

Review of MWNUK Helpline Service January to December 2017



Centre for Facilitation

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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. The Network conducts research, operates a helpline, delivers campaigns, runs training sessions, comments in the media and produces resources. It 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

This report is the third annual evaluation review of the operation of the MWNUK Helpline. Reports for [2015](#) and [2016](#) are available on the [Muslim Women's website](#). This report reflects and builds on the experiences of the first two years of operation as the Helpline Service enters its third year and is now operating as an established Helpline provider.

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 third year of operation.

“When I first contacted you I did get cold feet but you continued to ask if I was okay and were really reassuring. I was given good advice and also offered counselling, which is helping me a lot. I am glad you there for us and it is nice to have a service (in) which we are understood culturally”

(Domestic violence victim in her 40s)

SUMMARY

The MWNUK Helpline was launched in January 2015 with its own separate website www.mwnhelpline.co.uk. This website contains useful advice, information and details of other support services and helplines. This report is based on the third year of operation from January 2017 to December 2017.

The Helpline extended its opening hours to five full days a week from August 2016. This year has been the first full year of full time operation with the total working hours for a week increasing from 50 hours at the beginning of 2016 to **99 hours in January 2017** (although this had reduced to 64 hours by December 2017, due to health issues and vacancies in the staff team).

The increase in operational hours and staffing has resulted in additional challenges for both the management and operation of the Helpline service over this year. The final months of 2017 lead to an organisational crisis point which required a re-evaluation of the management role and the Helpline processes. This re-evaluation has created a more robust and sustainable service delivery model which has a number of safeguards against worker overload and stress and has implemented significant process improvements to prevent duplication of effort.

Against this background of change and development the service has continued to grow with **2280** contacts made by **792** individuals. In the first year of operation there were 814 contacts made from 335 individuals. This represents a **136%** growth over the 3 years of operation in the number of individual clients who have been in contact with the Helpline and a **180%** growth in the overall volume of contacts.

The range of issues covered in the calls has increased from 39 to **42** issues. The five issues that were raised most frequently are very similar to the pattern we observed in 2016 with both domestic abuse and mental health feelings dominating the calls. The main change this year is that faith and spirituality seem to have become more significant in the calls, mentioned in 15% of the calls.

1. Domestic Abuse – 38% of calls mentioned this as an issue
2. Mental Health Feelings – 24%
3. Divorce (17%) and Relationships (17%)
4. Faith and Spirituality – 15%
5. Housing/Homelessness- 13%

The data shows that the complexity of calls continues in this third year of operation. During 2017 it was recorded that **75%** of clients were calling about two issues and 36% of clients reporting three or more issues. It is this complexity of the calls which increases the intensity of the call and the amount of time that needs to be spent both on the call and in the follow up activity.

During 2017 the MWNUK secured long term funding for the Helpline service. This has moved the Helpline from the start up/new organisation phase of its development into the next phase of organisational maturity. Organisational development is a challenging process and the Helpline has faced a number of internal issues over 2017. There have been times when the team has been under considerable pressure to maintain service delivery.

By the end of this third year of operation the team have recruited additional staff members, including a new Helpline manager and have identified a number of changes that need to be made so that the Helpline service can continue to flourish and grow in the long term. 2018 will be a test of these changes and the establishment of the Helpline as a mature and robust organisation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEAM COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The new team of volunteers, worker and Helpline manager will need to integrate with existing team members so that the team becomes one team. The growth in numbers of team members will require more consciously structured communication to pass on information and to gain consensus about changes to policies and practice. The proposed changes will need to be explained and reinforced so that the whole team “buys in” to the changes.

2. UPDATING PROCEDURES

When the Helpline was established there were procedures and protocols provided to give the team guidance about how to handle a variety of challenging situations. These procedures need to be reviewed to ensure that they remain “fit for purpose”. It will be important to check that overall the Helpline policies are working from a consistent set of values and objectives and to make sure these align with the wider organisational principles. A priority will be to streamline the Safeguarding process, whilst still maintaining a duty of care to vulnerable adults and children so that actions are taken to protect them from harm.

3. SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

It will be important for the new manager to establish a regular pattern of supervision for all team members. Supervision will be an opportunity to review practice and to highlight different strengths of each of the team members so that there can be consistency in the team. Establishing regular call audits will be a really important way of identifying learning needs across the team and to identify any areas of practice that could be further enhanced.

4. CASE WORK BOUNDARIES

The additional funding for case working in 2018 will provide an opportunity for the Helpline Team to hand over clients who have complex needs and require more intensive intervention. It will be important to monitor the case work allocations to ensure that

referrals are made appropriately and that cases are closed where there is nothing further that can be done within the Helpline remit.

One of the themes in the last two reports has been the challenge of closing cases. This is often due to the complexity of the needs of the client and her capacity to initiate change in her situation. There is a risk that case working referrals are made because it feels too abrupt to close a case so the team and the Helpline manager will need to remain vigilant that there is a clear expectation of a purposeful intervention from the caseworker for each case that is referred.

It is recommended that frequent audits of open cases take place and case closure is monitored to prevent the volume of open cases overwhelming the capacity of the team.

5. ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR CORE OPERATION AND COUNSELLING

A number of the current funding sources for the Helpline have come to an end in 2017 or will be ending in the early months of 2018. This will leave the Helpline with a financial shortfall. This shortfall will only be met by reducing the opening and staffing hours for the Helpline and by cutting back on the faith based counselling service. 2018 will be a challenging year for the Helpline unless additional funds are secured.

“Thank you so much for your great support, the Islamic divorce service you referred me to are amazing, the process was quick, I didn’t have to pay my husband anything and I have my divorce already. I will always be grateful and so happy I found your helpline.”

[Anya, domestic violence and divorce case study](#)

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE HELPLINE SERVICE

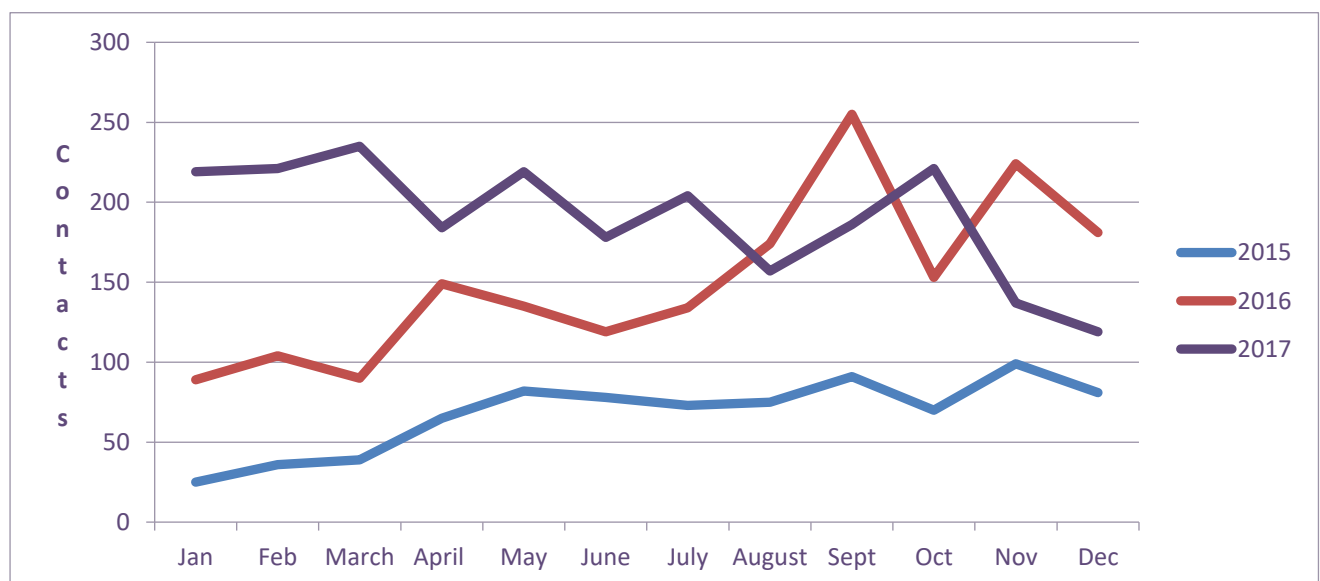
All calls to the Helpline are logged and any actions taken are recorded in individual case notes and on a database. There is now a record of three years of careful and consistent data recording which provides a valid evidence base from the Helpline of the experiences of Muslim Women living in the UK who make use of this service. Case studies describing examples of the calls can be found in [Section 3](#).

VOLUME OF CALLS

2280 contacts were logged during 2017. These figures will include repeat calls from clients in different sessions. The total calls shows significant increase over the three years of operation, with the number of contacts being made to the Helpline Team rising from 814 calls during 2015 and 1807 calls during 2016. During this three year period the Helpline has moved from a 3 mornings a week operation to being able to operate a 5 day a week operation in 2017.

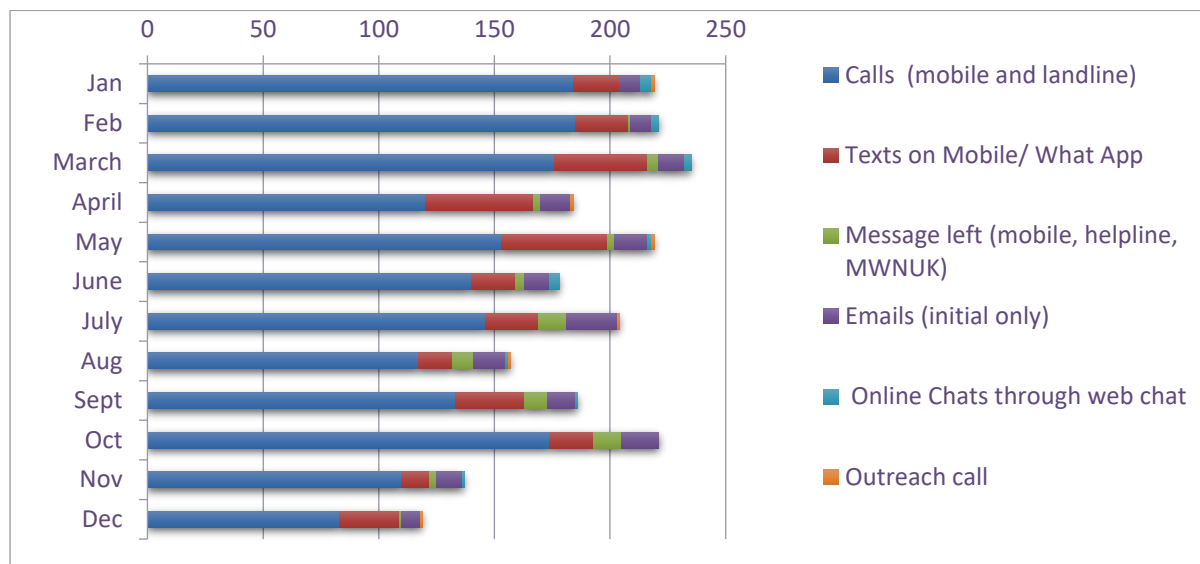
During 2017 the average number of monthly contacts is 190 (an increase of 25%). However overall you can see in the chart below that the level of contacts is not consistent across the year. There are 6 months during 2017 where the contacts dip below the average, falling to 119 contacts in December 2017 which is a 41% decrease in the level of contacts compared to December 2016.

