

Review of MWNUK Helpline Service January to December 2016



Centre for Facilitation

February 2017

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MUSLIM WOMEN'S NETWORK UK

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) is a national Muslim women's charity working on social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls. It conducts research, operates a helpline, deliver campaigns, run training sessions, comments in the media, produces resources and does advocacy work through reports and by engaging with government officials and other public bodies. Further information about the work of MWNUK can be found on the website www.mwnuk.co.uk.

REMIT OF REPORT

Funding was generously provided by the Henry Smith Charity for the evaluation of the first year of operation of the MWNUK Helpline Service. The report on this first year of operation is available (<http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/resourcesDetail.php?id=161>) Additional funding from Cabinet Office (Tampon Tax fund) has enabled this independent evaluation report to be commissioned. This report will reflect on the second year of operation, comparing trends in service provision with 2016, highlighting progress made on the lessons learnt from the first year and identifying ways that the Helpline can further improve as it enters its third year of operation.

This report has been written by Centre for Facilitation, an independent company. Throughout the report we have used stories of callers to the Helpline, changing names and some details to ensure anonymity whilst giving a sense of the range of people that the Helpline has supported in the second year of operation.

"I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't been there to support me through this crisis. Remembering the past has always been a haunting experience. You were able to find me safety and support and empower me to make real life choices by understanding what services were able to support me. This direction has also helped me spiritually to re-focus"

SUMMARY

The MWNUK Helpline was launched in January 2015 with its own separate website www.mwnhelpline.co.uk, which contains useful advice, information and details of other support services and helplines. This report is based on the second year of operation from January 2016 to December 2016.

During 2016 the opening hours of the Helpline were extended to five mornings a week in January 2016 due to additional funding from Tudor Trust and to five full days a week in August 2016 due to additional funding from the Cabinet Office (Tampon Tax fund). This increased the ability of the team to handle a higher volume of calls as the total working hours (for helpline workers and managers) increased from 50 hours to 115 hours a week.

In total **1807** contacts were made by **583** different individuals. This is a significant increase from the first year when **814 contacts** were handled from over **335** different individuals.

The range of issues covered in calls during 2016 was consistent with the pattern noted in 2015. A total of 39 different issues were raised during calls. The five most frequent issues raised were slightly different to last year when marriage and forced marriage both featured in the top five issues. This year sees a worrying rise in the number of calls that are about issues relating to domestic violence and with mental health issues also seeing an increase.

1. Domestic Violence – 37% of all issues raised
2. Mental Health Feelings – 23%
3. Divorce - 18%
4. Relationships – 14%
5. Housing/Homelessness- 13%

In the 2015 report the observation was that the calls to the Helpline were often complex and about a range of issues. This has intensified during 2016 and the time spent with each client has significantly increased.

Operationally the team have continued to build on the success of the first year and have sought additional funding to enable them to run a 5 day a week service. The management team have responded positively to the 2015 report and there is significant evidence of improvements and changes made in line with the recommendations of the 2015 report. The team continue to look at how to improve both service delivery and the operational management of the Helpline Service so that both clients and workers are cared for.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SEEK ADDITIONAL AND LONGER TERM FUNDING

Additional Helpline hours, counselling support and management hours will ensure that the professionalism of the service can be maintained. The complexity of many of the calls requires more in-depth follow up work (and at times counselling) than would be expected from a standard Helpline service and it is important that this follow up work is completed in a timely manner. Investigations should also begin into alternative office accommodation because the current office space offers limited scope for further expansion of the service.

2. DEVELOP AND ENGAGE THE TEAM

The Helpline team are highly engaged individuals and it is important to continue in investing in their personal skills and to give time for them as a team to develop service improvement ideas. Strategy discussions for both managers and team members will help to keep everyone focused on the bigger picture of the Helpline and support the evolution of the service delivery model.

3. COMPLIANCE AND DATA RECORDING

The team have developed a range of procedures so that cases are handled sensitively and consistently by all team members. These procedures need to be made more accessible by developing on-line guidance and there needs to be more regular audits of the data recording, feedback on call handlings and regular case reviews so that the Helpline Team can identify any areas where further improvements can be made. New procedures such as methods for handling silent calls should be considered and introduced where needed.

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH UNDER 21 AGE GROUP

This age group is considered to be vulnerable and at risk from issues such as Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence. Consider additional ways of promoting the Helpline to this group and explore technology which may make this younger generation more likely to get in touch.

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE HELPLINE SERVICE

All calls to the Helpline are logged and any actions taken are recorded in individual case notes and on a database. For a small operation the Helpline Team have an impressive amount of data recorded so that there is evidence to support the overall sense of the success of the MWNUK Helpline.

The Helpline Service has increased its operational hours to a 5 day a week operation in August 2016. The hours worked on the Helpline has increased from 50 hours a week in January 2016 to 115 hours a week in December 2016.

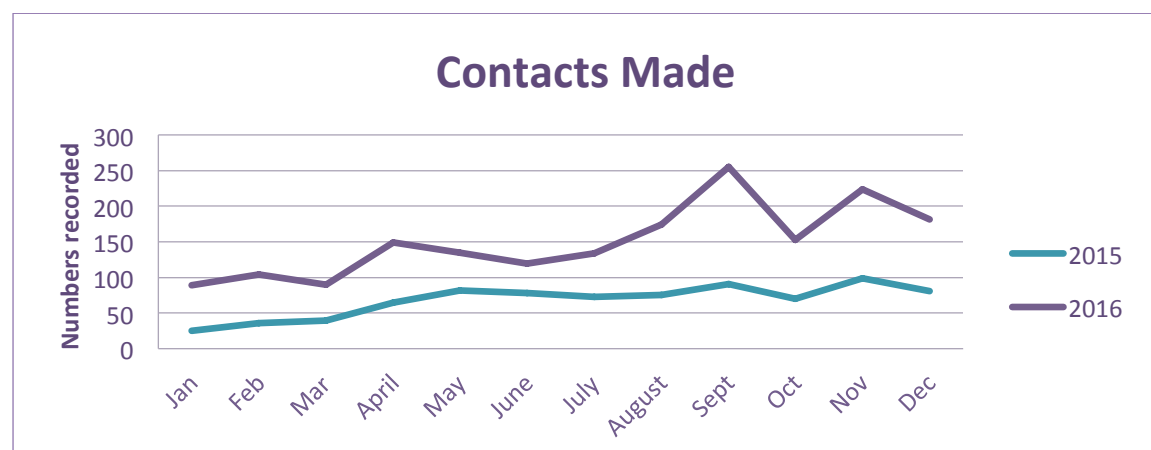
VOLUME OF CALLS

1807 contacts were logged during 2016. These figures will include repeat calls from one beneficiary in different sessions.

There has been an increase in the number of contacts being made to the Helpline Team from 814 calls during 2015 and 1807 calls during 2016. This potential for growth of calls was recognised in 2015 and additional funding/staffing was sought. This meant that in January 2016 the Helpline was able to increase the Helpline hours from 3 mornings to 5 mornings a week. Further funding applications meant in August 2016 the Helpline was able to offer a full time service, 5 days a week.

In total during 2016 there were 151 contacts on average handled each month by the Helpline team.

- During the period from January to July there were 117 enquiries handled on average per month.
- This increases up to 197 contacts on average being handled from August 2016 when the full time hours were implemented.

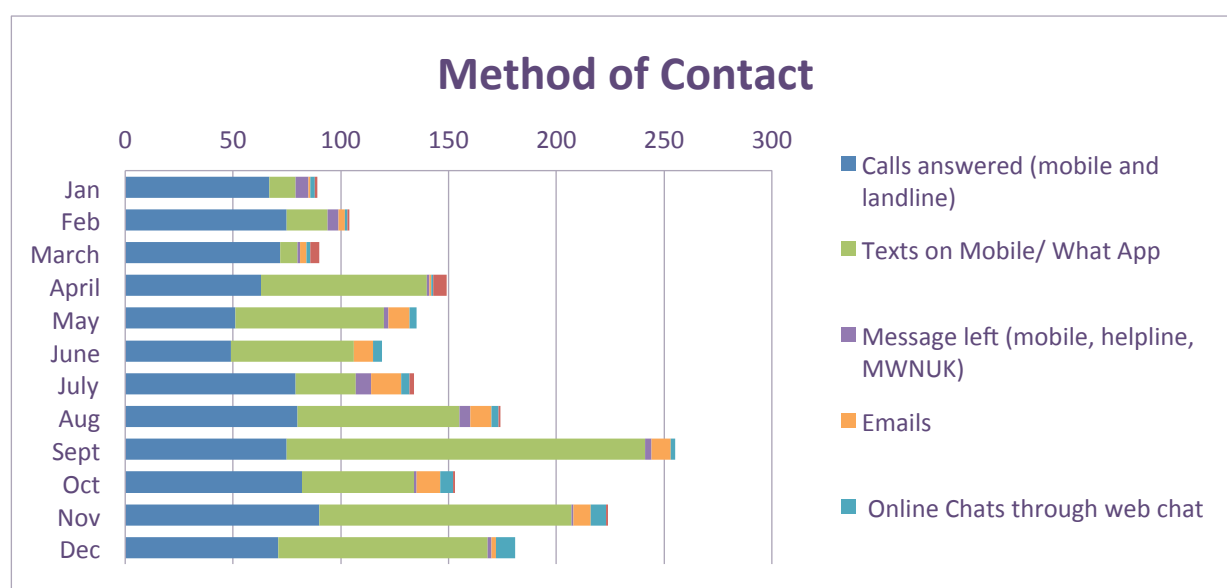


There is a clear peak in the volume of contacts in August and September which coincides with the increase in opening hours. It may be a coincidence but during August the MWNUK were very active in responding to the proposed “Burkini Ban” in France, which led to discussions about autonomy issues for women and linked with the wider issues of women and equality in the workplace. A number of MWNUK members were active on national media which will have raised the profile of the Helpline at a time when the opening hours would have made it easier for individuals to call and make contact directly with a Helpline workers.

An additional peak can be observed in November 2016 which also reflects a period of increased media activity from the MWNUK team on the issue of Sharia Councils. This resulted in a number of calls being made to the Helpline to share experiences of the Sharia Councils.

METHOD OF CONTACT

In 2015 it was noted about the growth in popularity of non-speech methods of contacts eg mobile messages or What’s App. This trend continues so although telephone contact is the most frequently used method overall non-verbal contact is very popular and in some months (for example September) non-verbal contact exceeds verbal contact. Given this increase, MWNUK is now exploring the development of a Mobile Phone Application.



Compared to 2015 the number of contacts that are text based has tripled. On average each month there are 71 phone call contacts and 65 text based contacts.

