

CASE WORKER SERVICE THREE YEAR EVALUATION (2021- 2023)



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Background

Muslim Women’s Network UK (MWNUK) is a national registered charity (charity number 1155092) that works to promote social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls. It runs a national helpline Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm, which helps about 1500 service users every year.

It also has a caseworker service that offers more comprehensive and long-term trauma informed support for very complex cases. There are two part time caseworkers who provide this service, each working 2 days a week, which restricts the number of cases that can receive this type of support.

Report Summary

The caseworker service of MWNUK provides continuous faith and culturally sensitive support to Muslim women who face multiple and complex issues, such as domestic abuse, mental health, financial and housing situation. The bridge care nature of the caseworker service is designed to provide wraparound support for the service user whilst they navigate multiple challenges and agencies. It helps the service users to improve their knowledge, confidence, and empowerment, as well as their health and wellbeing.

This 'bridge care' approach also contributes to the outcomes of other agencies and stakeholders that work with the service users.

The caseworker service collects various indicators and outputs, both quantitative and qualitative, to measure the changes and outcomes that the service users experience. It also receives feedback and testimonials from the service users and the referral partners, such as helplines, police, and social services.

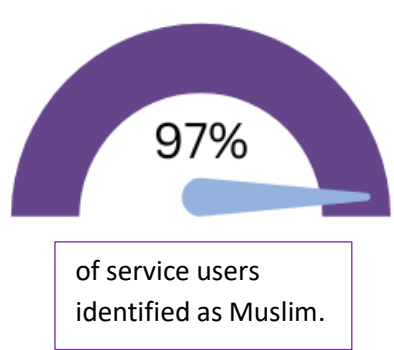
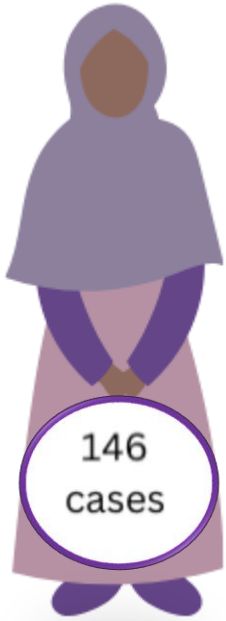
The caseworker service faces some challenges, such as increasing demand, complex cases, and limited funding. The report suggests some recommendations for the future, such as reviewing the outcome indicators, supporting data analysis, piloting a hardship fund, increasing counselling capacity, and raising awareness of the service.

Bridging care is a term often used in the social care sector. It means the provision of service designed to support an individual while they are waiting for a more permanent solution to their needs, such as a care home place. It is a holistic approach that looks at the whole person as an individual, not just their mental health needs. The support also considers their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing.

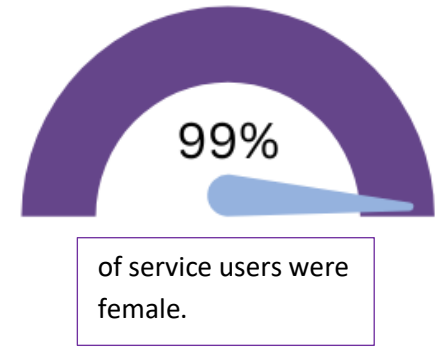


Three Year Impact Highlights 2021 - 2023

No. of service users supported in 3 years.



of service users identified as Muslim.



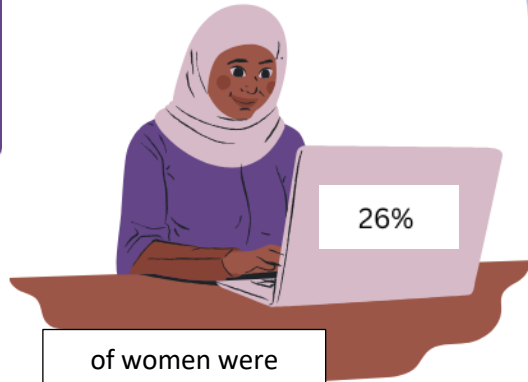
of service users were female.



of cases had three or more issues/barriers.

“Difference is these caseworkers speak as though they completely understand you and believe you as though they experienced it themselves, and not in a patronising way.”
Service User (2022)

“We don't want to become yet another dictator in their lives.”
Caseworker (2023)



of women were supported with interpreting.



In 2023, Caseworkers provided **practical and emotional support** through welfare checks and home visits to **86%** of service users.

“I genuinely appreciate every single help you offered and I feel so empowered having you on my side while all my family and most of my friends were against me and my decision.”
Service User October (2023)



Over 55% of service users saw an improvement in their financial literacy in 2023.