These figures are consistent with the background organisational changes and staffing levels that are noted later in the report and do not represent a long term trend for the helpline service.



METHOD OF CONTACT

The Helpline continues to be a mainly speech based service. **63%** of the first contacts made to the Helpline were through the phone line service. A further **19%** of the initial contacts were by email, and this seems to be growing as a contact method.



In 2016 we noted an increase in text based contact, in particular a growth in What's App messages with 777 contacts by text based messages. In 2017 there was a total of 320 contacts made by text based messages (including What's App) so it may be that the trend noted in 2016 was just an anomaly due to several heavy users of text based services.

Method of Making Contact	2015	2016	2017
Phone Call (mobile or landline)	478	854	1721
Text based (mobile or What's App)	238	777	320
Average number of contacts each month			
Phone call (mobile or landline)	40	71	143
Text Based (mobile or What's App)	19	65	27

NUMBERS OF PEOPLE HELPED

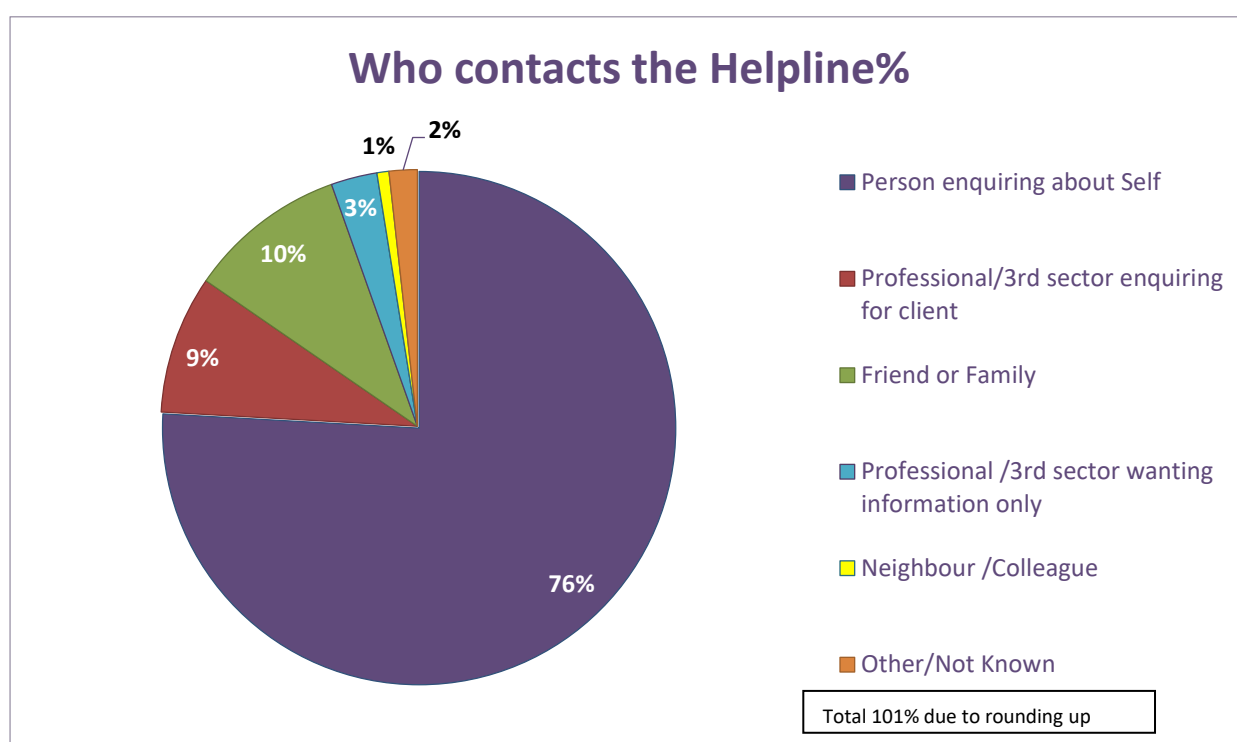
In 2017 there was a **36%** increase in the numbers of clients supported by the Helpline compared to 2016 and an overall growth to **792** clients in 2017 (from a starting point of 335 clients in 2015 and 583 clients in 2016)

As noted in previous reports it has been important from the beginning that the statistics in these reports have integrity. There is therefore a distinction that has been made consistently between the volume of calls and the number of people actually helped. By just recording numbers of contacts it is easy to mislead funders and other stakeholders. If the

Helpline only provides statistics about contacts it could be over stating the number of people who have been helped by assuming all contacts are clients when some of these calls will be from other professionals and services. By breaking down the data into types of callers an accurate picture is provided that demonstrates that the majority of contacts are from service users.

The analysis of the callers to the Helpline is very similar to 2016 with the majority of the calls from individuals enquiring about their own issues (**76%**) This is followed by calls from friends or family (10%) or professional/3rd sector (9%) on behalf of other people. Only **2.9%** of the Helpline calls were from professionals or other agencies asking for general information that was not relating to the specific needs of an individual client.

This data is reassuring for funders because it clearly shows that the majority of the calls handled by the Helpline are directly supporting the needs of individual Muslim women.



Professionals included college and school teachers, police, social workers and health professionals. Third sector organisations included women’s charities and organisations that are focus on issues such as domestic and sexual violence

The average number of clients supported each month is **66** compared to 49 people in 2016 and 28 in 2015. The team started the year with very high levels of client contact and were clearly building on high levels of client engagement in 2016 with an average of over 70 beneficiaries each month for the first 3 months of the year. There is a marked decline in the number of beneficiaries at the end of the year with November and December recording 45 and 39 beneficiaries, significantly below the average score.

This change in contacts reflects the challenging operational circumstances with two key members of staff having taking up new roles and a gap in appointing new team members

combined with higher than average levels of sick days recorded. This necessitated some full or half day closures of the Helpline because there were insufficient people to handle calls.

The increase in the size of the team during 2018 will help to provide more robustness within the staffing levels to ensure that service delivery is not affected to the same extent.



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 even more valuable as we move into the third 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 and some of this data is being offered to other agencies (within the constraints of privacy requirements)

Gender of Clients

The Helpline is branded as a Muslim Women’s Helpline and the gender of the callers broadly reflect this, although the proportion of male callers (often calling on behalf of someone else) has increased from previous reports. Calls from men included interested in converting to Islam, relationships / marriage (including non- Muslim men in relationships with Muslim women), divorce, depression, sexuality.

91.7% of calls were from women, 6.7% from men and 1.6% were unknown gender.

Age of Clients

Age was specified in **72%** of the calls, which remains consistent with the data collected in previous years. Contacts where age was specified range from 13 clients who are under 16 to 7 who are over 60 years old.

There is a significant increase of clients in the younger age groups, **12.1%** of clients are 21 or under in 2017. This compares to 9% in 2016 and may reflect additional activities from the team during 2017 to target this age group. This is an age group that MWNUK recognise are particularly vulnerable to abuse through forced marriage, sexual grooming and honour based violence so the organisation are keen to continue to explore ways of reaching out to this age group through outreach activities and programmes in schools.

Ages of callers	2015 %	2016 %	2017 %
Under 16	3.6	2	1.6
16-18	4.2	3	3.8
19-21	4.8	4	6.7
22-25	13	12	12.5
26-30	13	15	13.4
31-40	20	24	21.1
41-50	11	11	9.6
51-60	1.5	1	2.5
Over 60	0.9	1	0.9
Not Specified	28	27	27.9

In common with previous years the majority of the calls are from women in their 20s and 30s, 47% of callers were between 22 and 40 years old. This group of women will often have children and are in relationships. This is consistent with previous years and reflects the demographic that the MWNUK Helpline targeted when the Helpline was first established.

Faith of Clients

97% of clients (where faith was specified) were Muslim. Faith was not recorded in just 7.6% of the calls which is down on previous reports indicating that the team are adept at picking up this information in the majority of the calls. This information is often discerned from the context of the call because the beneficiary will often be making contact because of a specific faith or cultural context for their query.

Ethnic Background of Clients

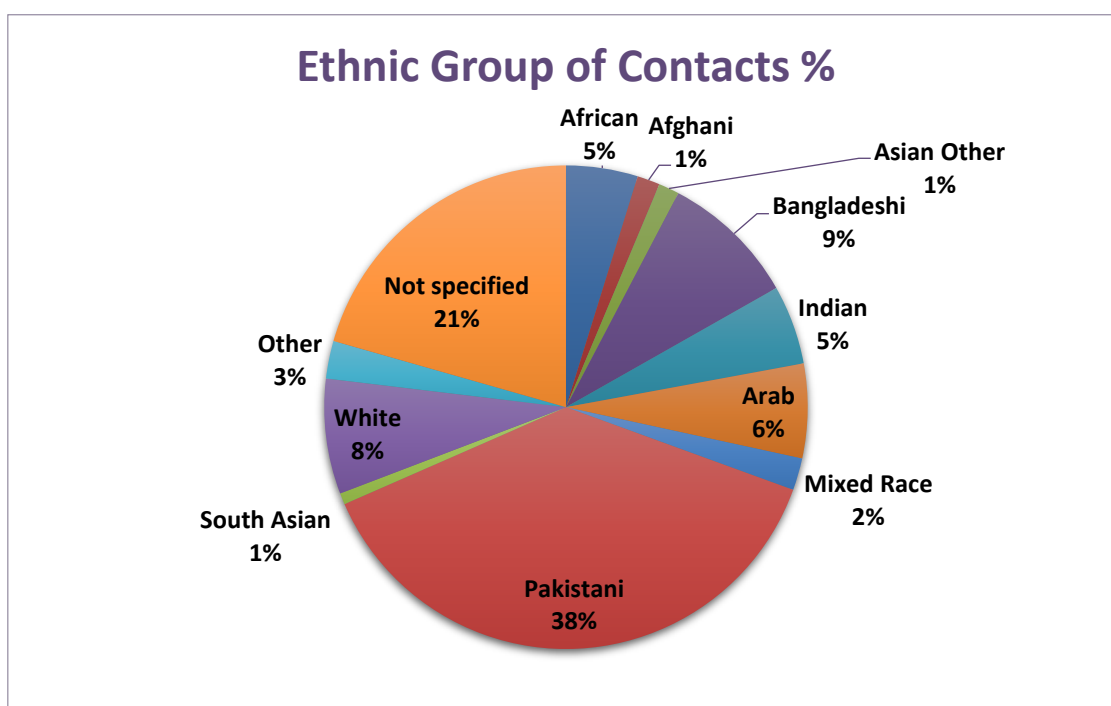
According to the Muslim Council of Britain's review of the 2011 Census data (<http://bit.ly/1Efl8zD>) the UK Muslim population is ethnically diverse, with 68% classified as Asian, including people of Pakistani, Indian, Chinese and South Asian backgrounds. Overall 8% of the Muslim population is from a white ethnic background.

