



Muslim Women's Network UK

ANNUAL REPORT

Address & Registered Office:

MWNUK

Arena View, 4 Edward Street,
Birmingham, B1 2RX

E: contact@mwnuk.co.uk

T: 0121 236 9000

Website: www.mwnuk.co.uk

Registered Company Number: 6597997

Jan to Dec 2011

CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. Management Structure	3
2. About MWNUK	4
3. Overview of Achievements and Performance	5
4. Activities supporting Aim 1	6
5. Activities supporting Aim 2	11
6. Activities supporting Aim 3	13
7. Future Planned Activities	15
8. Financial Statement and Accounts	16
9. Income and Expenditure Account	17

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Honorary President (and founder)

Baroness and Professor Haleh Afshar OBE

Current Board Members

Cassandra Balchin (Chair)

Robina Iqbal (Vice Chair)

Dr Iram Sattar (Treasurer)

Fariha Thomas

Gemma Dua Ibrahim

Mussurut Zia

Shaista Gohir

Khursheed Wadia

Nazmin Akhtar

Aisha Ali Khan

Executive Director

Faeza Vaid (no voting powers)

ABOUT MWNUK

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) is a UK network of women to share knowledge, connect the voices, and promote the needs of diverse Muslim women. MWNUK registered as a community interest company in 2008 (company number 6597997). MWNUK's vision is a society where Muslim women have an effective voice and opportunity to contribute equally to society.

MWNUK currently have 420 members, made up of individual Muslim women and organisations working with Muslim women, with a potential reach of approximately 73,000 Muslim women. Members include academics and students; workers in voluntary sector support services; health professionals; experts in women's rights, diversity policy, disability, and immigration, asylum refugee issues; businesswomen; local government and law enforcement officers; and artists etc. Membership is also diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and location.

MWNUK's aims are:

- **To share knowledge, experience, best practice and opinions among Muslim women and those working with them in order to strengthen Muslim women's ability to bring about effective changes in their lives.**
- **To bring Muslim women's diverse voices to Government, and to gather information relevant to Muslim women's lives in order to ensure local and national policy meets varied needs.**
- **To raise the profile of individual Muslim women and support organisations by highlighting their achievements and showcasing diverse role models.**

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Since the last AGM (December 2010), MWNUK has experienced a year of serious financial constraints and has seen changes to staffing. Shaista Gohir left her role as MWNUK Executive Director in July 2011, but has since been co-opted as a Board member. And Faeza Vaid was successfully recruited as new Executive Director in September 2011.

Despite Faeza being the only member of staff employed part-time, MWNUK continues to contribute much to work on issues relevant to Muslim women across the UK, with the support of the volunteer Board of Directors.

MWNUK were pleased to announce the cooption of 3 new Board Members; Nazmin Akhtar, Aisha Ali Khan and Khursheed Wadia. After advertising for 3 places MWNUK received 15 outstanding applications, showing the high caliber of Muslim women in the UK.

MWNUK's membership has steadily increased to 420 members. In addition, Facebook and mailing list members have also increased. The majority of members have found MWNUK through MWNUK's website. Also, the profile of MWNUK is increasing and more individuals are joining through word of mouth.

On pages 6-13 on this report are details of activities conducted over the past year to support MWNUK's 3 main aims.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING AIM 1

Aim 1: To share knowledge, experience, best practice and opinions among Muslim women and those working with them in order to strengthen Muslim women's ability to bring about effective changes in their lives.

The following activities have been carried out to support the above aim:

MWNUK website – The website is an important tool for sharing knowledge and information quickly. The website was upgraded and now includes a 'what we do' section, photo gallery, videos, publications section, directory and my story section where women can share their personal stories and experiences. Members are also able to add their own events and notices. It is hoped that the website will continue to develop as an information resource.

Signposting and responding to information requests – MWNUK has continued to receive enquiries on a wide range of issues, mostly on the rights of women in marriage and divorce. Other enquiries concern issues of violence against women; forced marriage; discrimination at work; and child abuse. Charitable organisations and statutory bodies wanting to reach Muslim women and have them represented on advisory groups also continue to contact MWNUK in order to obtain referrals. And MWNUK is regularly requested to speak at events across the UK.

Online Factsheets – The 'factsheet' section of the website now includes factsheets on 'Religious and Belief Discrimination in the Workplace', 'Forced Marriage', 'Female Genital Mutilation' and 'Muslim Marriages in Britain'. The factsheets are regularly downloaded. MWNUK will continue to produce easy to read factsheets on other rights based issues, such as

right to be safe (e.g. from domestic violence, honour crimes, Islamophobia, child abuse); right to sexual health (e.g. contraception, teenage pregnancies), right to well being (e.g. mental health) etc. MWNUK will be consulting appropriate members with relevant expertise on these factsheets.