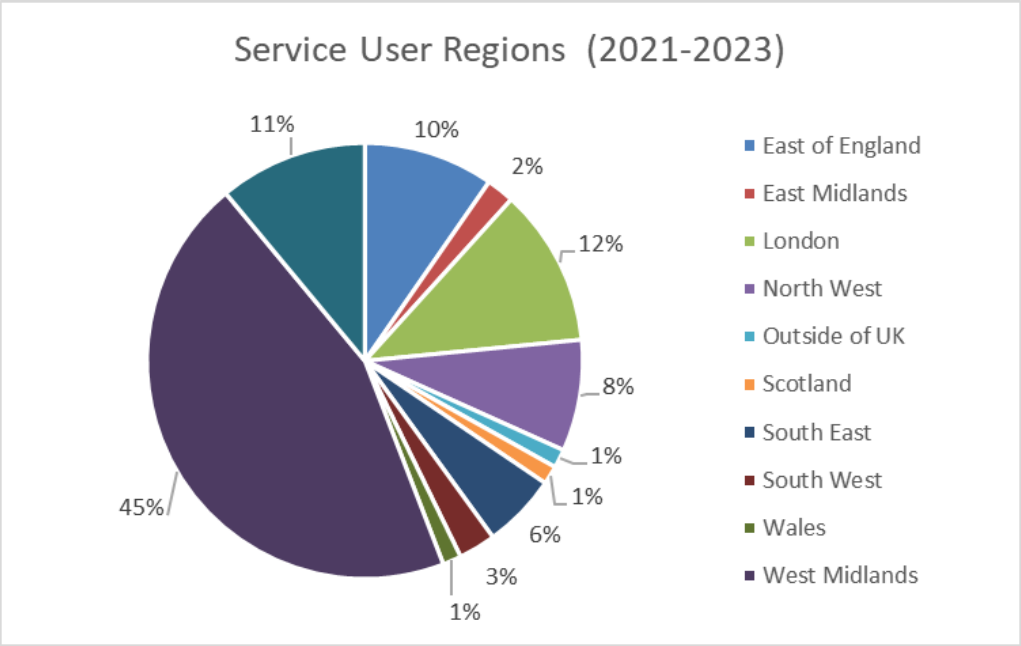
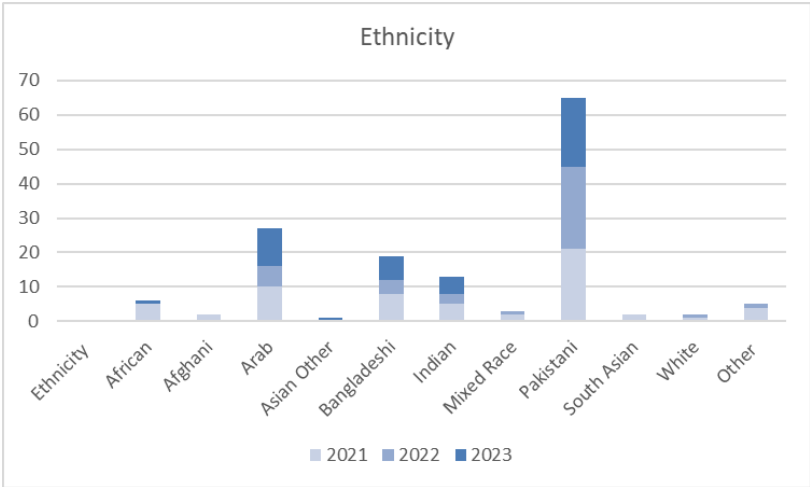


Demonstrating Need: Who, How and Why

Who - Key demographics

The majority of service users are Muslim women with **97% of service users identified as Muslim** and 99% of service users as female. A further 12% of service users were registered with a disability.

Over 60% of service users were married. However over 10% were Nikkah only, which is a marriage not recognised by UK law. Over the three years c.20% of service users had insecure immigration status.



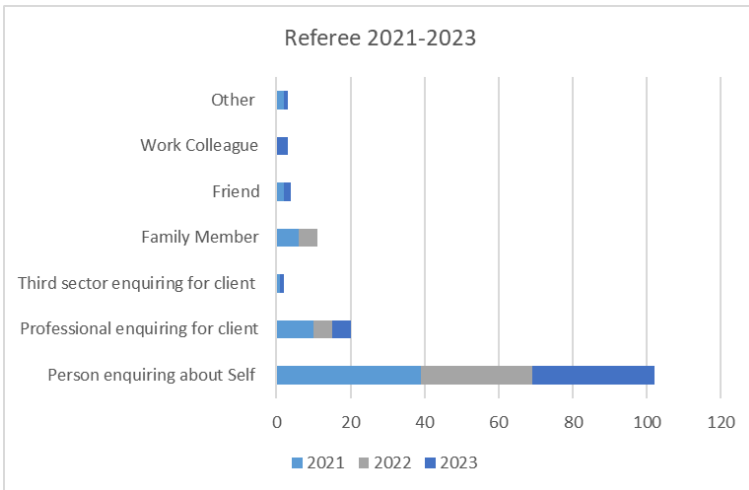
The service is accessible to all regions of the UK, as well as from outside the UK. Those that access support from outside the UK are predominantly service users that have experienced transnational abandonment, UK citizens abroad, or children of British nationals needing urgent support.

The service received a **higher percentage of calls from the West Midlands** over the three years of assessment. This is where MWNUK mainly operates. London, which has the largest population in the UK, was next. Then came the East of England, where MWNUK had done some occasional outreach work.

How - Accessing Support

Over the past three years the caseworker service has supported **145 cases**, averaging **48 cases per year**. During this time the initial contact has been made to the helpline and then referred onto the caseworker. This is around 3% of the helpline calls per year with two thirds of contact being made through emails and voicemails.