In the 2015 report it was noted that there appeared to be a trend for non-voice contact and this has been shown to be consistent with the growth in this method of contact. This is a global trend noted in the previous report and the MWNUK Helpline is well established for this preference and has a well-established method of using What’s App to support their

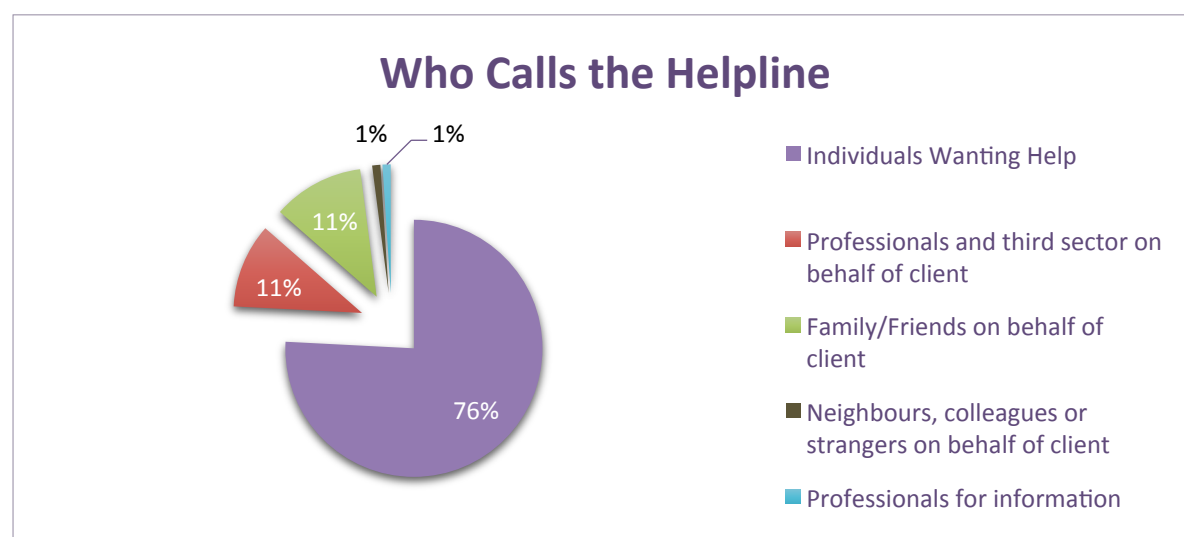
work. This is an externally provided Application which is familiar with many people and is clearly a method of communication that individuals feel comfortable using with the team. The team may want to review the way that each individual is using the App with clients to ensure a consistent approach is taken. The messages could also be audited in the same way that phone calls can be listened to so that practice improvements can be identified for the team.

Method of Making Contact	2015	2016
Phone Call (mobile or landline)	478	854
Text based (mobile or What's App)	238	777
Average number of contacts each month		
Phone call (mobile or landline)	40	71
Text Based (mobile or What's App)	19	65

NUMBERS OF PEOPLE HELPED

Volume of calls is an important measurement for a Helpline service but there can be a concern that much of the volume of calls is from callers seeking information rather than more detailed support. This is why the Helpline makes a clear differential between the volume of callers and the number of individuals who have been helped (clients). In 2016 there were **583** clients, an increase from the 335 clients supported in 2015 (**increase of 74%**)

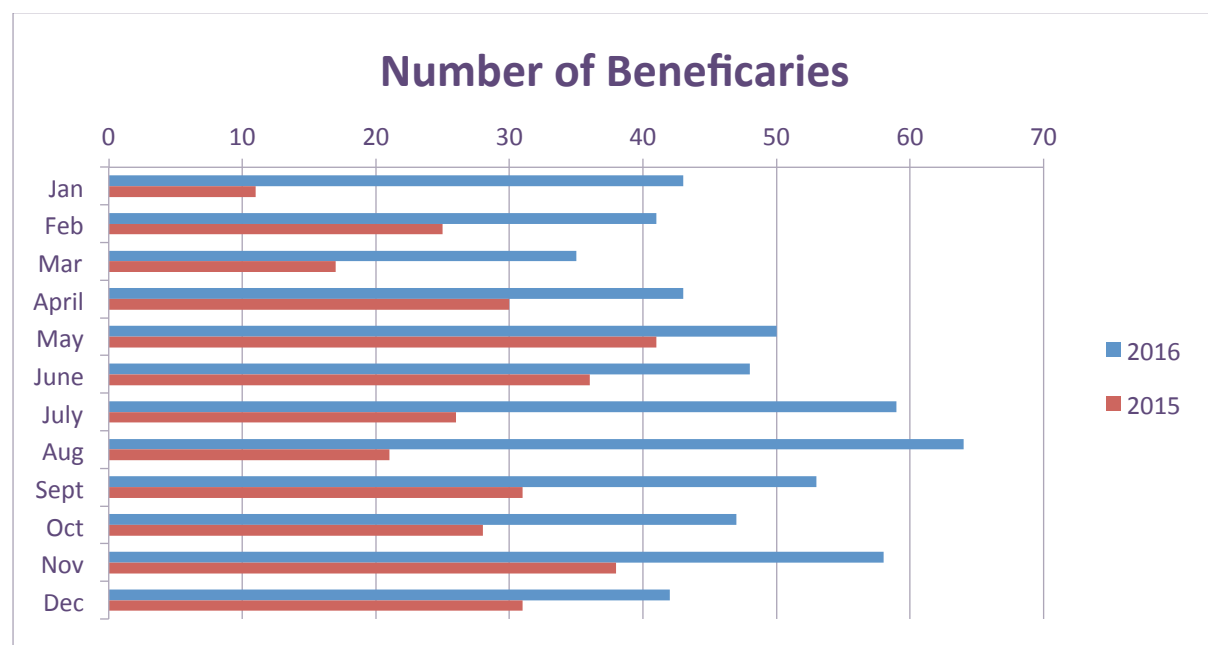
In 2016 the Helpline team added an additional data field so that it is now possible to show who is making the call to the Helpline. The analysis shows that the majority of calls (**76%**) were from individuals who were calling about themselves. A further **11%** of calls were from friends or relatives who were calling for individuals who needed help but for various reasons could not make the call themselves. **11%** of calls were from professionals (police, social workers, third sector organisations) on behalf of their clients.



This new data highlights that the Helpline calls are mainly from individuals (clients and other individuals) seeking direct help and support either for themselves or on behalf of another vulnerable person.

There were just 6 calls (1% of the calls) that were from professionals who were only seeking factual information. This could be for their training or to share with clients but was distinctive to calling about an actual current need. From a funding perspective this means that the Helpline call volume does reflect actual needs of women in the community for a culturally sensitive supportive non-judgemental helpline service

The average number of clients supported each month is **48** compared to 28 people in 2015. In 2016 there is a significant peak during July and August, with August having 64 clients, a **57%** increase on the average number of monthly clients for 2016. This peak coincides with the extension of the Helpline opening hours. There is also a significant peak in cases in November which has already been noted was a period of intense media attention on the Sharia Council and the MWNUK Open Letter.



It is rare for a beneficiary to have all their needed to be fully addressed in one session, with the exception of anonymous contacts there will be at least one follow up call made by the Helpline team a week after the initial call to check in on progress and wellbeing. Some very complex calls involving safeguarding issues may remain open for 2-3 months whilst the Helpline team support the beneficiary and engage with other agencies to ensure a positive outcome both for the beneficiary and for future policies and procedures.

With more management time it would be helpful for the team manager to analyse the number of cases on a month by month basis so that the Helpline team can easily audit the number of new opened cases, the number of closed cases and the number of cases on the

risk register. This would help the team in the future to assess any trends in the complexity of the cases to support the funding applications for additional case workers.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE HELPLINE?

The team have continued to use the bespoke database to record data about callers to the helpline. This data becomes very valuable as we move into the second evaluation report because we are now able to observe potentially significant trends in the clients, the issues raised and the impact that the Helpline intervention is making. This data is being proactively used by MWNUK for service improvement.

From a funding perspective it is worth noting that the data that is recorded gives the MWNUK a real insight into the clients of its service. External observers including the Data Analysis team at West Midlands Police are impressed with the quality of the data recording and are currently exploring ways in which this data can be mapped onto data kept by the police database to set these statistics in a wider context.

Gender of Clients

The Helpline is branded as a Muslim Women's Helpline and the gender of the callers broadly reflect this, with the proportions of genders virtually the same as in the 2015 report.

94% of calls were from women, 5% from men and 1% were unknown gender.

Age of Clients

Age was specified in **73%** of the calls, which remains consistent with our findings in 2015. The calls with a specified age are spread across a wide range of age with 11 callers recorded as "under 16" and 6 as over 60 years old. The age of callers remains consistent with the pattern in 2015, with a slight increase in the percentage of callers in the 31-40 age group.

In the previous report the small number of young callers (under 21) was noted and this was an area that the Helpline wanted to see an increase because it is known that this age group are at risk of honour based violence and forced marriage. There has been a small increase in the actual numbers of callers under 21, however is not reflected in a percentage increase in the proportion of younger callers.

This reduction from 12.6% to 9% is not statistically significant but is disappointing to the team as they had hoped that the outreach work on the Forced Marriage Project would increase awareness and use of the Helpline by younger callers. Further work could be done to explore whether this statistic represents the lack of need amongst this age group and to explore what might encourage a greater take up of the service by young people.

Ages of callers	2015 %	2016 %
Under 16	3.6	2
16-18	4.2	3
19-21	4.8	4
22-25	13	12
26-30	13	15
31-40	20	24
41-50	11	11
51-60	1.5	1
Over 60	0.9	1
Not Specified	28	27

Faith of Clients

97% of clients (where faith was specified) were Muslim. Faith was not recorded in just 10% of the calls which indicates that this was something clients felt comfortable disclosing or was easy to discern from the context of the call.

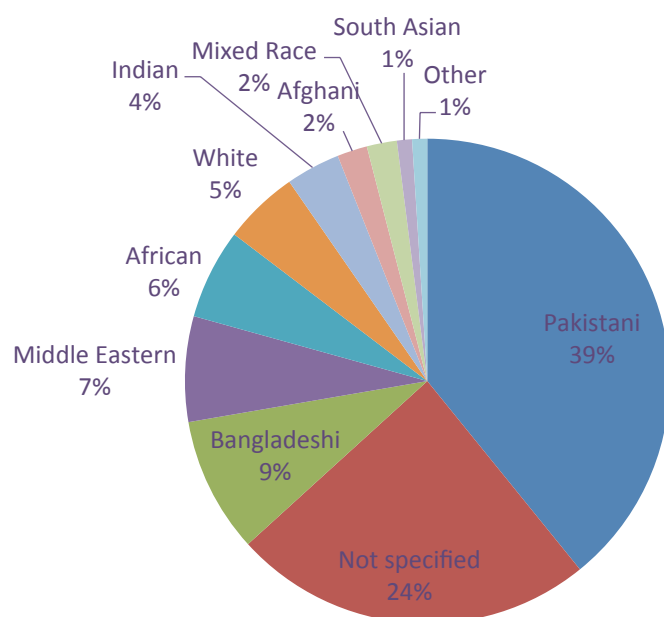
Ethnic Background of Clients

According to the Muslim Council of Britain's review of the 2011 Census data (<http://bit.ly/1EfL8zD>) the UK Muslim population is ethnically diverse, with 68% classified as Asian, including people of Pakistani, Indian, Chinese and South Asian backgrounds. Overall 8% of the Muslim population is from a white ethnic background.

In calls to the Helpline where ethnic background was specified (**76%**) the ethnic background of callers to the Helpline are very similar to the breakdown by the Muslim Council of Britain's review using the broad categories for the census data.

