

15th January 2022

Media Statement

Muslim Women contacting Helpline rises by 25%

The Muslim Women's Network (MWN) Helpline reaches its seven year anniversary today. It was launched on the 15th January 2015 as a part time pilot project and has since grown and been contacted over 17600 times providing help to around 6700 women and girls. However, during the Covid pandemic the demand on the helpline has increased further. The number of times the Helpline was contacted via phone, text, email or webchat rose from just over 3000 times (in 2020) to almost 4000 times in 2021. The number of women and girls provided support also rose by 25% to 1582 in 2021.

Although the helpline can be contacted about any issues, domestic abuse and poor mental health continue to be the top issues. Women are struggling to access mental health services and perhaps not surprisingly there has also been a small increase in more serious cases where callers are self-harming or having suicidal thoughts. Some of the Helpline's interventions have been life-saving. For example, one woman called the helpline while she was on her way to a train station to take her own life. The Helpline Worker managed to de-escalate the situation and persuade her to accept help and the mental health crisis team was contacted. Although the helpline also operates a culturally sensitive counselling service, it was also unable to meet current demands and unfortunately the waiting list had to be closed once it reached an 18 week wait time. The counselling referral waiting list will re-open in March 2022.

The Helpline manager, Shameem Hussain said: *"We have noticed that the number of service users choosing to contact us via email has increased. The cases have also become more complex and now involve more staff time with support lasting much longer. For example, we have started to see transnational abandonment cases. There has also been a slight rise in Muslim women with disabilities who need help - in one case a woman who had both visual and hearing impairments was experiencing emotional abuse and coercive control and wanted help to get away from her family."*

The helpline is national and is open from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday and can be contacted via phone on 0800 999 5786, via text on 07415 206 936, via email on info@mwnhelpline.co.uk and through the webchat service via its website www.mwnhelpline.co.uk, which contains useful information many resources.

Notes

- 1) For comments send email to: contact@mwnuk.co.uk
- 2) The Muslim Women's Network UK (www.mwnuk.co.uk), which operates the MWN Helpline is a national award winning charity based in Birmingham and works to advance equality and social justice for Muslim women and girls.