Over the three years **70% of referrals were directly from service user**, followed by 14% from a professional service such as college and schoolteachers, health professionals and statutory services (police, social workers, solicitors).

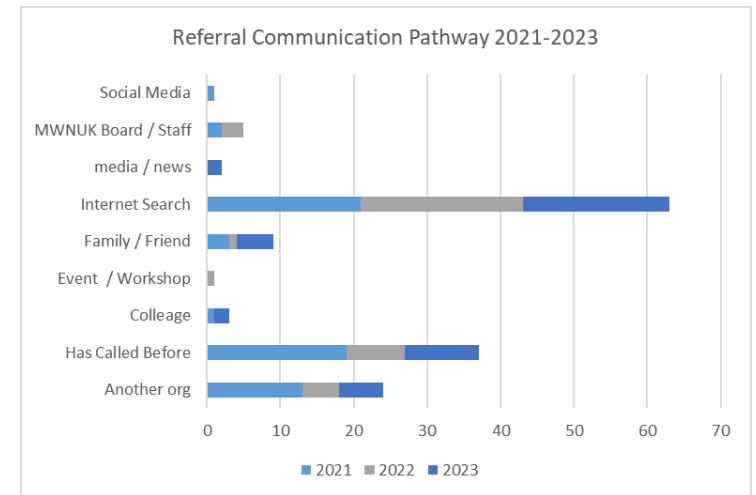
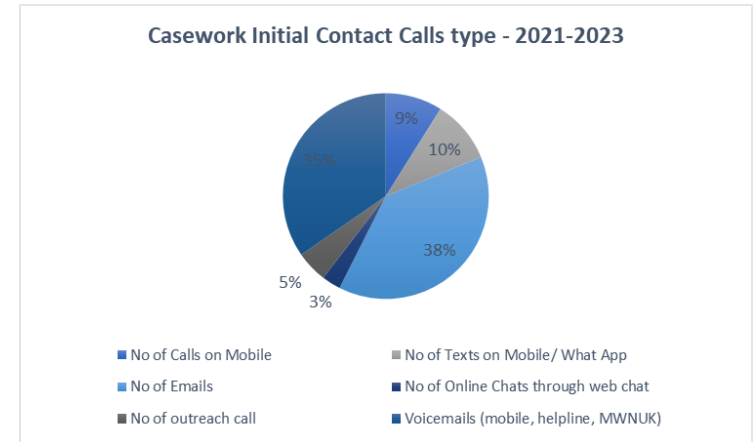


The Pandemic Years

In the first year, more than **30% of referrals came from people who had contacted before**, but this decreased in the following years to about 21%. This is probably because of the higher need for support during the Covid 19 pandemic, when statutory services were overloaded, and many agencies stopped their services. MWNUK not only kept going but increased its ability to help its service users. Unsurprisingly, there were also more referrals from professionals and organisations during the pandemic years, where the bridging care support provided by MWNUK helped to fill gaps in support their service users.

During the three-year project, a variety of methods have been employed to engage service users.

Over 40% of referrals found the service through the internet, whilst relationships and communication with stakeholders, specifically agencies and statutory services continues to play a key referral route (17%). Leaflets, posters, and promotional videos were not cited as a main referral route. It is important for MWNUK to ensure that information about the service is regularly updated on their website.



Why - Needs and Issues

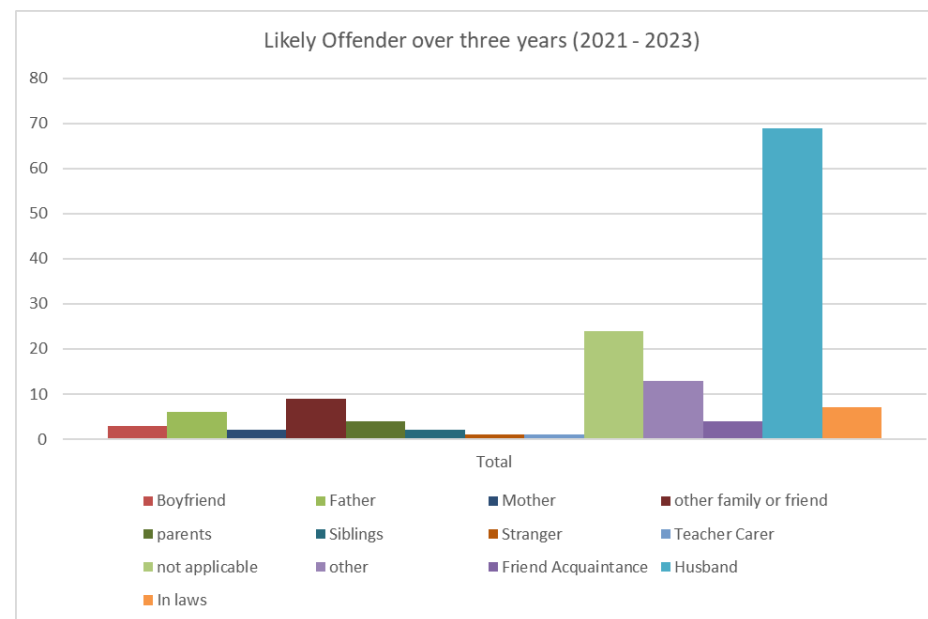
TOP 10	Number	Percentage
Domestic Abuse	77	53%
Mental Health Feelings	61	42%
Housing / Homelessness	56	39%
Money / Finance	47	32%
Children / Custody	37	26%
Isolation / Loneliness	23	16%
Honour Based Violence	19	13%
Immigration	19	13%
Complaints about public services	18	12%
Divorce	17	12%

It is estimated that less than 24% of Domestic Abuse crime is reported to the police¹ whilst 53% of MWNUK's cases are related to Domestic Violence, of which 30% were reported via the support of the helpline. This demonstrates that the caseworker service empowers users to raise their concerns and issues.