In calls to the Helpline where ethnic background was specified (**79.42%**) the ethnic background of callers to the Helpline are very similar to the breakdown by the Muslim Council of Britain’s review. This data was collected using the broad categories for the census data and follow a similar correlation between the two data sets as we observed in the 2016 report.

	2011 Census	2016 Callers Ethnic Background (where specified)	2017 Callers Ethnic Background (where specified)
White	7.8%	7%	9.7
Mixed	3.8%	2.7%	2.7
Asian	67.6%	69.0%	70.4
Black	10.1%	8.1%	6.2
Other	10.7%	13.3%	11.0

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 (**38%**). This figure is consistent with the findings in 2016 and shows a more marked diversity in ethnic background than in the first year of operation.

In 2017 the team have clearly made more concerted efforts to record ethnic groups. The “not known” category has reduced from 24% to 20% of the calls and it is hoped that this trend of collecting Ethnic Group data will continue with the new management team in 2018.



By removing the **21% of 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.) Although the categories are slightly different this breakdown gives a broad insight into the typical person making contact with the Helpline service. This also shows that the diversity of people contacting the Helpline remains consistent with no significant movement and broadly in line with the expectations based on the 2011 Census breakdown.

ETHNICITY	2011 Census % of Muslim population from ethnic groups	2016 Helpline Calls % Ethnic Background where specified	2017 Helpline Calls %Ethnic background where specified
Black African/Caribbean/Other	10.1	8	6
Other Asian (Afghani/S Asian/ Other Asian)	7.2	3	5
Bangladeshi	14.9	11	11
Indian	7.3	5	7
Arab	6.6	9	8
Mixed Race	3.8	3	3
Pakistani	38	51	48
White	7.8	7	10
Other	4.1	2	3

Language of Clients

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

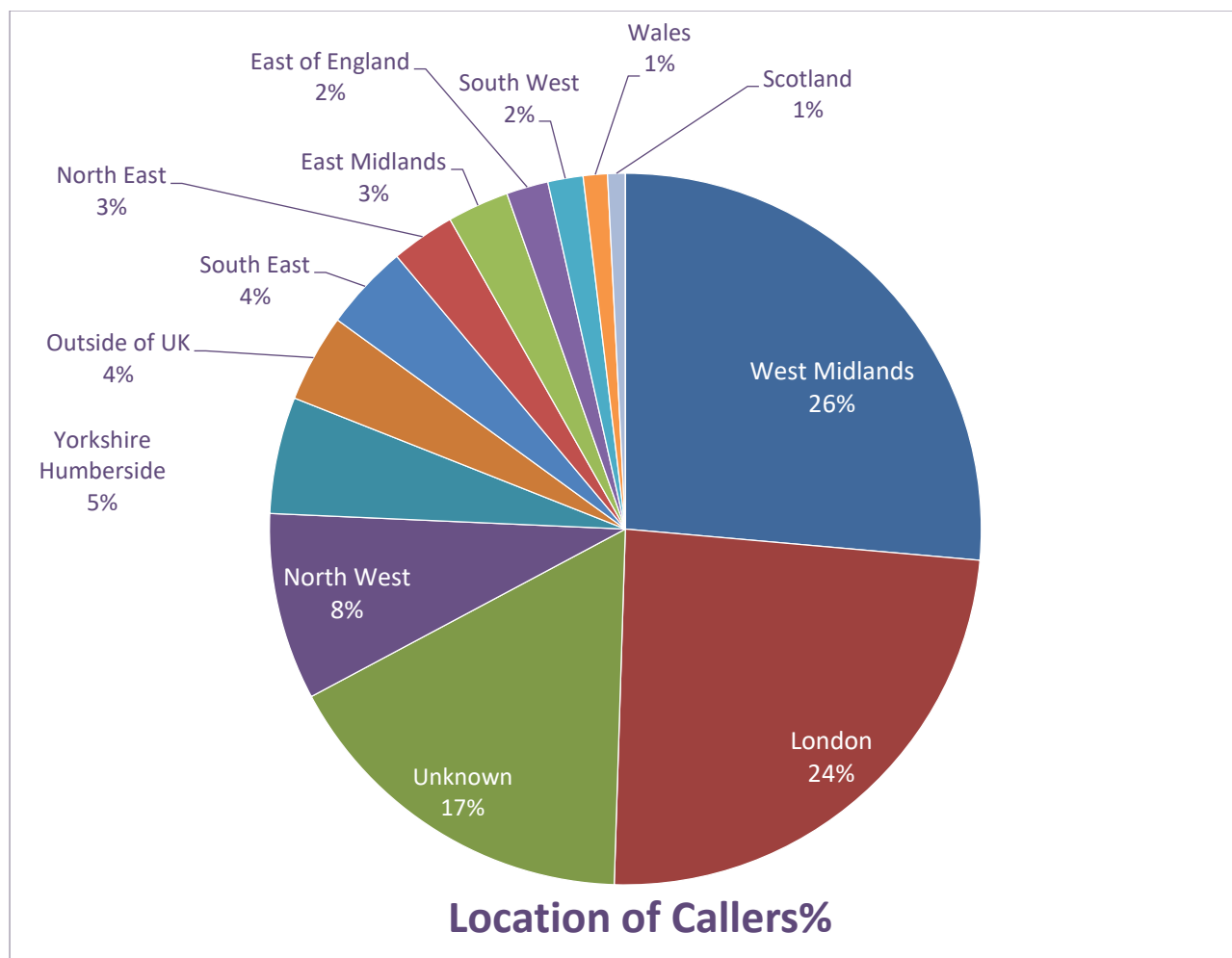
LANGUAGE USED	RECORDED	%
Arabic	3	0.4
Punjabi /Mirpuri	4	0.5
Urdu	21	2.7
Other	2	0.2

During 2017 the Helpline Team signed up to a language line so that calls can be handled even when the Helpline workers are not fluent in that language. In the recruitment drive for new Helpline workers the team sought to extend the range of languages that can be spoken and one of the new helpline workers for 2018 will be a Bengali speaker.

Location of Clients

83% of callers were recorded against a specific location and the majority of calls with a location recorded were either from the West Midlands or London.

The physical base for the Helpline is in the West Midlands, where there is a large Muslim population and the service has consistently been used by Muslim women in this location. Over the three years of operation there has been a steady growth in calls from other locations as the Helpline is growing in its reputation as a national service.



Once the unknown calls are taken out we can compare the data to the previous years and to the regional census breakdown. There are no significant changes in the breakdown of location of callers when compared to previous years and to the 2011 census data. Two outreach workers were appointed towards the end of 2017. One of the workers has a national remit, whilst the other worker is based in the North West. Their arrival had limited impact as this increase in outreach activity coincided with the decrease in staffing levels on the Helpline. It is hoped that over 2018 the combination of outreach workers and an increase in the staffing of the Helpline will continue to extend the reach of the Helpline service from the Midlands and London to other large Muslim population centres, in particular Yorkshire and Humberside region.

LOCATION RECORDED	2011 Census % of Muslims by location	2015%	2016%	2017%
East of England	5.5	3	6	2.3
East Midlands	5.2	4	4	3.3
London	37.4	16	28	28.9
North East	1.7	4	2	3.5
Northern Ireland	-	1	Less than 1%	0
North West	13.2	7	10	10.2
Outside of UK	-	2	4	4.8
Scotland	-	1	1	0.9
South East	7.5	6	5	4.7
South West	1.9	2	1	2.0
Wales	1.7	Less than 1%	2	1.4
West Midlands	13.9	33	29	31.7
Yorkshire Humberside	12	6	7	6.4
		<i>Data based on the 83% of calls where location was recorded</i>		

This data can be found on the MWN Helpline Dashboard <http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/muslim-women-helpline-dashboard.php>

In updating the dashboard we noticed some minor errors in the 2015 data from the previous reports, this has now been amended so the above table reflects the correct data.

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.

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. Over the course of 2017 the Helpline team dealt with calls that covered 42 different issues. The new issues recorded were:

- Addiction (other – not alcohol or drugs related addiction) - these calls were often about gambling or porn addiction issues of the caller's partners
- Bereavement
- Sexual Harassment

The five issues that were raised most frequently are very similar to the pattern we observed in 2016 with both domestic abuse and mental health feelings dominating the calls. The main change this year is that faith and spirituality seem to have become more significant in the calls. Faith/spirituality was mentioned in 15% of the calls during 2017.

- Domestic Abuse – 38% of calls mentioned this as an issue
- Mental Health Feelings – 24%
- Divorce 17% and Relationships 17%
- Faith and Spirituality – 15%
- Housing/Homelessness- 13%

For Muslim women issues of faith and spirituality are inseparable from their lives, and the range of issues covered in calls that were classified with the category “Faith and spirituality” are exceptionally varied. The issues covered in these calls included religious practices, dress issues – including whether Western style clothing could be compatible with their faith, the permissibility of interacting with male colleagues or friends, converting or leaving Islam, interfaith marriage, and male chaperones

Faith and spirituality were also relevant in calls about challenging issues such as marital rape, abortion, sexuality and often was part of the overall context for calls relating to wider mental health/self-harm/suicidal thoughts.