Newsletters – Bi-monthly electronic newsletters are produced and sent to update members on MWNUK activities, news, opportunities, events, and featured individual members and organisations. Contributions are also invited.

Online Directory – Having added a ‘directory’ section to the MWNUK website last year, one of the strategic activities for this year is to populate the directory with information on organisations across the UK that are involved in various women's issues, particularly on Domestic Violence Against Women and Mental Health.

Advising Muslim women’s organisations - MWNUK have continued to advise women who have wanted to set up forums or networks in their areas, or host events. MWNUK have also hosted a women’s group from New Zealand who wanted to share and learn from MWNUK’s experience.

Advising Mainstream organisations- MWNUK have advised many mainstream organisations. Examples include: Howard Shelly Solicitors (Walsall), Toni and Guy Training (national), Mosaic Network (West Midlands), Engage (national), and Human Appeal International (international).

Speaking at events - MWNUK have spoken at a number of events in the UK, increasingly around International Women’s Day (IWD). For example, MWNUK spoke at a celebratory IWD event at Islington Town Hall,

organised by the Metropolitan Police and two London based Muslim women's groups.

Other events have included: Bradford Muslim Women's Council's 'Daughters of Eve' event (Bradford), the Workers' Educational Association's (WEA) 'Women's Voices and Rights' event (Southampton), WEA's 'Hard Times' event on women responding to government austerity measures (Sheffield), the Aga Khan University's 'The Politics of Negotiation- Muslim subjectivities in Western contexts' event, Babington Technology College's 'Role Models' event (Leicester), the NSPCC's first annual conference to improve the safeguarding of Muslim children (London), Launch of Muslim Marriage Contract Website hosted by City Circle (London), Wilton Park's 'Religion, Change and Development' Conference (West Sussex).

Running Workshops- Often alongside speaking at events, MWNUK are asked to run workshops on issues relevant to the event, e.g. women's rights in Islam, women's rights in the UK, how to create networks, organisations, informal discussion groups, etc.

An example of a workshop organised by MWNUK, Practical Solutions, and West Midlands Fire Service was the 'Forced Marriages and Honour Based Violence' event, which was attended by practitioners from all sectors, including West Midlands Police, and other third sector front line staff.

Networking / Partnership Working – MWNUK are continuing to build linkages nationally with other organizations. Some have included: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick and the Economic and Social Research Council, Parliamentary Outreach, and the Equality and Diversity Forum. MWNUK is also a member of the Women's Peace Federation who conduct a series of dialogue sessions to increase dialogue with women of different faiths and no faith; Faeza Vaid sits on

the advisory board for Dying Matters which advises the National Council for Palliative Care from a faith perspective on issues related to health; and on the NSPCC Advisory Group for child abuse in Muslim communities.

MWNUK worked with Channel 16, Oxfam and other organisations on the 'Green Scarf Campaign' for women in Afghanistan.

This particular campaign was covered by The Times, AlertNet, the F-Word, Ethnic Now, the Labour Campaign for International Development, the Women's International Perspective and countless other news outlets.

MWNUK also participated at events hosted by other organisations:

- Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP)'s Thematic Assessment Launch entitled 'Out of Mind Out of Sight' (London).
- The Women's Health and Equality Consortium (WHEC) Conference. WHEC partners include: Platform 51, FORWARD UK, Imkaan, Maternity Action, Postively Women, Women's Resource Centre.
- Roundtable discussion hosted by the US Embassy with keynote speaker Zeba Iqbal the Executive Director of CAMP (Council for the Advancement for Muslim Professionals).
- The Positive Action in Housing (PAIH) Annual General Meeting (Glasgow).
- Equality and Diversity Forum's 'Coming of Age' launch as a charity (London).

Engaging with Media – MWNUK continues to comment in the ethnic and mainstream media – both nationally and internationally. Some media examples include: CNN, Islam Channel, BBC News, and various BBC radio stations; e.g. BBC Asian Network and Radio 4's Women's Hour. Shaista Gohir was also featured in the Times newspaper.

An example of the impact of MWNUK's engagement was when MWNUK submitted a complaint to the BBC regarding in the programme Eastender's portrayal of Muslim divorces. Subsequently, the complaint was registered by the BBC Complaints department on the audience log, which is made available to many BBC staff, including members of the BBC Executive Board, channel controllers and other senior managers including programme makers and producers of 'Eastenders'.