Over the three years, where there was a perpetrator driving the need for support, it was primarily the Husband of the Service User. Data also shows that over 50% of perpetrators were male. Note - this figure could be higher as some data does not clearly capture gender e.g. in-laws, friend.

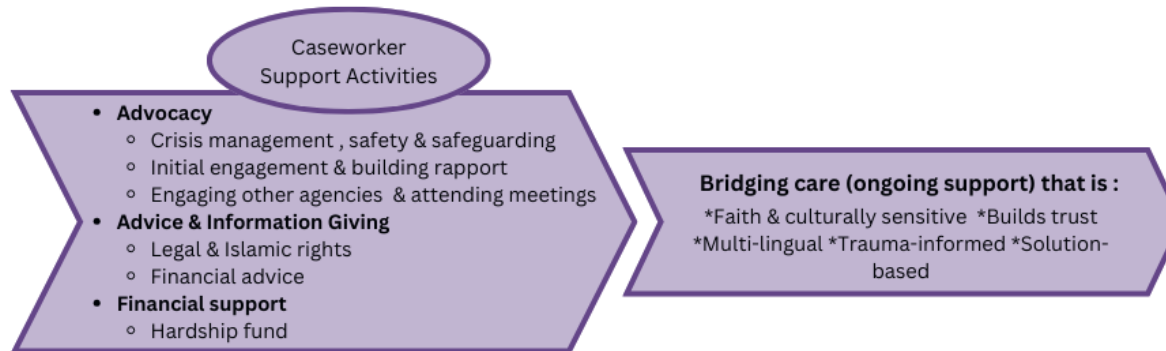
Every case brought to the caseworker service experienced multiple and complex challenges, with at least three types of issues per case.

Over the three years, **Domestic Abuse was consistently the most frequently raised issue to the caseworker team**, with 77 of 145 cases experiencing this problem. This was followed by Mental Health and Housing. In addition, Domestic Abuse cases frequently saw Coercive Control (50% of cases), Tech/digital Abuse (19%) and Financial Abuse (15%).



¹ <https://www.ncdv.org.uk/domestic-abuse-statistics-uk/>

Providing Vital Faith Culturally Sensitive Support



travel through to communication e.g. language. When the caseworker is confident that these basics are in place, they start to move into strengths-based support. This could be through the creation of networks, building mental resilience through to supporting employment or learning need, all of which is provided through a faith and culturally sensitive lens. Caseworkers make sure that service users also get support in financial advice or being made aware of their legal rights. As they provide their bridging care and support, the caseworkers are working to build knowledge, resilience and new practices, that ultimately help the service users to look ahead, set new goals and get ready to move on in their lives. The support plan is used to capture the service users progress so that they can what they have achieved.

The Caseworker project provides various types of practical and emotional support to women, often in crisis, who have to deal with many and complex challenges. Practical support includes informing them about rights or guiding them to statutory services, while the emotional support involves attending meetings with women who have been referred to agencies, contacting them regularly or referring them to MWNUK's own counselling. This may sometimes require linguistic support to help both the women and the referral agency overcome language barriers. There is also access to a vital Hardship fund which can be used to purchase food/fuel vouchers, feminine hygiene products, emergency money to cover the (upto 6 week) gap before first benefits payments are accessed.

The Caseworker works with a service user and helps them through their journey of need through the creation of a comprehensive support plan. They use a service user led and trauma informed approach to build trust from the start, using the first assessment to establish safeguarding issues, and making sure the service user and children are safe and secure.