There were **792** clients where at least one issue was identified as the purpose of the call. As previous reports have noted many calls to the Helpline are complex and multi-issued based. In 2017 **75%** of clients had more than one issue that was covered in the intervention by the Helpline and **36%** of clients wanted support on at least three issues.

We are seeing a continued growth in the complexity of calls from 2016 (68% reported secondary issues and 28% had three or more issues) and from the first year of operation (where just 51% of calls had secondary issues and 17% had three or more issues covered in the intervention) This growth in complexity could be due to the enhanced reputation of the Helpline for being able to handle complex situations and will also be due to the increase in skill and confidence of the Helpline employees in being able to delve beneath the “presenting problem” to explore other issues which may be even more important to the life choices the client is dealing with.

The complexity of the situations dealt with by the Helpline team can be a cause of stress amongst the employees. One of the [cases](#) dealt with in 2017 involved criminal justice system, immigration, forced marriage, mental health, sexual violence and an overall background of poverty and social injustice. Trying to support women to navigate a way through the complexity of these multiple issues can threaten to overwhelm even the most resilient of the Helpline workers.

“Thank you very much for intervening and assisting me. I had found it so difficult as I didn’t speak English properly. I was able to sort out my payment arrears, and get additional support for my daughter. This has really helped with the stress I am under”

Woman with child with a disability needing a care package assessment

The complexity and wide range of issues that are covered also makes it challenging to train and develop new team members. Although new team members were recruited in January it is unlikely that they will have completed all their training and be able to handle the full range of calls until April, this will impact on the operational effectiveness of the Helpline Service in 2018 and will continue to affect the stress levels of the established team members.

Domestic abuse was the **initial reason** for 150 of the clients making contact with the Helpline and these calls can also cover other issues such as forced marriage, honour based violence and the impact of this on a women’s mental health as she will often feel trapped in and overwhelmed by the complexity of situation she finds herself in. The Helpline [case studies](#) provide many examples of these types of complexities.

193 of clients had concerns that related to mental health. The team has completed training on Mental Health this year and recognise the importance of the issue. The team comment that they are more adept at spotting mental health issues when raised in a call and feel

Mental Health issues and feelings are an important theme that can make calls even more challenging and complex. Seeking additional mental health training will support the Helpline team to identify and handle calls that relate to mental health issues.

“We are more informed now about mental health. We know that is important to accept that what is being described is her reality, it may sound strange to us but we can’t dismiss what she is saying, we have learnt the different reasons why people may create different realities to explain difficult situations to us”

Faith and spirituality were issues raised by **118 clients**. One of the unique features of the Muslim Women’s Helpline is that the team are able to provide information and support from an Islamic perspective and their background understanding of faith issues can help support their understanding of the wider context behind an inquiry. It is often important to be able to provide an alternative understanding of Islamic rights and to provide a more progressive view of Islam than may be provided by other organisations.

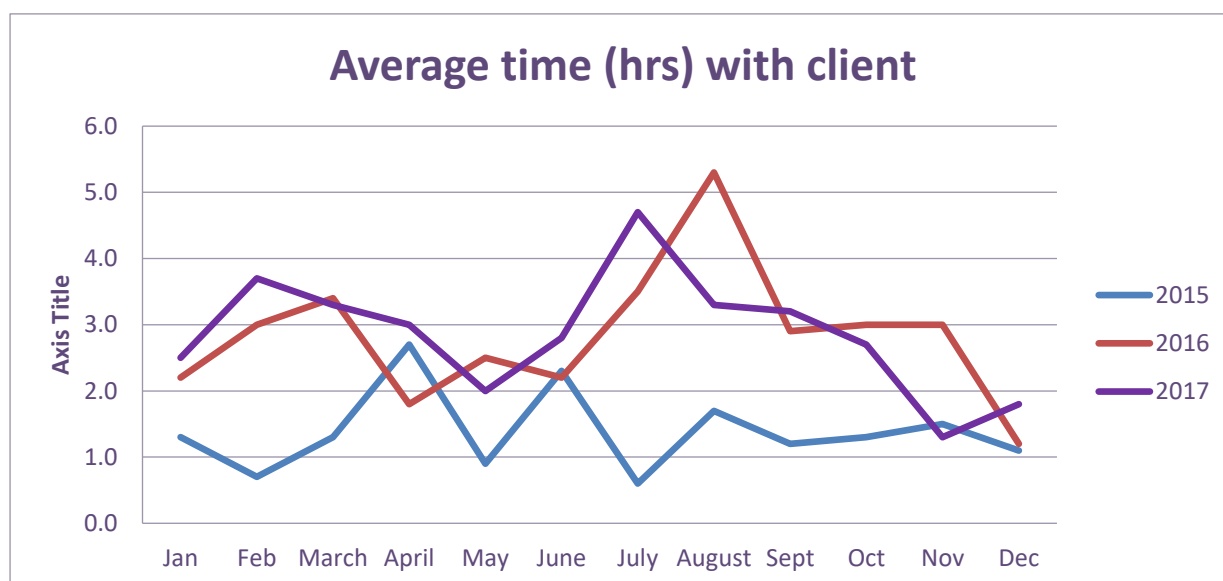
During 2017 funding was re-established for a specialist faith and culturally sensitive counselling service for a short period of time. There continues to be high demand for this service and only clients who have the most complex needs can be referred to the service. Longer term funding for this service will be sought.

TIME SPENT WITH CLIENTS

When the Helpline was established the aim was for it to be a Helpline service and not a case work service. There continues to be a tension in the operation of the Helpline about the length and depth of engagement with individual clients. One of the challenges that needed to be addressed in the final months of 2017 was the large number of “open cases” which alarmed the executive team of the Helpline. A proactive process of case closure helped to reduce the number of open cases. This had a benefit of relieving the sense of being overwhelmed by case working responsibilities for the Helpline team members. It also helped to open up a dialogue about the boundaries of a Helpline service and how this will differ from other helping focused organisations.

In the 2016 report it was noted how the amount of time spent on each client and their needs had increased by 264% to almost 3 hours. This pattern has continued in 2017 and if we take out the 102 contacts where there was either no or very limited intervention (eg where messages were left but there was no reply when the call was returned) then the time spent with each active client is 3.37 hours. In total **2328** hours have been directly spent talking to clients and taking action to get them information, make referrals or to act as their advocate to other agencies.

The chart below shows the average time spent each month with each of the clients. There is a similar pattern to 2016, with a clear peak period around the summer months. In 2017 this peak was in July and in 2016 it was August, both were the month AFTER Ramadan, which may have significance in the same way as within many communities there are peaks in domestic crisis and divorce applications AFTER the Christmas festivities period.



In the previous reports and in discussions with the team the growing amount of time being spent with each client was causing concern. The Helpline does not have a large team and is funded as a Helpline service, designed to offer initial support and to signpost women to appropriate services. The caring nature of the team, combined with their skilful questioning meant that they were often finding layers of complexity in each call and were then struggling to hand the situation over to a case carrying service because there is a lack of services that are appropriate for the sensitive needs of many of the clients who call the Muslim Women’s Helpline.

I have been supported from day 1 with kindness, legal advice, support and general good advice about what to do with my life. My life is finally moving forward and the Helpline has had a big hand in that. Without them I do not know where I would be. When I have my life back I hope I can repay them by supporting the work that they do.”

[Mona](#) – Forced Marriage/Immigration/Domestic Violence

The intensity of the case working/pro-active follow up could not be sustained and put the team under a huge amount of pressure. Interventions were made during the staffing crisis (July to December) to reduce the load on the team members and to review procedures so that the amount of time spent on each call was more sustainable and that cases were not held open on the system unnecessarily.

This process of review will continue in 2018 as the new Helpline manager and team members become established and it is hoped that this will result in more calls being handled with less time being spent on each client, unless additional funding can be found for a more intensive case handling service.

IMPACT OF THE HELPLINE

In the 2016 an impact recording process was introduced to the Helpline. At the end of the call the Helpline worker will record up to three impact statements that reflect the outcomes for this client. This process was further developed and improved during 2017. This data is compared to the data from 2016. 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 the percentage of overall clients where this was noted.

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 who spoke with the team were (up to three impacts for each client)	2017 %
Better Informed of Support Available	40
Better informed of safety issues / advice	20
Felt listened to	17
Given help by other support services due to our referral	14
Better informed of their Islamic rights	14
Client better informed of legal rights	11
More confident to deal with problems	9
Client helped at crisis point	5
Client helped before situation reached crisis point	4
Client moved to safety	4
Client improved mental health due to counselling referral	2
Client more confident to challenge/leave abusive/harmful situations	2
Client feels less isolated	1
Prevented self-harm/suicide	0.6

There are a number of contacts made (102) where it is difficult to assess the impact. This is mainly because these clients made contact by leaving a message and although the team will have responded back several times there was no further response given so no intervention could take place.

The impact of the Helpline interventions in 2017 is very similar to the findings in 2016. It is clear that clients appreciate being able to make contact and be given information about both support services and action to help improve personal/family safety and for this to be given in an appropriate Islamic context.

“I think the helpline is really needed. The fact that it is over the telephone is vital ... some of the people who came on the line were people stuck at home who could not get out. Also some people don't want face to face support - when you start working in the community you realise how small it is – your client is a cousin of the person they saw last week.” (Member of MWNUK)

A new impact outcome has been added this year by the team - “felt listened to”. The team felt this was often one of the main benefits that clients spoke about during the call, the relief of having uninterrupted time to be able to talk through their worries and concerns.

HARDSHIP FUND

During 2016 a Hardship fund was established to provide limited financial support on a discretionary basis to adults and children regarded as vulnerable following contact with the Helpline for support.

The fund has been operational in 2017 and a total of £668.46 was provided to 6 women. The fund has a limited impact due to the lack of donations to the fund; this represents a funding opportunity which could be attractive to some organisations who want to directly support vulnerable adults and children within the Muslim community.

In addition to the Hardship fund applications more than 12 applications were put into the National Zakat Foundation for women in financial need. The amounts of funding requested varied, up to a maximum request of £250. The tracking of these applications will be improved during 2018 so that the outcomes of the funding application can be easily accessed in a centralised format.

SECTION THREE: MEASURING IMPACT: CASE STUDIES

These case studies are from a selection of the calls made in 2017 and reflect the wide variety of issues that are covered in the calls to the Helpline.

IMMIGRATION / ABUSE

Mona was forced into marriage and brought into the UK as a teenager by a much older man. She was beaten and raped regularly, prevented from having friends, prevented from studying, forced to wear the headscarf, not allowed to wear makeup and could only have supervised phone conversations with family. During one domestic abuse incident, Mona injured her husband in self-defence. Due to poor legal representation and Mona not understanding the legal process she was given a custodial sentence despite having a young child and having mitigating circumstances leading up to the offence.

