

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

England & Wales · Charity number 1013817

Details

Status Registered

Legal form Other

Registered 1992-08-20

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

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Activities

Objects: TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT IN THE CITY OF SHEFFIELD ("THE AREA OF BENEFIT") IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY FOR AFRICAN AND ASIAN WOMEN IN THE FIELDS OF PERSONAL HEALTH, NUTRITION, FAMILY PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN OF SUCH WOMEN AND TO RELIEVE POVERTY, SICKNESS AND DISTRESS AMONGST THE SAID WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

Activities: Training for African women and children in ESL, cookery, Arabic language, IT and personal health matters. There is a homework class for schoolchildren on Sundays. Advice, information and language support on personal health and related matters given to women and support in contacting schools in respect of their children's education and further development.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives
- **Who:** People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** CITY OF SHEFFIELD
- Sheffield City

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-06-30	£118,133	£113,039	-	-
2024-06-30	£104,055	£84,299	-	-
2023-06-30	£102,233	£102,109	-	-
2022-06-30	£98,532	£99,371	-	-
2021-06-30	£84,030	£59,316	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
HALIMA MOHAMED	Chair	
CORRIEN MOSS		2022-02-04
Rima Alkhayat		2016-07-20

Accounts

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP (AWHG)

2024-25 Annual Report

We continue to aspire and grow, working to:

- Reduce isolation, stigma towards single parenthood and discrimination by helping affected women strengthen social networks and confidence to become better integrated and active into their locality;
- Reach out, empower and equip disadvantaged women with advocacy, awareness, interpreting support, health, legal and practical tools to take action and make informed decisions;
- Address high levels of unemployment by providing basic skills, literacy, vocational training, childcare, as well as a homework support for a further generation of young people. Our aim is to enable isolated women and families living in, or at risk of poverty, with skills to achieve their full social, emotional, civic and employment potential.

Who are we? What do we do?

Set up and led by women from hard-to-reach communities in the deprived ward of Darnall in Sheffield who clubbed together three decades ago to formalise a self-help women's group where women were constantly asking for help, AWHG is a constituted voluntary sector charity governed by a voluntary Management Committee team composed of local women who themselves have faced challenges in finding their way through life.

Our geographic reach has expanded as isolated and disadvantaged BAME heritage women, refugees and asylum-seekers who disproportionately experience poor health, housing issues, poverty and increasingly, anxiety, continue to find their ways to our door. Our aim is to provide much-needed health, welfare advice & advocacy, English, IT and vocational training alongside health & wellbeing services at a time of increasing poverty, depression and strife.

Building and sharing skills is at the core of our work. When three Somali-heritage mums took an initial step thirty years ago to set up a self-help group and help women showing up at their doorstep at all hours of the day and night, we had no notion of the steps which would organically follow to shape our expanding services which at their core, continue to meet each newcomer in whatever circumstances they find themselves to begin with. Our strength lies in our understanding of what it is to arrive in a new environment, with or without language skills, social networks, work experience and degrees to build a new life – particularly where women juggle

to guide and support young children in circumstances around which they themselves are learning to survive.

Our work continues to be informed by the experiences of local women, including those governing our work via a voluntary Management Committee, who have themselves been challenged in accessing much-needed services. Working from our community centre in Darnall, Sheffield which experiences some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation, we continue to support service-users, a majority who are displaced from Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Kurdish, Iraqi, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian, African, Afghani and Eritrean heritage, to find their feet and thrive.

Where we once primarily catered to women within walking distance, women from across Sheffield have begun to arrive. As our geographic reach grows, the profile of service-users is also widening, with more women of Iraqi Kurdish heritage now asking to join ESOL, IT and vocational training. Our waiting lists grow as civic funding cuts bite, local provisions disappear and local groups struggle to find volunteers.

Deep bonds of trust help us reach BAME women who struggle to access mainstream services. While sharing skills, learning and empathy, we try to help each newcomer become more resilient, then build skills to improve their family's health, mental outlooks and finances. As each moves out of crisis, maybe joining ESOL and exercise classes, craft activities, celebrations and outings according to need, age and aspirations, friendships develop and networks help us find our way. Volunteers, most of whom are former service-users, take steps towards improved self-sufficiency, become role models just as young people attending our Homework Club might also begin to achieve and become peer role models too.

A Word from our Chair: A Year of Change and Growth!

So many who joined our Pre-Entry Level ESOL classes seven years ago, moving up after achieving end-of-year exams, working their way towards fluency, then attending vocational courses at Sheffield College and qualifying for jobs as Teacher Assistants, Nursery Workers, Passenger Assistants (PATs) on special needs school buses or carers with *Health & Social Care* have proved cynics wrong. No one imagined this was possible - yet fifteen low-income women in this year alone have achieved in the face of challenges, caring their families, often alone, as they find their feet with determination and hard work. Some were labelled as being 'lazy'.

So many stories to tell! Just recently, a woman applied for a job as a cleaner at a local school. While the team was supportive, they told her to go back to study English and apply again when her English language skills had improved.

Where once we had very limited role models showing the way, women simply didn't think they could achieve, self-belief is thriving! Access to free education is key.

Staff, Management Committee members and volunteers don't count the hours spent trying to make a difference. After a very long day, we might well ask ourselves why

we do it. But with news of each small step comes joy and reminders of a steady journey we have taken together. It reinvigorates and reminds us of what we set out to do, all those years ago, opening our doors for each new woman knocking.

None of this could have been possible without the financial and practical support from *Comic Relief*. While giving us tools, guidance and support to strengthen our organisation, they also demonstrate flexibility enabling us to adapt to work plans to effectively meet hidden need in a changing environment.

A lot of our clients are still isolated, however, unsure of how systems work and, struggling with limited English language skills to make themselves understood, are at the mercy of a doctor, a housing, a social worker when seeking help. In the absence of peer guidance, knowledge of their rights, social standing and skills to articulate their needs, each becomes dependent on an authority understanding their situations, giving them accurate information and demonstrating good will.

As costs of food and utility continue to rise, a shortage of affordable housing and more, AWHG has begun to intervene to help families in crisis, signposting women to foodbanks, supporting families facing homelessness and addressing family challenges. Better communication, support and listening skills allowing for earlier interventions would save lives, health care costs and all the hidden costs of women unable to work or care for their children effectively.

Each time a woman, vulnerable to whoever she turns to for guidance, falls into crisis she turns to peers who, increasingly, have come to us for help. Thanks to the help of our locally elected Councillor, Mary Lea, women are supported in working their way through school places appeals, housing, health and Social Services systems to access services to which they are entitled but to which often denied. Having Mary by our side has changed everything. Where officers might once have dismissed our explanations, failed to return calls or take action, then now listen and act. We help women in dozens of ways, as illustrated below:

Homeless and Abused

We are fortunate to be helped by our dedicated elected Councillor, Mary Lea, a down-to-earth, no-nonsense woman. she comes without delay, often visiting clients in their homes and giving her number, just in case. People like her are hard to find.

A Sudanese-heritage woman and her two children, one disabled, were thrown out by her husband. She approached Sheffield's Housing Dept., was put on the housing waiting list, then sent away. No interpreter was provided. Her English skills are still limited and she had no idea what her rights are. A friend let them stay but as it was overcrowded, they could not stay long. Luckily, she turned to us for help.

Our advocates, supported by Mary, accompanied our client to Shelter who liaised with Sheffield's Housing team to place the woman and her children in safe, temporary accommodation. They stayed for several months but were then given a

fifth floor property with no working lift. She was told she would be considered 'intentionally homeless' if she refused the offer. She and her disabled son struggled.

Thanks to Cllr. Mary Lea's letter-writing, we managed to secure the family a ground floor home within six months. She is a special person for whom very special thanks is always on our mind for her dedication, empathy and hard work!

Losing a Child ...

A woman came to us who's one-year-old breastfeeding baby had rolled and fallen from her sofa. She took him to the doctor but was told he was fine. Back home, he vomited repeatedly and was clearly not well. We accompanied her to the hospital for further checks. Examinations indicated that he did indeed have a head injury which, to her astonishment, led to her child being taken away.

Two months have passed and, though she pleaded for the child to at least be placed with a Kurdish family who, sharing her cultural traditions, applied willingly to become foster parents and care for the child as such. At the last minute, they were refused.

She is due in court shortly. We have found her a solicitor to represent her but are concerned accusations of negligence will override witness statements describing a capable and caring mother who's child was injured by an unforeseen accident ...

A Climate of Fear

Strangers now look at us with anger in their eyes. While our neighbourhood feels safer, there are neighbourhoods where we hesitate to go. A shortage doesn't help and clients find themselves in the middle of nowhere or in neighbourhoods where they definitely don't feel welcome.

One of our clients showed up with bruises on her arm, head and side. *What happened?* We asked?

A man had run down the road and knocked her over. A shopkeeper ran out to help, offered her a glass of water and called for an ambulance. It's been three weeks now since her assault, and we are waiting for her to return when she recovers from her injuries, physical and otherwise.

Other such incidents come up on trams, where men come up and abuse women to their face, where thankfully, women have stood their ground until their perpetrators have walked away. All of us, however, now watch over our shoulders while we walk down the streets...

Our Service Users

A majority of women coming through our doors are unemployed or from low-income households in a district experiencing some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation. Most are from migrant or refugee communities and of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian, Ethiopian and increasingly, Kurdish heritage. Some women have limited educational and employment experiences, English language, IT and qualifications to navigate statutory services and gain work.

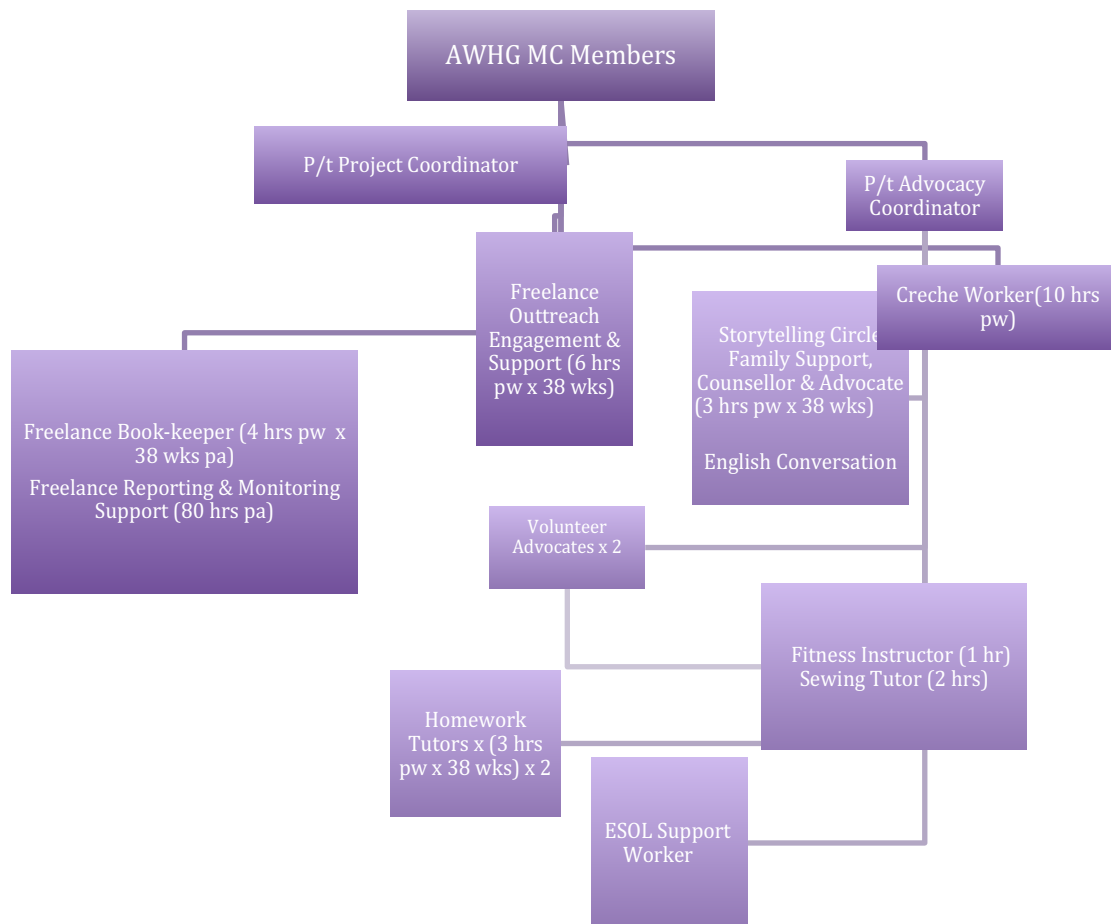
Most hear of our services by word-of-mouth. As all of us come from a position of shared experiences, we understand and support one another while each newcomer can see how other women have developed new skills and moved forward in life. In this sense, we provide ideal role models through our collective efforts.

Classes, workshops, health activities, preparations of refreshments, celebrations and outings help bond and build confidence amongst women who might have limited social networks to which to turn at times of trouble. Some say that looking forward to joining in with group activities in itself improves their outlooks.

Women attending our ESOL and Childcare say that better peer networks also make the experience more sociable as learners meeting others in similar circumstances helps break down taboos of shame as learners start to rebuild new lives. Our welcoming venue offers refreshments which women can help themselves as they please while meeting others in a safe space where they feel can come for help.

As a self-help group, BAME women at AWHG support one another. Newcomers say news of our helping with personal, practical and quality support, particularly when women come in crisis situations, helps our reputation grow. Word also spreads about each woman who achieves a small success. As each newcomer sees how others have developed skills to move forward in life, we also serve as informal, collective role models.

AWHG's Organisation Chart



Meet our Team!

Some of our **Management Committee** members were first met as service-users and volunteers. All of us are local, DBS-checked, and as women of Somali, Black, Syrian and Yemeni heritage, help to represent service-users from a range of backgrounds.

Our Chair, *Halima Mohamed*, Our Treasurer and multi-talented Engineer with talents to repair anything, *Rima Al-Khayat*, multi-certificated Health & Wellbeing community Outreach Worker, *Corrie Moss* and *Eram Al-Khasadi* who speaks Arabic and helps interpret, fill forms and visit GPs with visitors. All generously contribute their talents and support to help us shine!

Our Chair, who helped establish our community initiative three decades ago, received Sheffield's East Local Area Committee **Community Star Award** in September 2023. She is increasingly asked to share insights and help shape strategies so Sheffield's most disenfranchised residents can access support needed while effectively contribute towards improving our whole community. Halima was also recently nominated by **Voluntary Action Sheffield** for a Community Award!

Our Chair, Secretary and Treasurer help support our day-to-day running, supervising and supporting workers, tutors and volunteers while encouraging former service-users to join in and help. We meet quarterly and invite newcomers to join us reviewing the progress of our projects, making sure we provide safe services and

keep within budgets. Feedback from service-users, staff, tutors, volunteers and partners also help us identify new needs and think about how to help.