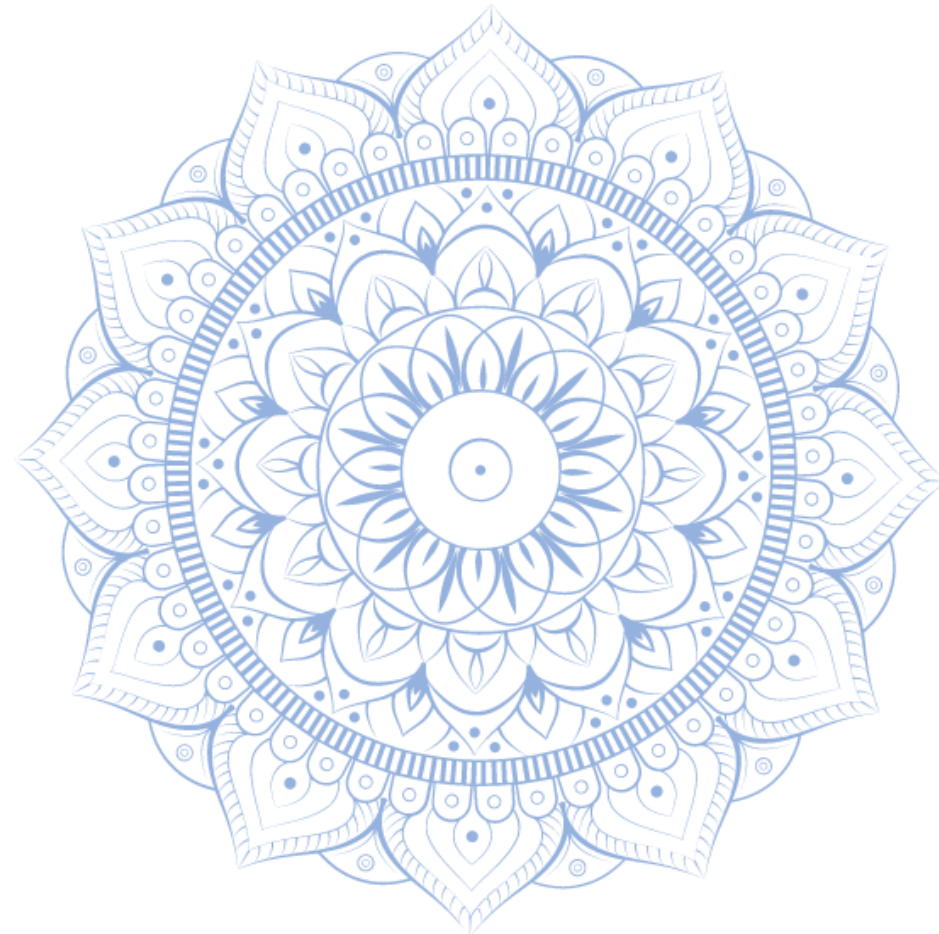
Using a traffic light system, they work with the user to establish and meet any accessibility needs from

The financial hardship support was critical to the women who were stranded abroad due to domestic abuse from their spouse. This help allowed the women to return to the UK in order to enforce their legal rights to remain in the UK permanently. **Roopa Tanna, Solicitor at Islington Law (2024)**

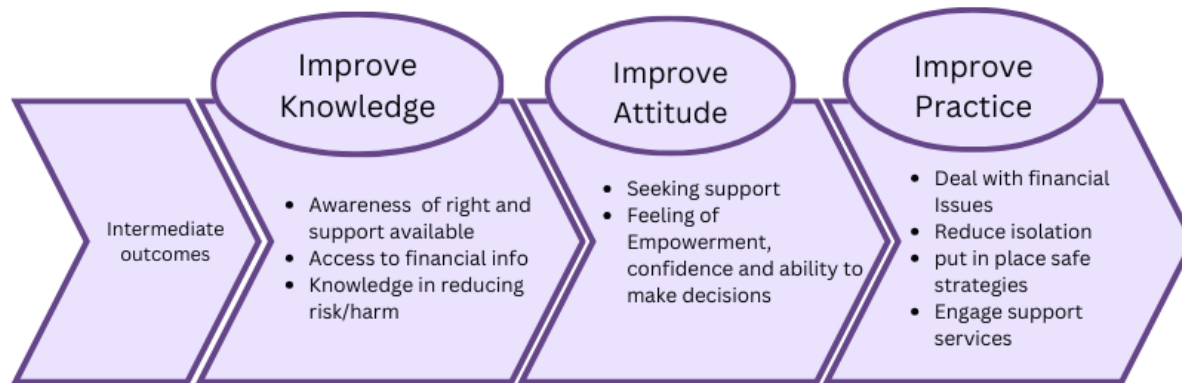
Difference is these caseworkers speak as though they completely understand you and believe you as though they experienced it themselves, and not in a patronising way.

Service User (2022)

"I received an incredible support from MWNUK helpline during a very difficult period when my in-laws kicked me out of the house. I was so scared, lost and overwhelmed with the challenges of adjusting to life in the UK. The language barrier increased my fear. Meeting with my caseworker, felt like getting help from an angel sent by God. She helped me stand on my feet; she accompanied me to the police station and various relevant agencies, showing me a way forward. I cannot express my feelings for the security and stability she helped me find. With her help, I regained my confidence and learned many things, but most importantly, I discovered that I no longer need to live in fear." **Service User Feedback 2023**



Demonstrating Outcomes and Impact



MWNUK capture a breadth of outcome indicators and outputs, both quantitative and qualitative to help understand the journey of their service users. The short and medium outcome indicators enable the caseworker service to understand the improvement in service user knowledge, building of their confidence and attitude to actively engage other agencies, which in turn improves their likelihood to continue to access the support available.

Regular feedback and case studies are gathered from users by Helpline staff who have not been involved in the casework, to monitor the service and highlight how the caseworker service improves the health and wellbeing of service users in the long term, ultimately empowering them to improve their lives and thrive.