The helpline started supporting Mona while she was in prison and has continued to help her now that she is out on probation. She is being supported on: appealing her sentence, family law proceedings to obtain child contact, securing her immigration status, accommodation, counselling and hardship funds until she receives benefits. This is an ongoing case.

DIVORCE

Anaya had an arranged marriage. When her spouse came to the UK he was abusive which included marital rape. He also refused to financially support her. He would instead send his wages to his family abroad.

When Anaya contacted a Shariah council for divorce, she felt uncomfortable at having to provide intimate details to three men. She contacted the helpline to intervene on her behalf as the panel was only willing to provide her with an Islamic divorce if she gave her husband a huge financial compensation amounting to over £10000. The helpline had Anaya's marriage certificate translated into English and challenged the Shariah council's assessment. However, when they did not cooperate, her case was referred to another trusted service with all of the paperwork summarising the case. Anaya was supported through the process and the Islamic divorce was issued without any financial compensation being required.

SEXUALITY / RELATIONSHIPS

Saiqa is married with children and contacted the helpline because she wants to leave her husband because he is gay. She had known for a long time that he was gay due to lack of intimacy and had caught him on gay websites. However, she felt pressured to stay in the marriage from her husband's family. Although she wants to leave, she has been struggling with the emotional pressure being applied to persuade her to stay in the marriage. She

wanted to talk through her situation and find the confidence to take control of her own life.

The helpline gave her general advice, encouraged her to put her wellbeing first and also talked through her options and what steps she needed to take.

FORCED MARRIAGE / MARITAL RAPE / DOMESTIC ABUSE

When Bilquis contacted the helpline she was crying. She had been raped again by her husband. It was a forced marriage and he hits her regularly and the beatings get worse when she refuses to have sex with him. She says now she just complies with his demands. He has also told her that she has to keep getting pregnant until she gives birth to a boy and blames her for producing only girls telling her that she is not producing a boy because 'she has not been cut.'

The helpline provided safety advice, information on her rights including contacting the police on her behalf. Details of support available including safe accommodation were provided. Bilquis wanted to think through her options before making any decisions. She felt better knowing that if she leaves she would be supported.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE / MARITAL RAPE / HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

Nazia called the helpline because her husband beats and rapes her. She has been putting up with it for years. She has been told by her own family that it is her Islamic duty to comply with her husband's sexual demands and if she does not then she would be committing a sin. Recently he beat up their daughter for wearing Western clothes and this was a turning point for Nazia. She wanted him out of her life and wants to know what she can do.

After talking through about her rights and options, with support from the helpline, Nazia contacted the police herself and a non-molestation order served on her husband. She was also supported to seek counselling.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION / MENTAL HEALTH

A Muslim female teenager was groomed online and raped in different locations. She wanted to be referred to a faith and culturally sensitive counselling service to help her to cope with her trauma.

She was referred to the internal MWN Counselling service and also provided support and advice on dealing with the criminal justice system.

FORCED MARRIAGE

Aisha contacted the helpline because she refused to marry her cousin and has told her parents. She has told them she has a boyfriend and wants to marry him instead. The parents will not agree to her marrying her boyfriend and are still pressuring her to marry her

cousin. She has attempted suicide and was taken to the hospital and is receiving counselling.

Aisha was provided with legal and safety advice including options. This resulted in Aisha moving out of her parents' house. However, she did not want to move in with her boyfriend because she does not want to be cut off from her parents because she loves them. She agreed to inform her parents that forced marriage is against the law as she thinks they may not be aware. After talking things through she will be getting her boyfriend's family involved to try and resolve the issue.

DOMESTIC ABUSE / EXTREMISM

Anna woman contacted the helpline because she was very frightened of her husband. He was extremely violent and would try and justify his actions by quoting verses from the Quran she did not understand. He had put a tracker on her phone and would sometimes strip her and lock her outside. She said she was too frightened to call the police because her husband had told her she would not be believed.

When the helpline explored the husband's past with Anna, she revealed that he had three previous marriages and that he had also been very violent towards previous partners. She also revealed that he had also been convicted of extremism / terror related offences abroad. The helpline contacted the police (including counter terrorism) and Anna was placed in safe accommodation. The helpline also referred the case to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and made a referral for hardship fund support.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE / SELF HARM

Noreen, a teenager contacted the helpline because she was self-harming and had regular suicidal thoughts. She said she contacted the helpline to distract herself. She had felt neglected by her parents growing up and her neighbour had sexually abused her until she was a teenager. She feels lonely and struggles to make friends at school. She also feels depressed all the time. Although she had eventually disclosed the abuse to her family and police were called and she has support from her school and social worker, she feels she can't talk to them openly.

Noreen contacted the helpline over several weeks and just wanted someone to listen to her until she felt a bit more confident to cope with her feelings. The helpline was unable to make contact with her social worker or school as Noreen would not provide any details including identifying details. However, she was provided information about a local specialist free counselling service for youth.

HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

Zara married a man residing in the UK who is originally from Afghanistan. His immigration application is currently with the Home Office to enable him to stay in the UK due to the marriage.

However, the marriage has broken down which means he is unlikely to obtain leave to remain in the UK. She wants to divorce him. However, he has threatened her with extreme violence claiming that 'in his country women don't divorce their husbands and when they dishonour husbands in this way they have acid thrown in their faces.' She was really frightened as he has also threatened to kill himself and harm her.

Zara was immediately referred to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and police contacted.

FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY / RELATIONSHIPS

Komal wants to marry her boyfriend who was a Hindu but has converted to Islam. However, her family are not happy and do not accept him, accusing him of not being a real Muslim. She wanted to know where she stands Islamically and wants to reconcile with her family as she misses them. She wanted some general advice on talking to her family.

The helpline provided information about her rights under both UK law and Islam and also provided some general guidance on engaging with her family about the issue.

RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sabrina is a university student and was raped by a friend she trusted. She was distraught and wanted to talk through her feelings as she felt she could not speak to any family member or friend due to fear of the rape being disclosed, being blamed and consequences from her family. She did not want to report the matter to the police and just wanted to talk.

The helpline listened and provided information on specialist that was available to her including counselling.

HOUSING / HOMELESSNESS

Maliha has three children and had lost her job and had fallen behind on her rent. She has also separated from her partner due to domestic violence. She had been served with an eviction notice to leave the property she was renting. She was worried about being made homeless with three young children.

A referral was made to another organisation and social services. She was supported to apply for benefits and placed in emergency accommodation.

SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Over the last three year the MWNUK have built positive working relationships with other agencies and this has supported the work of the Helpline. The 2017 internal report for MWNUK noted the successful development of partnerships with other agencies

MWNUK has forged links with generic NGOs, statutory bodies and faith institutions. Several of these were interviewed during the evaluation and it was clear that MWNUK had managed to gain the confidence and trust of many

Involvement is often sought from statutory agencies – in particular the police and social services to support vulnerable adults and children and referrals are made to other third sector organisations. Records kept by the team have been invaluable to the statutory agencies where legal action is taken and the detailed call logs have provided a clear timeline for the investigations. There have been two serious cases during 2016 where the notes kept by the Helpline workers were used as part of the witness statement to support women in domestic violence situations.

POLICE INVOLVEMENT

Since 2016 the Helpline team have begun specifically recording the number of clients where there was police involvement in the case. **25%** of cases recorded in 2017 had an element of police involvement, an increase from 17% of cases in 2016. This could sometimes be involvement prior to the call or it could be that the client was advised to contact the police after the call.

In **11%** of these calls where the police were involved this was initiated by the Helpline Team, which sometimes goes against the wishes of the client following the duty of care that the Helpline has to vulnerable adults and children.

SOCIAL SERVICES INVOLVEMENT

Another important statutory agency is Social Services. 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 and this involvement has increased to **14.5%** in 2017. The Helpline team contacted the relevant social services

department directly in **19%** of the calls involving social services, often because of a safeguarding concern.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Year	Total Cases	Safeguarding Cases	% Safeguarding Cases
2017	792	111	14%
2016	583	30	5%
2015	335	7	2%

Some of the information shared during calls raises concerns about the safety of the client and/or others involved with them. At times the duty to protect the safety of vulnerable adults and children overrides the principle of confidentiality.

Safeguarding cases most commonly included situations involving domestic violence (approx. 50%) and Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage (approx. 30%) and self-harm/Suicide (20%) Other safeguarding cases recorded have involved child protection issues, sexual abuse and homelessness.

Safeguarding is a very important issue for the team and during 2017 a training session was held with the team in February to review cases where there were safeguarding concerns to discuss the issues involved and to explore what the most appropriate response would be.

The Helpline team have a clear protocol that has to be used when there are safeguarding concerns. Each case is logged and is discussed with the safeguarding officer who then approves disclosure to the appropriate professional agency.

The total number of recorded safeguarding cases has risen from **7** in 2015 to **111** in 2017. 14% of the cases handled by the Helpline during 2017 were felt to have a safeguarding element to them and a requirement for additional monitoring and follow up to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults and children.

In June 2017 a Safeguarding Audit took place, reviewing all current cases. The audit identified a number of cases where an initial report had been written but where the follow up activities (required in the protocol) had not been recorded. The process opened up conversations within the team about the Safeguarding process.

There is a high awareness of Safeguarding concerns within the team and this is something that must continue. However it is recognised that there are different levels of Safeguarding concern and risks. The team use the DASH Assessment Tool (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence risk identification and assessment management) which is used by the police and other agencies and provides a checklist to assess the level of risk in each situation.

The original Helpline Safeguarding procedure was applied to all Safeguarding cases regardless of the level of risk. This was appropriate during the Helpline start-up phase because it helped the team to recognise patterns and encouraged the team members to have Safeguarding concerns on their radar.

Over time the Safeguarding procedure has become time consuming and for the lower risk cases it feels out of proportion to require a report to be written and sent to the Safeguarding Officer. It had become routine for the team to apply the procedure of 3 follow up contacts to every safeguarding concern regardless of the level of risk. The Audit highlighted that this level of follow up was not sustainable given the level of calls being handled by the Helpline.

It was recognised that other agencies are also using the DASH assessment tool and will not usually take any direct action on the lower risk concerns so forwarding the information to other agencies could be counterproductive because it could risk the higher risk referrals being missed in the data overload. It was agreed to stop writing reports for Low Risk cases but to continue to ensure that everything has been done to mitigate the risks.