Our team is growing!

Our *3-days-a-week Outreach Advocate*, Somali, Dutch and Arabic-speaking ***Outreach Advocate*** joined AWHG in 2016 to outreach, advise and advocate for isolated BAME women, refugees and families with limited literacy and digital skills, organising and supporting class tutors, volunteers, empowerment and wellbeing activities including outings, health workshops, sewing, our Homework Club etc. She has Advice & Guidance Level 3 qualifications.

Our *4-days-a-week Project Coordinator* oversees staffing, volunteers, coordination of core activities, helps hands-on with sessional work and representation of AWHG in local forums and networks. sharing insights with strategic community panels including Sheffield's Partnership Board. In the process, we are also learning about wider resources available to support Sheffield's wider diverse demographic communities.

A review this year of her additional administrative duties, including bookkeeping, fundraising and monitoring and reporting on our progress, in coordination with our Treasurer and external support, has led to a pilot project detailed below, to share responsibilities worked round the clock without pay.

Structural Review

Our skeletal staff team have worked all hours over years. When we thankfully secured longer-term core funding from ***Comic Relief*** in October 2024, coupled with Emergency funding to help meet demand from a growing number of women coming to our services for help, we turned to a team of longstanding volunteers who have been core to our service delivery, and asked them to trial new roles on a self-employed basis.

All have been ***DBS-checked*** and completed our 6-week ***Passport to Volunteer Training Certificates*** run in partnership with ***Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life team*** in 2021; each obtained certification in ***Safeguarding (refreshed in Oct 2024)***, ***Health & Safety***, ***First Aid***, ***Confidentiality*** while exploring issues including outreach and community engagement skills to help us facilitate safe, effective and caring support to women visiting our centre as follows:

- A ***4 hr. pw English Conversation Class tutor*** helps women waitlisted for our ESOL classes in gaining basic spoken English language skills, alongside Pre-Entry and Entry-Level learners in need of additional support;
- A ***6 hr. pw Urdu-speaking Outreach Advocate***, with skills in *Hindi* and *Bengali*, welcomes, engages and signposts women coming to our centre while setting up classroom arrangements, preparing refreshments ensuring admin, training and refreshment stocks are replenished;

- An experienced **4 hr. pw Finance Worker** tracks income and expenditure, supports our Treasurer as we diversify and consolidate services, transfers book-keeping systems online and produces quarterly cash-flow reports for our Management Committee and funders;
- **Storytelling Circle (3 hrs pw, 38 wks pa):** Our Kurdish/Arabic speaking *Weekly English Conversation* tutor is also a qualified as a counsellor, working in GP Surgeries and community settings. She facilitates our two-hourly weekly *Storytelling Circle* and one-to-one sessions with individuals with concerns about family issues, anxiety and trauma with support from volunteer interpreters and sessional staff. On a voluntary basis, she also accompanies women to hospital appointments.
- **Freelance Reporting/Monitoring Support: (80 hrs pa):** our longstanding Mentor helps us prepare quarterly reports, our Annual Report with information gathered by our team.

Sessional Staff: AWHG is also supported by:

- **Three ESOL tutors**, provided by Sheffield College to provide twice-weekly term-time Pre-Entry Level to Level 3 combined classes with support from AWHG volunteers.
- **A Creche Worker** who cares for toddlers while mothers attend ESOL;
- **Wednesday Afternoon IT Class**, funded by *Comic Relief*, offers three cycles of 12-week basic digital skills sessions to help particularly vulnerable women go online.
- **A weekly Sewing tutor**, funded by *Sheffield City Council*, supports women weekly with sewing repairs, Make'n'Mend, textile design skills and networks!
- **A Weekly Term-time Fitness Tutor** funded by *More Light*;
- **Maths, English and Science AWHG Homework Club tutors** supported by three volunteers, help 38 children each year with schoolwork and exam preparation, critical where parents might have limited education and language skills to help them along. Parents also come in to help with setting up, preparing refreshments and sustaining a calm, quiet and positive environment.

Volunteers

Volunteers help welcome each newcomer to our service. Seven volunteers of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali, Kurdish and Syrian heritage now help prepare informal *breakfast-luncheon* of sandwiches and fruit for women attending classes.

Bilingual volunteers with Arabic, Somali, Kurdish, Urdu and Bengali community languages, to name a few, also serve as informal interpreters, even accompanying and supporting women at appointments while explaining how systems work. They help tutors and support learners in larger classes who need a bit of extra help.

At the end of our academic year, volunteers also help coordinate our annual outings with women and children to the Peak District. Each, in turn, also becomes a role model for peers and neighbours.

Volunteers are key to our busy service. We offer hands-on' experience, help build capacity, demonstrates what women can achieve and empowers them with skills for employment.

A majority of volunteer recruits are former/existing clients and learners developing new skills in a safe space to build confidence and gain references to move on. Others have recently arrived refugees with educational and work experience skills.

We are grateful to our wonderful volunteers who helps vulnerable women take first steps towards navigating a world of online communications; our community counsellor, *Samira Siddiqi*, who facilitates weekly craft activities knitting together 60 women yearly to share strategies for tackling anxiety, depression and building resilience at times of trauma. Many thanks to our *Fitness Tutor*, *Claire*, formidable *Sewing Tutor*, *Niyam Mohamed*, who supports women in repairing, designing and making clothes, textiles and domestic goods.

We celebrate their achievements. Without them, our team would struggle and hidden needs amongst lonely, struggling and anxious BAME women and refugees might not receive the attention volunteers help provide.

Partnerships and Sharing with Wider Networks

Many of our clients are elderly, have mental or physical health issues and need help to access basic services that are fast migrating online. As services close and civic funding pots shrink, we have been overwhelmed by an increased demand for help.

Thankfully, given financial constraints, partnership programmes have helped us diversify our services, trial new activities and help women and families with nowhere to turn. They also offer a conduit for conversations with organisations tackling similar social challenges while ensuring we enhance, rather than duplicate our work.

Sheffield College funds our ESOL classes. *Community Wellness Service* has also helped us source a fitness tutor who runs sessions as part of our Friday Wellbeing programme.

We regularly liaise with *Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)* who facilitated face-to-face appointments at our centre post-Covid. *Sacmha's* Corrie Moss, one of our dedicated Management member *Corrie Moss* also invites women to visit *Darnall Community Allotments* who share food growing strategies, plants, gardening gloves, trowels, seeds and more. Corrie also facilitates healthy eating, crafts, aromatherapy and fitness sessions to help children and women improve wellbeing.

Local schools continue to signpost young people struggling with academics while *Sheffield Wellness Centre's Indian Head Massage* practitioner, *Farah*, has also offer stress-reducing to women not otherwise able to afford such treats!

Voluntary Action Sheffield facilitates key community engagement hubs including *Sheffield City Council Partnership Board* where we share learning about some of Britain's hardest-to-reach BAME communities and consider linked up strategies for community, statutory and mainstream services. Our Chair also represent excluded voices via the CCG's BAME Health Network and sits with *South Yorkshire Community Foundation's* grants panel to consider the value of projects seeking resources.

ESOL and Employability

Demand for ESOL and vocational training continues to soar. With spousal visas now requiring new non-European arrivals to pay £1,200 (sterling pounds one thousand two hundred) which they simply can't pay in the absence of work permits for the first five years. Many are Kurdish and everyone wants to learn. Education is important and everyone wants to work. Their determination and hard work have meant some have achieved their GCSEs, then entered college.

Thanks to outreach sponsorship from *Sheffield College*, three Celta-qualified English as a Second Language (ESOL) teachers run three combined levels of twice-weekly **ESOL classes attended by 78 BAME women**. AWHG runs a creche alongside classes to help ensure no one is excluded.

With ongoing waiting lists for our free classes, we have blended Pre-Entry and Entry Level 1 ESOL classes with Level 2 & 3 combined as well as Level 3 groupings combined. With 26 learners in each class, we also have two Support Worker/volunteers in each class to help support individuals according to varying starting points and need. Teachers cannot otherwise cope with our 78 learners who meet twice weekly each during 38 weeks of term-time. All pass at least two of three end-of-year exams in speaking, reading and writing in English according to levels achieved!

AWHG staff recruit and support tutors and learners and, alongside volunteers, take registers, remind women to bring absence notes for GP or benefits appointments, and help students, in smaller groups, learn how to receive messages, homework, join classes online, take tests and receive updates via *WhatsApp* and *Google Classroom*. Should the centre be forced to close, vulnerable learners are now equipped to attend lessons remotely!

We also help facilitate elements of exams including video recording of speaking and listening skills, which culminate in an end-of-year celebration where learners are awarded what might be the first certificates they've ever earned in their lives!

Most learners are aged of 25-60 and of Pakistani, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese, Kurdish, Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Syrian, Eritrean, Afghani, Iraqi and Turkish heritage. Classes

offer a chance to get out of home and meet others which isolated women say improves their mental outlook. It also helps knit together a community of women who go on to help one another out in times of challenge. While improving English skills to fill forms, speak with GPs, teachers and neighbours, most say they slowly gain confidence and skills to become more active, volunteer or attend vocational training for employment.

AWHG starts in August to recruit, interview and register learners for each further academic year, ferrying women to and from Sheffield College, helping with form filling, translations and follow-ups to ensure each woman's papers are processed. *Sheffield College*, meanwhile, provides funds to cover venue hire and tutors who are also recruited by AWHG itself, while AWHG provides stationery, hand-outs and refreshments daily for women struggling to make ends meet.

Employability Training and Support

For over three years, we partnered with *Red Tape* and tutor *Helen Haythorne* to provide three 12-week cycles of *Level 1 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)* training for **Childcare, Health & Social Care** and **Passports for Volunteering** which has ensured our teams of volunteers have certificates in *First Aid, Health & Safety, Basic Safeguarding*. While this programme has sadly come to an end, over 200 women have gained basic qualifications towards employment through this partnership programme and moved onto further vocational training or jobs.

IT Drop-in Sessions

Our IT Drop-in sessions help 30 women each year via three 12-week-long sessions. By helping women learn to set up and write emails, do online searches, shopping and access critical GP appointments and update Universal Credit information for benefits, these small but vital steps help particularly vulnerable and disenfranchised women to begin to transition online.

Refreshments for All!

We noticed women who spend much of the day with us don't bring food along, so a small team of volunteer now prepare sandwiches and lay out fruit for visitors each morning. More than fifty sandwiches and fruit arrays we purchase wholesale disappear each day; some women seem to head straight to our kitchen when they arrive. This informal *Breakfast-Lunch Club* is particularly popular Wednesdays and Thursdays when 25-odd women visit mornings, and 25 more come in the afternoon.

Advice and Advocacy Support

Thanks to generous support from Comic Relief, our three-days-a-week *Advocacy Worker* is available to meet a surge in demand from women in crisis.

Seemingly simple tasks - booking GP appointments or updating benefits information – are quickly transiting online, making them inaccessible for women with limited digital and English skills. Where complex issues cannot be resolved online, waiting times for telephone assistance can literally waste hours of staff and client time.

Where digitally skilled residents have skills to resolve benefits, housing, schooling and disability issues swiftly, women lacking such skills often arrive in crisis, penniless, homeless, without heating or electricity. Unable to read letters and respond without external support, it only at this point that they realize there is a problem.

Timing is critical so we frequently remind service-users to come to us immediately when they receive letters they don't understand. Delays can mean women might find themselves without homes, food, benefits and help. Once alerted, we act swiftly to make sure each visitor get the help she needs before matters get worse.

Where court cases, immigration or specialist issues arise, we also help clients access a new online *Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)* screen located in a neighbouring *Pakistani Muslim Centre*. We also routinely now take women along to show them how to this a new local touchscreen service for benefit updates.

Newcomers often say they feel safe coming for help at our women-only service as our own experiences reflect theirs. Empathy and understanding of how easily women can find themselves alone, and with no one to turn to, comes naturally as we've all faced similar challenges along the way.

A Search for Employment

Many clients over the age of 60 are in poor health, have limited English and digital skills and struggle to find work. Some arrive in tears, asking for help to understand messages saying their benefits will be cut if they cannot show they have actively applied for work. Some become traumatized as they do their best, but are, or feel, chided for failing to achieve the impossible.

Our Advocate therefore spends hours trying to help women with limited skills search for roles they can try to apply for, or even to get through to appropriate offices for clarification of what is realistically wanted of them.

Many cannot work because of chronic health conditions, so need help completing forms to explain why they struggle, often with mobility issues, to travel to distant appointments, fruitlessly searching for work. Such applications are often rejected, so we need to follow them up time and time again.

Poverty and distress are directly linked to poor physical and mental health. Women with limited educations, employment, digital and English language skills speak of feeling demoralised and distraught as they do their best to comply with a system into which they simply don't fit. As they struggle to find work, many experience severe anxiety and depression. Some simply come in and cry. Others confide they skip morning meals to ensure their children are properly fed.

Friday Wellbeing Sessions

A principle of self-help informs our sharing of information and resources to empower and embed learning amongst hard-to-reach women and their peer networks. We are effective in moving quickly to address gaps in mainstream services affecting some of Sheffield's most vulnerable residents - often the first to feel the impact of socio-economic and cultural deprivation.

We help women navigate access to what sometimes seems like impenetrable institutions with fast-changing requirements, upon which they depend for their survival. As face-to-face services transit online, isolation, anxiety and depression have also substantially increased.

Given a growing number of women seeking help, we are also working where possible with groups; a need for activities for young people, many reporting increased social anxiety who are often not in school because of homelessness, displacement, a lack of school places and a surge in post-Covid school drop-out, a need for further local youth activities is evident.

Healthy Living Activities

In-house fitness, sewing sessions, crafts and group discussions, support for children out of school, health & wellbeing talks, family outings to allotments and annually, to the Peak District, are facilitated alongside advocacy, signposting and support for isolated women, refugees and families.

Older women in particular speak of feeling lonely and always turn up to share refreshments and join our Friday Healthy Living sessions; we don't walk long distances with them as many have health issues which make this difficult but they love to join chair aerobics sessions.

Lightweight, Obesity and Health Awareness Classes

Thanks to input from superstar, Corrie Moss, a 12-week programme was facilitated with 35 women seeking to learn about weight management, healthier diets, nutritional advice and all manners of essential oils. Cards are also written to show what is positive in the delivery of workshops to explore how each participant felt.

After a nutritionist's talks about links between diet, nutrition and wellbeing, each woman keeps records of what they eat each day, how much and what is included so they can reflect on how to improve their own and their families' diets. Pop drinks, breads and milk are tabled, for instance, so the group can collectively explore how much sugar, salt and fat content each one holds.