	2011 Census	2016 Callers to Helpline Ethnic Background where specified
White	7.8%	7%
Mixed	3.8%	2.7%
Asian	67.6%	69.0%
Black	10.1%	8.1%
Other	10.7%	13.3%

Looking at all the calls to the Helpline (including those calls where the ethnic group was not recorded) and with the more detailed sub- categories of ethnic background by the Helpline Team the largest group are from Pakistani origin (**39%**). This figure is slightly down on the 2015 finding of 46.9% and shows calls to the Helpline are from a more diverse ethnic base as the team have reached out to other communities. In 2017 the team will make more concerted efforts to record ethnic groups as in 24% of the call data this information was not available and this can make it difficult to identify clear trends in the diversity of the caller base to the Helpline



Ethnic Group of all Calls

By removing the calls where ethnic group was not specified it is possible to compare these sub-categories of ethnic group against the Census data (as analysed by the Muslim Council of Britain.)

It is not completely possible to compare all the data as some of the categories used by the MWNUK are slightly different to those used in 2011 Census data so these percentage comparisons are designed to give a broad insight into the breakdown of the typical caller to the Helpline service and whether some groups could be targeted more effectively in future outreach activities.

ETHNICITY	2011 Census % of Muslim population from ethnic groups	2016 Callers to Helpline Ethnic Background where specified
African/Other Black	9.8	8
Afghani (other Asian in Census)	7.2	3
Bangladeshi	14.9	11
Indian	7.3	5
Middle Eastern(Arab in census)	6.6	9
Mixed Race	3.8	3
Pakistani	38	51
South Asian (other Asian in Census)	7.2	2
White	7.8	7
Afro Carib/Asian Other	0.3	2

Language of Clients

The majority of calls were in English (96%). The remaining 4% of calls used the following languages which are spoken by team members on the Helpline. These figures are very similar to previous findings.

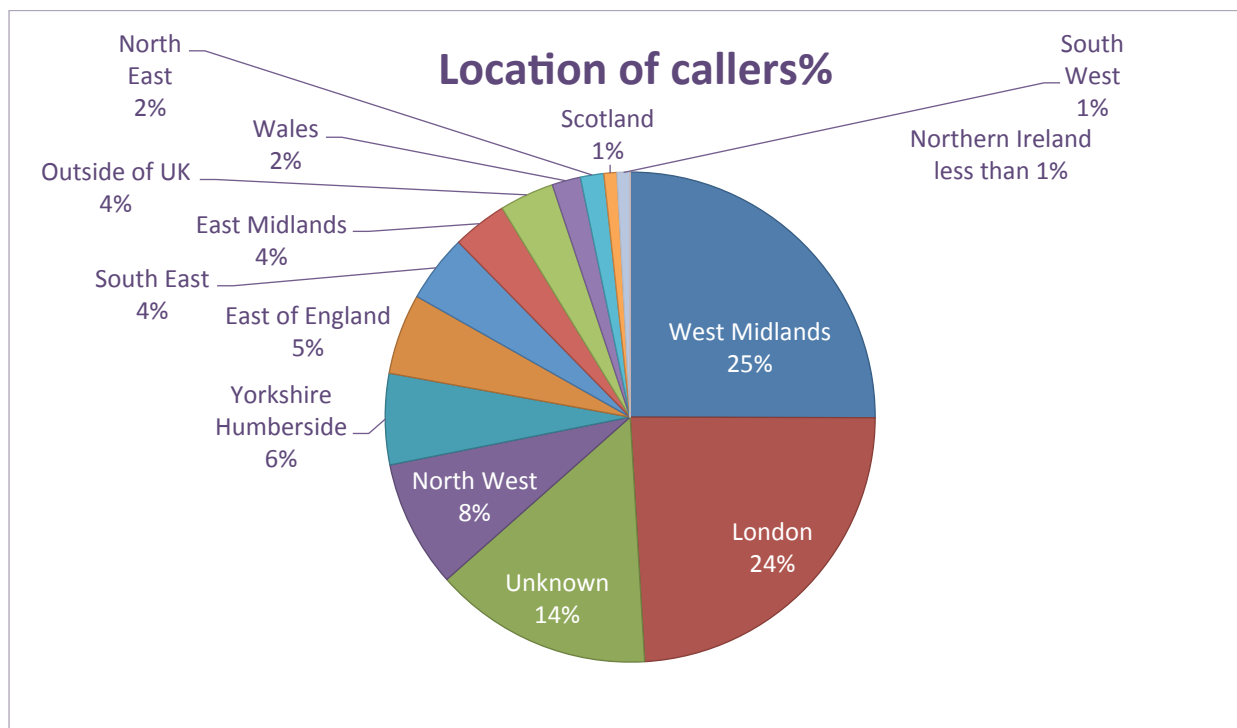
LANGUAGE USED	RECORDED	%
Arabic	3	1
Punjabi /Mirpuri	2	0.3
Urdu	16	2.7

Location of Clients

GEOGRAPHICAL IMPACT

The MWNUK is based in the West Midlands and are able to do local outreach in this area which helped to build a strong West Midlands base. An observation last year was that the MWNUK needed to extend its reach to other significant population centres for Muslim women (as identified in the 2011 Census). In addition to the West Midlands these significant population centres are London, North West, Yorkshire and Humbershire.

83% of callers were recorded against a specific location. The proportion of calls is spread between West Midlands and London, with a small but significant growth of calls from outside the West Midlands area. This indicates that the MWNUK is reaching outside of its locality and offering a national service. To increase reach in London is significant because it could be assumed that women in the capital have easy access to a range of culturally sensitive services, which may be less readily available to women outside this area.



CHANGES IN LOCATION

Looking at all the calls received where location was specified the proportion of callers from London has increased as has the reach to the North West region. Yorkshire and Humberside is represented in 7% of the total calls and this is slightly lower than would be expected as the 2011 census indicated that 12% of Muslims lived in this region. This may be an area that the MWNUK could consider targetting with awareness raising activities with relevant groups in this region.

LOCATION RECORDED	2015%	2016%	2011 Census % of Muslims by location
East of England	3	6	5.5
East Midlands	5	4	5.2
London	19	28	37.4
North East	5	2	1.7
Northern Ireland	1	Less than 1%	-
North West	8	10	13.2
Outside of UK	2	4	-
Scotland	1	1	-
South East	7	5	7.5
South West	2	1	1.9
Wales	Less than 1%	2	1.7
West Midlands	39	29	13.9
Yorkshire Humberside	7	7	12

Data based on the 83% of calls where location was recorded

SECTION TWO: IMPACT AND RESPONSE

The Helpline was established to provide a faith and culturally sensitive service that would be able to offer information, advice and signposting to other services. The response provided in 86% of the calls is to provide information or general advice/support. In 16% of calls the response is a referral to another service including a refuge, mental health services or to other organisations including the police and social services.

In a similar pattern to last year only 2% of the callers could not be helped and this was usually due to insufficient information being disclosed by the caller about their need. This was often because they left a message but did not either leave a number to call back on or if they left a number they did not respond when the team made several attempts to call them back.

“Even though they were conversations on the phone, those conversations have helped my confidence a lot and helped me to feel able to trust people again”

RANGE OF ISSUES

The distinctive feature of the MWNUK Helpline is that it is a multi-issue service. It offers people the opportunity to make contact on a wide range of issues. The table in **Appendix 1** gives the full range of issues which have been handled. A similar number of issues have been handled during 2016 compared to 2015 (38 distinct issues plus 2% of the calls which were categorised as “other issues”)

There were **570** clients where at least one issue was identified as the purpose of the call. As the 2015 Report noted contacts to the Helpline are often very complex. In 2016 68% of calls had a secondary issue recorded and 28% had at least three issues discussed and recorded for the call. This is a significant increase from last year where 51% of calls had an additional issue recorded and just 17% had a three issues recorded. This could indicate increased complexity of the calls or it could indicate improved recording by the team. It is likely to be a mix of both and is also likely to indicate the increase in confidence in the Helpline team members in being able to probe further to get beyond the “presenting issue” to find the underlying reason for the call.

I am much more confident now and am able to probe more information during a call and give more relevant advice about both helpful services and about the Islamic perspective

One noticeable trend is that mental health issues are rarely a primary reason for a call but emerge very clearly in the analysis of the secondary and tertiary data recorded for the call. This is not surprising as mental health is not a topic that many feel comfortable talking about across the UK population and the skill of the helpline workers is likely to make it possible for mental health concerns to be raised later on in the call.

“I thought it was impossible so I never took anything seriously because it was all such a mess. It’s made me think more positively about things, and that people in these kinds of organisations do their best to help and make a difference. For that I am truly grateful”

Looking at **all** the issues addressed in each call (combining the primary, secondary and tertiary issues) there are five strong themes emerging about what the clients are looking for help with when they make contact with the Helpline. These figures are based on the % of beneficiaries where this issue was raised as the important issue that prompted them to contact the Helpline Service.

The table below compares the top five issues raised in 2016 with how many of the clients were affected by the same issue in 2015. From this analysis it is noticeable how domestic violence and mental health feelings have both increased substantially since the first year of operation. This seems to indicate both skilled call handling techniques and a willingness of callers to trust the Helpline with issues which may be difficult to discuss with others within the faith community.

% of clients for who this was an issue		
	2015	2016
Domestic Abuse	15%	37%
Mental Health Feelings	15%	23%
Divorce	16%	18%
Relationships *	7%	14%
Housing/Homelessness*	7%	13%
*in 2016 these issues replaced forced marriage and marriage problems that were in the top 5 in 2015		

These issues are slightly different to last year, and it is interesting to note that housing/homelessness issues have entered into this top five listing during 2016 and that both domestic violence and mental health issues seem to be much more significant.

The issues of forced marriage (5%) and honour based violence (10%) were raised in an overall total of 15% of the calls. This is a slight increase in the proportion of the total for these two issues compared to 2015 (13%). These issues remain areas of concern and one of these calls has resulted in the UK government considering the law on repatriation of victims of forced marriage who are sent abroad by their families against their will.

Mental Health issues and feelings are an important theme and many of the calls can be very challenging. Seeking additional mental health training will support the Helpline team to identify and handle calls that relate to mental health issues.

Although faith and spirituality did not feature in the top five issues, a significant number of calls were received on this issue. Callers wanted to know what Islam said about topics such as sexuality, abortion, polygamy, marrying outside of faith, Islamic divorce, the religious obligations of fasting if pregnant or with mental health conditions and dress. Women and girls tended to be aware of more conservative interpretations of their faith and wanted to have knowledge of a range of interpretations. Although the Helpline Workers do not tell callers to follow particular interpretations of Islam and they ensure that callers are made aware of egalitarian and progressive interpretations of their faith so they are able to make more informed decisions. Examples of calls that have supported women to make choices within their faith can be found in the [case studies](#).

The Helpline team have improved their recording against the existing categories so that only **1%** of calls are categorised as unknown and only 1% of calls are for issues that are not covered by the existing categories. However some of this coding had to be done retrospectively during an internal audit so the coding of the calls remains a training issue during the third year of operation.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE NEEDS MET BY THE HELPLINE

In the review of the first year of operation it was clear that the MWNUK Helpline was getting calls which were complex in nature and that often required more detailed follow up work to be completed.

