

## MEDIA STATEMENT

20<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### LAUNCH OF NEW APPG ON MUSLIM WOMEN

The new All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Muslim Women was formally established today and has appointed national, award-winning charity Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) as its Secretariat.

Conservative MP, Caroline Nokes, who is also the current Chair of the Women's Equality Committee will be one of the first Co-Chairs of the APPG along with Labour MP Naz Shah who is currently Shadow Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Co-Chairs recognise that Muslim women are one of the most marginalised groups in society, suffering from multiple disadvantage including barriers from within their own communities. They both believe that the APPG will act as a powerful mechanism by which to ensure that the multiple lived realities of Muslim women and girls are given the attention they deserve; that they are listened to, not just spoken about.

Secretariat support for the group will be provided by MWNUK through a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which will also fund the APPG's first inquiry which will be looking into Muslim women's experience of maternity care.

Co-Chair of MWNUK, Nazmin Akthar said: *"The purpose of the APPG on Muslim Women is to support social justice and equality for Muslim women by debating, scrutinising, investigating and raising awareness of issues affecting them. The overall aim is to influence practice, policy, legislation and attitudes across all spheres, so as to be able to transform the lives of Muslim women in the UK for the better. MWNUK are especially pleased to be acting as Secretariat of this APPG because it will allow us to take our existing activities to new heights and allow us to have an even greater impact than what we have already achieved as the leading national charity working on issues affecting Muslim women and girls for over 17 years."*

Co-Chair of the APPG, Naz Shah MP said: *"Muslim women are one of the most marginalised groups in society suffering from multiple disadvantage including from within their own communities as a result of cultural practices, patriarchal attitudes and misinterpretations of their faith. The APPG will be a more effective way to influence government decisions that impact on their lives and provide a more powerful way of making their case and help them to be heard."*

Co-Chair of the APPG, Caroline Nokes MP said: *"It is so important that the voices of Muslim women are heard, and I know as the Chair of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, how hard we have to work to make sure a cross section of people have the confidence to provide evidence to our inquiries. When we have heard the voices of Muslims we need to also ask if that included a female perspective, recognising that it may well be different."*

Co-Chair of MWNUK, Shaista Gohir OBE said: *"The APPG's first Inquiry will be to review Muslim women's experience of maternity care so that lessons can be learned to mitigate existing inequalities. Black women are 4-5 times more likely to die during pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period, while South Asian women are 2-3 times more likely to die in comparison to white women. These disparities in maternity outcomes in England have been well known for a long time, which indicates the lack of effort made in trying to understand the maternity experiences of BAME women despite health and*

*social care providers having a legal duty to reduce inequalities between patients in their access to health services and the outcomes achieved. We are therefore grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for supporting the APPG research which will be conducted by Dr. Suriyah Bi, CEO of the Equality Act Review.”*

Consultant Gynaecologist Eddie Morris, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists also spoke at the Inaugural Meeting, discussing these disparities within the healthcare system.

If Muslim women, who have given birth in England in the last five years, would like to contribute to the research by sharing their experiences, they should get in touch with MWNUK on [contact@mw nuk.co.uk](mailto:contact@mw nuk.co.uk).

#### **Ends**

1. For further media comments, please get in touch on [contact@mw nuk.co.uk](mailto:contact@mw nuk.co.uk) / [appg@mw nuk.co.uk](mailto:appg@mw nuk.co.uk) / 0121 236 9000.
2. Muslim Women’s Network UK (MWNUK) is a women’s rights charity working to promote social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls through research, by operating a national helpline, through engaging with its membership and using women’s experiences and their voices in campaigning and advocacy work.
3. MWNUK has won two Charity Governance Awards, in two separate categories, in 2019 and 2020.
4. Further information about MWNUK can be found on [www.mw nuk.co.uk](http://www.mw nuk.co.uk)