



24<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Muslim Women's Network UK's response to the Autumn Budget Statement**

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) eagerly awaited the Chancellors autumn statement as we know in this continued cost of living crisis and widening inequalities, economic decisions announced now will have a lasting impact on the most vulnerable people in our society.

We welcome the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announcing that benefits will be increased by 6.7% in line with inflation and Local Housing Allowance will be raised. Additionally, specific provisions targeting women, such as the expansion of the 0% VAT rate on women's period products (now including period underwear), funds for understanding the effects of domestic abuse on the labour market, and an extra £2 million for the Flexible Fund aiding victims of domestic abuse, are appreciated. However, more dedicated funding is needed for specialist minority led organisations to address domestic violence and domestic homicides in Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

We also acknowledge the positive step of expanding NHS talking therapies given the current mental health crisis in the UK. However, it is unclear whether funds will be allocated for the provision of specialised talking therapies tailored to the needs of minority communities. There is disproportionate representation of minority ethnic individuals in secondary care and their underrepresentation in primary care. Timely access to appropriate primary care for Black and Asian individuals would reduce the likelihood of poor outcomes.

The absence of allocated funds to combat hate crimes against Muslim communities is deeply disappointing. We commend the government's announcement of £7 million to tackle antisemitism. However, the highest rates of religious hate crime are experienced by Muslims (42% of all victims). Muslim women are at increased risk because of their often more visible Muslim identity. The recent Israel-Gaza situation has led to a surge in hateful rhetoric, stereotypes, and discrimination being directed at both Muslim and Jewish communities in Britain. We are therefore surprised that the same level of investment has not been extended to Muslim communities or even other groups given the upward trend in hate crime over the last decade. The government must be careful not to create a hierarchy of hate crime or send the message that the safety of some groups does not matter. We therefore look forward to the government making similar commitments to tackle all forms of racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia and as well as disability hate crime.

It is clear from the budget announcements (or a lack of thereof) that tackling discrimination and disadvantage experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities is not a priority for the current government.

## **Additional Information**

- Media enquiries can be directed to: [contact@mwruk.co.uk](mailto:contact@mwruk.co.uk) or 0121 2369000
- Muslim Women's Network UK is a national charity and more information can be found on its website: <https://www.mwruk.co.uk>
- MWN Helpline (national specialist faith and culturally sensitive helpline) can be contacted on:  
TEL: 0800 999 5786 / Email: [info@mwnhelpline.co.uk](mailto:info@mwnhelpline.co.uk) / Text: 07415 206 936 and further  
Information can be found here: <https://www.mwnhelpline.co.uk/index.php>