This trend has continued in 2016 with the team reporting that calls are increasing in their complexity and intensity. One reason for this could be that the MWNUK has had a high profile during 2016 and been vocal on issues including the Sharia Councils. Many women have said that this campaign has helped them to feel comfortable to raise their own concerns about experiences of the Sharia Councils. An example of this can be found in [Case Study 2](#)

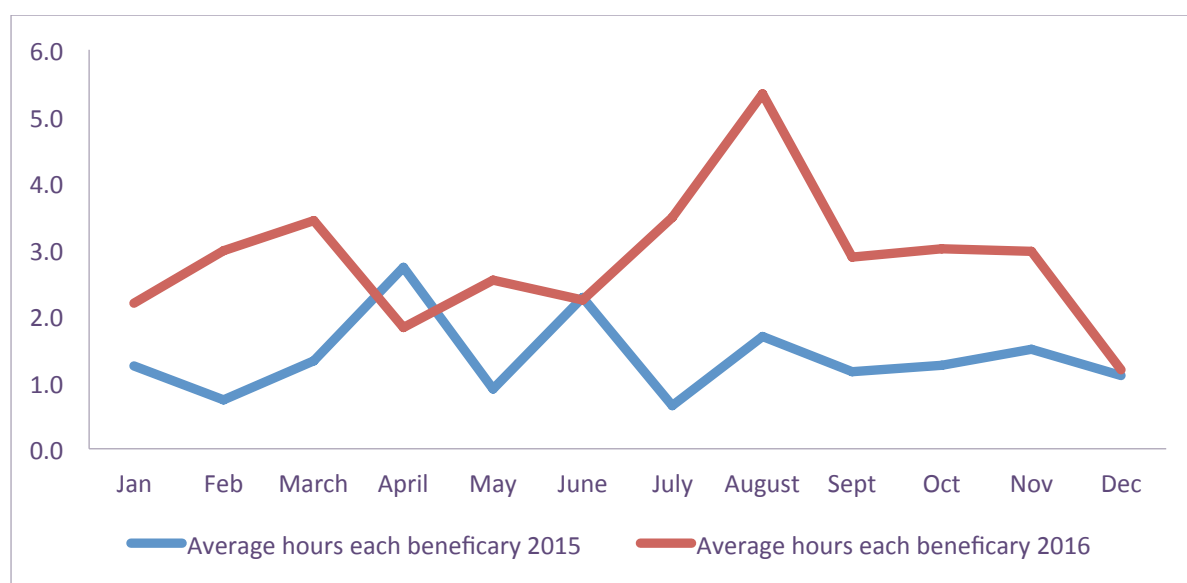
Many women are seeking an alternative to the traditional perspectives on Islam and the MWNUK Helpline offers a distinctive feminist perspective and is becoming recognised as an organisation that will not be judgemental about the choices a woman may make. The Helpline team are skilled at combining practical advice with culturally specific guidance

which can help beneficiaries to feel that their religious views are being considered in the advice that they are being given.

In 2015 it was noted that the average time spent with each beneficiary was **1 hour and 25 minutes**. This includes time spent on the initial contact and includes all subsequent contacts with that individual. The sense of from the team that calls have become increasingly complex is confirmed by the data on call length. The amount of time has doubled to almost **3 hours** on each beneficiary.

The total amount of time spent on dealing with enquiries has increased by **264%** from 470 hours in 2015 to an impressive **1712** hours spent during 2016.

The chart below shows the average time spent each month with each of the clients. It clearly shows that the amount of time given to each person calling the Helpline has consistently increased. In August there was a peak in the intensity of the work, with 5.3 hours being spent on each beneficiary. This also corresponds to the higher volume of calls in this period which was noted earlier so it can be seen that during this summer period the team were working hard handling a higher volume of calls and dealing with complex issues raised.



There are many reasons for this increase in time spent. Some of it could be that clients are now more confident in calling the helpline because of their reputation for handling complex issues. It is also noted that the Helpline workers are now much more experienced and this means that they ask more probing questions and are more willing to get under the surface of the initial query to discover more about what the concerns are really about.

IMPACT OF THE HELPLINE

In the 2015 report one of the data concerns was that although the MWNUK could clearly show how many clients had been supported and how much time was invested it was not

possible to clearly state what the benefits of this intervention had been. Funders could have been challenged about the impact of the funding and increasingly the team recognise how important it is to show how an intervention has made a difference.

It was noted in the 2015 report that it will often be difficult to directly ask clients about how the intervention has made a difference because the nature of the calls are therapeutic and to start asking evaluation questions during a call or sending a feedback form did not feel an easy fit with the ethical principles of the MWNUK.

The issue was discussed at length and it was agreed that the Helpline team would attempt to record for each client intervention what the consequences of that intervention were based on the call content and the stated intentions of the client during the call. When the case is closed the Helpline worker will record up to three impact statements that reflect the outcomes for this client. This data was then cross checked against all the case records during an internal audit in January 2017 and summarised in this table format. The % shows the impact of the intervention on each client. For some clients there were up to three impact statements that were true so our table shows how often each impact statement was selected.

More detailed explanation of each statement and what it covers can be found in **Appendix Two**. The [case studies](#) also provide examples of the different outcomes.

As a result of the intervention client were (up to three impacts for each client)	%
Better Informed of Support Available	37
More confident to deal with problems	32
Better informed of their Islamic Rights	15
Better informed of safety issues	15
Given help by other support services due to our referral	11
Have made no difference*often due to lack of details (eg message left but no response when returned call)	10
Client better informed of legal rights	9
Client moved to safety	8
Client more confident to challenge/leave abusive/harmful situations	6
Client helped at crisis point	5
Client helped before crisis point	4
Client improved mental health due to counselling referral	4
Client feels less isolated	2
Prevented self-harm/suicide	1

The main outcomes related to increased information and confidence to deal with the problem that the client felt they were facing. This is a highly appropriate outcome for a service which aims to be a source of information and support to empower clients to take action. An example of this can be seen in [Case Study 13](#)

"I have received really consistently good support from the staff on the helpline and would definitely recommend it to others...even when I am angry and crying. I know the staff are there to listen to me...and care. Thank you for all the support you have provided"

As observed in the previous section many calls have an element that is related to faith which add to the complexity of the calls. Clients will often have been told that certain actions are not allowed by Islam and the Helpline Team can often share alternative perspectives on this, helping clients to explore other actions without feeling that they have to reject their faith as a consequence. [Case Study 7](#) is an example of helping women to maintain their faith but take action so that they are safe as a result of being better informed about their Islamic rights.

HARDSHIP FUND

During 2016 it became clear that some people calling the Helpline were in desperate financial need. The lack of financial resource was preventing them taking action to move themselves (and sometimes their children) to a place of safety. A fund was set up and requests for made for donations to existing supporters of the MWNUK.

The Hardship fund has been designed to provide limited financial support on a discretionary basis to adults and children regarded as vulnerable following contact with the Helpline for support. Senior management will determine whether to award any financial support on a case-by-case basis.

Generally cash payments will not be made unless the management deem it necessary e.g. vouchers not appropriate. The funding can be used for items deemed as necessities such as food, drinks, toiletries / hygiene products, items for babies and from time to time other things considered as needed.

SECTION THREE: MEASURING IMPACT:

CASE STUDIES

These case studies are from a selection of the calls made in 2016 and reflect the wide variety of issues that are covered in the calls to the Helpline. Each case study provides a sense of the value of the intervention to the life of the women who called for support and advice. Names have been changed.

1. CASE STUDY - HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE AND DIVORCE

Amal is of Arab background and wanted to divorce her husband. However, her father was against the divorce because he believes it would bring shame on to the family. When she mentioned the divorce again, her father slapped her hard and went into the kitchen and took out a knife and threatened to kill her. Although she had escaped, she had to leave her child behind. She wanted to return to the house to collect her child.

Amal contacted the Helpline because she was confused about what to do. Amal was advised to not go back alone and to take the police. However, Amal decided to take the risk and go back to the family home to collect her child. The Helpline contacted the police who also went to the family home. The father was arrested and Amal was moved to safe accommodation.

2. CASE STUDY - SHARIAH DIVORCE

Sana did not have a civil marriage and only had an Islamic marriage. She contacted a Shariah Council to obtain an Islamic divorce because her husband had married again (Islamically) and also had subjected her to domestic abuse. Despite these circumstances Sana was told she could be issued with an Islamic divorce if she complied with her husband's demands of financial compensation. Sana contacted the Helpline for advice and support. The Islamic divorce process and Islamic rights were explained to Sana. The Helpline contacted the Shariah Divorce Service, which was willing to review the case and their procedures and offered Sana an Islamic divorce without having to pay any financial compensation to her husband.

3. CASE STUDY - COMPLAINT ABOUT A PUBLIC SERVICE

19-year-old Sadia contacted the Helpline because she was upset that she had to repay repatriation costs to the Foreign Office for rescuing her from a forced marriage two years previously. Sadia's family had taken her to Pakistan and forced her into marriage. When she had contacted the British Embassy, she was made to sign a loan agreement before being put

on a flight back to the UK. She was 17 years old at the time. As Sadia was on benefits she was struggling to repay the costs.

The management team wrote to the Foreign Office challenging the policy including questioning that a minor was made to sign a loan agreement. The case was also anonymised and featured in the Guardian and the Independent in December 2016. The Foreign Office responded and are currently reviewing their policy. The media attention also resulted in donors coming forward to clear Sadia's debt.

4. CASE STUDY – FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION / MENTAL HEALTH

Fatu contacted the Helpline because she was depressed. She was in a relationship but having problems being intimate and felt embarrassed. She was also worried about her lack of sexual desire. The cause of her problems was the fact that she had FGM in her childhood when she lived in Africa. The Helpline made a referral to a specialist FGM support organisation where Fatu received advice on medical interventions available to her as well as mental health support to develop coping strategies.

5. CASE STUDY – DOMESTIC ABUSE / SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Aziza, a woman in her 30s of Afghani background, contacted the Helpline because she was very frightened. Her husband was very controlling and abusive, which included placing monitoring devices in the house. He didn't want her to go out anywhere and was even forcing her to get pregnant to try and restrict her from going outside. A few days earlier, he had called an Imam to the house. They locked her in a room, held down and forced her to drink some water while praying over her. With permission from Aziza, the Helpline contacted the police and the husband was removed from the marital home. Aziza was also supported in accessing legal advice so she could make an informed choice of the next steps to take.

6. CASE STUDY – HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE / PREGNANCY

Husna is of Bangladeshi background contacted the Helpline because she was worried about her safety. She is in a relationship and had become pregnant outside of marriage. Husna's family has told her to have an abortion but she does not want to have one. Her brother has also threatened to kill her and arranged for her to have an abortion and was planning to force her to attend the clinic. The Helpline contacted the police who moved Husna to safe accommodation.

7. CASE STUDY – RESTRICTING FREEDOM / EMOTIONAL ABUSE USING RELIGION

Maha was only allowed to study away at university provided she returned to the family home after completing her degree. Now that her course is coming to an end, Maha's family are pressuring her to live at home. She does not want to and wants to pursue a career. However, Maha's parents are emotionally blackmailing her and using religious arguments including that she cannot live alone without a male guardian, to pressure her into moving

back to the family home. Maha feels guilty and believes that she is committing a sin by not listening to her parents. She is also worried her family may take her home by force. Maha contacted the Helpline for faith-based support. Helpline staff informed Maha of her rights (both legal and Islamic) and provided her with counter arguments to her parent's religious rhetoric. Maha is now more confident in making choices about her and challenging the family pressure.