The new Helpline manager will be developing and implementing Safeguarding procedures to support the team in getting the risk assessment and management to a level that does not overwhelm the team but still protects vulnerable adults and children from the risk of harm.

SUPPORTING CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES

In the 2016 report the case of a young woman who had to repay her repatriation costs following a forced marriage was highlighted. This issue was raised in a Helpline call and resulted in a campaign of awareness raising with the government.

In 2017 this resulted in a policy change so that victims of forced marriage who are under 18 are not penalised for the costs of their repatriation to the UK and demonstrates a very clear link between the work of the Helpline and the wider campaigning for social justice for Muslim women from the MWNUK organisation.

During the later stages of 2017 another [complex case](#) was being handled by the Helpline which involved a young woman who involving forced marriage abroad, domestic abuse in the UK and imprisonment of the victim who then lost her rights to remain in the UK with her young daughter. Supporting the victim through the complexity of the case was very time consuming and was clearly outside of the remit for the Helpline but there were no other agencies that were willing or able to provide support. This case and similar cases have been used in an application for funding for a case worker post to specialise in criminal justice situations so that the experience of Muslim women within the criminal justice system can be documented and explored.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

In December 2015 a short pilot study was established for a counselling service to be offered to support callers to the Helpline Line. The funding for the pilot was ended in April 2016 and a report is available on the [website http://bit.ly/2EKGGAL](http://bit.ly/2EKGGAL)

In October 2017 with funding support from the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Victims Fund and [Charles Haywood Foundation](#) the counselling service was made available for all women who need a deeper level of support and who fit the criteria. This has helped the Helpline workers to be able to refer women to a culturally sensitive counselling support. The funding was short term and limited to 6 months up to April 2018.

Additional funding has been provided for 2017-2022 for counselling for £5,500 from the Reaching Communities Big Lottery Grant. Some of this funding (£500) will support counselling for staff, the rest will provide counselling support but at a very minimal level (£1,000 a year) and to meet the demand for a faith specific counselling service additional funding must be sought.

SECTION FIVE: STRATEGIC PLANNING

The previous Helpline reports have highlighted a number of strategic issues that need consideration. The management team have responded positively to all the suggestions for improvement in previous years. Although 2017 was a challenging year operationally for the Helpline service all the recommendations from 2016 have been addressed at some level, although many will continue to require action as we enter into 2018.

Recommendations	Progress
<p>1. Seek funding for additional Helpline workers –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</p>	<p>The quest for a longer term funding grant has always been a challenge for the Helpline. During 2017 the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund provided a 5 year grant of £498,286 to fund the development of the Helpline service.</p> <p>In December 2017 a fundraising campaign was launched that specifically targeted the leading Muslim charities to encourage donations from the Muslim community. Funding bids have been made for case workers, including a specific case worker for Criminal Justice issues.</p>
<p>2. Funding for an In-House Counselling Service –Further funding for a culturally and faith sensitive counsellor to support the work of the team would help provide a depth of support beyond the Helpline response.</p>	<p>Funding for a further 6 months of counselling support has been provided by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner’s Victims of Crime Fund and by The Charles Haywood Foundation. This funding will run from October 2017 to March 2018. A £5,500 annual contribution to the counselling service has been made as part of the wider Reaching Communities Big Lottery Grant for the next 5 years. There will need to be additional funding to enable the counselling service to meet the growing demand for the service.</p>
<p>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 is recommended to discuss faith based issues and the impacts of the Helpline work on spiritual well-being of the team members.</p>	<p>This strategic session was moved to January 2018 so that it could involve the new Helpline manager and team and would build on the findings of the wider MWNUK Internal Evaluation report.</p>
<p>4. Streamline and Make Use of Data</p>	<p>A review has been completed of the data</p>

<p>Recording – explore ways of streamlining the recording system to reduce duplication and time spent and paperwork. 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.</p>	<p>recording system which has highlighted duplication in the different recording systems in use. Changes are being made, in consultation with the new Helpline Manager, to create a more user friendly interface on the database so that this will amalgamate the existing recording systems into one place.</p>
<p>5. Conduct Regular Case Reviews - 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. Consider identifying case studies throughout the year so that these can be easily referenced and referred to during outreach work and in the wider advocacy work of the MWNUK.</p>	<p>During October to December there was a review of all cases. This review identified 50 cases that no longer needed to be open. This process highlighted the need for more frequent case reviews to encourage closure where there is no need for any current active engagement. Part of the remit for the new Helpline manager is to review cases and this process will also highlight useful case studies.</p>
<p>6. Increase Management Hours – 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.</p>	<p>In July 2017 the existing Helpline manager left for a career development opportunity and was replaced by another member of the team, who then left in November for a role with more hours and pay. A strategic decision was taken to increase the salary for the Helpline Manager so that a more experienced manager could be recruited; however this was only possible by reducing the hours for the manager role.</p>
<p>7. Support Strategy and Training for the Management Team- Time to be set aside for the management team to shape their development plans 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.</p>	<p>A planned programme of management coaching was provided during the early part of 2017 to support the development of the Helpline Manager. She subsequently left the organisation to further develop her career goals. During the latter part of 2017 an internal review was conducted and it was agreed to hold a Helpline Strategy event once the new Helpline Manager was in role in 2018. The new manager has been encouraged to propose ideas to further develop the Helpline and team performance. A new policy has been introduced so that any specialist training costs will need to be repaid (proportionally) if team member decides to leave within a year of completing the training.</p>

<p>8. Continue to Develop Skills and Knowledge of the Team –workers attending training sessions will cascade the learning to the rest of the team. Funding to be provided for mental health training and housing issues</p>	<p>Training was attended by Helpline team members on Mental Health First Aid and Housing issues. These training sessions were then cascaded to other team members during internal training sessions.</p>
<p>9. Seek Funding for Increased Office Accommodation – An increase in office accommodation will help with the issue of background noise. It is also recommended that phone headsets with noise cancelling functionality are further explored.</p>	<p>The office accommodation has been under further stress this year due to renovations by the owner of the building There is now a room for the Helpline team and a separate organisational base office for the wider MWNUK team. Headsets have been explored but there are difficulties with the compatibility with the building owner’s phone system which has meant this issue remains outstanding and will need addressing in the future.</p>
<p>10. Seek ways to engage with the Under 21s age group –It was recommended to explore ways of promoting the Helpline to this group and continue to invest in technology which may be more appealing to this generation.</p>	<p>There is a slight increase in contacts from the 21 and under population which is a positive change. Although there were plans to develop an app based interface with the Helpline which was thought to be more attractive to younger people this has now proved unviable. A new marketing approach is being developed by MC Saatchi (pro-bono funded project via the Home Office) which will target under 21s to engage with the wider MWNUK and thereby spread the word amongst their peers. MWNUK have also worked with other groups such as Forward to run awareness programmes in schools and colleges on Forced Marriage and FGM</p>
<p>11. Develop On-Line Procedures – explore the process for creating an on line guide for procedures and guidelines so these are referred to during calls and case reviews.</p>	<p>Although there were plans to implement this over 2017 the changes to the management of the Helpline meant that this project was delayed until the appointment of the Helpline manager in 2018 so that she would be able to review and strengthen the procedures.</p>

12. Develop Protocols for Handling Silent Calls – 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 provide options for a silent response

In the initial training for the Helpline team members there is a session with the Samaritans which covered the protocol for silent calls. It is also covered in the procedures. The procedures were reviewed in 2017 and team members had a short refresher on the protocol to ensure that the procedure was fully understood and implemented by all team members.

DATA SHARING

In 2017 the new Helpline Dashboard was launched. This has been designed to share data to improve practice and policy regarding Muslim women and girls and can help with research and awareness raising of issues.

It is hoped that access to this open data will be useful for a variety of people including: decision makers, public bodies, politicians, civil servants, funders, academics, students and other third sector organisations. The dashboard provides a range of data about the calls made to the helpline, whilst stripping out any personal markers from this data. It is possible to drill into the data using pre-set categories or to create a bespoke research report – eg to find out which issues Bangladeshi women aged 22-30 contacted the Helpline for in 2016.

This level of data sharing is rare within funded organisations and it means that funders will be able to interrogate and dig into the data because it is presented in a clear, accessible format so it is easy to search for specific numbers of clients or calls from specific target groups.

To access the data individuals and organisations will need to register from this link on the website and will then be able to access the dashboard

<http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/muslim-women-helpline-dashboard.php>

RECRUITING AND RETAINING TEAM MEMBERS

During 2017 a new administrative support worker was appointed for MWNUK. This role relieves the Helpline management and others in the team from responding to administrative requests or to managing social media responses. The administrative worker has been able to support the Helpline team during the final months of 2017 with tasks which would have been taken on by the Helpline manager – for instance the rota management.

A recruitment plan was put in place to recruit replacements for workers who left the Helpline in 2017, including the Helpline manager. At the beginning of 2017 there were 7 workers/managers and their combined Helpline hours were 99 hours per week. This

includes the overall project manager who does not usually work on the Helpline calls. By the end of the year the number of workers had reduced to 5 workers with 85 hours, however one of the workers was off work on long term sick leave which reduced the actual workers to 4 and the hours available to 64.

This meant that the project manager/executive director of MWNUK had to cover some of the shifts, along with the Chair of Trustees who took a key role in managing the Helpline during the transitional period until a new manager was appointed. The contribution of both of these people enabled the Helpline to continue to provide a service during the staff shortage.

New workers, including a manager were appointed to start in January 2018. A total of 10 workers will be working on the Helpline in 2018, working 126 hours on direct Helpline Calls. In addition funding has been requested from Lloyds Bank Foundation for 2018 for case worker support for the Helpline (2 days a week) and a project will be starting in March 2018 for a Criminal Justice Caseworker (funded by Barrow Cadbury Trust) who will also be exploring the overall experience of Muslim Women of the Justice system to identify policy gaps that need to be addressed by the government.

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

During the first year of operation the Helpline proactively recruited volunteers however by the end of 2016 the decision had been taken to no longer involve volunteers directly in the Helpline Service due to the complexities and resource intensity of the training period.

In 2017 a strategic review took place about the role of volunteers in the Front Line Helpline operation. It was agreed in August to begin a recruitment process to recruit a limited number of volunteers. The volunteers were selected from existing contacts and members within the MWNUK. They were approached directly and asked if they would be interested in volunteering. Each individual volunteer brings specialist skills and knowledge to the team. In this round of selective recruitment the volunteers' time commitment has been assessed. The criteria were for volunteers who want to commit long term to supporting the Helpline and have the time to offer to do this.