Informal feedback suggests that women are now changing the way that they eat. Such was the popularity of this course that Corrie will be back shortly to run another 12-week cycle for a long waiting list of women waiting to take part!

Type 2 Diabetes

Walks, diet, keeping stress levels low and small changes in life help keep us healthier. Given a high level of diabetes in our communities, outings, talks, workshops and walks help explore ways to prevent and reduce risk of diabetes. Twenty women have attended every Friday to learn, share and gain awareness.

More Life, Fitness and More!

Thanks to *Claire*, our fabulous fitness tutor who cheers up any room she enters, an average of 20 BAME women join us each week for free, gentle fitness classes. While they try to keep fit and maintain good health, they also say it offers a rare moment to find peace of mind for a short hour each week and keep worries briefly at bay.

Healthy refreshments of sandwiches and fruit were made available on Fridays for our Healthy Living exercise, Circle and health talk drop-in sessions where neighbours sometimes come just because they feel isolated at home, particularly where their children shut their bedroom doors and spend their time online. Nothing went to waste as any leftover sandwiches went home with visitors too. While welcoming newcomers every time we provide food, as women tell one another of such opportunities which means we see new faces, we are sometimes told that the provision of simple refreshments helps make people feel more optimistic that they can get by when household incomes are so tight that food budgets are impacted.

Listening and Sharing Craft Sessions

As women struggle to keep families afloat, a growing number report that their GP have put them on anti-depressants. We therefore launched creative sharing sessions after Covid facilitated by a qualified and experienced BAME community counselor, to help women develop collective strategies to address anxiety, stress and depression.

Mainstream mental health services are rarely available in community languages. Therapists often lack insights into the cultures, social expectations and needs of women from marginalised cultural communities. One of our visitors regularly sits down and silently cries without saying a word while the word 'depression', for instance, does not exist in languages include Somali. This means words and concepts to explore emotional health are very limited.

As direct conversations about poor mental outlooks continue to be social taboos in some of our networks, a craft collective provides a vehicle for women, unlikely to engage in formal 'therapy', to simply come together and share experiences.

Feedback suggests that women coming together to reflect, share trauma and solutions results in collective brighter outlooks at times of financial and emotional crisis. Many say that just getting out of home and joining activities or sharing tips on taking better care of themselves and their families makes a huge difference.

Some women say they wish we didn't have to stop sessions over the Christmas period; this indicates the difference such activities make to particularly isolated

women. Where women experience very personal distress which cannot be fully explored in a group. our counselors offer follow up sessions on a one-to-one basis.

We are really a group of women coming together to speak openly and without being judged. Sharing emotional experiences is critical - it is not the same to do it online when we are upset. Joining our network, sharing stories about life experiences and sharing what is on our minds just gives us relief. It's really important to learn that other people are going through similar experiences and that it's not just you; it means we understand one another and are there to help when each of us needs a bit of support which, in turn, might be offered to others when we overcome obstacles which are difficult when we face them alone.

Inviting our whole street to join in has also made a difference to everyone as we greet one another, know a little bit more about our neighbours, feel safer and happier in the knowledge that we are friends and are more likely to call on one another if needed where once we would not dare.

Crafts and Family Activities

We brought whole households together over summer thanks to [Corrie Moss](#), [Sachma](#) and funding from [Comic Relief](#) and support from two volunteers, helping 20+ children aged 5-11 to design, paint and create Eid, birthday and greeting cards.

During warmer weather, we also take an average of 20 women for twice weekly walks as well as a series of 6 outings for swimming at Heeley Baths, which are warm and run women-only sessions. While improving health, outings also build social connection and learning!

[We also Visit Darnall Allotments](#) for fresh air, exercise, growing, healthy eating and herbs and are particularly popular with Bangladeshi women who grow herbs, vegetables and produce in their back yards - garlic, aubergines, herbs and more which they bring to the centre and share when they over produce. Some women are teaching others and pots of herbs shared at the allotments were shared out so women could try growing things they had not done before including strawberries, cucumbers, trees and even roses! We also learnt about herbs, and which are good for us, the difference in olive, avocado and other oils.

Aside from exercise classes, talks, workshops, snacks and a moment to connect and relax, aromatherapy oil workshops run by [Yasmin](#) and [Corrie Moss](#) at [Sachma](#), showing women how to prepare mixtures to improve outlooks, health, address bruising, stress and more, clinical hypnotherapist and Massage Therapist [Farah](#) from [Sheffield Wellness Centre](#) is also joining us to offer five-minute stress-busting [Head & Shoulders](#) massage for 10 women per session. Lucky them!

Classes offer a rare chance to socialise so chances are, a visitor to our classes will be greeted by waves of laughter!

Sewing Sessions

Our popular sewing sessions, paused over lockdown, have been revived! [Sheffield City Council](#) enabled us to purchase sewing machines two years ago and continues to pay for our tutor. Half a dozen women join us each week to share skills, socialize, design, repair and make clothes. This extends the life of textiles and household goods at a time of financial distress while encouraging more sustainable practices!

Sewing sessions enabled an average of 12 women to join 12 sessions in which they learn to mend as well as design, cut and sew clothes including coats which a whole collection of women made from fabric bought cheaply in the market for an average of £10. It looks like visitors to the centre wear a uniform!

Our teacher is amazing and puts in far more hours than she is actually paid for. She also taught us to use sewing machines, changing needles and, alongside a woman who ran Electronic Repairs workshops, how to rewire a plug and basic skills for self-sufficiency in home maintenance. Such is the popularity of sessions that we had to open a waiting list; sometimes our Friday Healthy Living sessions are so busy that we have to limit our numbers to 40.

Case Study

An older woman who comes to our centre brought along a friend who was really isolated, walked on her own a lot and had no one to speak to. She joined our sewing sessions, has something to eat, and says it makes such a difference to have somewhere to come along and share, talk to others and feel less alone. It makes life much less stressful when you have someone to share strategies with about how to cope with rising prices and opportunities.

She has changed so much. She is happier, greets people now on the streets where she walked alone and looks forward to meeting us every Friday. She says it's changed her life.

What a difference a few community activities and services can make!

Sheffield University Medical Student Wellbeing Sessions

Our very popular sessions, led by medical students from [Sheffield University](#), shared insights on managing diabetes, arthritis, cancer, hyper-tension and Paediatric First Aid. While offering preventative learning to help women be well, stay safe, and reduce chances of developing chronic health conditions which are particularly prevalent amongst BAME women, students also learn from feedback, questions and discussions with participants. Learning to identify blood pressure readings, for instance, equip women with an understanding of what is going on when they have their blood pressure taken so they can join in the conversation from an informed point of view!

Homework Club

Our very popular [Homework Club](#), two [English](#) tutors and three [Maths & Science](#) tutors and a team of parent volunteers, 35 young people aged 11-16 are offered an

hour each of GCSE-level Maths, English and Science each Sunday morning. Our Homework Club is particularly helpful for households where parents have limited English language, educational experiences and resources to support children struggling at school.

We also work closely with parents and schools where attempts to address poor academic achievements might come late and parents, lacking skills and financial resources to help, feel helpless. Those left behind by age 11 have a mountain to climb, do not know where to turn for help and often feel the future is bleak.

Volunteer parents prepare refreshments provided at the start, break-time and at the end of each Club session to give learners a break and help make learning more sociable. These breaks also offer a pause to meet, share and break down stigmas where students might feel embarrassed by school failure and afraid ask for help.

When children first join, they are often disruptive, particularly when they've been suspended from school. Thanks to our supportive team of parent volunteers, a level of discipline and respect is maintained, our students are thriving.

Seven children last year passed their GCSEs and have gone on to A-level studies while eight are preparing to move on this year. Given that our neighbourhood is one of the most deprived in Britain, our young people are working hard to improve their educational standards and their lives. Thankfully, also, young people who did not immediately return to school after Covid have slowly gone back.

Former students, now working as lab technicians in local hospitals, in IT and analytical sciences, are all the first in their families to find their way through educational systems and make informed choices for their futures. Their stories inspire young learners who start believing that they too can go on to gain degrees and follow dreams. This, in turn, draws more young people to come along to learn...

We interview each young person joining, listen to their personal, academic, emotional and home experiences as we try to gauge how best to help. Volunteers who themselves have attended our Homework Club are available to spend more time with individuals in need of additional support.

Our approach to teaching is shaped by each child's needs. As time goes by, we learn through class feedback, parents and one-to-one conversations arising at breaks about further hidden needs which young people are embarrassed to talk about. We also ask young people about workshop topics they would like to explore.

More than just Academics As we build trust with young people who might feel they have no one to confide in at times of distress, stories of bullying often emerge. After years of shame, fear and isolation, some discover others share similar experiences and visibly become more confident. A lack of motivation and emotional withdrawal slowly melts as kids share with peers and start taking an active interest in learning, speaking out in class for the first time ever!

Celebrations are also key to recognising each learner's achievements. While inspiring generations, whose parents have often not completed secondary school, to aim high, we continue to share learning via peer role modeling, with our own staff team, volunteers and Management members demonstrating how each of us can take small steps and keep going until we do things we never imagined possible.

Media

We have quite a few photos of our activities but many of the women who come to our centre don't want to have their pictures used in publications and a wider media. They feel it's not safe, as asylum-seekers and refugees have been targeted by racist demonstrators across Britain. We keep a very discrete profile because we don't want to make our centre a target for abuse.

While we don't advertise our activities widely in the media, however, we do have very good word-of-mouth networks which reach women who might not access mainstream information outlets at any rate. They find us when they need us, with friends, neighbours and signposting from other local community organisations.

We did design and produce photocopied leaflets which we distributed to all our neighbours on our very long street of 69 households. It brought new families and neighbours together to meet, work as a team and visit our centre. In this sense, our publicity targets local residents directly rather than broadcast our achievements to the wider public.

Our goal is to help residents who are vulnerable rather than to applaud our good work. The people who need us speak of our value and that is more than rewarding enough to all of us who work hard to help!

Our Work is made possible thanks to the following funders:

We are very grateful to **Comic Relief** for supporting our work with careful guidance and encouragement to continue serving local women for a further five years. Securing long-term core funding makes all the difference to our being able to plan and develop services with the knowledge that we will still be around in the years to come. It has also enabled us to build on our wellbeing and training activities providing opportunities for a range of former volunteers and service-users who themselves arrived in crisis before taking small steps to finally join our team through short-term work opportunities.

We are also indebted to **Sheffield City Council** who continue to fund our sewing sessions, while **Sheffield College** enables 78 women achieving **ESOL certification** to progress in learning English, gain skills to better understand their own and their families' health, housing, education and wellbeing issues while moving into vocational training, connecting with others and access jobs otherwise outside of their reach. As each person progresses, it also reminds us that we can all improve our lives!

Last, but not least, our volunteers, Management Committee members and all the wonderful women who make our services vibrant make all our efforts rewarding.

We look forward to each and everyone rising to achieve further untold things!

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2025

**AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL 0114 2588067**

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2025

	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Balance B/F 01.07.2024		Total 19826
<u>Grants Received (Restricted)</u>		
Sheffield City Council	1060	
More Life UK	7701	
Main Grants	25945	
Voluntry Action Sheffield	3940	
Sheffield College	9312	
Charity Projects (Comic Relief)	50349	
		<u>98307</u>
		118133
<u>Payments</u>		
Salaries	37077	
Seasonal Workers	20425	
Admin Workers	7734	
HMRC-Paye	4458	
Creche Workers	4022	
Outreach Support Workers	5107	
Project Support	8020	
Consultancy Fees	2030	
Voluntary Action Sheffield	201	
Voluntary Expenses	1990	
Event Activities, Food and Health Workshop	2440	
Insurance	290	
Bank Charges	119	
Premises Rent	8707	
Community Wellness	1132	
Telephone & Internet	336	
College Fees	0	
Travel & Refreshments Cost	5350	
Stationary & Equipment Purchase	2601	
Repairs	0	
Accountancy	1000	
Misc	0	
Total Expenses		113039
Restricted Funds Available As At 30.06.2025		<u><u>5094</u></u>
BALANCE AT BANK 30.06.2025		5094
Less: Cheques presented after date		<u>0</u>
		<u><u>5094</u></u>

ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


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Chartered Certified Accountants
537 Abbeydale Road
Sheffield S7 1FU

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SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL: 0114 258 8067

CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member  Dated 30/10/2025

Committee member H. Mohamed. Dated 30-10-25



SECTION A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

**On accounts for the year
ended**

30th JUNE 2025

**Charity no
(if any)**

1013817

Set out on pages

1-1

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the year ended **30/06/2025**

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date: 30/10/2025

Name:

Mohammad Wakas Ashraf

**Professional
qualification or body**

Chartered Certified Accountant

Address:

537 Abbeydale Road

Sheffield

S7 1FU

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2025

**AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL 0114 2588067**

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
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FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2025

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Balance B/F 01.07.2024		Total 19826
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Committee member  Dated 30/10/2025

Committee member H. Mohamed. Dated 30-10-25



SECTION A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
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AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

**On accounts for the year
ended**

30th JUNE 2025

**Charity no
(if any)**

1013817

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1-1

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Signed:

Date: 30/10/2025

Name:

Mohammad Wakas Ashraf

**Professional
qualification or body**

Chartered Certified Accountant

Address:

537 Abbeydale Road

Sheffield

S7 1FU

Accounts

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP (AWHG)

June 2023-24 Annual Report

Why We're Here

Set up and led by women from hard-to-reach communities in the deprived ward of Darnall, Attercliffe and wider areas in Sheffield who clubbed together three decades ago to formalise a self-help women's group where women were constantly asking for help, AWHG is a constituted voluntary sector charity governed by a voluntary Management Committee team composed of local women who themselves have faced challenges in finding their way through life.

Our geographic reach has expanded in recent years as isolated and disadvantaged women of *Black and Ethnic Minority* heritage, refugees and asylum-seekers who disproportionately experience poor health, housing issues, poverty and increasingly, anxiety, continue to find their ways to our door. Our aim is to provide much-needed health, welfare advice & advocacy, English, IT and vocational training alongside health & wellbeing services at a time of increasing poverty, depression and strife. Our aim is to:

- Reduce isolation, stigma towards single parenthood and discrimination by helping affected women strengthen social networks and confidence to become better integrated and active into their locality;
- Reach out, empower and equip disadvantaged women with advocacy, awareness and interpreting support, health, legal and practical tools to make informed decisions and take action;
- Address high levels of unemployment by providing basic skills, literacy, vocational training, childcare and homework support to help equip women and further generations of young people living in poverty, distress and despair with skills to achieve their full social, emotional, civic and employment potential.

Our Service Users

As a self-help group, BAME women at AWHG support one another. Newcomers say news of our helping with personal, practical and quality support, particularly when women come in crisis situations, helps our reputation grow. Word also spreads about each woman who achieves a small success. As each newcomer sees how others have developed skills to move forward in life, we also serve as informal, collective role models.