8. CASE STUDY - DOMESTIC ABUSE / HOMELESSNESS

Misbah, who was in her 20s and had arrived from abroad on a spousal visa. Soon after arriving in the UK, she became pregnant. When the scan revealed that she was going to have a girl, the husband hit her and refused to give her food to eat. Misbah then moved in with a relative. After giving birth she returned to the marital home again. However, her husband accused her of bringing bad luck, threatened to kill her, beat her and kicked her out of the house. Misbah contacted the Helpline for help. The Helpline contacted the police and made a Multi-Agency referral. Misbah was moved to a refuge where she was receiving support.

9. CASE STUDY - SUICIDE / SELF HARM, RAPE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Zabayda became friends with a man who then raped her. He told her that as he had dishonoured her that they should get married. Zubayda agreed and did not report the rape to the police. During the marriage her husband has been abusive.

When Zabayda contacted the Helpline, she said she was very depressed and that the counselling she had been having was not working. She told the Helpline Worker that she felt suicidal and had previously attempted suicide. She said she felt her life was not worth living and detailed her suicide plan and said this time she would make sure she was successful. Helpline staff contacted the police and an ambulance was called. Her local Social services and the mental health team were also informed so they could provide the necessary support to Zabayda.

10. FORCED MARRIAGE AND DISABILITY

A woman called the helpline because she was worried about her teenage daughter. The daughter has learning difficulties. Relatives abroad were pressuring her husband to take the daughter to Pakistan for marriage (to facilitate British citizenship). She was worried that her husband would cave into family pressure and forced their daughter into marriage. The Helpline explained the law and provided detailed advice on what steps she could take to protect her daughter including the use of Forced Marriage Protection Orders.

11. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUALITY

Different adults had sexually abused Shabnam as a child. When she raised concerns about her abuse as an adult survivor, she was told that she had black magic done on her. Shabnam did try and also attempt to challenge one of her abusers about what had

happened. He blamed her for the abuse. Shabanam felt depressed and was having flashbacks and panic attacks.

When she called the Helpline, she did not want to report her abusers to the police she just wanted to be able to cope mentally. She also indicated she was confused about her sexuality. Shabnam was provided with details of specialist support to talk about her sexuality and also provided details of counselling services in her area.

12. FORCED MARRIAGE, RAPE AND HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

Saira went on a family holiday abroad. While she was there her parents forced her to marry a cousin. He raped her on the wedding night. Saira contacted the Helpline upon returning to the UK and does not want to call her husband to the UK but is worried about honour based violence from her family. Saira was put in touch with the Forced Marriage Unit about the steps she can take to prevent her husband's visa application from being successful. She was also provided advice about the legal steps such as annulment. Saira was also provided with safety advice and options of being moved to safe accommodation. Saira did not want to report her parents to the police and instead wanted to think through her options.

13. EMOTIONAL PRESSURE / CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Zara who is 18 years old had just received her A level results. Even though she attained As and Bs, it was not sufficient to get her into medical school. She feels like a failure because her parents who are both professionals have high expectations from her. She also disclosed that she was expected to care for her younger siblings as her parents worked long hours and also at times had to work away from home. This included helping them with their homework, doing the school runs and other household chores. She felt really down because she said she wanted to do things that other teenagers were doing and not act as a carer. She also blamed her poorer than expected exam results on these extra responsibilities.

The Helpline Worker provided advice about how Zara could talk through her concerns with her parents or whether someone could do this for her. She was also offered the option that the Helpline could also speak to her parents. Zara felt better and said she had the confidence to speak to her parents herself.

14. CASE STUDY – SEXUALITY

A teacher called the Helpline about one of her 15-year pupils, who has disclosed that she is a lesbian. The pupil was struggling with her sexuality especially because of her faith. The teacher wanted to know what support was available. Details of specialist LGBT organisations were provided including, those which could answer her questions about faith e.g. that she can be both a lesbian and a Muslim.

15. CASE STUDY - MARRIAGE

Mariyah was in a long term relationship with her boyfriend. However, he was not Muslim and they wanted to get married. She had been told she could not marry him because it was not allowed in Islam. She wanted to know what Islam said about Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men.

Mariyah was provided advice about the range of religious interpretations on this issue including those that permitted it. She was also signposted to the MWNUK online resource on Muslim marriage. The information allowed Mariyah to make an informed choice about her life.

16. CASE STUDY - MENTAL HEALTH

Aalia contacted the Helpline because she was very depressed and had been feeling like this for a while. She had reached a point where she had started to feel suicidal and started cutting herself. She had been brought up in a very religiously strict household. She was constantly monitored by her parents and older brothers, which sometimes included verbal and physical abuse. Aalia was provided with advice and options for support including being moved to safe accommodation. However, Aalia did not want to leave her family or get the police involved and wanted to at first try and stand up to her family.

Local mental health support was contacted and Aalia was referred. However, she wanted faith based counselling. She was therefore also referred to the Helpline's internal counselling service, which allowed Alia to receive telephone counselling.

SECTION FOUR: Engagement with Other Agencies

In the previous report it was highlighted that the MWNUK were building positive relationships with other agencies, including statutory organisations. They are often asked to contribute to Multi Agency Case Reviews. These can be a valuable opportunity to highlight underlying cultural issues and subtle indicators which other professional groups may not have picked up and which indicate a higher level of risk. There are examples of cases which the input of the MWNUK Helpline meant that a case stayed open and women and children were kept safe.

REFERRALS

Referrals can be an important service that the Helpline team offer and in 7.2% of situations the clients got support from other services. This includes 5% where the outcome was being moved to a place of safety including women's refuges or other forms of temporary accommodation. The team have built effective relationships with a range of other services and aim to work alongside other services in a collaborative manner.

"Almost a year later I finally got my divorce, thanks to your intervention"

The Helpline maintain an extensive list of other relevant agencies. Sometimes it is about providing a number/information about these services to the clients and sometimes it is a direct referral. This list includes (although not exhaustive list):

Amirah Foundation,	Citizen's Advice	Counselling services,
Debt Advice Helplines	Drugs / alcohol services	Equality and Advisory Support Service
FGM Health clinics	Food banks	Forced Marriage Unit
Hope for justice	LGBT support groups	Local Authorities
Local support groups	MIND	National Domestic Violence Helpline
National Zakat Foundation	NAPAC	NESTAC,
Rape Crisis	Relate	Revenge Porn Helpline
Samaritans	Sexual Assault Referral Centres	Shariah Divorce Services
Shelter	Women's Aid organisations	Women's Refuge Organisations
Tell MAMA		

COUNSELLING SERVICES

For 5 months (December 2015 to April 2016) the MWNUK was funded to provide a free counselling service. This was very useful to support clients who had gone through a crisis point or to avoid them reaching a crisis point. It also gave a consistent referral point for the team to offer clients. An evaluation study was completed in 2016 to highlight the value of this service (reference to website)

The funding for this service ended in April and since then the Helpline workers have struggled at times to find appropriate referral points for clients who need more in-depth support than is possible from the Helpline workers. The Helpline team struggle to adequately refer clients who need counselling and support since the closure of the MWNUK Counselling Service. They have a list of different services but most of these charge fees and there are only a few that offer Islamic Counselling or have a high level of cultural sensitivity in their provision. Helpline workers report giving clients some suggested options to explore and asking them to call back if they cannot find a suitable service.

The lack of counselling provision may be part of the reason for the increase in time spent with each client as the Helpline workers try to do their best to support clients who are going through a crisis situation.

POLICE INVOLVEMENT

In 2016 the Helpline team have begun specifically recording the number of clients where there was police involvement in the case.

17% of cases recorded had an element of police involvement. This could sometimes be involvement prior to the call or it could be that the beneficiary was advised to contact the police after the call.

In **35%** of these calls where the police were involved this was initiated by the Helpline Team. An example is in [Case Study 9](#). In many of these cases the contact was made because of concerns about safeguarding issues and needing the police to take action to protect the beneficiary. At times this went against the wishes of the beneficiary because the Helpline team concluded that they had a duty of care to involve the police because of safeguarding concerns.

"I know I didn't want you to call the police, but thank you...I don't know what would have happened if you didn't. I am thinking of my future in a more positive way now...and I feel strong enough to say no"

SOCIAL SERVICES INVOLVEMENT

Another important statutory agency is the Social Services Departments across the UK. These services are vital where there are safeguarding issues including concerns about the welfare of young children.

There was Social Services involvement in **8%** of cases during 2016. Involvement means that the beneficiary contacted them following advice from the Helpline worker and some cases Social Services were already involved prior to the call. The Helpline team contacted the relevant social services department them directly in **39%** of the calls involving social services.

SUPPORTING CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The Helpline calls enable the wider MWNUK to hear the real lived experiences of Muslim women living in the UK. In the 2015 report the value of the case studies generated by the Helpline was highlighted. These case studies support wider interventions such as the presentations to mosques about Forced Marriages. The case studies provide clear evidence to support arguments for the need for change.

During 2016 the Helpline one of the callers to the Helpline (see [Case Study 3](#)) reported her experience of being forced to marry a stranger abroad by her family. She arrived at the UK embassy in Islamabad, aged 17, seeking to escape a forced marriage. She was required to sign a loan agreement and surrender her passport before being flown back to the UK. She will not have her passport returned until she repays the £814 bill for her repatriation to the UK.

The helpline workers raised their concern about this experience and a letter was written by MWNUK to the foreign office highlighting the moral issues in demanding payment from forced marriage victims. The issue was highlighted by the Guardian newspaper in an article in December 2016(<http://bit.ly/2ho4O1Y>). Following the raising of these concerns the foreign office has agreed to review its policies in 2017 about repatriation costs.

SECTION FIVE: THE HELPLINE TEAM

In the review of the first year of operation we identified a number of recommendations that would support the MWNUK Helpline to continue to improve.

During the 2016 Review for this report it was clear that the team had been using the report recommendations to continue to shape and develop their service. All the main recommendations about the operation of the Helpline have been responded to positively by the team. This also includes a Helpline Strategy Review Day which took place in May 2016 and provided an opportunity to review the policies and procedures for the Helpline and to further develop the team working skills.