Engaging with international initiatives – It is important to share knowledge, experience, best practice and opinions with Muslim women from different contexts. MWNUK has therefore been involved in a number of international initiatives and any travel expenses have been covered by the host organization:

- **Musawah Young Women's Caucus Strategic Meeting (Malaysia)** - MWNUK are a part of the Musawah global movement. Faeza Vaid (Executive Director) attended the strategic planning meeting for the Musawah Young Women's Caucus, which focused on how young women could contribute to the Musawah movement.
- **Women's Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) 3rd Global Conference (Turkey)** - Faeza Vaid (Executive Director) also sits on the Steering Committee for WISE, and attended WISE's 3rd Global Conference entitled: "Muslim Women Leaders at the Frontlines of Change".

More than 180 Muslim women from 45 countries attended. The Conference specifically focused on religious & spiritual, political and business & civic leadership, with an emphasis on highlighting how Muslim women are shattering stereotypes by playing significant roles as key leaders in these areas.

- **Musawah Conceptual Workshop (Jordan)**

Faeza Vaid also attended the 'Musawah Conceptual Workshop'. During the meeting, the advocates from around the world discussed how they could contribute to knowledge production around the Islamic concepts of *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*. It is often understandings of these concepts that premise understandings of Muslim Women's roles in the family and public in Islamic laws.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING AIM 2

AIM 2: To bring Muslim women's diverse voices to Government, and to gather information relevant to Muslim women's lives in order to ensure local and national policy meets varied needs.

The following activities have been carried out to support the above aim:

Engagement with Policy makers – MWNUK have responded to and participated in government consultations which have included written feedback and roundtable discussions. Issues that MWNUK have responded to included civic and political engagement, preventing violent extremism, family migration, ECHR and religious discrimination, and the appointment of women onto public boards. Government Departments that MWNUK have engaged with include the Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Justice and Government Equalities Office.

An example of MWNUK's engagement with policy makers is the roundtable discussion which was held in December 2010 in response to the Government Equalities Office's 'Strengthening Women's Voices' consultation.

Following the consultation, in partnership with the University of Warwick and the ESRC, MWNUK produced a summarised report entitled 'Muslim Women: Political and Civic Participation in the UK'. This report is available in print and on MWNUK's website.

Other examples of participation include:

- Roundtable discussion on 'Diversity in Public Appointments' hosted by Sir David Mornington.

- Roundtable discussions at House of Lords to explore Baroness Cox's proposed Arbitration & Mediation Amendment Bill.
- Roundtable discussions at House of Lords organised by Sarah Morgan of Government Equalities Office, chaired by Baroness Verma , to explore women of faith and no faith backgrounds and their participation in Government policy.
- Consultation event with Baroness Warsi and Nick Clegg in Birmingham.

Understanding Parliament Workshop – In partnership with Parliamentary Outreach and the University of Warwick (and in part sponsored by Economic and Social Research Council), a workshop was held to help Muslim women from around the UK to understand how parliament works and how they can influence decision making.

Since the event, 5 more workshops have been organised by member organizations independently following MWNUK direct linking to Parliamentary Outreach.

Annual General Meeting – The theme of this year’s annual general meeting is ‘the Family.’ A range of speakers have been invited to the event to be held at the House of Commons, to encourage the civic participation of Muslim women, and facilitate direct linking of Muslim women and Government representatives.

Member of Advisory Group for NSPCC – MWNUK is a member of the NSPCC advisory group for safeguarding Muslim children.

UN Speaker- Board member Shaista Gohir spoke at the United Nations Human Rights Council Forum on Minority Rights (Switzerland).

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING AIM 3

AIM 3: To raise the profile of individual Muslim women and support organisations by highlighting their achievements and showcasing diverse role models.

The following activities have been carried out to support the above aim:

Profiling Muslim Women – Muslim women across UK, including many of MWNUK members make an impact in a wide range of work. It is important that their contributions are recognised whether they are individuals or organisations. It is also useful for other women to know about their work. MWNUK have done this through the newsletter and website, particularly in the ‘my story’ and ‘featured member’ sections.

Examples include MWNUK nominating three MWNUK members for the ‘Network of Aspiring Women’ Annual Awards; Fozia Parveen in the category ‘Women’s Advocate’, Salma Yaqoob in the category ‘Leadership in the Community’ and Rana Nazir in the category ‘Women in Property and Construction’.

Also, MWNUK featured in a newsletter 2 achievements of wider success: Councillor Naveeda Ikram from Bradford became the first Muslim female Lord Mayor. And Rabia Bhatti became the youngest Muslim female councillor in the country, having been elected to represent the Newtown Ward in Chesham.

Birmingham Big Sisters Project - MWNUK piloted in Birmingham the ‘Birmingham Big Sisters’ role modelling project. This project showcased 30 diverse local Muslim female role models, through booklets, posters and mobile exhibition displays.