A majority of women coming through our doors are unemployed or from low-income households in a district experiencing some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation. Most are from migrant or refugee communities and of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian, Ethiopian and increasingly, Kurdish heritage. Some women have limited educational and employment experiences, English language, IT and qualifications to navigate statutory services and gain work.

Most hear of our services by word-of-mouth. As all of us come from a position of shared experiences, we understand and support one another while each newcomer can see how other women have developed new skills and moved forward in life. In this sense, we provide ideal role models through our collective efforts.

Classes, workshops, health activities, preparations of refreshments, celebrations and outings help bond and build confidence amongst women who might have limited social networks to

which to turn at times of trouble. Some say that looking forward to joining in with group activities in itself improves their outlooks.

Women attending group sessions to share stories say that better peer networks also make learning experiences more sociable as learners meeting others in similar circumstances helps break down taboos of shame as learners start to rebuild lives. Our welcoming venue offers refreshments which women can help themselves as they please while meeting others in a safe space where they feel can come for help.

Our Team

Some of our **Management Committee** of local Somali, Black, Syrian and Yemeni heritage women first came to us as service-users and volunteers. Our Management committee help support our day-to-day running, supervising and supporting workers, tutors and volunteers while encouraging former service-users to join in and help. We meet quarterly and invite newcomers to join us reviewing the progress of our projects, making sure we provide safe services and keep within budgets. Feedback from service-users, staff, tutors, volunteers and partners also help us identify new needs and think about how to help.

Volunteers

AWHG's volunteers represent a range of cultures including Pakistani, Somali, Kurdish, Syrian, Yemeni and Sudanese heritage; many are single, most are parents of young children and their ages range from 23 to 49. In keeping with our self-help ethos, a majority are former clients and learners developing new skills and confidence in a safe space. Others are recently arrived refugees seeking to build on existing educational and work experience skills.

Bilingual volunteers with Arabic, Somali, Kurdish, Urdu and Bengali community languages, to name a few, also serve as informal interpreters, even accompanying and supporting women at appointments while explaining how systems work. They help tutors and support learners in larger classes who need a bit of extra help. We offer hands-on' experience, help build capacity, demonstrates what women can achieve and empowers them with skills for employment; a cohort have attended Volunteer Training facilitated with *Sheffield College* which included certification in *Basic Safeguarding, First Aid, Health & Safety*.

While serving as role models for new clients and sharing insight from their own experiences, volunteers help facilitate our services from a perspective of lived experiences, understanding and empathy for each new client starting their own journeys.

We celebrate their achievements. Without them, our team would struggle and hidden needs amongst lonely, struggling and anxious BAME women and refugees might not receive the attention volunteers help provide.

ESOL and Employability

AWHG starts in late June of each year to recruit, interview and register learners for each further academic year, ferrying women to and from Sheffield College, helping with form filling, translations and follow-ups to ensure each woman's papers are processed. *Sheffield College*, meanwhile, provides funds to cover venue hire and tutors who are also recruited by AWHG itself.

Sheffield College also provides funding for three Celta-qualified English as a Second Language (ESOL) teachers who run five levels of **ESOL classes attended by 90 BAME women**. AWHG staff recruit and support tutors and learners while volunteers help take registers, remind women to bring absence notes for GP or benefits appointments, and help students, in smaller groups, learn how to receive messages, homework, join classes online, take tests and receive updates via *WhatsApp* and *Google Classroom*. We also help facilitate elements of exams including video recording of speaking and listening skills, which culminate in an end-of-year celebration where learners are awarded what might be the first certificates they've ever earned in their lives!

Most learners are aged of 25-60 and of Pakistani, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese, Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Syrian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Afghani, Iraqi and Turkish heritage - now joined by an influx of Kurdish heritage women. Classes offer a chance to get out of home and meet others which isolated women say improves their mental outlook. It also help knit together a community of women who go on to help one another out in times of need. While improving English skills to fill forms, speak with GPs, teachers and neighbours, most say they slowly gain confidence and skills to become more active, volunteer or attend vocational training for employment.

We also help each woman coming to our ESOL classes to prepare or update existing CVs to help search for work.

Employability Training and Support

Most women attending our ESOL classes move up a level each year. Those achieving Level 1 qualifications often go on to attend courses at Sheffield College or one of our own 12-week cycles of *Level 1 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)* in **Childcare** training with tutor *Helen Haythorne* of local training organisation, *Red Tape*. We facilitate three cycles each year so that total of 30 women annually gain skills to support nurseries or join *Red Tape* Level 2 *Childcare* training for further qualifications as Nursery Workers. We also jointly run three 12-week cycles of Level 1 **Health & Social Care** training for a further 30 women yearly moving towards employment which fits around family caring timetables.

Twice weekly we also help women log into our centre laptops to search for work as Teaching Assistants and as Passenger Services Support Workers helping children with disabilities travel to school or day care centres, a role which has become particularly popular.

IT Drop-in Sessions

Seemingly simple tasks such as booking a GP appointment or updating benefits information have transited online and become inaccessible for women with limited digital and English skills. Where complex issues cannot be resolved online, waiting times for telephone assistance can literally waste hours of staff and client time.

Our IT Drop-in sessions are therefore critical to helping 30 women via three 12-week-long sessions each year to take first steps towards surviving in a digitalized world. By helping each and every vulnerable learner gain skills to open up and write emails, access critical GP appointments, update Universal Credit information for benefits, undertake online energy price searches, each small but vital steps help disenfranchised women gain skills to better care for themselves.

In order to reach a wider group of women, from last autumn helped support women in our ESOL classes directly gain basic digital skills to access services, learning and job searches online.

Informal Support for Young People

Even as we contemplated how to best help disenfranchised women coming to our doors, we have found an increasing number of young people out of school because of a lack of secondary school places or where families have become homeless and moved to neighbourhoods with limited school places.

Some say they are bored and in need of fresh activities. While connecting them to our weekend *Homework Club* to keep learning, we help them log-onto our Centre laptops and work through homework tasks during the week to help stay engaged and progress academically while awaiting new school places.

Refreshments: The Best Part of it All!

Building on our [Welcoming Place](#) initiative ensuring women who don't bring refreshments when they attend classes daylong are fed with a minimum of sandwiches, our volunteer team continue prepare sandwiches and lay out fruit for visitors each morning and welcome women from a range of heritages to simply pop in and met others.

Newcomers sometimes cry as they speak of spending whole days alone when their children leave home or close the doors to their rooms. Some say there's no talking in their homes anymore. The chance to simply join in and talk, while sharing simple sandwiches, joining our Friday *Health & Wellbeing* and "Let's Talk" sessions and inviting friends who didn't know they could join in. Most recently, Afro-Caribbean women spent a morning with us, just talking and talking, sharing and enjoying with us while offering other women at our centre fresh opportunities to practice English language skills with new friends!

More than fifty sandwiches and fruit arrays disappear each day; some women head straight to our kitchen when they arrive. This informal *Breakfast-Lunch Club* is also particularly popular Wednesdays and Thursdays when 25-odd women visit mornings, and 25 more come in the afternoon.

Newcomers also say they feel safe coming for help at our women-only service as our own experiences reflect theirs. Empathy and understanding of how easily women can find themselves alone, and with no one to turn to, comes naturally as we've all faced similar challenges along the way.

Advice and Advocacy Support

Where digitally skilled residents have skills to resolve benefits, housing, schooling and disability issues swiftly, women lacking such skills often arrive in crisis, penniless, homeless, without heating or electricity. Unable to read letters and respond without external support, it only at this point that they realize there is a problem.

As our work is directed by our principle of self-help, information and resources are shared to empower and embed learning amongst hard-to-reach women and their peer networks. While helping women navigate access to what sometimes seems like impenetrable institutions with fast-changing requirements, upon which they depend for their survival, we move quickly to address gaps in mainstream services affecting some of Sheffield's most vulnerable residents - often the first to feel the impact of socio-economic and cultural deprivation.

Timing is critical so we frequently remind service-users to come to us immediately when they receive letters they don't understand. Delays can mean women might find themselves without homes, food, benefits and help. Once alerted, we act swiftly to make sure each visitor get the help she needs before matters get worse.

That's why we help women as they come through the door, with or without appointments, be they single parents or older women, in deciphering energy bills, health, housing, caring, education and benefit systems pressuring them to repeatedly apply, and often be rejected, for one job after another.

Where court cases, immigration or specialist issues arise, we also help clients access [Citizens Advice Bureau \(CAB\)](#) services by taking clients directly to their office at [The Circle](#), a community building in central Sheffield which houses a range of voluntary groups, so as to help ensure they quickly get help.

Case Study:

A very young United Nations refugee arrived with her two young girls, pregnant and in temporary accommodation. Without family and friends to help she became quite helpless. She had to go into hospital but had no one to look after her children, take them to school and bring them back home. After coming home, she needed

time to heal so we came to help with food, help and respite. Soon, however, her landlady wanted her out and she was scheduled to become homeless.

She asked for help, and we pleaded with Sheffield Housing to negotiate her stay in situ until a suitable place became available.

A Search for Employment

Our Advocate and Volunteers also spend hours trying to help women with limited skills search for roles they can try to apply for, or even to get through to appropriate offices for clarification of what is realistically wanted of them. Where older women with limited English and digital skills have been directed to find work, it can be heartbreaking to watch women with medical issues which limit what they can do try again and again, only to be repeatedly rejected.

A few who have joined our ESOL classes and improved English language skills have managed to find cleaning jobs in schools but with others, with limited skillsets and physical restrictions, are repeatedly pressured to keep up what seems like hope-dashing efforts to find work. Some, unable to support their children single handed, say they feel like failures.

As poverty and distress are directly linked to poor physical and mental health, women with limited educations, employment, digital and English language skills also speak of feeling demoralised and distraught as they do their best to comply with a system into which they simply don't fit. As they struggle to find work, many experience severe anxiety and depression. Some simply come in and cry. Others confide they skip morning meals to ensure their children are properly fed.

School Issues

Increasingly, over the last years, distraught woman come to ask us to accompany them to visit school teachers at our local secondary school where young men, in particular, are regularly put in detention, referred to GPs for diagnoses of learning or behavioural issues or excluded from school.

The schools now ask us to come along to help which means we find ourselves in school each week. Language is a barrier and often, where young people stop feeling welcome, confidence is broken.

Thankfully, we have now begun to build relationship with the school's Liaison Officer who has helped to intervene and put forward what parents are trying to explain so as to improve communication, ensure an independent voice is present and that accurate records are kept.

Health & Wellbeing

Our Friday *Health & Wellbeing* sessions continue to grow in popularity even as newcomers from new cultural communities join in and enlarge networks of friendship, support and comfort. As face-to-face services transit online, we have seen an increase in isolation, anxiety and depression have also substantially increased. Therefore, the *Health & Wellbeing* sessions have helped to support women with this.

Friday Fitness Sessions & Medical Student Health Talks

Thanks to *Elena*, our fabulous fitness tutor who cheers up any room she enters, an average of 20 BAME women join us each week for free, gentle fitness classes. While they try to keep fit and maintain good health, they also say it offers a rare moment to find peace of mind for a short hour each week and keep worries briefly at bay.

Classes offer a rare chance to socialise so chances are, a visitor to our classes will be greeted by waves of laughter!

Listening and Sharing Craft Sessions

As direct conversations about poor mental outlooks continue to be socially taboo in some of our cultural networks, a craft collective provides a vehicle for women, unlikely to engage in formal 'therapy', to simply come together and share experiences.

As women struggle to keep families afloat, a growing number report their GP have put them on anti-depressants. Our creative sharing sessions, facilitated by a qualified and experienced BAME community counselor, therefore help women develop collective strategies to address anxiety, stress and depression.

Our counselor might also offer quiet follow-on sessions where a woman joining our group is in need of further one-to-one and confidential support.

Our 'light touch' approach offers an alternative to oversubscribed mainstream mental health services which are rarely available in community languages and might lack insights into the cultures, social expectations and needs of women from marginalised cultural communities.

Feedback suggests that women coming together to reflect, share trauma and solutions results in collective brighter outlooks at times of financial and emotional crisis. Many say that just getting out of home and joining activities or sharing tips on taking better care of themselves and their families makes a huge difference.

Case Study

A woman dropped into our session on Friday and couldn't stop talking. She talks to everyone who comes in, explaining that it's a relief to meet us all after spending days of the week at home, alone in her sitting room, though she has four children at home who all sit in their rooms with doors shut.

In addition to joining our Fitness and Circle sessions, she spends the day with us on Fridays and pops in from time to time in the week just to meet with other women!

Sewing Sessions

Thanks to [Sheffield City Council](#) who enabled us to purchase a further four sewing machines, half a dozen women join us each week to share skills, socialize, design, repair and make clothes. While extending the life of textiles and household goods at a time of financial distress, sessions also encourage us to care for what we have and improve our skills for a more sustainable future.

Family Activities

We brought whole households together this summer while picking litter on our streets and later, sharing refreshments back at our centre. Sessions were run in partnership with Sheffield City Council as were workshops, supported by our volunteers, helping 20+ children aged 5-11 to design, paint and create crafts.

As we listen, support and encourage women who might feel on the edge of a breakdown. It's worse when they have come from war zones, faced trauma, displacement and socio-economic isolation. Inviting them to join us for their first ever outings to the Peak District,

where most women don't have transport, resources or knowledge what exists out there makes it really special. We walk, picnic and are often greeted by fellow walkers calling out to cheer us on and make us feel welcome. Some say these outings have been the best thing they've done for years and that they feel like a cloud has been lifted.

Given the popularity of holiday activities which build on walks and annual Peak District outings for families, we hope to increase our offering of holiday activities for young people, particularly those who are out of school and can benefit from further skill-building, learning and social connection.

Homework Club

Thanks to Sheffield City Council who stepped in when longstanding funding from *BBC Children in Needs* finally came to an end, we have been able to carry on supporting 30 young people aged 11-16, with three hours of GCSE-level Maths and English each Sunday morning.

Our *Weekend Homework Club* has now run for more than 25 years! It is particularly helpful for households where parents have limited English language, educational experiences and increasingly, where young people find they have no school places.

Many in these situations lack day-to-day structure in their lives, social networks and learning links to keep them on track so we also support them during the school week when they come to our Centre.

For weekend sessions, we interview each young person joining, listen to their personal, academic, emotional and home experiences as we try to gauge how best to help. Our approach to teaching is shaped by each child's needs. As time goes by, we learn through class feedback, parents and one-to-one conversations arising at breaks about further hidden needs which young people are embarrassed to talk about. We also ask young people about workshop topics they would like to explore.