In the earlier recruitment rounds a number of volunteers got involved because they were on training courses or in part time roles where the skills from the Helpline would help them in their future careers. There was a significant drop out from the end of the training to these volunteers becoming fully operationally effective. It is hoped that the 3 new volunteers who join the team in January 2018 will still be contributing to the Helpline by January 2019.

DEVELOPING THE TEAM

The third year of operation has been a challenging one for all members of the Helpline team. It has been noted in previous reports that the Helpline (in common with many third sector organisations) was reliant on a lot of discretionary effort from team members. These

contributions were made in a positive, generous spirit but over time this type of discretionary effort can have a big impact on the resilience of people working in such an emotionally affecting environment as the Helpline.

In June 2017 the Helpline manager decided to resign so she could take up the offer of another role and further progress her campaigning and managerial skills in a different context. It was a positive move for her but the impact of the resignation was described by Faeza Vaid, Executive Director, as “like bereavement” and the intensity of the feeling of loss was initially underestimated. In a small team the change of manager unsettled the team and the environment changed from a supportive energetic environment to a team that felt under pressure and vulnerable. This situation was further compounded by the short notice period (one month) which meant it was very challenging to complete a handover period to the new manager (an existing team member) and this increased the uncertainty in the team which was then further compounded when the new manager also found a different role that would support her own career development goals.

People were not leaving the Helpline because they were unhappy with the team or their role but because they wanted to further develop their careers. This type of career transition is inevitable in all organisations and the Helpline will benefit from continuing to explore succession planning so that in the future significant staffing changes have less of an impact on service delivery and team morale.

GROUP SUPPORT/CLINICAL SUPERVISION

The group support/supervision sessions that were introduced towards the end of 2016 have been continued throughout 2017. These sessions are held every month and the Helpline is closed for half a day to allow everyone to participate in the sessions.

The sessions provide a structured and supportive environment for the Helpline team to bring cases that have particularly affected them and to review these cases as a team. From these reviews it has been possible to identify recurring themes affecting all team members and to share good practice ideas for handling these situations in the future.

CASE MANAGEMENT

One of the issues identified during the review of the Helpline operation during October/November was the large number of open cases. The Helpline team were anxious about shutting cases and had moved beyond the original Helpline remit to more complex case management. Each open case was reviewed and about 50 cases were shut down to make the case system more manageable.

This process helped to open the dialogue within the team about the anxiety team members felt about closing down cases and how this anxiety was causing them to go beyond the remit of the helpline service of listening, acknowledging and signposting.

A proactive approach to Case Management will be taken by the new Helpline manager.

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

Calls to the Helpline can be very distressing. Many women make contact to share the challenges that they are facing in their life which can involve issues such as domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour based violence, depression, rape and share their painful experiences of living as a Muslim woman within their communities in the UK.

The experiences that are shared can have a profound impact on the Helpline team and at times can trigger off emotional responses that can relate back to their personal experiences in the past.

In recognition of the potential for emotional distress the Helpline team are offered individual counselling sessions if they feel they would benefit from this to either help with their distress over a situation or to talk through deep rooted issues emerging from their own past experiences.

A total of 10 hours of counselling has been provided for team members by professional counsellors during 2017.

WORKING HOURS/RESILIENCE

The later period of 2017 has highlighted the importance of providing a supportive working environment for all members of the Helpline team. A decision was made to enhance the role of the manager and the pay rate so that it was possible to recruit individuals who have developed a high level of supervisory skills already through working in similar environments.

The manager role will be responsible for the ongoing support and supervision of all team members and will be expected to work autonomously. There will no longer be an expectation that the Helpline manager will handle calls on a regular basis.

Helpline Team hours will be limited to part time hours with some new team members just working 7 hours a week and the Helpline manager will work 9.30 – 2.30 each day. This will give sufficient breaks which will help to prevent individuals becoming emotionally overwhelmed by the challenges that are faced by their clients, whilst retaining the empathy that is so important to the Helpline callers.

The new Helpline manager to establish a debrief session at the end of the morning and afternoon Helpline sessions. This debrief will offer team members the opportunity to leave any concerns in the office and shared with others before they leave for their homes.

SECTION SIX: DELIVERING A PROFESSIONAL HELPLINE SERVICE

In 2015 the Helpline Service was established from scratch and as a recent organisational review report highlighted it is now “delivering a complex, multi-faceted and highly regarded service. The policies and practices around this have been carefully developed and MWNUK is currently developing this further through Imkaan accreditation.”

The reputation of the Helpline has grown over the three years and longer term funding has been established. The data collected by the Helpline is a great asset for the wider work of MWNUK

“It is clear that MWNUK has approached the task of providing the service with dedication and an attention to quality, as well as considerable commitment to the client group who it is serving. There has been great attention paid to training, staff support as well as meeting quality standards and, vitally, attention to safeguarding”

MWNUK Internal Review

The Helpline Service is now moving into its next phase in organisational development. This year has been very challenging and there were often times when the Helpline team felt overwhelmed by the challenges facing them but they emerge into 2018 having learnt from the experience and able to build a stronger and more resilient service.

CASE MANAGEMENT

The comprehensive case recording used by the Helpline has enabled the team to establish a credible data base of evidence showing the challenges faced by clients. However over the last three years there have been additional elements added and there is some duplication of effort with some case recording on “Trello” and the database and some case information and team communication on “What’s App”. Both Trello and What’s App can be accessed outside of the workplace by the Helpline workers and this creates boundary issues between work and home life.

The Helpline team have highlighted a need for a more consolidated method of recording data and maintain case information, which also encourages case closure if a case is defined as lower risk. These changes will be introduced in 2018.

UPDATING PROCEDURES

One of the issues raised in the MWNUK Organisational Report was that some of the systems needed to be streamlined. An area of particular concern was the safeguarding process:

“We have an additional safeguarding form we fill in for the organisation but I don’t think it is realistic to continue with that. It’s a bit too much administration and does not add anything.”

A review is taking place in 2018 of the Safeguarding process to explore ways of maintaining the principles of good practice but in a process that feels more appropriate and less time intensive. It is planned to run a Safeguarding Training Session in April 2018 for the Helpline Team Members. All other processes and procedures will also be reviewed during 2018 with a view to streamlining the processes used by the team and ensuring more consistency.

In addition to updating the procedures the database was reviewed during 2017 and enhanced security features were added to ensure that the sensitive data that is being collected is kept in a secure environment which complies with updates to data processing and storage regulations.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

The working space for the Helpline continues to be challenging and this has become even more of an issue for the Helpline team, adding to the stress of their working environment. During 2017 the owner of the building has been renovating the building and reconfiguring the layout which has meant that the Helpline has been operated against a backdrop of noise and disruption during 2017.

There are also infrastructure problems within the building affecting the phone lines and the internet. There is a lack of ownership of the building management issues from the building owners which can make it frustrating for the Helpline team to resolve issues. A seemingly simple change such as installing noise cancelling headsets becomes a challenge due to compatibility issues with the phone system. As the administrator commented: “nothing ever feels straightforward”

To work professionally the Helpline team need a quieter working space that allows multiple calls to be conducted in privacy whilst offering private space for supervision sessions. However better accommodation will cost more and the challenge is how to operate the Helpline professionally with a limited pool of funding.

SECTION SEVEN: PROMOTING THE HELPLINE

The Helpline team have continued to find out how each client heard about the Helpline. It is recognised that in some calls the emotional intensity of the call will make this question inappropriate so the guidance is to ask the question where it feels appropriate to the call.

In **38%** of calls this information was not specified. This is very similar to the finding in 2016 (40%)

In those calls where the caller did specify the most popular method was via an Internet search (**70% of callers who specified**) this is a similar finding to 2016. The consistency of this information shows the benefit of hosting a specific Helpline website (<http://www.mwnhelpline.co.uk/>). It is important the MWNUK continue to invest in the website and keep it up to date in both content and design.

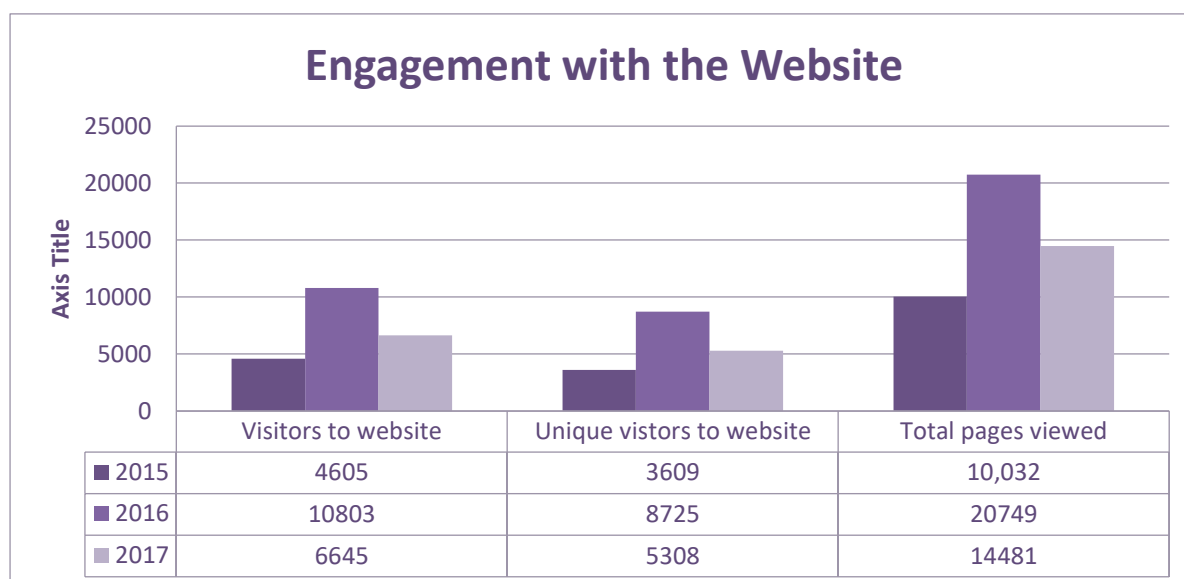
Where callers specified how they found out about the Helpline we can see that friends and family continue to be significant in providing information about the Helpline (**12% callers, 10% in 2016**) This is a helpful indicator because it shows that the Helpline is being discussed amongst friendship networks in the community. It is interesting to note that social media (Facebook/Twitter) are only mentioned in 3% of calls as the referral source (where we know the referral source).