The exhibition and booklets have been showcased at secondary schools, colleges, Birmingham's Council House, to other local groups, councillors, etc. It has been exceptionally well received, with others wanting to replicate the idea, not only in Birmingham, but across the country.

Role Modelling Exhibition- MWNUK created a 'Women Like Us' exhibition display, featuring 30 British Muslim women from across the UK in diverse professions. MWNUK also created displays using information from the Birmingham Big Sister website; 'Muslim Women in History', 'Pioneering Muslim Women' and 'Muslim Women in Sport'.

The exhibition displays have travelled from Scotland to Southampton, and are available for all members to use.

Muslim Women Contribution Awards- MWNUK are currently planning to host a 'Muslim Women Contribution Awards' in partnership with Human Appeal International. The aim of the awards will be to showcase and celebrate the contributions of Muslim women across the UK.

FUTURE PLANNED ACTIVITIES

In late 2011 MWNUK conducted a strategic review and planning process involving staff and directors. This took into account network member priorities and concerns gathered from the vast number of inquiries received and other interactions over the past two years since the previous plan, as well as building upon directors' own vast knowledge and engagement in work towards Muslim women's equality.

The following are MWNUK's priority areas of working in the next 3 years:

1. Build Understanding of Gender in Islam from a Human Rights Perspective
2. Build Understanding of Equality in Family Laws
3. Change Attitudes to Domestic Violence
4. Change Attitudes to Mental Health
5. Change Attitudes to Women's Leadership
6. Contribute to addressing Forced Marriages
7. Contribute to addressing Child Sexual Abuse

In order to most effectively tackle each priority area, they have been grouped according to the 3 main ways in which MWNUK sees itself contributing to their development: 'MWNUK Unique Selling Points', 'MWNUK Changing Attitudes' and 'MWNUK Support Actions', along with 2 necessary mechanisms for the achievement of success: 'Growing our Network Development' and building an institutional base.

More details of Future Planned activities may be found in MWNUK's Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND ACCOUNTS

The overall budget available for the financial year June 2010 to March 2011, was £67,170. The funders included Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and Birmingham City Council. The funding spent amounted to £71,902. A Summary of the accounts are provided on page 18 and a full copy of the accounts are available upon request. The majority of the expenditure covered core costs such as salaries, rent, stationary, telephone, travel costs, and accountancy fees.

Please note: the accounts are for 10 months due to changing MWNUK's accounting year end to coincide with funder year end.

The accountants and auditors are:

RUS Chartered Accountants (Registered Auditors and Tax Advisors)
1190A-1192 Stratford Road
Hall Green
Birmingham
B28 8AB

With the current recession, like other organisations in the third sector, MWNUK is also feeling the impact. MWNUK is in the process of becoming a Charity, applying for funding from a range of charitable sources, and continuing to examine ways to raise a stable source of income to support core costs while ensuring that MWNUK guarantee its political and institutional independence.

Detailed trading income and expenditure account for year ended 31 March 2011

	2011		2010	
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources				
<i>Voluntary Income</i>				
Grants receivable		67,143		61,704
		<u>67,143</u>		<u>61,704</u>
<i>Investment Income</i>				
Bank interest receivable		27		43
		<u>27</u>		<u>43</u>
Total incoming resources		<u>67,170</u>		<u>61,747</u>
Resources expended				
Costs of running Community Interest activities:				
<i>Grants</i>				
Grants – Subcontractor	-		(1,973)	
Grants – Staff - Wages & Salaries	35,880		35,707	
Grants – Staff - Employer’s NIC	3,374		3,108	
Grants – Establishment – Rent & Services	5,000		6,000	
Grants – Establishment – Insurance	292		285	
Grants – Bank Charges	14		1	
Grants – Printing, Postage & Stationery	1150		402	
Grants – Staff Training	-		350	
Grants – Professional – Accountancy Fees	2,198		843	
Grants – Professional – Auditor Remuneration	1,200		636	
Grants – Professional – Legal Fees	2,830		2,330	
Grants – Resource Production (Exhibition, Booklets)	11,907		596	
Grants – Office Expenses – Telephone	465		381	
Grants – Website & Upgrades	3,841		615	
Grants – Depreciation of Computer	164		244	
Grants – Travelling & Accommodation	3,425		2,023	
Grants – Subsistence	162		421	
		<u>71,902</u>		<u>51,969</u>
Total Costs of running Community Interest Activities		<u>71,902</u>		<u>51,969</u>
Governance costs				
Taxation		6		9
Total governance costs		<u>6</u>		<u>9</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year		<u>(4,738)</u>		<u>9,769</u>