We provide refreshments at the start and break-time of each Club session to help make learning more sociable; pauses to meet, share and break down stigmas where students might feel embarrassed by school failure and afraid ask for help. Attempts to address poor academic achievements otherwise come late and parents, lacking skills and financial resources to help, feel helpless. Those left behind by age 11 have a mountain to climb, do not know where to turn for help and often feel the future is bleak.

More than just Academics As we build trust with young people who might feel they have no one to confide in at times of distress, stories of bullying often emerge. After years of shame, fear and isolation, some discover others share similar experiences and visibly become more confident. A lack of motivation and emotional withdrawal slowly melts as kids share with peers and start taking an active interest in learning, speaking out in class for the first time ever!

Four qualified Maths and English tutors run our three-hourly term-time sessions and are supported by an Administrator who manages our class registers, photocopies worksheets, tests and organise termly parent-tutor reviews resources to support children struggling at school.

Volunteers who themselves have attended our Homework Club, some of whom now work as lab technicians in local hospitals, in IT and analytical sciences, have become models for a further generation who come with low educational aspirations.

Talks from former students who are the first in their families to find their way through educational systems, are inspirational to young learners who start believing that they too can go on to gain degrees and make informed choices while enable them to work in sectors which inspire them.

Celebrations are also key to recognising each learner's achievements. While inspiring generations, who's parents have often not completed secondary school, to aim high, we continue to share learning via peer role modeling, with our own staff team, volunteers and Management members demonstrating how each of us can take small steps and keep going until we do things we never imagined possible.

Partnerships and Sharing with Wider Networks

Many of our clients are elderly, have mental or physical health issues and need help to access basic services that are fast migrating online. As services close and civic funding pots shrink, we have been overwhelmed by an increased demand for help.

Thankfully, given financial constraints, partnership programmes have helped us diversify our services, trial new activities and help women and families with nowhere to turn. They also offer a conduit for conversations with organisations tackling similar social challenges while ensuring we enhance, rather than duplicate our work.

Sheffield College funds our ESOL classes while *Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life* funds *Red Tape* who provide tutors for our Level 1 introductory courses in *Health & Social Care* and *Childcare*. *Community Wellness Service Group* also helped us source a fitness tutor who runs sessions as part of our Friday Wellbeing programme.

We regularly take or signpost clients to *Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)* while *Sacmha's* Corrie Moss, now a management member, invites women to visit *Darnall Community Allotments* who share food growing strategies, plants, gardening gloves, trowels, seeds and more. Corrie also facilitates healthy eating, crafts, aromatherapy and fitness sessions to help children and women improve wellbeing.

Local schools continue to signpost young people struggling with academics' while *Sheffield City Council* has linked up to trial family rubbish-picking initiatives and holiday activities for young people. We look forward to building on such links to help a younger generation continue to achieve!

Voluntary Action Sheffield facilitates key community engagement hubs and while our participation in *Sheffield City Council Partnership Board*, where we shared learning about some of Britain's hardest-to-reach BAME communities and consider linked up strategies for community, statutory and mainstream services was paused this summer when our Chair, *David Blunkett*, retired, our Chair continues to represent excluded voices via *South Yorkshire Community Foundation's* grants panel which considers the value of projects seeking resources.

Our Work is made possible thanks to the following funders:

Special thanks to the *Big Lottery*, our anchor for many years, who have enabled us to keep funding our p/t staff, volunteers, core overheads, IT Drop-ins and elements of our Health & Wellbeing programme.

Sheffield City Council has enabled us to continue facilitating our sought-after **Homework Club** where young people aged 11-16 can re-gain confidence, build friendships, practical and academic skills to ensure their continued engagement and success at school and beyond.

Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life programme also indirectly funds *Childcare* and *Health & Social Care* classes at our centre which are managed by the wonderful *Red Tape* team. Enabling local women to achieve gives faith to everyone and reminds us that we can all improve our lives!

Sheffield City Council's small grant has thankfully enabled us to continue facilitate sewing sessions with socio-culturally isolated women who can come together to sew, with help from our wonderful sewing tutor, while meeting one another, connecting, mending clothes and household items at a time of stretched resources, while improving English language skills, gaining confidence and gaining transferable skills for employment.

Many thanks are also due to *Sheffield College* who fund our ESOL classes.

Volunteers and Sessional Staff:

Thanks is also due to *Asiya Dull*, who helps particularly vulnerable women take first steps towards navigating a world of online communications; our qualified and experienced community counsellor, *Samira Siddiqi*, for facilitating weekly craft activities knitting together 60 women yearly to share strategies for tackling anxiety, depression and building resilience at times of trauma. Our *Fitness Tutor*, *Elena*, formidable *Sewing Tutor*, *Niyam Mohamed*, who supports women in repairing, designing and making clothes, textiles and domestic goods, *Freelance Welfare Advisor*, *Maryam Ali*, who steps in, as needed, to support women in crisis and to our **Weekend Homework Club Team** including Maths tutors, *Showkat Mahmud* and *Hassan Iqbal*, as well as English tutors, *Sonia Bhatia* and *Natasha Ashley* who help our young people thrive!

Last, but not least, our volunteers, Management Committee members and all the wonderful women who make our services vibrant make all our efforts rewarding.

We look forward to each and every one rising to achieve further untold things!

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2024

AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL 0114 2588067

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2024

	£	£ Total
Balance B/F 01.07.2023		124
<u>Grants Received (Restricted)</u>		
Sheffield City Council	10500	
Sheffield Yorkshire Community	9870	
Main Grants	50968	
Community Organisation	23293	
Sheffield College	9300	
		<u>103931</u>
		104055
<u>Payments</u>		
Salaries	31861	
Seasonal Workers	10765	
Admin Workers	5845	
HMRC-Paye	4103	
Creche Workers	2510	
Outreach Support Workers	1385	
Project Support	2865	
Consultancy Fees	4663	
Voluntary Action Sheffield	149	
Voluntary Expenses	650	
Event Activities, Food and Health Workshop	1180	
Insurance	650	
Bank Charges	81	
Premises Rent	9570	
Community Wellness	992	
Telephone & Internet	226	
College Fees	450	
Travel & Refreshments Cost	2685	
Stationary & Equipment Purchase	3060	
Repairs	40	
Accountancy	500	
Misc		
Total Expenses		84229
Restricted Funds Available As At 30.06.2024		<u><u>19826</u></u>
BALANCE AT BANK 30.06.2024		19826
Less: Cheques presented after date		<u><u>0</u></u>
		<u><u>19826</u></u>

ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Azim & Wakas
Chartered Certified Accountants
537 Abbeydale Road
Sheffield S7 1FU



CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member A. Mohamed Dated 21st Nov 2024 .

Committee member  Dated 21st Nov 2024

Accounts

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP (AWHG)

2022-23 Annual Report

In the Beginning ...

Over thirty years ago, three mums of Somali heritage became overwhelmed at the growing number of neighbours knocking on their kitchen doors for help. Many were very isolated refugees and single-heads-of-households from war-torn Somalia with limited or *no* English language skills. The door-knocking continued until, in a bid to find a better way to help, Halima Mohamed, Amina Warsame and Dequa Ibrahim decided to set up *AWHG* as a 'self-help' group.

AWHG volunteers found one-day-a-week office space to meet and help with reading and writing letters, interpreting for women at doctors, schools, benefit and court appointments. ESOL classes followed in partnership with *WEA (Workers Education Authority)*, and, when parents with no experience of the British education system struggled to support their children, *AWHG* secured their very first small grant for a *Homework Club* tutor for young people, supported by *AWHG* volunteers. Health talks on managing diabetes, arthritis and chronic conditions disproportionately affecting local women soon followed, as did fitness classes.

Service has since evolved according to changing local need and ideas emerging from a growing number of women coming to our doors. Some go on to help as volunteers, supporting events and activities for other women in need.

Most *AWHG*'s service-users are displaced and of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Kurdish, Iraqi, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian, African, Afghani and Ethiopian heritage. Many have limited educational experiences and, in an area experiencing some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation, are from low-income households

We are governed by a voluntary Management Committee of displaced local women who themselves face challenges experienced by service-users in accessing much-needed services. A majority joining classes, workshops, craft activities, celebrations and outings hear of us from peers who trust us, further deepening bonds to:

- Reduce isolation, stigma towards single parenthood and discrimination by helping affected women strengthen social networks and confidence to become better integrated and active into their locality;
- Reach out, empower and equip disadvantaged women with advocacy, awareness, interpreting support, health, legal and practical tools to take action and make informed decisions;
- Address high levels of unemployment by providing basic skills, literacy, vocational training, childcare, as well as a homework support for a further generation of young people. Our aim is to enable isolated women and families living in, or at risk of poverty, with skills to achieve their full social, emotional, civic and employment potential.

Supporting Women at Times of Crisis

At a time of shrinking resources and growing need, community, statutory partners and funders have helped AWHG to sustain and diversify our diversity of services.

We support one another. Word spreads about each woman who achieves a small success. AWHG's caring reputation also helps us reach some of Sheffield's most alienated residents. As each newcomer sees how others have developed skills to move forward in life, we also serve as informal, collective role models.

Most women coming through our doors are displaced, isolated, low-waged or unemployed single heads of households of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian and Ethiopian heritage communities. A majority have limited formal education and many, challenged to identify and access services, experience trauma, poor health and struggle as they try to find their feet.

Women of all ages arrive in crisis. Quite a few are vulnerable older BAME women. Poor health, disproportionately experienced amongst BAME women, holds them back. It makes it hard to find work, to travel, care for dependents and themselves.

We work to help women better understand what is wanted of them, where to go for help and how to access services online. While sharing skills, learning and comfort with women who are bereft, we try to help each newcomer build skills to become more resilient, move into volunteering, employment and improve family finances.

We are so proud of our contributions! Our neighbourhood experiences some of Britain's highest deprivation indices and was, until recently, considered dangerous. Yet as younger people begin to achieve and finding skilled jobs, showing the way for further generations who had no idea they could make better choices through persistence, hard work and qualifications, our whole community is improving.

Relationships of Trust

Trust is fundamental to what we do. We work organically - listening, reflecting and helping each visitor work out best courses of action in to survive and thrive in a fast-changing environment. Our staff and volunteers share languages, cultural experiences and an understanding of each displaced woman's journey. This helps us weave each newcomer into our rich and expansive community network tapestry.

Meet our Team!

Some of our **Management Committee** of local Somali, Black, Syrian and Yemeni heritage women first came to us as service-users and volunteers. All of us are DBS-checked. Our Acting Chairperson and founder, *Halima Mohamed*, Secretary, *Marium Mohammed* who is also an qualified Advocacy Worker, our Treasurer and multi-talented engineer with talents to repair anything, *Rima Al-Khayat*, multi-certificated Health & Wellbeing community Outreach Worker, *Corrie Moss* and *Iram Al-Khasadi* who speaks Arabic and helps interpret, fill forms and visit GPs with visitors. All generously contribute their talents and support to help us shine!

Our Chair, Secretary and Treasurer help support our day-to-day running, supervising and supporting workers, tutors and volunteers while encouraging former service-users to join in and help. We meet quarterly and invite newcomers to join us reviewing the progress of our projects, making sure we provide safe services and keep within budgets. Feedback from service-users, staff, tutors, volunteers and partners also help us identify new needs and think about how to help.

Our Chair, who helped establish our community initiative four decades ago, received Sheffield's East Local Area Committee *Community Star Award* in September 2023. She is increasingly asked to share insights and help shape strategies so Sheffield's most disenfranchised residents can access support needed while effectively contribute towards improving our whole community. Halima was also recently nominated by *Voluntary Action Sheffield* for a Community Award!

Staff

The impact of two p/t staff reaches far beyond our limited resources ...

Our 4-days-a-week Project Manager and 3-days-a-week English, Arabic, Somali (and Dutch!)-speaking Outreach Advocate coordinate activities, support tutors running ESOL, IT Drop-in, Childcare and Health and Social Care classes with partner organisations and volunteers. In-house fitness, sewing sessions, crafts and group discussions, support for children out of school, health & wellbeing talks, family outings to allotments and annually, to the Peak District, are facilitated alongside advocacy, signposting and support for isolated women, refugees and families.

In spite of a challenging year in which our own Outreach Advocate and Project Worker straddled overtime work with themselves becoming homeless and nursing critically ill family members, we now find ourselves invited to speak and share insights with wider forums after decades of quietly working at a local level.

Our Project Manager shares insights with strategic community panels including Sheffield's Partnership Board and South Yorkshire Community Foundation's grants panel. In the process, we are also learning about wider resources available to support Sheffield's wider diverse demographic communities.

We are grateful to our wonderful volunteers, *Asiya Dull*, who runs three 12-week cycles of IT support helping particularly vulnerable women take first steps towards navigating a world of online communications; our qualified and experienced community counsellor, *Samira Siddiqi*, facilitates weekly craft activities knitting together 60 women yearly to share strategies for tackling anxiety, depression and building resilience at times of trauma. Many thanks to our Fitness Tutor, *Elena*, formidable Sewing Tutor, *Niyam Mohamed*, who supports women in repairing, designing and making clothes, textiles and domestic goods. From March- June, Freelance Welfare Advisor, *Maryam Ali*, also supported over 40 women in crisis.

Weekend Homework Club Team: two Maths and two English tutors are supported by two 4-hours-a-week Administrator who help our young people thrive!

Volunteers

Volunteers help welcome each newcomer to our service. Seven volunteers of Pakistani, Somali, Kurdish, Syrian, Yemeni and Sudanese heritage now help prepare informal *breakfast-luncheon* of sandwiches and fruit for women attending classes.

Bilingual volunteers with Arabic, Somali, Kurdish, Urdu and Bengali community languages, to name a few, also serve as informal interpreters, even accompanying and supporting women at appointments while explaining how systems work. They help tutors and support learners in larger classes who need a bit of extra help.

At the end of our academic year, volunteers also help coordinate our annual outings with women and children to the Peak District. Each, in turn, also becomes a role model for peers and neighbours.

We celebrate their achievements. Without them, our team would struggle and hidden needs amongst lonely, struggling and anxious BAME women and refugees might not receive the attention volunteers help provide. Many thanks!

Newcomers Welcome!

Where we once primarily catered to women within walking distance, women from across Sheffield have begun to arrive. As our geographic reach grows, the profile of service-users is also widening, with more women of Iraqi Kurdish heritage now asking to join ESOL, IT and vocational training. Our waiting lists grow as civic funding cuts bite, local provisions disappear and local groups struggle to find volunteers.

ESOL and Employability

Demand for ESOL and vocational training has soared. An ESOL student explains:

My husband only works part-time and his salary is not enough to pay our bills. That is why I really need to improve my English so I can get a job and help!