Improving knowledge

MWN can build trust quickly due to their unique ability to deliver a culturally sensitive service, whether its offering multi-lingual support or being able to understand faith-based belief systems and their nuances. This makes it much easier to develop rapport and trust with service users and impart information and knowledge, especially during times of crisis. *“I was able to take her to the police station and support her straight through to accessing the women’s refuge, because I was able to act straight away not only removing the language barriers, but providing the emotional support as she had never been left alone before.” Caseworker Interview (December 2023)*

Improving attitudes

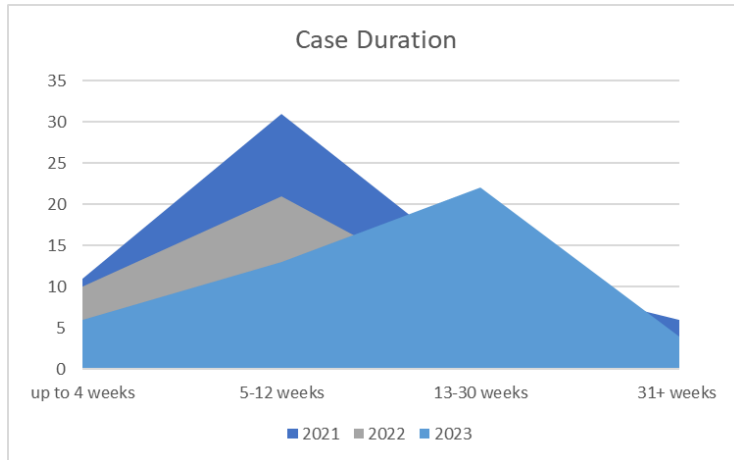
“...attitude change is difficult – most people are highly resistant to persuasion. This is especially true when a short-term attempt at changing a person’s view is made. Lasting, meaningful attitude change occurs gradually, over the course of weeks, months, and sometimes years (Brinol, Rucker, & Petty,

It maybe someone has just found out that day about an incident and in a lot of distress – we are able to refer them to MWN for support, and then they can come back to our helpline when they are ready to take things forward.

Kate Worthington – Senior Practitioner at Revenge Porn Helpline

2015). It also tends to occur through meaningful, non-forceful discussions about competing viewpoints (LaCour & Green, 2014). The more an individual is allowed to slowly revise their views and arrive at a new outlook, the more effective an attempt at attitude change will typically be.”²

The Caseworker service is successful in supporting service users to engage with agencies and services by providing reliable 'bridging care'. This means giving someone regular help, guidance and representation when accessing support services over time. This comprehensive help not only eases stress and concern of the service user, but also helps agencies engage with the person. This approach is well-known in the care and education sectors, as people achieve better outcomes because they have bridging care support while waiting for lasting solutions such as housing.



“Once she was secure I could help with the practical stuff like opening a bank account app, sitting with her to write notes in her own language through to getting a bus together, which helped to build her confidence”
Caseworker Interview (December 2023)

Unlike many statutory services with rigid processes and time allocations, the caseworkers can provide support for over a year if required.

Most of the service users were successfully supported within 12 weeks (over 70% - 2021 and 2022), however MWNUK made a conscious decision after the pandemic to give more time to service users, to use solution-based therapies and build long term outcomes. A positive trend in 2023 has seen a sharp increase in the time needed to support service users, with over 50% of cases now requiring 13+ weeks support. The team members also reflected on increasing challenges due to the cost of living crisis, which may be a contributing factor.

“Their cases were extremely complicated and took considerable effort to resolve to the extent of securing their re-entry to the UK. However, whilst the legal work was resolved further practical hurdles meant that without the incredible support from MWN, it would not have been possible for them to come back to the UK”
Referral Partner Islington Law (September 2023)

By 2023, Caseworkers practical and emotional support through welfare check and home visits had increased to 86% of service users, and attended meetings at schools, social services, police, MARAC, SARCs, and other agencies for over 53% of cases.

² [https://www.ckju.net/en/dossier/attitude-change-science-changing-human-attitudes-and-perspectives#:~:text=Lasting%2C%20meaningful%20attitude%20change%20occurs,%2C%20%26%20Petty%2C%202015\).](https://www.ckju.net/en/dossier/attitude-change-science-changing-human-attitudes-and-perspectives#:~:text=Lasting%2C%20meaningful%20attitude%20change%20occurs,%2C%20%26%20Petty%2C%202015).)

Improving practice and contributions to long term outcomes



The Caseworker service sees service users implementing improved practices in many ways, from over 55% of service users seeing an improvement in their financial literacy, to around 30% feeling more confident to deal with problems or challenge/ leave abusive and harmful situations (in 2023).

Whilst the Caseworker service does not ask specific questions about feeling empowered, this word is used in numerous case studies and discussions with staff.

"..never in a million years did I think I would need to access the support for myself. The support has been brilliant! My caseworker provided excellent support and helped me move forward in many ways." (Service User 2023)

"she told me she had become a very strong and powerful woman now. She began to cry as she could not believe the words she was saying" Caseworker (March 2022)

Supporting other agencies

The Caseworker service helps with many other outcomes besides the ones they are directly responsible for (contribution), by enabling their service users to access various support services such as education, volunteering and employment. The Caseworker's skill in providing continuous care, guidance and encouragement can often make the difference in ensuring that other provision achieves its goals.