Recommendation	Progress
1. Seek funding to increase the levels of staffing on the helpline so that there will always be two paid staff available with appropriate admin and volunteer support.	Additional funding was secured from the Tudor Trust and the UK Government which has enabled the opening hours to be extended to 9.00- 16.00, 5 days a week from August 2016. However, funding only covers having one Helpline Worker on each session – during busy times a second member of staff also takes calls but it means they are unable to then complete their case work.
2. Explore additional funding for case workers and for a culturally/faith sensitive counselling service to support the more complex issues, where follow up is needed both with the beneficiary and with other agencies involved in the situation.	Additional funding has been sought to fund a counselling service but so far the applications have been unsuccessful. This means that sometimes the more complex needs of callers cannot be met.
3. Continue to develop collaborative working relationships with other agencies and explore any possibilities for joint projects and working.	The team have begun recording engagement with key statutory services. The team have attended Multi Agency case meetings to discuss individual cases and agree a course of action to protect from risk. A joint data sharing project is being explored with the West Midlands Police.
4. Continue to explore ways of raising the profile of the Helpline in key Muslim areas beyond the Midlands and London and for younger women and girls. This will require additional funding for outreach workers in these areas and to develop ways of engaging more with younger Muslim women – eg exploring a mobile phone application.	There has been a significant impact on the reach of the Helpline across the UK. This has been supported by the national campaigns led by the MWNUK which have raised national awareness of the Helpline. Have also secured funding from Esmee Fairbairn for two outreach workers one based from office and other based in North West who will disseminate information booklets on some of the issues covered on helpline as well as helpline details The mobile app is being explored and is in beta test phase both as an external facing app and as an app that could be used by the Helpline team
5. Continue to support employees and volunteers to prevent professional burnout in the long term – additional staffing will	Staff numbers have been increased which has helped to manage working hours. In addition group counselling has been implemented to

enable the supervisor to spend more time supporting the team instead of handling calls on the Helpline	offer team members an opportunity to share concerns about cases and to discuss broader issues around ethics and responsibilities.
6. Review data recording to ensure consistency and efficiency and ensure that the information that is being captured continues to support the evaluation of the effectiveness of the service	Additional fields have been added to the data base so that important information can be captured. A significant step forward has been the introduction of an impact review which records what the impact was of each call.

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

One of the challenges over 2016 has been the recruitment and retention of an administrative worker to provide background support to the Helpline Team. Finding someone with the right skills and who wants to work for the organisation has not always been an easy process and there has been a period when the post was unfilled which put strain on the management team of the Helpline who had to take on some of these tasks. The role has now been filled and the team have introduced a relevant skills test for this post to ensure that.

There have been various changes to the team over the year as the operational hours for the Helpline have been extended. The team now have 2 additional workers on the team, including an Arabic speaker. Supporting the team through these changes has been demanding at times and an area of future need for the management team is to develop more awareness of how to effectively support a team through periods of change, as workers join and leave the service.

"Our managers are amazing; they are so supportive and help us get more confident. They will coach and guide us to become more confident in handling the complex queries"

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

When the Helpline was initially established the limited funding meant that the MWNUK explored the use of volunteers. The 2015 report noted that the use of volunteers had been very resource demanding and there was a problem with retaining the volunteers long term. In December 2015 there were 5 volunteers who remain engaged with the Helpline service.

The volunteering strategy has been changed for 2016. It has been agreed that volunteers are best used to support the team in outreach work instead of training them to operate on the Helpline. A team of Helpline workers and volunteers successfully ran a stall at the German Market in the Christmas period which helped to spread the word in the local Birmingham area about the Helpline.

This change of strategy is sensible given the increased complexity of the calls to the Helpline. Involving volunteers in answering calls will require a high level of investment which can easily be wasted because the nature of volunteering is often about a short term commitment and individuals often leave to find full time work or to pursue other interests.

DEVELOPING THE TEAM

In the first year report an area that was highlighted was the pressure to ensure that the team were kept updated and that sufficient time was provided to develop their skills and knowledge given the complexity and range of advice provided on the Helpline.

The team are very positive about the experience of working for MWNUK Helpline and see it as a good place to work, where they are supported to give their best.

I don't see it as work; it is more of a cohesive community. I can talk to anyone and ask for advice. We have a strong team that are willing to help each other. We treat each other in a kind and supportive manner.

The first year of operation was an exciting time for the team as gradually the numbers calling the Helpline grew and the team became aware about how much demand there was for the service. In the 2015 we highlighted that this discretionary effort combined with the intense nature of the calls to the Helpline could put workers and managers at risk of professional burnout. The report highlighted the need to increase the staffing levels, provide a case worker for more complex cases, to manage the working hours of the team and to consider ways of supporting the team members with the emotional impact of the Helpline work.

The management team have carefully considered these recommendations and taken action in a number of ways:

IMPROVED ROTA MANAGEMENT

With the shift to full time operating hours the Helpline were able to increase the hours worked by each member of the team. In January 2016 a total of 44 staff hours per week were funded for Front Line service delivery on the project (29 hours for staff, 15 hours for the Helpline Manager)

By December 2016 the hours dedicated to directly running the Helpline had increased to a total of 102 hours per week (73 hours for the staff, 29 hours for the Helpline Manager)

Even with this increase in hours the Helpline are still operating with a skeleton staffing team because in these hours they need to answer calls, respond to messages, complete all the paperwork for calls, update procedures, conduct case management reviews as a team and attend external multi agency meetings.

The operational plan for the increased hours was to have one worker handling calls for half a day. Where possible a second worker (or manager) would be available during the shift to provide support/supervision if needed as part of the “Lone Working Policy” The second workers would be working off the phone lines on completing case recording and working on the necessary follow up eg informing other agencies.

During peak periods this has become very challenging to manage effectively. In November 2016 the team had to resort to both Helpline workers covering the calls on busy days (Monday and Fridays) because the volume of calls was overwhelming the helpline worker on call duty. This meant that case work did not always get completed and it also exposed the workers to spending the day handling calls, which given the intense nature is not ideal for their personal stress exposure.

The growth in both the volume and intensity of calls/casework has meant that the Helpline management team are seeking additional funding for 2017 to increase the number of workers covering calls each day to two. This will also help to keep the management team or even Trustees having to answer calls directly so that they can concentrate on support and supervisory tasks.

The longer opening hours of the Helpline has made it impossible for the team manager to cover all the hours of operation as she only works for 29 hours a week, mainly in the mornings. Initially the Executive Director stepped in to cover the additional hours but this was a short term solution as these 13 hours are funded to manage the project as a whole and to support the external outreach of the project and not the direct management of the Helpline service.

A longer term solution is urgently needed so that less experienced staff get support and supervision during the afternoon shifts. Additional funding will need to be sought so that all Helpline shifts will have a Helpline manager present to supervise, support and intervene in calls.

INTRODUCTION OF SUPERVISION AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

As observed above the management hours are limited and the skeleton staff means that the Helpline manager often has to handle calls. This prevents her being able to carry out all her management roles. Considering this challenge there has been progress made during 2016 to increase the formal supervision and support that is offered to each individual Helpline worker.

One to one supervision sessions now take place every two months. These sessions give the Helpline Line Manager an opportunity to review performance and pick up any concerns from the individual workers. These sessions are valued by the workers:

I get a chance to off load and get advice about what to do, really helps me to feel better about the work

In addition an annual appraisal session has enabled the Helpline management to identify ways to build the capacity and skills of the team. This process was implemented in 2016 as a result of the 2015 report recommendations. The opportunity to step back and review the year is valued by the Helpline team:

"It is a good way for the work that you are doing to be appreciated and also helps you to have a clear view of the areas for improvement"

Members of the team have been encouraged to identify subject areas that they are interested in developing skills and knowledge in so they can become subject experts for the team. This is helping the team to keep their knowledge up to date on a wide range of topics in a cost effective manner. At the end of 2016 the increase in mental health issues in the calls was raised and two of the team will be attending Mental Health First Aid Training in 2017 and will share this information with the team.

At the moment there is no formal process in place to monitor calls. This may not be required in a small working office where calls can easily be overheard. However it can be a useful learning process for Helpline workers to listen to their own calls or to do some peer listening so that they can identify small areas of improvement that can be made to improve consistency and standards amongst the team. This process will also be a way of auditing that all procedures and policies are being complied with. It is recommended that each Helpline worker has at least one call monitored each month as part of their supervision process.

WEEKLY CASE REVIEW

Every Monday the Helpline manager facilitates a team case review. In this session the team review open cases, close cases and identify any lessons learnt from recent cases.

This process has been strengthened in 2016 to make sure that cases are recorded, appropriate action is taken and cases are closed when there is no need for any further action to be taken. The case review process will continue to improve over 2017 to ensure no issues are missed and that learning from individual cases is shared within the team.

The Helpline team mentioned the value they gain from the case review process and how it helps them to review the actions that they took and identify any areas for further improvement.

INTRODUCTION OF GROUP SUPPORT SESSIONS

In 2015 the management team implemented counselling sessions to support the Helpline team. All members of the team, including the management team attended these individual sessions. The feedback indicated that there was limited benefit from this method, which was felt to be too personally intense.

It was decided to try a different approach so in September 2016 bi-monthly group counselling session was introduced. The session is run by a professional counsellor who is hired to deliver this valued service.

The session provides a supportive group environment to explore some of the more sensitive cases handled by members of the team. In addition the sessions explore broader themes that relate back to the Helpline Ethical Principles (<http://bit.ly/2jseAzu>) A recent example was discussions on “Judgement and Assumptions” which helped the team to reflect on their individual and team practice.

The feedback from the staff about this intervention has been very positive

“These are great!! It is so important to us and really helpful. You get to speak about difficult calls and how it has personally affected each of us individually. Sometimes you don’t realise how you can be affected by things and making time to do this is really important”

In 2017 it is planned to run the group support sessions every month which is something that the Helpline workers are really positive about

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

All the Helpline Team are employed on a part time basis. They are balancing their Helpline responsibilities with other work, caring, and leisure/volunteering. The increase in staffing has helped to make sure that staff work their contracted hours and this is something that the Helpline team have worked hard on. All the Helpline workers are working part time hours and during 2016 the hours each spent on the answering the Helpline varied between 7 hours a week to 21 hours a week.

One of the challenges of part time working is to make sure that information is shared across the team so that there is consistency in the service provision. A number of recording systems are in place to ensure that information is transferred. One system that works is the “What’s App” group which has been established for all members of the team. At the end of a shift each person will write a follow up sheet and send this via What’s App to all members of the team. This is a very effective method and the team are encouraged to turn off

notifications for the group so that they are not disturbed by the follow up notes during their time off.

Members of the team will also send messages to each other via What's App at different times of day. One of the risks of this informal communication is that it creates an "always on" culture. Without intending to messages sent in the evenings and weekends can create an expectation that these messages will be responded to in this period. For some of the team this can create a feeling of pressure outside of working hours when they see the messages. Others like the way that they are kept informed and updated outside of their working hours.

The mental health foundation recommends that organisations do regular audits on "their work environment to identify elements of practice, policy or culture which may be detrimental to a health work-life balance" (MHF Work Life Balance <http://bit.ly/1VBWpXB>)

It is recommended that the team have an open and honest conversation about the shared expectation for communication outside of working hours so that this communication is helpful to the overall success of the team and does not put additional pressure on workers outside of their contracted hours.

SUPPORT FOR THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

The management team have been keen to find ways of better supporting the team to prevent professional burnout. In 2016 the team manager was funded to attend training sessions on Vicarious Trauma (VT) which is defined as the impact on a helper of working with survivors of traumatic life events. One of the main learning points of the training has been that the Helpline cannot prevent VT as it is a natural consequence of the Helpline workers connecting to and caring about the callers. However the Helpline has a responsibility to ensure that care is taken to provide strategies for the Helpline workers to help them to deal with the impact of VT.

The group support sessions help with this process. In addition all three members of the management team (the Project Manager, Executive Director and Chair) are available in person or by phone to provide to the team members.