Three Celta-qualified English as a Second Language (ESOL) teachers run five levels of **ESOL classes attended by 80 BAME women**. They're run in partnership with Sheffield College. AWHG staff recruit and support tutors and learners and, alongside volunteers, take registers, remind women to bring absence notes for GP or benefits appointments, and help students, in smaller groups, learn how to receive messages, homework, join classes online, take tests and receive updates via *WhatsApp* and *Google Classroom*. Should the centre be forced to close, vulnerable learners are now equipped to attend lessons remotely!

We also help facilitate elements of exams including video recording of speaking and listening skills, which culminate in an end-of-year celebration where learners are awarded what might be the first certificates they've ever earned in their lives!

Most learners are aged of 25-60 and of Pakistani, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese, Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Syrian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Afghani, Iraqi and Turkish heritage - now joined by an influx of Kurdish heritage women. Classes offer a chance to get out

of home and meet others which isolated women say improves their mental outlook. It also help knit together a community of women who go on to help one another out in times of challenge. While improving English skills to fill forms, speak with GPs, teachers and neighbours, most say they slowly gain confidence and skills to become more active, volunteer or attend vocational training for employment.

AWHG starts in late July to recruit, interview and register learners for each further academic year, ferrying women to and from Sheffield College, helping with form filling, translations and follow-ups to ensure each woman's papers are processed. *Sheffield College*, meanwhile, provides funds to cover venue hire and tutors who are also recruited by AWHG itself.

Employability Training and Support

Most women attending our ESOL classes move up a level each year. Those achieving Level 1 qualifications often go on to attend courses at Sheffield College or our own 12-week cycles of *Level 1 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)* in **Childcare** training with tutor *Helen Haythorne* sent by *Red Tape*. we facilitate three cycles each year so that total of 30 women annually gain skills to support nurseries or join *Red Tape* Level 2 *Childcare* training for further qualifications as Nursery Workers.

We also jointly run Level 1 **Health & Social Care** training for a further 30 women yearly to move towards employment which fits around family caring timetables!

This year, AWHG's service-users have also been supported by an *Employability Worker* from the *Centre for Refugees and Asylum-seekers* who helped women **prepare CVs and undertake job searches online**.

IT Drop-in Sessions

Our IT Drop-in sessions help 30 women each year via three 12-week-long sessions. By helping women learn to set up and write emails, do online searches, shopping and access critical GP appointments and update Universal Credit information for benefits, these small but vital steps help particularly vulnerable and disenfranchised women to begin to transition online.

Refreshments for All!

We noticed women who spend much of the day with us don't bring food along, so a small team of volunteer now prepare sandwiches and lay out fruit for visitors each morning. More than fifty sandwiches and fruit arrays we purchase wholesale disappear each day; some women seem to head straight to our kitchen when they arrive. This informal *Breakfast-Lunch Club* is particularly popular Fridays when 25-odd women visit mornings.

Advice and Advocacy Support

Seemingly simple tasks - booking GP appointments or updating benefits information – are quickly transiting online, making them inaccessible for women with limited

digital and English skills. Where complex issues cannot be resolved online, waiting times for telephone assistance can literally waste hours of staff and client time.

Where digitally-skilled residents have skills to resolve benefits, housing, schooling and disability issues swiftly, women lacking such skills often arrive in crisis, penniless, homeless, without heating or electricity. Unable to read letters and respond without external support, it is only at this point that they realize there is a problem.

Timing is critical so we frequently remind service-users to come to us immediately when they receive letters they don't understand. Delays can mean women might find themselves without homes, food, benefits and help. Once alerted, we act swiftly to make sure each visitor gets the help she needs before matters get worse.

Thankfully, [Sheffield City Council's Hardship Grants](#) helped single parents and older women over the course of last year to decipher energy bills, health, housing, caring, education and benefit systems pressuring them to repeatedly apply, and be rejected, for one job after another. Where court cases, immigration or specialist issues arise, we also help clients access a new online [Citizens Advice Bureau \(CAB\)](#) screen located in a neighbouring community centre. We also routinely now take women along to show them how to use this new local touchscreen service for benefit updates.

As we emerged from Covid and into a *Cost of Living* crisis, we secured [South Yorkshire Community Foundation](#) funding to employ a one-day-a-week Welfare Advisor over three months to meet a surge in demand from women in crisis.

Newcomers often say they feel safe coming for help at our women-only service as our own experiences reflect theirs. Empathy and understanding of how easily women can find themselves alone, and with no one to turn to, comes naturally as we've all faced similar challenges along the way.

A Search for Employment

Poverty and distress are directly linked to poor physical and mental health. Women with limited educations, employment, digital and English language skills speak of feeling demoralised and distraught as they do their best to comply with a system into which they simply don't fit. As they struggle to find work, many experience severe anxiety and depression. Some simply come in and cry. Others confide they skip morning meals to ensure their children are properly fed.

Increasingly, we are also visited by clients over the age of 60 who are in poor health and, with limited English and digital skills, struggle to find work. Some arrive in tears, asking for help to understand messages saying their benefits will be cut if they cannot show they have actively applied for work. Some become traumatized as they do their best, but are, or feel, chided for failing to achieve the impossible.

Our Advocates might spend hours trying to help women with limited skills search for roles they can try to apply for, or even to get through to appropriate offices for

clarification of what is realistically wanted of them. Most often, no one wants their skillsets. They try again, and again, but are repeatedly defeated.

It is heartbreaking to witness older BAME women with limited physical mobility, at a loss to achieve what is being asked for, trying their best - even as chronic health conditions become exacerbated through efforts to travel to distant appointments and worry.

A Housing Crisis in Sheffield

A housing crisis has also grown in Sheffield. As mortgage rates soar, private landlords end rental contracts without warning. Increasingly, we see whole families become homeless. Being thrown into temporary accommodations far from school, friends, social networks and resources statistically decreases the likelihood of their finding work, sustaining good health and positive outlooks. Poor public transport links means two or three buses might be needed to take children to and from school. Our own Advocacy Outreach Worker found herself in this situation, housed in a small, isolated and inadequate space.

We have, on occasion, stepped in to stop Bailiffs taking away limited household possessions or camped out in offices to help where families have been at risk of finding themselves on the street. Meanwhile children in temporary accommodation often lose school places in spite of being wait-listed for months. A lack of empathy from mainstream agencies can be disruptive for clients and our own staff:

A family of recently displaced refugees was made homeless when the ceiling in their house collapsed. Their carpets were soaked and, after two years of living in perpetual dampness, every single family member, including a severely disabled teen, had to be given ventilators for breathing problems they didn't have when they arrived.

Our team took them to Sheffield's Homeless Department who said to go back to live in the damp and damaged house. The mum said she would rather live on the street. Her teen son had quickly learnt to speak, read and write in English, with additional help from our Homework Club, and was excelling at school - despite managing with a physical disability over repeatedly displacements from Somalia to India to Sheffield. He now speaks multiple languages. But it had all become too much for him. He cried throughout, saying he couldn't carry on living this way.

A member of our team returned daily to the Homeless Office with the whole family for three days, refusing to leave, until at long last, they were awarded temporary hotel accommodations. It was far from the children's school and not ideal for transport links, particularly in light of family mobility issues, but the family hoped that at least their health might improve once they left housing unfit to live in...

A lady came for help when her benefits stopped. She didn't know why this had happened and was extremely distressed. She had children to care for alone, and one was disabled. She had no correspondence or explanation of what was going on.

We loaned her £10 for food and took her to the touch-screen advice service at the Pakistani Muslim Centre so we could go online and make an appointment to speak with Sheffield CAB. An Advisor there contacted the Universal Credit Department who said that when the mum had applied for a Carers' Allowance to help her disabled son, she hadn't send a particular document needed. This meant her existing welfare benefits had been stopped for reassessment and five had weeks passed. Meanwhile she had no money to feed and care for her family.

Being able to pop in and ask for help, she said, to understanding what was going on made all the difference. She said she hadn't known what to do, where to go or what would happen to her and her children if they couldn't pay for rent or food.

She had been advised by neighbours to come to us as because we care about what happens to these women and their children, really trying to help in whatever way is needed. Refugees, finding their feet in a totally alien environment, find their way to us after literally stopping strangers on the street who's physique suggests they might share a common language. We actually understand how it feels, the burden women carry and how they try so hard to help their children.

We are part of this community so we don't turn people away with advice which doesn't consider the reality in which very isolated women find themselves. Last week a woman travelled quite some distance with a disabled child to ask for help; knowing how far she had to come by foot, we told her to wait and drove her home after our sessions finished.

Health & Wellbeing

A principle of self-help informs our sharing of information and resources to empower and embed learning amongst hard-to-reach women and their peer networks. We are effective in moving quickly to address gaps in mainstream services affecting some of Sheffield's most vulnerable residents - often the first to feel the impact of socio-economic and cultural deprivation.

We help women navigate access to what sometimes seems like impenetrable institutions with fast-changing requirements, upon which they depend for their survival. As face-to-face services transit online, isolation, anxiety and depression have also substantially increased.

Given a growing number of women seeking help, we are also working where possible with groups; a need for activities for young people, many reporting increased social anxiety who are often are not in school because of homelessness, displacement, a lack of school places and a surge in post-Covid school drop-out, a need for further local youth activities is evident.

Friday Fitness & Medical Student Health Talks

Thanks to *Elena*, our fabulous fitness tutor who cheers up any room she enters, an average of 20 BAME women join us each week for free, gentle fitness classes. While

they try to keep fit and maintain good health, they also say it offers a rare moment to find peace of mind for a short hour each week and keep worries briefly at bay.

Classes offer a rare chance to socialise so chances are, a visitor to our classes will be greeted by waves of laughter! They are sometimes followed by health awareness talks, facilitated by medical students, on topics such as healthy eating and obesity, cancer-awareness and Emergency and Pediatric First Aid training. First Aid has been particularly popular since lockdown when some learners have had to make emergency decisions on their own and in the absence of timely external support.

Listening and Sharing Craft Sessions

As women struggle to keep families afloat, a growing number are reporting that their GP have put them on anti-depressants. We have therefore launched creative sharing sessions, facilitated by a qualified and experienced BAME community counselor, to help women develop collective strategies to address anxiety, stress and depression.

Mainstream mental health services are rarely available in community languages. Therapists often lack insights into the cultures, social expectations and needs of women from marginalised cultural communities. One of our visitors regularly sits down and silently cries without saying a word while the word 'depression', for instance, does not exist in languages include Somali. This means words and concepts to explore emotional health are very limited.

As direct conversations about poor mental outlooks continue to be social taboos in some of our networks, a craft collective provides a vehicle for women, unlikely to engage in formal 'therapy', to simply come together and share experiences.

Feedback suggests that women coming together to reflect, share trauma and solutions results in collective brighter outlooks at times of financial and emotional crisis. Many say that just getting out of home and joining activities or sharing tips on taking better care of themselves and their families makes a huge difference.

Some women say they wish we didn't have to stop sessions over the Christmas period; this indicates the difference such activities make to particularly isolated women. Where women experience very personal distress which cannot be fully explored in a group. our counselors offers follow up sessions on a one-to-one basis.

Sewing Sessions

Our popular sewing sessions, paused over lockdown, have been revived! Thanks to a generous donation from [Sheffield City Council](#) which enabled us to purchase a further four sewing machines, half a dozen women join us each week to share skills, socialize, design, repair and make clothes. This extends the life of textiles and household goods at a time of financial distress while encouraging more sustainable practices!

Crafts and Family Activities

We brought whole households together over summer while picking litter on our streets and later, sharing refreshments back at our centre. Sessions were run in partnership with Sheffield City Council as were workshops, supported by our volunteers, helping 20+ children aged 5-11 to design, paint and create crafts.

Given the popularity of these holiday activities which build on walks and annual Peak District outings for families, we hope to increase our offering of holiday activities for young people, particularly those who are out of school and can benefit from further skill-building, learning and social connection.

Outings: Exploring Local Public Resources

Sometimes we get calls from young people saying their mothers are seriously depressed. They ask us to visit or take them out to help shift their moods ...

We listen, support and encourage women who might feel on the edge of a breakdown. It's worse when they have come from war zones, faced trauma, displacement and socio-economic isolation. Inviting them to join us for their first ever outings to the Peak District, where most women don't have transport, resources or knowledge what exists out there makes it really special. We walk, picnic and are often greeted by fellow walkers calling out to cheer us on and make us feel welcome. Some say these outings have been the best thing they've done for years and that they feel like a cloud has been lifted.

As the weather improves, we hope to take women and children out again for swimming, walks, exercise in the park and outdoors activities to help get them going again while encouraging women from different cultural communities to share experiences and learn from one another!

Homework Club

As BBC funding finally came to an end in September 2023 we struggled to identify resources to carry on. To our delight, however, such was the outcry from families that Sheffield Council stepped in to fund this project until May 2024 while we seek alternatives.

Four qualified tutors and 2 sessional Administrators who take registers, photocopy worksheets, tests and organise termly parent-tutor reviews to support 30 young people aged 11-16, offer an hour each of GCSE-level Maths, English and Science each Sunday morning. Our Homework Club is particularly helpful for households where parents have limited English language, educational experiences and resources to support children struggling at school.

Increasingly, we have also helped young people who are out of school and lack a structure, social networks and learning links to keep them on track; we also support them during the school week when they come to our Centre with their parents and ask us to provide more youth activities as they are bored at home.

We provide refreshments at the start, break-time and at the end of each Club session to give learners a break and help make learning more sociable. These breaks also offer a pause to meet, share and break down stigmas where students might feel embarrassed by school failure and afraid ask for help. Attempts to address poor academic achievements otherwise come late and parents, lacking skills and financial resources to help, feel helpless. Those left behind by age 11 have a mountain to climb, do not know where to turn for help and often feel the future is bleak.

Former students, now working as lab technicians in local hospitals, in IT and analytical sciences, have become models for a further generation who come with low educational aspirations. This, in turn, draws more people to join!

We interview each young person joining, listen to their personal, academic, emotional and home experiences as we try to gauge how best to help. Volunteers who themselves have attended our Homework Club are available to spend more time with individuals in need of additional support.

Our approach to teaching is shaped by each child's needs. As time goes by, we learn through class feedback, parents and one-to-one conversations arising at breaks about further hidden needs which young people are embarrassed to talk about. We also ask young people about workshop topics they would like to explore.

More than just Academics As we build trust with young people who might feel they have no one to confide in at times of distress, stories of bullying often emerge. After years of shame, fear and isolation, some discover others share similar experiences and visibly become more confident. A lack of motivation and emotional withdrawal slowly melts as kids share with peers and start taking an active interest in learning, speaking out in class for the first time ever!

Celebrations are also key to recognising each learner's achievements. While inspiring generations, who's parents have often not completed secondary school, to aim high, we continue to share learning via peer role modeling, with our own staff team, volunteers and Management members demonstrating how each of us can take small steps and keep going until we do things we never imagined possible.