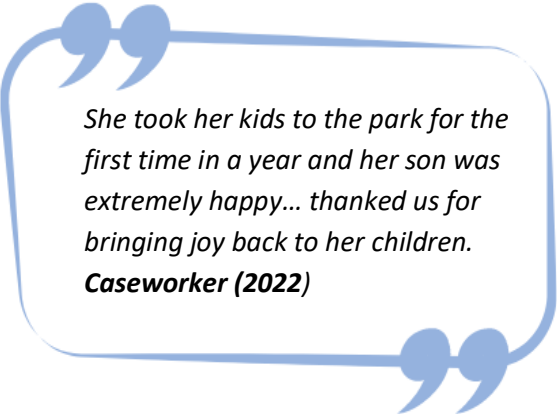
I genuinely appreciate every single help you offered and I feel so empowered having you on my side while all my family and most of my friends were against me and my decision
Service User October 2023

Other related family members

The support provided to the service users, not only supports them but also those closely related or connected to them. For example, domestic abuse significantly affects children exposed by increasing their levels of fear, anxiety and depression compared to their peers and emerging evidence shows they are also at greater risk of poor health outcomes in adulthood.³ By empowering the service users who have children, they can also achieve positive outcomes for their families.

Referral Partners

Over the three years c.70% of cases had Police involvement with c.30% of those cases being engaged by the caseworker service. Similarly, over 50% of cases had social service involvement and 30% have safeguarding requirements too. *“the MWN service has a huge impact on the level and quality of support we can provide our service users, especially from an emotional and cultural perspective”* Kate Worthington Revenge Porn Helpline (Jan 2024)



She took her kids to the park for the first time in a year and her son was extremely happy... thanked us for bringing joy back to her children.

Caseworker (2022)

Recommendations for the future

Whilst recommendations from the year one report remain such as seeking ongoing and long-term funding and continuing to invest in professional development for caseworkers, additional recommendations include:

Review the outcome indicators against the theory of change – There is an opportunity to streamline as well as update the current indicators to ensure that there is robust data collection against the theory of change. This could also include a follow up with service users to measure their perception of confidence and empowerment because of MWN’s support.

Support with Data analysis – Analyse and trace cases, where there is capacity, to determine trends such as:

- Actual waitlists e.g. greater analysis and discussion with the helpline team to determine numbers of ‘informally held’ service users
- ‘Called before’ statistics e.g. understand trends and any consider potential support measures i.e. number of calls before reaching crisis
- Whether those that are referred by a referral agency or other (e.g. family member) take more time to support or have greater levels of risk

³ Not just collateral damage' Barnardo's Report : Meltzer H, Doos L, Vostanis P, Ford T, Goodman R. (2018) The mental health of children who witness domestic violence. American Psychological Association

- Regional outcome data e.g. are some regions better equipped to support service users whether local agencies.

Financial assistance – Whilst there is a hardship fund (funded by MWNUK donations), financial support to service users has been limited due to tight eligibility criteria. There is an opportunity to pilot a without limitations and measure its impact.

Increase capacity of MWNUK counselling to reduce waiting times for service users, although it was acknowledged that this was still quicker than many statutory wait times.

Increase financial literacy of Muslim women in the community – Caseworker feedback highlighted a lack of understanding about financial rights and entitlement within the Muslim community, and whether MWNUK could play a role in proactively upskilling Muslim women.