How Callers Found Out About the Helpline – where this was specified in calls	
Internet Search	70%
Family or Friends recommendation	12%
Another organisation recommendation	7%
Social Media	3%
Educational Institution (College)	2%
Another Website	2%
Event/Workshop	2%
Leaflet/Poster	1%
Media/news	1%
MWNUK Board/Staff	1%

WEBSITE ENGAGEMENT

There is marked decrease in numbers of people visiting the website this year. This is interesting because the majority of referrals are coming from the website and referrals have increased in 2017 so this decline in website viewing does not seem to correlate with any decline in service use.

It may be that the operational issues that have affected the Helpline this year has meant that there has been less social media engagement on Helpline issues which has resulted in less clicks from the news item to the web page. Equally it could be that the Helpline number is available from other websites and sources so that individuals are able to find the number without accessing the website.



The length of each session and the number of pages viewed are consistent with the previous two years and the slight dip noted in 2016 with the pages viewed and time spent is not a downward trend as viewing levels are back to the levels noted in 2015.

The highest number of visitors to the Helpline website continues to be from Birmingham and London which is consistent with the majority geographical locations of callers to the Helpline.

WEBSITE DOWNLOADS

At the end of the first year of operation for the Helpline there were just 2 downloadable resources available via the Helpline website. The Helpline Team felt that having easy to access resources would be very supportive to clients at the close of a call and for people to access independently. There are now 7 booklets. The booklets have proved very popular with a total of 5043 downloads in 2017.

The new booklet on Marriage and Divorce which was launched in November 2016 has been hugely popular with 2419 downloads. The topic of marriage and divorce is also the third most frequently discussed concerns on the calls and many clients want to explore a faith based response to the difficulties that they are experiencing within their marital relationships.

Resource Downloaded	2015	2016	2017
CSE booklet	433	391	446
Domestic Abuse	<i>Available May 2017</i>		584
Forced marriage booklet	231	385	413
FGM booklet (new)	<i>Available April 16</i>	224	425
Discrimination booklet (new)	<i>Available Nov 16</i>	46	378
Marriage & Divorce (new)	<i>Available Nov 16</i>	68	2419
Mental Health	<i>Available May 2017</i>		378

These resources are very useful during Helpline calls because links to the resources can be sent in a follow up text or email.

When the Helpline was established a promotion video was created to explain the main features of the service to potential clients. The views of this video via the website have increased over the three years of operation:

Year	Views
2015	320
2016	474
2017	722

SECTION EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Over three years the MWNUK has become a recognised provider of Helpline Services. Across the three years there has been a consistent growth in the number of contacts made and the Helpline team have meet the needs of **1710 clients**.

2017 has been a successful year for the Helpline with an increase in numbers of clients and the range of issues that have been covered. The work of the Helpline has directly led to a proposed change in the law for victims of forced marriage so they are no longer required to repay their repartition costs. During 2017 a Helpline case has also raised a wider issue about Criminal Justice and the lack of understanding of reasons for their actions which are outside of the law.

Although the Helpline service has made an impact this year both for clients and in the wider community this year it has been an internally challenging year for the team. The Helpline has reached the next level of organisational maturity and this has bought change in the staffing of the team, as part of a natural career progression of some key members of the team. The later part of the year has highlighted a number of changes that will need to be made over the next year to strengthen and develop the work of the team so that there is more resilience in the team to the stress of the work and so that the systems and processes are appropriate for the type of work that is the focus of the Helpline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the last three years the Helpline management team have responded positively to all the recommendations from these reports. They have used the recommendations to review and reflect on aspects of service delivery that could be improved and have as a consequence further strengthened the professional service that is provided by the Helpline Team.

1. **Team Communication and Engagement** - The new team of volunteers, worker and Helpline manager will need to integrate with existing team members so that the team becomes one team. The growth in numbers of team members will require more consciously structured communication to pass on information and to gain consensus about changes to policies and practice.
2. **Review and Update all Procedures** - When the Helpline was established there were procedures and protocols provided to give the team guidance about how to handle a variety of challenging situations. These procedures need to be reviewed to ensure

that they remain “fit for purpose” and to check that overall the Helpline policies are working from a consistent set of values and objectives. A priority will be to streamline the Safeguarding process, whilst still maintaining a duty of care to vulnerable adults and children so that actions are taken to protect them from harm. Improvements to on line integration of the database and other systems like Trello will help to reduce duplication and will improve both communication and call handling

3. **Develop Supervision and Support Systems** - It will be important for the new manager to establish a regular pattern of supervision for all team members. Supervision will be an opportunity to review practice and to highlight different strengths of each of the team members so that there can be consistency in the team. Establishing regular call audits will be a really important way of identifying learning needs across the team and to identify any areas of practice that could be further enhance
4. **Review Case Work Boundaries** - The additional case working resource provides an opportunity for the Helpline Team to hand over clients. This process will need support to ensure that case working referrals are appropriate and that Helpline team members recognise the role of the Helpline and refer or close cases so that the team is not overwhelmed by large numbers of “open” cases
5. **Continue to Build on Work with Under 21s** – the work that has started with the outreach project and running sessions in colleges would seem to have had an impact on reaching to this vulnerable age group.
6. **Continue to focus on extending the national reach for the Helpline Service** – the service continues to have most impact in the West Midlands area. The new outreach project and the wider MWNUK national campaign work will help to increase awareness to all Muslim populations across the UK.
7. **Review the intensity of the training for new starters** – the range of issues that are covered by the Helpline is very broad. The need to provide awareness in each of these issues means that there is a long period between recruitment of new staff and being operational on the Helpline. It may be worth considering approaches used by other organisations (eg Norwich Union) where new starters are only trained on the issues that are most frequently covered in the calls and a supervisor or mentor will handle calls that go outside of these areas.
8. **Continue to develop awareness of mental health issues** – this is an important issue for many of the clients and it is also an important issue for the Helpline team members.
9. **Promote the Hardship fund** – opportunities could be sought for smaller scale organisations and individuals to contribute to the Hardship Fund and an annual summary of the benefits of the fund may encourage more giving
10. **Succession Planning** – continue to be aware of the need for succession planning so that no one person becomes irreplaceable on the Helpline. It is important that all members of the team feel that they can make a decision to go on holiday, to take sick leave or to change career without feeling that the service will not be sustainable without their contribution

11. **Improvement to Office Accommodation** – it has been noted how challenging the work environment has been over 2017. The lack of funding will make an office move challenging but at some point the lack of space and the background noise in the environment will make this essential if the Helpline is to continue to provide a high quality professional service.
12. **Seek Additional Long Term Funding** for the Helpline and Counselling Services – although the Helpline has finally secured a long term 5 year grant (from the Building Communities Big Lottery Fund) this grant will be insufficient to cover the needs of the Helpline during 2018/2019. Some of the existing funding has come to an end (Henry Smith in 2017) and in 2018 the Tampon Tax funding and the Tudor Trust funding will end. Unless additional funding is found in 2018 the MWNUK Helpline will have no alternative but to cut back services and reduce staffing levels and will no longer be able to offer a 5 day a week service.

APPENDIX ONE: ISSUES HANDLED

TYPE OF ISSUE - 2017 (42 ISSUES)				
ISSUE	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY	TOTAL
Abortion / Pregnancy	16	6	0	22
Addiction - Alcohol	2	3	1	6
Addiction - Drugs	1	3	2	6
Addiction - other	2	0	0	2
Bereavement	2	1	0	3
Child Abuse (neglect)	7	10	7	24
Child Sexual Abuse	13	5	5	23
Child Sexual Exploitation	0	2	0	2
Children / Custody	12	19	5	36
Complaints about public services	4	3	1	8
Disability Issues	1	1	1	3
Discrimination / Islamophobia	7	6	1	14
Divorce	88	25	20	133
Domestic Abuse	150	109	44	303
Eating Disorder (self-harm)	0	2	0	2
Education	0	3	0	3
Elderly Issues	0	1	0	1
Employment / Work	2	7	0	9
Extremism	0	0	2	2
Faith / Spirituality	56	50	12	118
Female Genital Mutilation	3	0	1	4
Forced Marriage	23	11	5	39
Health (physical)	2	8	3	13
Honour Based Violence	20	31	23	74
Housing / Homelessness	51	34	15	100
Immigration	21	15	5	41
Isolation / Loneliness	13	16	8	37
Jinn / Black magic	1	3	1	5
Marriage	42	22	1	65
Mental Health Feelings	49	83	61	193
Money / Finance	24	28	20	72
None	0	201	506	708
Other	10	6	4	20
Rape / Sexual Abuse	13	10	6	29
Relationships	67	47	19	133
Revenge Porn	4	3	4	11
Sexual Exploitation (Adults)	2	2	0	4
Sexual Harassment	1	0	0	1
Sexual Health	0	1	0	1

Sexuality	13	7	2	22
Stalking / Harassment	9	5	2	16
Suicide / Self Harm	36	3	5	44
Trafficking	0	0	0	0
Unknown	25	0	0	24
TOTAL	792	792	792	2,376

APPENDIX TWO: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE MWN UK HELPLINE

What Difference did we make to clients?	What does this mean?	Total cases with this impact	
<i>Our clients were:</i>			
Client felt listened to	Client was able to just talk through their problems, felt listened to and provided with emotional support as well as general advice	134	16.9
Client 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 	85	10.7%
Client Better informed of their Islamic rights	We inform client about the Islamic perspective including different interpretations on any issue e.g. Islamic divorce process, sexuality, abortion, dress code etc.	107	13.5%
Client 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 	318	40.2%
Client given help by other support service due to our referral	Where we make a direct referral and client is supported by: <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 	109	13.8%
Client 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. 	157	19.8%

	• Other safety tips		
Client 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.	74	9.3%
Client 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 etc.	15	1.9%
Client 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	30	3.8%
Client 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 life 	37	4.7%
Client moved to safety	When our intervention results in client being moved to safety e.g. to family, friend, refuge or other temporary accommodation.	30	3.8%
Client 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	9	1.1%
Client has improved mental health due to counselling referral	When we directly refer client to an internal or external counselling service and client is helped	18	2.3%
Prevented 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 	5	0.6%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an urgent mental health / health professional referral • Make an urgent counselling referral 		
Have made no difference/no contact	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	102	12.9%
<p>The percentages in this data total more than 100% because many caller report the contact with the Helpline having impact in a variety of ways</p>			

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