If I have a problem with a call I will talk to my manager, most of the time one of them is in the office. If not I will call them to get advice/support

MWNUK Helpline team have responded positively to the early concerns about the psychological impact of the work on the Helpline team and have taken action to mitigate this risk of harm.

The area that has not been addressed yet is the impact of VT on the management team. The team are consulted about the most complex and challenging of the cases and will

sometimes initiate Safeguarding actions. At the moment there is no formal method of support for the three managers, and this is something that will need to be addressed in 2017. It may be helpful for a group support/learning session to be set up specifically for the management team so that learning about managing the team and the organisation of the Helpline can be shared.

“I do feel sorry for our managers, they have so many responsibilities and who do they get to talk to?”

Training in managing teams and dealing with issues such as conflict and change in teams will also be helpful to the management team to help them to continue to support the team in a professional manner. The managers are keen to learn and develop their professional expertise and learning activities should be encouraged and funding sought where needed to enable the managers to learn from other managers and organisations about good practice for team supervision and management.

It may also help to be clearer about the amount of time they are expected to have direct client contact and the time they need to spend on managing and supporting the team and the wider operation. If funding can be sought in 2017 this will help with this process and additional helpline workers will avoid the management team filling in gaps in the rota.

SECTION SIX: DELIVERING A PROFESSIONAL HELPLINE SERVICE

In the 2015 report the professional and structured way that the Helpline had been established was commended. The team at MWNUK sought external advice and guidance and used this to establish a credible infrastructure to support the Helpline team to develop as a professional and accountable service.

This groundwork has given the Helpline a really robust professional infrastructure. This has been built on with a real energy for improvement in 2016. It is impressive how the team continue to explore ways to strengthen their practice and offer an open, transparent and accountable service provision for current and future funders.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Each contact with the MWNUK is carefully logged onto the database. An initial response is provided and the contact will usually be logged in the case management system (unless it is a very simple factual question) Once logged in the case management system a follow up call is scheduled for most cases for a week after the initial contact. It is often during this follow up call that further information is disclosed and the call becomes more complex than the initial request because of the increased trust in the professionalism of the Helpline team. Up to three follow up calls are made and if there is no response made then the case is closed (unless the initial call was detailed enough to raise safeguarding concerns)

The clear process for contacts to the Helpline ensures that there is a consistent case management system in place. This is important because there are a variety of people handling the calls on the Helpline and the case management system helps all workers to quickly identify cases where further action is required.

SAFEGUARDING

There were 30 cases where an internal safeguarding form needed to be filled in and the safeguarding procedures followed. Five of these cases included children.

The reasons for safeguarding concerns included risk of harm from others from domestic violence, forced marriage and honour based violence. There were also cases where there was considered to be a risk of harm to self due to mental health concerns. Some of the cases included homelessness. Actions to protect the clients included: contacting the police, social services, mental health professionals, Forced Marriage Unit, one Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub referral (a single point of contact for all professionals to report

safeguarding concerns) and three Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference(where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases)

During regular supervision and case reviews a further three cases were identified that could have been potential safeguarding cases. These were reopened and further action taken by the team. Two of these cases were closed and the team were satisfied that there are no safeguarding concerns. One of these cases remains open and the team are trying to establish if there are any safeguarding concerns.

The three cases will be used in training sessions in early 2017 to help increase vigilance in the team for potential signs of cases where there may be safeguarding concerns.

DATA RECORDING

Following the report on the first year of operation the Helpline team have reviewed their methods of data recording. A number of additional fields have been added to the database to assist with the identification of trends and pattern in the service provision. The data collected is impressive for a small charitable organisation and the new measures for assessing impact will help the team to assess their overall impact on the community of this culturally sensitive supportive service.

The data collection process has been shared with a senior Data Analyst at West Midlands Police to get their perspective on the data methodology. He was really impressed with the quality of the data collected and is now exploring ways in which data can be shared between the two organisations to help provide more detailed methods of analysis for the West Midlands area.

Trello continues to provide a useful accessible visual tool to assist the Helpline team to quickly review open cases. A query was raised about duplication of data recording and this continues to be an issue that is difficult to fully resolve. A possible way forward is through the development of a bespoke app which will reproduce the visual impact of Trello whilst being able to directly transfer data from the app to the database.

Seeking further investment in a more comprehensive single point method of case recording/reviewing may help the team find a way of recording comprehensive data without the need for duplication.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

The MWNUK Helpline has grown from the original set up operation which was for 3 sessions a week to now a five day a week full time service. An additional room is now available to the team which is helpful for both supervision and to give the Helpline workers space to take their rest breaks away from the Helpline.

This staffing level is still not quite sufficient for the volume and intensity of the calls and further increases in staffing is emerging as a recommendation. Should further staff be employed this will stretch the current space for the Helpline to the point where the provision of a professional service is potentially compromised.

Several Helpline workers commented about the noise levels when taking calls. There is a risk that a client may overhear another worker talking on the phone on a follow up call and it is likely that any background noise will be picked up. In the short term consideration more use should be made of the existing headsets to help produce noise and to explore other methods of noise reduction in the office environment. These will help all team members to concentrate on their calls and not risk being distracted by background noise and the headsets should help prevent clients being aware of any background noises in the call, which will increase the sense of privacy of the call.

However this will have a limited effect because the small size of the helpline office makes it very hard if more than one call is taking place at one time. Longer term the MWNUK Helpline will need a larger operational base. This would ideally have more private working spaces for the Helpline workers on the phone lines and more space for the managers to easily sit alongside a worker to give feedback on a call or to de-brief a call immediately after.

SECTION SEVEN: PROMOTING THE HELPLINE

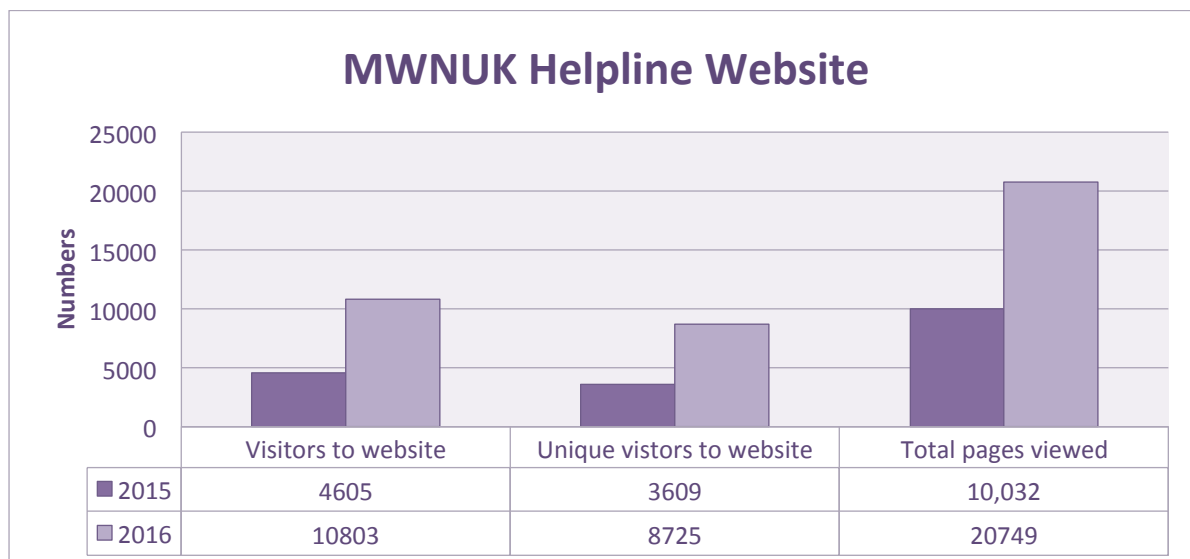
During the first year of operation there was some data collected about how callers had heard about the Helpline, however this data was not considered sufficient robust to use with integrity in the first report. It was agreed that this was a useful way of reviewing which promotion methods seemed to be most effective at communicating about the Helpline to potential callers and the collection of this data was improved in 2016. The information remains incomplete as this can be a very difficult question to ask during a conversation that can be emotionally intense so it is not surprising that in **40%** of the calls this information was not specified.

In those calls where the caller did specify the most popular method was an Internet Search (**71% of callers who specified**) Friends and Family were also significant in providing information about the Helpline (**10% of callers specified**), this is a helpful indicator because it shows that the Helpline is being discussed amongst friendship networks in the community.

The dedicated helpline website (<http://www.mwnhelpline.co.uk/>) continues to act as a valuable source of information and support for people. It is often the first point of contact prior to contact with the helpline. It is important the MWNUK continue to invest in the website and keep it up to date in both content and design.



The pattern of website visits shows a growth compared to the previous year of operation.



There is a slight shift in the number of pages viewed per session, down from 2.18 pages to 1.92. This is not statistically meaningful at this stage but it is worth monitoring if there is a way to encourage visitors to explore more pages in each visit. This will increase the time spent on the site which has also gone down from 2.12 mins to 1.44 mins. It may be that visits are shorter because the information people want is more easily available on the site so that less searching is required, so the reduction in time is not necessarily a cause for concern.

Another trend is the highest numbers of visitors to the site are from the Birmingham and London areas, which reflects the large proportion of calls to the Helpline from both these two urban centres.

The devices used to access the website are increasingly mobile devices (40% accessed with a phone and 5% by tablet) and of these 54% used an iPhone to access and 42% an Android device. This data will be valuable when accessing how best to further develop the website and possible apps to further raise awareness of the Helpline.

WEBSITE DOWNLOADS

The website has five downloadable resources available in 2016, building on the two that were available in 2015:

Resource Downloaded		
	2015	2016
CSE booklet	433	391
Forced marriage booklet	231	385
FGM booklet (new)		224
		Available from April 16
Discrimination booklet (new)		46
		Available from Nov 16
Marriage & Divorce (new)		68
		Available from Nov 16

There is a video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA1sLDuDo3I>) on the main MWNUK site that was used to launch the Helpline. This continues to get some views and these have increased from 320 to 474 views in 2016.

These resources can be very helpful to the Helpline team as a way of giving more detailed information on a call or to send as a follow up in an email or a message. It is encouraged that the team continue to develop specific resources which can be accessed freely on line and reflect the types of topics discussed on the Helpline eg Domestic Abuse, Mental Health issues and interpretations of Islam that are women specific

MEDIA PROFILE

The media activity of the MWNUK will often mention the availability of the Helpline and there are spikes in calls to the Helpline which seem to reflect the level of general media engagement of the wider MWNUK.

As noted previously there was a clear spike in August 2016 which may have reflected the wider discussion about the rights of women relating to the Burkini ban implemented in France and then in November there was the campaign about Sharia Councils.

The impact of the media profile continues long after the event, in the interview in January 2017 the Helpline workers reported that they continue to get calls about the Sharia Councils which specifically mention the high profile media coverage of the issue in November 2016.

CASE STUDIES

The MWNUK Helpline has built up a robust evidence base over the last two years about the actual lived experiences of Muslim women. These are presented as a series of [case studies](#). These case studies are used by the team in presentations and in social media and help other women to recognise that they are not alone and to take action by ringing the Helpline for support on their issue.