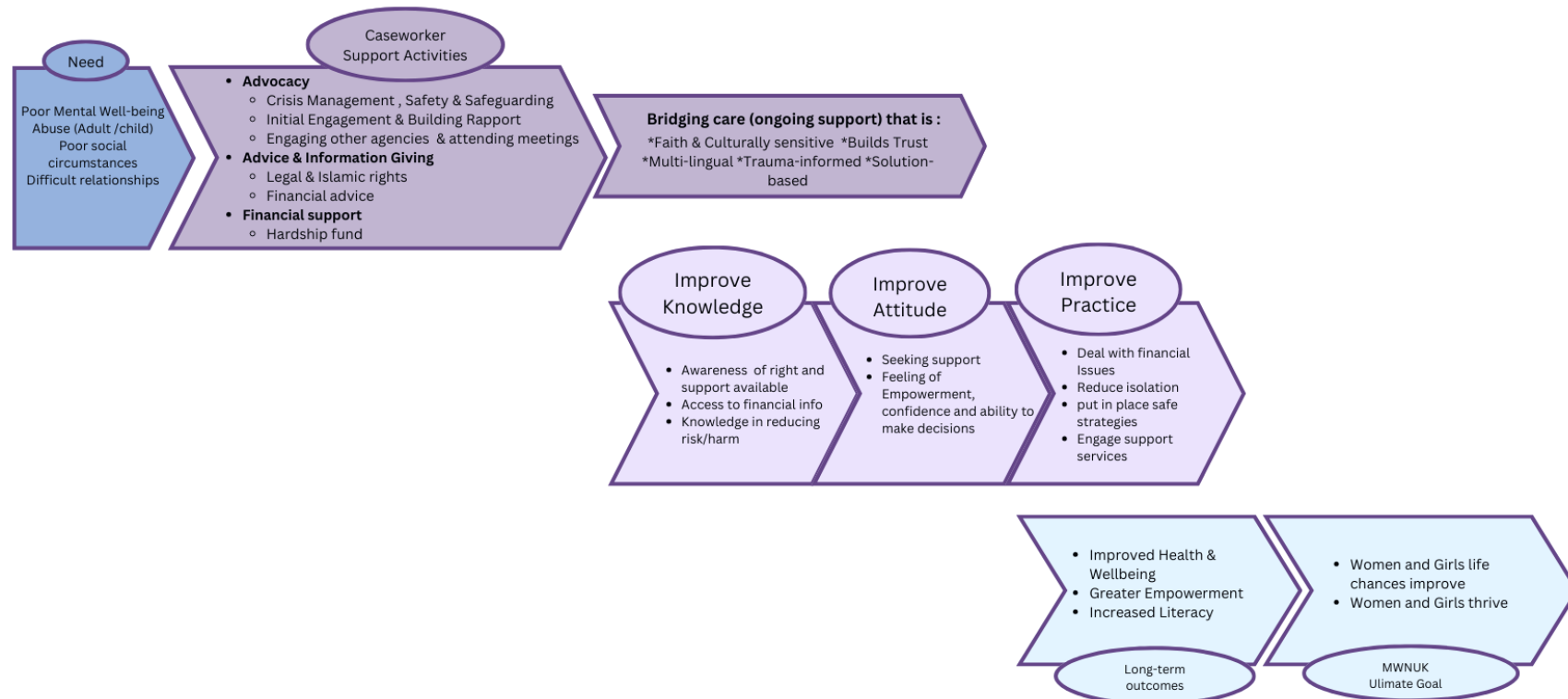
Continue to raise awareness of MWNUK offer – Consider using videos or mini webinars to deliver more learning sessions with agencies, especially with the increasingly high turnover of staff within agencies (help with their staff inductions).

Professional Development & Training for caseworkers – MWNUK caseworkers are highly experienced, however they are not formally trained Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). It might help the caseworkers to get formal IDVA training, which would enhance their knowledge and skills with a formally recognised qualification.



Case Worker Service's Theory of Change

Using primary and secondary data, workshops and one to one interviews with the Caseworkers, Team lead and operational lead, a theory of change was developed to capture the perceived changes and outcomes that the service users experience through the support and intervention from the caseworker service. It enabled the team to reflect on the important contribution made by agencies they refer to and the impact the caseworker service has on the partner's ability to support their clients.



Support provided to service users not only improves knowledge, but the continuous nature of support ('bridging care') means that knowledge is embedded, helping to adapt the behaviours and attitudes of the service users as well as other agencies supporting them. Building service user confidence sees users implementing new strategies such as making safe decisions, improving financial literacy and their ability to deal with issues. This has led to service users becoming more empowered to take control of their lives and improving their health and wellbeing, achieving MWNUK's goal of improving life chances of women and girls.

Appendix 1 – Summary of the Support Plan

The following guidelines are used to complete the Support Plan. The caseworker uses this information to track progress, with the initial assessment being used as a baseline. Throughout their journey a traffic light system is used by the caseworker to measure progress which includes what steps the service users are taking themselves.

1) Safety

The safety and wellbeing of the service user's needs are assessed in three areas:

- Safeguarding – nature of trauma abuse, barriers to maintaining positive decisions, agencies that are involved / forms filled e.g. DASH, MARAC, social service, police, whether there is awareness of role of agencies, flags on property, assessment of risk levels
- Children & pregnancy – if children in education, whether educational milestones met, SEND referrals, custody disputes, if children are visible to agencies / schools, if parent need respite and maternity needs
- Safety and security – housing, Maslow's hierarchy of need (safe space to live, locked doors, running water, hot water, privacy), safe space to grow and thrive and access to spaces in home and community.

2) Capacity

The capacity and ability of the service user to access import services is assessed including:

- communication, mental health, anxiety or whether they required BSL / braille
- navigating statutory services, knowing their eligibility to claim expenses, and empowering them with key phrases e.g. need interpreter, accessing service GP are they registered? Do they need legal advice? Etc
- practical ability to access transportation.

3) Empowerment

A comprehensive strengths-based approach is taken to establish key information such as:

- The presence of support networks (friends, family, colleagues, community),
- Current state of their Health and wellbeing e.g. physical, medication, counselling
- Current employment, work and learning situation (interview preps, volunteering, CV support, finding opportunities),

- The level of financial literacy (money, finance and legal rights) - do they need support with budgeting, accessing correct benefits, do they need support accessing grants, do they have own bank account / card, basic items, are lifestyle choices impacting on finances e.g. addictions, are they aware of foodbanks, do they have legal rights over property, assets, finances (e.g. legal marriage), is child maintenance needed?
- Understanding their right - do they know where / how to access legal rights e.g. law firms offering pro bono, legal centres, legal aid, CAB, type of legal advice needed e.g. protection orders, custody, immigration, human rights, family divorce.

4) Future (Aspirations)

Finally, to improve their life chances we consider: life prior to hardship / abuse, what were their aspirations or what did they do e.g. were they working, studying and how we can help and who can help and how do we need to make that happen and when these steps can happen?