Talks from former students who are the first in their families to find their way through educational systems, are inspirational to young learners who start believing that they too can go on to gain degrees and make informed choices while enable them to work in sectors which inspire them.

Partnerships and Sharing with Wider Networks

Many of our clients are elderly, have mental or physical health issues and need help to access basic services that are fast migrating online. As services close and civic funding pots shrink, we have been overwhelmed by an increased demand for help.

Thankfully, in the face of financial constraints, partnership programmes have helped us diversify our offer of services, trial new activities and help women and families with nowhere to turn. They also offer a conduit for conversations with organisations

tackling similar social challenges while ensuring we enhance, rather than duplicate our work.

Sheffield College funds our ESOL classes while *Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life* funds *Red Tape* who provide tutors for our Level 1 introductory courses in *Health & Social Care* and *Childcare*.

Over the spring of 2023, the *Centre for Refugees and Asylum-seekers* provided a monthly *Employability Worker* helping women learn to draft CVs and search online for work. The volunteer-led *Food Hall Project* also provided crucial provisions for households simply unable to make ends meet. *Community Wellness Service Group* also has also helped us source a fitness tutor who runs sessions as part of our Friday Wellbeing offer.

We regularly liaise with *Burngreaves Centre* and *Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)* who facilitated face-to-face appointments at our centre post-Covid. *Sacmha's* Corrie Moss, now a Management member, also invites women to visit *Darnall Community Allotments* who share food growing strategies, plants, gardening gloves, trowels, seeds and more. Corrie also facilitates healthy eating, crafts, aromatherapy and fitness sessions to help children and women improve wellbeing.

Local schools continue to signpost young people struggling with academics while *Sheffield City Council* has linked up to trial family rubbish-picking initiatives and holiday activities for young people. We look forward to building on such links to help a younger generation continue to achieve!

Voluntary Action Sheffield facilitates key community engagement hubs including *Sheffield City Council Partnership Board* where we share learning about some of Britain's hardest-to-reach BAME communities and consider linked up strategies for community, statutory and mainstream services. Our Chair also represent excluded voices via the CCG's BAME Health Network and sits with *South Yorkshire Community Foundation's* grants panel to consider the value of projects seeking resources.

Our Work is made possible thanks to the following funders:

Special thanks to the **Big Lottery**, our anchor for so many years, who have enabled us to keep funding our p/t staff, volunteers, core overheads, IT Drop-ins and elements of our Health & Wellbeing programme. Without your support, our services would not be free for women who most need it and your generosity gives us hope!

BBC Children in Need funds made it possible for a proud cohort of young people attending our **Homework Club** to gain re-gain confidence, build friendships, practical and academic skills. We are eternally grateful.

We are also indebted to **Sheffield City Council** who stepped in this autumn to help keep our Homework Club running. Sheffield Council's **Skills for Life** programme indirectly provides our *Childcare* and *Health & Social Care* tutors managed by the wonderful **Red Tape** team. Enabling local women to achieve gives faith to everyone and reminds us that we can all improve our lives!

Sheffield City Council's small grant also enabled a wide range of women to come together, join motivational talks, craft, advice, henna painting, exercise sessions and performances as part of our **Getting Along Open Day** event in June 2023 where we also awarded certificates to **82** proud women achieving **ESOL certification!**

They have also very kindly donated £2,000 for sewing machines and support to enable us to expand our *Health & Wellbeing* capacity to help women come together and gain transferable skills for employment.

Many thanks are also due to **Sheffield College** who fund our ESOL classes.

South Yorkshire Community Foundation enabled us to offer urgent one-to-one advocacy support for women and families facing rising costs while the **Subud Centre's** gives us a space to make it all happen at a time when cuts to public services put hard-to-reach women and families more at risk than ever.

Sheffield's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) covered costs for AWHG community health surveys and helped cover consultation and information-sharing costs.

Last, but not least, our volunteers, Management Committee members and all the wonderful women who make our services vibrant make all of our efforts rewarding.

We look forward to each and every one rising to achieve further untold things.

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2023

**AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL 0114 2588067**

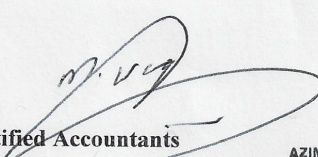
AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2023

	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Balance B/F 01.07.2022		Total 23875
<u>Grants Received (Restricted)</u>		
Sheffield City Council	4680	
Sheffield Yorkshire Community	50	
NHS Sheffield CCG	8300	
Main Grants	51296	
NU Community	3302	
Sheffield College	10230	
BBC Children In Need	500	
		78358
		102233
<u>Payments</u>		
Salaries & Wages, Seasonal Workers, Project Support & Social Workers	51322	
Outreach Support Workers	3385	
Admin Workers	4300	
Consultancy Fees	1412	
Project Support Workers	8209	
Care Workers	5860	
HMRC-Paye	5447	
Event Activities	540	
Foodhall Project	553	
Bank Charges	120	
Premises Rent	11470	
Community Wellness	350	
Telephone & Internet	291	
College Fees	466	
Travel & Refreshments Cost	3815	
Stationary & Equipment Purchase & Repairs	2201	
Accountancy	500	
Survey Charges	680	
Misc	1188	
Total Expenses		102109
Restricted Funds Available As At 30.06.2023		124
BALANCE AT BANK 30.06.2023		124
Less: Cheques presented after date		0
		124

ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


Azim & Wakas

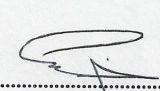
Chartered Certified Accountants

537 Abbeydale Road
Sheffield S7 1FU

AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL: 0114 258 8067

CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member  Dated 26/02/2024

Committee member H. Mohamed Dated 26th Feb 2024

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2023

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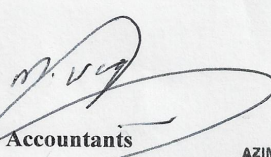
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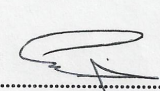
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CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member  Dated 26/02/2024

Committee member H. Mohamed Dated 26th Feb 2024

Accounts

African Women's Health Group

2021-22 Annual Review

Who Are We?

Set up and led by women from hard-to-reach communities who clubbed together to offer health advice, advocacy and interpreting support, signposting and information, African Women's Health Group (AWHG) is a constituted voluntary sector charity and unincorporated association which works in the deprived ward of Darnall in Sheffield.

We are governed by an annually elected voluntary Management Committee team composed of local women who themselves have faced challenges in finding their way through life. We support isolated and disadvantaged women - particularly those of *Black and Ethnic Minority* heritage, refugees and asylum-seekers - in accessing much-needed health advice, advocacy, training and services and aim to:

- Reduce isolation, stigma towards single parenthood and discrimination by helping affected women strengthen social networks and confidence to become better integrated and active into their locality;
- Reach out, empower and equip disadvantaged women with advocacy, awareness and interpreting support, health, legal and practical tools to make informed decisions and take action;
- Address high levels of unemployment by providing basic skills, literacy, vocational training, childcare and homework support for a further generation of young people enabling isolated women and families who might be living in poverty with skills to achieve their full social, emotional, civic and employment potential.

Forty Years of Service!

When we first started our organisation we faced so much opposition! We didn't give up. We were not involved in the bigger networks as it wasn't about getting recognition. But with the number of refugees coming to Sheffield, there just wasn't enough help to go around.

We were all volunteers. We didn't know anything, really, but just kept on doing what we knew how to do. We managed to set up in a council-owned building rent-free and just wanted to help the women and children coming to us. It really *was* a self-help group and it made a lot of difference to peoples' lives.

Our first payment ever was a very small grant to take women and children on a day trip. No one could believe that we managed to put this together by ourselves. Forty years on, people see us at public events, Zoom conferences and receiving awards. We seem to have been accepted by a wide network and a younger generation who seem very open-minded... *Halima Mohamed, Chair*

It All Started When ... forty years ago, three mums of Somali heritage became overwhelmed by a growing flow of women knocking on their doors for help, many of whom were isolated single heads of households with limited or *no* English language skills, asking for advice on health, welfare, housing, family and school issues, help with reading and writing letters, interpreting for doctors', school, benefit and court appointments, decided to take things in hand.

The flood of door-knocking continued until, in a bid to find a better way to help, Halima Mohamed, Amina Warsame and Dequa Ibrahim, first set up *AWHG* in 1992.

Local women, many single parents coming out of Somalia as refugees and in desperate need, found family demands, limited English language skills and, often, health problems, made it difficult for them to get out to know what is going on locally, make friends, share information and find their way around life in Sheffield.

An office space was found for one day a week where the *AWHG* team offered advocacy services, set up ESOL classes with the *WEA* (*Workers Education Authority*), and, when it became evident that parents who had no experience of the British education system were struggling to support their children, parents found a tutor, a source of funding, and helped run a *Homework Club* for young people – all on a voluntary basis. Health talks for women who needed advice on managing conditions such as diabetes and arthritis were soon followed by fitness classes. Service have evolved as new ideas emerge to meet the need of an increasing number of disadvantaged women come to our doors seeking help. Some go on to help as volunteer interpreters or in organising and supporting our Homework Club, events and activities for other women in need.

Fast-forward and a majority of *AWHG*'s service-users are still from low-income households, on sickness benefits or unemployed in a district experiencing some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation. Most are from migrant or refugee communities and of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian and Ethiopian heritage and come with below age-related educational expectations in education.

Most hear of our services by word-of-mouth. As all of us come from a position of shared experiences, we understand and support one another while each newcomer can see how other women have developed new skills and moved forward in life. In this sense, we provide ideal role models through our collective efforts.

Sometimes when women get in touch, we're later told it isn't just to get information but because women say we are the only people they have been able to talk to about the stress and challenges they struggle to cope with and feel they're understood. Sometimes it helps just to be heard ... it help them to work out what to do next, with or without much input....

Classes, workshops, craft activities, preparations for celebrations and outings help build confidence and bond women together while establishing networks to which they can turn at times of alienation which can lead to negative outlooks on life and poor self esteem.

Better peer networks also make the experience more sociable as learners meet others in similar circumstances, break down taboos and pick themselves up to rebuild new lives in an environment very unlike the world in which they thought they would live as adults. It is a credit to our approach that women say they have felt safe to ask for help for the first time in a wider community.

Our Team

As we are a self-help group, our Management Committee is made up of local women, some of who first came to find us as service-users and volunteers.

When we finally emerged from Covid lockdown last June, we were also able to catch our breath and identify new recruits for our Management Committee who meet quarterly for updates and feedback on our services, finances and gaps in our own and other local services to meet emerging needs.

Nearly forty years on, thanks to the efforts of our Acting Chairperson, Halima Mohamed, our newly elected Secretary, [Marium Mohammed](#) and Treasurer Rima Al-Khayat are joined by newcomer [Corrie Moss](#) and [Iram Al-Khasadi](#), women of local Somali, Black, Syrian and Yemeni heritage. [Welcome and thanks to all!](#)

Our Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are responsible for the day-to-day running of AWHG, supervising and supporting our team of workers, tutors and volunteers while encouraging former service-users to join in and help others. We also meet monthly and invite newcomers to join us in reviewing the progress of our projects and making sure we provide a good standard of service and keep within

budgets. We also discuss further local needs for services based on feedback from families coming to our services, staff, tutors and partner organisations such as *Sheffield College* team who jointly facilitate and fund our programmes.

Staff

It's been a challenging year. Our *4-days-a-week Project Manager* and a part-time English, Arabic, Somali (and Dutch!) speaking *3-days-a-week Outreach Advocate* have worked flat out to support and help advocate for isolated women, refugees and families. As women come in crisis we are finding that we are not only working full-time but also working overtime as we try to keep up.

Sometimes we struggle to keep up with our paperwork on the weekends as weekdays are filled with signposting, administering and monitoring women desperate for help. Some ask for jobs or simply join vocational training at our centre – in some cases the women are told their welfare benefits will be cut off if they do not join. It's heartbreaking.

While providing logistical support for family activities including term-time ESOL classes run four days-a-week, Digital Drop-ins, vocational training, Advocacy, a Health & Wellbeing programme and our *Home Work Club*, our Chair also sits on strategic community panels including and South Yorkshire Community Foundation's grants panel to share insights into BAME women's needs and reflect upon intersecting social issues. While learning about wider resources available to support Sheffield's diverse demographic communities, attending meetings also means we are now getting recognition that we never had before.

Face-to-face advice has completely disappeared just as women are struggling to pay bills and make themselves understood by telephone. It means we are simply not able to keep up with women showing up in crisis. Letters and letters and letters. Women are coming with letters every day. They cannot afford to pay gas bills, they cannot afford to buy food. Last week a woman was given a £500 gas bill and asked whether she should pay that or her rent? She couldn't pay both. There are so many women on anti-depressants now ...

While some clients are able to negotiate issues with a bit of signposting, advice and encouragement, many don't have a good enough English to understand what they have to do, where to go and what to say. This means our work is never simple and unexpected things come up every day.

Sometimes we find older women have simply not opened letters and have miss crucial deadlines to complete paperwork for 'Settled Status' in Britain after decades of living in the U.K. We spend hours trying to get help for such women as these sorts of matters cannot wait.

Some have received scam calls asking for their National Insurance numbers and are told they would be referred to the police or sent to jail if they don't act so staff and volunteers might spend hours helping to block payments.

Highlights this year included our participation in an online panel facilitated by the Rowntree Trust to share learning about the needs of very disenfranchised BAME residents as we collaborate to help share learning with wider partnerships as we emerge from the pandemic. over and beyond the requirements as paid community activists. Thanks is due to our formidable team members for sustaining our collective passion for helping and meeting wider need in times of trouble.

Volunteers

As we returned to face-to-face activities, *Sheffield Skills for Life* offered us a rare opportunity to run a six-week Volunteer Training course leading to a 'Volunteer Passport' showcasing skills and learning gained. Outreach and community engagement skills, nationally-recognised First Aid, Health and Safety training, in-house Safeguarding training and DBS safety checks help us facilitate safe, effective and caring support to each BAME woman visiting our centre in their own mother tongues so as to unravel the complexities of often dire situations and help each take first steps towards understanding routes and empowering them with basic skills to make informed decisions on critical issues affecting their own and their children's futures. Each volunteer, in turn, is supported in gaining national recognition and accreditation as a complement to existing life skills and lived experiences. Many thanks and recognition is due to each and all.

From formally or informally helping as interpreters supporting ESOL learners in Arabic, Somali, Kurdish, Urdu and Bengali community languages, to name a few, outreach to help vulnerable residents and help with ESOL learners' registration and, later in the year, assessments, signposting and advocacy support as well as assistance with our sewing classes, our Homework Club and outings.