If more time was available these case studies could be further developed and promoted to support the dialogue about real lived experiences of Muslim women in the UK and help to further improve service delivery and policy development to reflect the needs of Muslim women.

SECTION EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The Helpline Service has built on the success of the first year of operation and has implemented a number of changes which further enhances the professionalism of the service.

During 2016 the volume of calls has increased along with the intensity of these calls. It would seem that the clients of the service are able to discuss and gain support for a wide range of needs which are not being fully addressed elsewhere. One of the unique features of the MWNUK Helpline is that the team work from an Islamic Feminist perspective and able to provide a non-judgemental culturally and faith sensitive service. This has enabled a number of clients to share concerns both about government policy but also about aspects of the Muslim community (for example the workings of the Sharia Council) which they may not have had the confidence to share elsewhere. These examples of lived experiences are very valuable in providing the UK policy makers with a more rounded sense of what is needed to support all members of the Muslim community so that everyone is able to give their best to the UK Society.

The improvements made to the Helpline Data Recording means that is now easier to assess the impact of the Helpline provision and the difference it is making to the lives of the clients. This data will become increasingly helpful over the next year of operation so that patterns and trends can be easily observed and improvements made in response to this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Helpline Management Team have responded in a really positive manner to the recommendations made in the 2015 report and a number of significant improvements have been made to the service provision, to prevent the potential of staff burnout and to improve the process of data recording. The recommendations made in this report will support the Helpline to further develop the service and to secure longer term funding.

- 1. Seek funding for additional Helpline workers** – the increase in staffing has helped to ensure that the Helpline is now able to offer full time operation hours. However this currently means that often only one worker is on duty to answer calls and there are times when one of the management team has to step in which impacts on their

ability to complete their own objectives. Additional hours to cover the gaps in the current rota will enable the team to cope with the increase in volume and complexity of calls and the hours worked will need to be monitored to prevent overload

2. **Funding for an In-House Counselling Service** – the intensity and complexity of the calls has continued in this second year of operation. The period of the pilot counselling scheme helped relieve the pressure on the Helpline team. However this funded was only for a pilot study and it has not been possible to find further funding for a culturally and faith sensitive counsellor to support the work of the team, this is something that the team should continue to pursue over 2017
3. **Engage the Team in Strategy Planning** – a further strategy session with the Helpline team is recommended for May 2017 to enable the team to reflect and review progress made since the previous session. It would also seem important to include in these planning days an opportunity to reflect and discuss faith based issues and the impact of the Helpline work on spiritual well-being of the team members.
4. **Streamline and Make Use of Data Recording** – explore ways of streamlining the recording system to reduce duplication and time spent and paperwork. This recommendation remains in place because currently a combination of paper recording, using the bespoke data base and using Trello for case recording is happening. It would be useful to get an expert to assess how this data recording can be made less consuming and to avoid any needless duplication.
It would be useful to find a way to capture and summarise data on a monthly basis to provide the team with a “dashboard” overview analysis of the calls. This will help the team to take action more quickly about any emerging trends.
5. **Conduct Regular Case Reviews** - During an internal audit during 2016 a small number of cases were identified where improvements could have made in terms of safeguarding. It will help the team to take some time out to review cases so that further improvements to processes can be discussed and agreed by the team. It would be helpful to regularly identify different case studies to reflect the wide range of the themes covered in the calls to the Helpline so that these can be easily referenced and referred due during outreach work and in the wider advocacy work of the MWNUK. These case studies could also be used to support the development of the range of on-line and print resources offered by the Helpline.
6. **Increase Management Hours** – The management team are regarded very positively by the team for their supportive and hands on manner. However there are insufficient hours for the manager to complete all the supervision tasks and it has been noted that the helpline manager and executive Director have not always taken their full statutory holiday entitlement. Additional management hours will enable more one to one call monitoring and systematic case reviews to take place. The

responsibilities for this role should also include monitoring the data inputting on a weekly basis so any errors are noted and can be quickly resolved. This means that any missed issues such as safeguarding concerns can be quickly addressed and responded to.

7. **Support Strategy and Training for the Management Team**- The management team would benefit from having some learning time set aside to further develop their management skills. This does not necessarily need to be a training course; options such as shadowing another manager in a different organisation may give some valuable insights. Each manager should have their own appraisal/development review to help them shape their development plan for the year so that they can continue to bring fresh ideas and improvements to the operation of the Helpline. It would also be helpful for the management team to have a strategy session to explore more about how to further develop the operation of the Helpline and the performance of the team. These sessions can be an opportunity for the team to conduct a deep dive analysis of our most significant issues to find out any patterns or learning for advocacy and campaign work.
8. **Continue to Develop Skills and Knowledge of the Team** – it has been noted that in response to the increase in both call intensity and the number of clients for whom mental health issues were raised the Helpline are funding two workers to attend Mental Health First Aid Training. Plans are also in place to attend training sessions run by Shelter to support increased awareness of housing/homelessness issues. The workers attending these sessions will cascade the learning to the rest of the team.
9. **Seek Funding for Increased Office Accommodation** – as observed in the report the concern is that clients phoning the Helpline may be distracted by background noise and for the Helpline workers the level of noise in the office can make it harder to concentrate and listen to a client. An increase in office accommodation will help with this issue but in the short term an exploration about making more use phone headsets with noise cancelling functionality may improve the ability of clients and workers to concentrate on the call.
10. **Seek ways to engage with the Under 21s age group** – The level of calls from under 21s is lower than the Helpline team would like to see given the vulnerability of this age group. We recommend that the Helpline explore ways of promoting the Helpline to this group and continue to invest in technology which may be more appealing to this generation.
11. **Develop On-Line Procedures** – the Helpline has a well-developed procedure manual in paper format. The challenge is that during busy periods the Helpline workers can forget to refer to the manual because it is hard to find the relevant information quickly whilst actively engaged on a phone call. The idea of putting the procedures and guidance on line using an easy to navigate directory would make it much easier for Helpline workers to access the relevant information whilst on the phone.
12. **Develop Protocols for Handling Silent Calls** – sometimes there are silent calls to Helpline where the person puts the phone down without talking. These calls could

be from callers who are in a high risk situation and unable to talk easily. The Helpline team could help distinguish if these are genuine calls or “mis-dialled numbers” by introducing new protocols and guidance to ask questions and ask the caller to respond with a cough (this is similar to the Silent Call Solution used by the UK Emergency Services) The caller could be asked if they want the police to attend them and then the Helpline workers could locate the number and inform the police of the location.

APPENDIX ONE: ISSUES HANDLED

ISSUE	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY	TOTAL
Abortion / Pregnancy	15	4	3	22
Addiction - Alcohol	1	2	4	7
Addiction - Drugs	1	3	0	4
Child Abuse (neglect)	3	5	0	8
Child Sexual Abuse	6	3	1	10
Child Sexual Exploitation	3	0	0	3
Children / Custody	12	8	3	23
Complaints (about public services)	7	8	3	18
Disability Issues	0	2	0	2
Discrimination / Islamophobia	13	1	1	15
Divorce	65	28	12	105
Domestic Abuse	150	55	12	217
Eating Disorder (self-harm)	0	0	1	1
Education	0	2	0	2
Elderly Issues	1	1	0	2
Employment / Work	0	3	0	3
Extremism	1	2	1	4
Faith / Spirituality	18	21	4	43
Female Genital Mutilation	7	1	2	10
Forced Marriage	17	11	3	31
Health (physical)	4	5	3	12
Honour Based Violence	21	28	7	56
Housing / Homelessness	34	30	9	73
Immigration	10	15	10	35
Isolation / Loneliness	7	7	10	24
Jinn / Black magic	5	1	1	7
Marriage	35	20	5	60
Mental Health Feelings	28	65	39	132
Money / Finance	11	15	9	35
None	0	185	420	605
Other	11	0	2	13
Rape / Sexual Violence	9	6	2	17
Relationships	39	35	9	83
Revenge Porn	6	0	0	6
Sexual Exploitation (Adults)	2	1	0	3
Sexual Health	1	2	1	4
Sexuality	9	1	0	10
Stalking / Harassment	7	4	0	11
Suicide / Self Harm	11	2	5	18
Trafficking	0	0	1	1
Unknown	13	0	0	13
TOTAL	583	583	583	

APPENDIX TWO: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE MWN UK HELPLINE

What Difference did we make to clients?		Total cases with this impact	
What does this mean practically?			
<i>Our clients were:</i>			
Better informed of support available	Made aware of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another helpline / advice service • Public service that can help them • Counselling services • Third sector services • Specialist services such as faith based / culturally sensitive services. • Financial support that can be accessed 	218	37%
More confident to deal with problems	After speaking to us and with advice given client feels more confident about what to do next e.g. they may state they will / have taken certain steps or even decisions about their life.	188	32%
Better informed of their Islamic rights	Made aware of: <p>Islamic perspective including different interpretations on any issue e.g. Islamic divorce process, sexuality, abortion, dress code etc.</p>	88	15%
Better informed of safety advice	Made aware of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting police • Precautions to take to protect oneself e.g. what to do if partner is abusive or at risk of forced marriage / honour based violence etc. • Other safety tips 	88	15%
Given help by other support service due to our referral	<p>Where we make a direct referral and client is supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social services • police • community / women's group • Another third sector group • refuge • counselling service • another helpline • Niche service eg. Faith based service • Legal service e.g. pro bono / legal aid 	67	11%
Experienced no difference	When we are unable to help due to nature of enquiry or when we have insufficient information and client does not get back to us when we respond to an answer phone message, text, web chat or email	61	10%
Better informed of their legal rights	Made aware of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal protection through injunctions • Legislation such as coercive control, revenge porn, harassment / stalking, discrimination, civil divorce law etc. • Free legal advice or access to legal aid • Lawyers in their area 	51	9%
Moved to safety	When our intervention results in client being moved to safety e.g. to family, friend, refuge or other temporary accommodation.	47	8%

More confident to challenge / leave abusive/ harmful situations	When client decides to or takes actions to challenge (or formally report) abuse or leaves abusive situations (or makes plans to leave) e.g. move out, get perpetrator to move out, tell parents they will not have forced marriage, make complaint about discrimination.	33	6%
Helped at crisis point	We help client who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is in immediate danger of violence e.g. DV, sexual abuse, HBV, FM, FGM • Has been subjected to violence immediately prior before calling helpline • Is homeless (includes temporarily staying with friends / family after escaping domestic abuse) • Is Suicidal and has taken steps or about to take steps to endanger own 	31	5%
Helped before situation reached crisis point	When our intervention leads to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police doing safety / welfare check • Help with injunction • Moving client to safe accommodation (e.g. refuge or hotel or some other safe place) before situation escalates • Prevention of HBV, forced marriage, FGM or any other form of abuse eg child sex abuse, neglect, physical abuse etc. Client being referred to mental health / counselling services who are at risk of self-harm / suicide	26	4%
Seeking to improve mental health due to counselling referral	When we directly refer client to an internal or external counselling service and client is helped	24	4%
Feels less isolated	When our help makes client feel less isolated / lonely by talking to through their problems or when we find local support groups	10	2%
Prevented from self-harm / suicide	When client is in imminent danger of self-harm / suicide and we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call police or ambulance • Make an urgent mental health / health professional referral • Make an urgent counselling referral 	4	1%