Volunteers also take class registers, photocopy learning materials and preparing refreshments for break times. Some even help as teaching assistants when individuals in large classes need a bit of extra help while Childcare trainees help with our crèche and young people training as teachers support our Homework Club team.

Over the Covid period, in particular, we could not have reached and supported as wide a rang of really vulnerable service-users over the lockdown period if it hadn't been for their help in fetching and

delivering food, medication and shopping for isolated and shielding older BAME women and families.

Each, in turn, becomes a role model for peers and neighbours searching for confidence to take first steps out of home. In this sense, our services helps women take small but important steps to gain skills, confidence and experience to lead informed, independent and fulfilling lives.

We value each and every volunteer coming through our doors and celebrate their every achievement. Without them, our overstretched core team of two part-time workers and voluntary Management Committee members would struggle to identify and support a diversity of hidden needs amongst some of Britain's most disenfranchised and impoverished BAME women and refugees on a shoestring grassroots budget!

Our Activities

English as a Second Language Classes (ESOL)

Three Celta-qualified English as a Second Language (ESOL) teachers normally run classes five days a week but funding cuts means we have had to combine our *Pre-entry* and *Level 1* classes to create four twice-weekly classes, morning and afternoons, from Monday to Thursday during term time which also include ESOL Level 1, 2 and 3. Funding cuts to other local centres also means our centre has been overwhelmed by requests for places, with more than 25 women on our waiting lists and women asking every single day.

Our 80 existing learners, most of who between the ages of 25-60, are of Pakistani, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese, Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Syrian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Afghani, Iraqi and Turkish heritage have also been joined by a new influx of women of Kurdish heritage. While improving English skills to initially, fill forms, speak with GPs, teachers and neighbours before gaining confidence and skills for volunteering and vocational training for employment, learners say classes also offer a unique chance to get out of home and meet others! Such bonds help knit together a community of women who often go on to help one another out in times of challenge.

While *Sheffield College* provides funds to cover costs of venue hire and tutors who we recruit, AWHG starts recruiting, interviewing and registering learners for each new academic year. Starting in the month of July, we ferry women to and from Sheffield College several times a day or each week, helping with form filling, translations and follow-ups to ensure each woman's papers are processed.

At the end of each year we help video an average of 80 women over a two-week period as our tutors assess learners' English listening and speaking skills while coordinating reading and writing exams for a final City & Guilds certificate award.

Badges gained as Sheffield College students also fills some women with pride. 'My children had better watch out,' one woman chanted, 'because I am finally a college student too!'

Celebrating our achievements also offer a chance to look back on how each of us has progressed so we all come together each July to mark another giant collective step taken. Given that for some learners, this might represent their first ever accreditation award in their lives, these small steps are bigger than they might seem.

IT Classes

At long last, we finally have enough laptops to start our long-awaited IT classes for digitally marginalized women!

As Socially-economically marginalized BAME women are more likely to lack digital technology and equipment, finances for Wifi access and digital skills which further isolate them, we hope to empower a wider community of women to become more self-sufficient and better manage their own lives as they learn to send emails, manage GP appointments and gain skills to gain work.

Ten beginners join us in the morning and ten more advanced learners in the afternoon twice weekly with one weekly session funded by *Sheffield City Council* and our second one by *Big Lottery*. It's very popular as everyone wants to learn so our waiting list keeps growing....

Health & Social Care

Thanks to funding from *Sheffield Skills for Life*, September 2022 saw our launch of three yearly 12-week *Health & Social Care* courses supporting 10 women in each to gain nationally-recognised accreditation for employment!

Of thirty programme participants, two have gained work in nurseries while ten have gone on to work in social care. Others attending training say our courses also offers a step on the ladder as each searches, with support from a visiting *Employability* sessional worker, to find work which fits with their skills, timetables and sustainable employment goals.

Employability

A waiting list has grown for the monthly visits from an *Employability Worker* from the *Centre for Refugees and Asylum-seekers* who comes to support women in creating CVs and undertaking job searches to find work which matches their needs.

Childcare

Our *National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1 Childcare* training in partnership with *Red Tape*, *Sheffield Council's Skills for Life* tutor Helen Haythorne started up again once more in September 2022 with three 12-week cycles offering women a chance to gain work experience with *Darnell Community Nursery* or to go on to join *Red Tape* to gain *Level 2 Childcare diplomas* for employment in community and statutory nurseries.

Health Awareness Programme

Friday Fitness

When women come to join our exercise classes on a Friday they say it offers a rare chance to become fit and maintain good health, while keeping worries at briefly at bay. While finding peace of mind, classes offer a rare chance to socialise and enjoy.

So when some 20-30 women join us each Friday morning for an hour of gentle exercise, chances are a visitor will hear laughter and fun!

Counselling Sessions

Mainstream mental health services are rarely available in community languages and often lack insights into the cultures, social expectations and needs of women from marginalised cultural communities.

The word 'depression' does not, for instance, exist in Somali – meaning that language to explore poor mental health is very limited. One woman, for instance, regularly visits us to silently cry without saying a word.

As more and more women struggle to keep families afloat, we noted a similar number reporting their GPs have given them prescriptions for anti-depressants. In the face of this, thanks to our three-year funding from the *Big Lottery*, we have managed to source a sessional counselor offering group and one-to-one counseling sessions Friday mornings as part of our Health & Wellbeing programme.

A shortage of space and resources limits our offering but feedback suggests that coming together to reflect, share trauma and solutions, while offering women with deeper personal needs space to further explore, results in collective strategies to brighter future outlooks at times of financial and emotional crisis.

Food Sharing

25 food packs donated by local warehouses and sorted by *Food Hall Project*, a charity run by volunteers, means we typically share out up to 30 food packs with women joining Friday Fitness classes. As energy costs and food prices soar, so too has demand for food support. Such is competition that we re-package and share smaller packages amongst a greater number of households or alternate distribution so that each household gets a package once a fortnight rather than weekly. It's the best we can do.

Lightweight Weight-Loss Initiative:

A two-day NHS-funded training delivered by **Zest**, a local social enterprise, was launched in September 2022 to train BAME community workers and volunteers to facilitate a programme called **Lightweight**.

While equipping BAME teams with a new strategy to help women manage eating and explore new approaches to weight loss, the programme has connected weight-loss trainers with BAME communities they struggled to engage with through mainstream services. It's a win-win situation!

Rather than eating less and exercising more, participants were encouraged to look at the food they ate, consider what was in their plates and what sort of protein/carbohydrate/vegetable balance each meal offered. Counting calories, taking time to eat slowly and chew so as to improve digestion were also key. As poor sleep leads us to being tense and, as a consequence, hold onto weight through emotional eating and other coping strategies, we were also advised to avoid television and digital screens before bed and avoid eating an hour before going to bed as this disrupts sleep. Simply getting 10 minutes of exercise, indoors or outdoors, is enough.

Such tips were shared with a further 30 BAME women who joined us weekly over as we checked and recorded their height, weight at the start of the programme and monitored and see whether they lost weight. Participants then shared achievements and helped motivate one another to meet their weight loss targets in this incredibly popular programme which we hope to repeat in future!

Sessional Advocacy Support

While the process of teaching and empowering service-users with a range of new skills we previously thought were impossible to achieve in a short space of capacity-building time, the number of women [facing language, digital and confidence barriers to accessing](#) advocacy support also doubled over the lockdown period.

A lack of accountability is growing as face-to-face services disappear increasingly women who do speak English say they have spent hours on the phone, calling and calling again for services which then cuts them off after 45 minutes.

‘One-size-fits-all’ online service-formats do not always apply to individual circumstances or allow for further clarification needed where residents are seeking help. As they additionally require a level of confidence, administrative, English language and digital skills which exclude some of Britain’s most socio-economically and culturally marginalised communities, statutory and voluntary sector drives to cut costs are further excluding those for whom the services are purportedly designed.

*Some sent to find **private accommodations** are finding themselves charged more than they should for housing while paying the balance of what **Universal Credit** will contribute with money set aside for utility, family food and care bills.*

While women lacking literacy and digital skills often miss deadlines and opportunities to claim much-needed entitlements, an absence of face-to-face and ‘one-stop-shops’ support means clients have nowhere to turn for personalised reviews of to help unpick complex circumstances in times of change and distress.

As Britain's spiraling cost-of-living crisis has set in, funding from the *Big Lottery* has enabled us to employ a sessional Advice Worker who visits once a fortnight to help us address a flood of urgent requests for help.

Sewing Sessions

Given demand for the re-opening of this very popular activity, we look forward to starting sessions again when space and time is available to enable women to re-join make-and-mend activities, sewing skills and a chance to get out and meet others to share and learn together.

Crafts and Family Activities

Craft sessions have similarly been put on hold as fitness, counseling, food bank and advice sessions take over the space. Once the weather improves we look forward to taking women out again with Management Committee and Sacma Community Support Worker, Corrie Moss, inviting women and children to visit Darnall Community Allotments on a Wednesday afternoon and share in the growing of fresh produce while taking seeds home which can only help improve diets, physical activity and household finances!

Outings: Exploring Local Public Resources

Sometimes we get calls from young people saying their mothers are seriously depressed, asking us to come visit, take them out or help shift them into a more positive mood. Several young people have also committed suicide as we came out of lockdown.

As we have listened, supported, encouraged women who sometimes feel to be on the edge of a breakdown – particularly where they have previously faced trauma and displacement which studies confirm makes people more vulnerable in times of strife and isolation – and invited them to their first ever outings to the Peak District with our team. These outings are really special because most of the women coming to us don't have the transport, resources or knowledge of what resources exist for them to join. We walk, picnic and are often greeted by fellow walkers calling out to ask how we are, cheering us on and making us feel welcome.

Several women have said these outings have been the best thing they've done in ages and feel like a cloud has been lifted.

As the weather improves, we are also planning to take women and children swimming, for walks, exercise in the park and outdoors activities to help get them going again. We look forward to encouraging further walks, learning about horticulture and, if

possible, encourage women from different communities to share experiences to learn from one another!

Sharing Health Information with Wider Networks

We are often approached by women who don't know how to get to their required destinations for medical appointments so we help them navigate to their destinations and, while sometimes signposting clients to telephone translators for GPs or asking volunteers to help make sure they receive critical support they need, we also accompany them in person.

Most visitors lack confidence and English communication skills which create further barrier to their accessing online information about civic, health and public awareness issues. So when we were asked to join fortnightly Zoom meetings with a CCG team, the BAME Health Network and Greg Fell, Director of Public Health over the Covid period to share data on vaccination take-up, hospitalisation, demographics, geographic and time charts alongside case studies and information about Covid vaccination trends, we signed up.

While our Outreach Advocate engaged with women at school gates, shopping centres and in parks to learn from some of Britain's hardest-to-reach BAME women of Arab, Somali, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage about whether they had been vaccinated, if not why, and helped inform Sheffield's Community Consultation Group (CCG) about reservations people might have about being vaccinated, feedback on health perceptions and barriers to accessing mainstream services.

Thanks to bonds of trust, we were able to act as a two-way channel sharing information with hard-to-reach women face-to-face while helping inform mainstream agencies' strategies working to reach isolated women and families.

Feedback from participants highlighted the benefits of offering primary health services close to home where single heads of households juggle work, caring and household responsibilities and where services in geographic area which are familiar mean some of the most disenfranchised heads of households physically know where to go. More crucially, challenges in getting GP appointments, even when faced with critical health issues, means women often find no alternative to showing up at emergency services for help for themselves and their children.

Homework Club

Staff noted a big differences in young peoples' behaviour as they build confidence to speak about their needs and as they do better, academically and socially, at school.

It takes them a while to make friends with peers and come to trust our team but when they do finally talk about what might be troubling them and learn to work as a team to address each challenge, they transform from initially being shy and afraid, putting their names down and quickly going to seats at the back, they now come in with a smile and stop to chat.

Opening up is a really important step to young people who sit in groups during breaks when we run face-to-face sessions and talk about what is happening to them at school where they didn't dare to speak about bad experiences when they first joined our club. Those peer networks are really important to building confidence too as well as sharing information which makes all the difference to young people's ability to aspire to achieve things their parents never dreamt of.

Led by two qualified tutors and two teaching assistants supporting 40 young people aged 11-16 with an hour each of GCSE-level Maths, English and Science, the programme is particularly helpful to households where parents have limited English language, educational experiences and resources to support children struggling at school. Our teachers' assistants also come in during the week to photocopy, help us keep up with administrative tasks and support teachers throughout.

We provide refreshments at the start, break-time and at the end of each club session to give learners a break and helps make learning more sociable and breaks down stigmas amongst students who might feel embarrassed by school failure and afraid ask for help. Attempts to address poor academic achievements otherwise come late and parents, lacking skills and financial resources to find help, feel helpless. Those left behind by age 11 have a mountain to climb, do not know where to turn for help and often feel they are failures.

Older siblings, parents and neighbours are our best publicity routes as stories of former students, now working as lab technicians in local hospitals, in IT and analytical sciences, have become models for a further generation of young people who come with low educational attainment levels hoping we can help.

We interview each young person joining our group and listen to their personal, academic, emotional and home experiences as we try to gauge how best to help. Volunteers who themselves have attended our homework club are available to spend more time with individuals in need of additional help.

Our approach to teaching is shaped by each child's needs. As time goes by, we learn through class feedback, parents and one-to-one conversations arising at breaks about further hidden needs which

young people are embarrassed to talk about. We also ask young people about additional workshop topics they would like to explore.

Young people are working hard right now and doing well on mock exams and building confidence where they once struggled with schoolwork and felt ashamed to talk about it. Special credit is also due to our new intake of young refugees who joined us from India during lockdown with barely a word of spoken English to help them get by at their new schools. Each has worked so hard and have achieved magnificent results to testify to their effort and determination!

Celebrations are part and parcel of recognising each learner's achievements; as such a reading comprehension competition was run at the end of our 2021-22 with 20 well-deserved tablets awarded to our hard-working young people!

What the kids say:

One student told us that he never had any help at home until his mother brought him to our group. When he first came, he didn't know if he was going to like it but now he doesn't want to miss a single Sunday. He says it's friendly, he learns so much and he always looks forward to coming!

More than just Academics ... our Club is also about positively improving communication, social networks and outlooks. Newcomers often hear about us from other children-a high recommendation indeed!

Even as we build trust with young people who might have no one to confide in at times of distress, stories of bullying often emerge. After years of shame, fear, low self-esteem and isolation, some discover others who've shared similar negative experiences and visibly become more confident, speaking and sharing with peers where they initially appear to be withdrawn and unmotivated. An active interest in learning is often unleashed and grows.

While inspiring younger generations who's parents have often not completed secondary school to aim high, we continue to share learning through peer role modeling, with our own staff team, volunteers and Management members often demonstrating how each of us can take small steps and keep going until we do things we never imagined possible ourselves!

Talks from older peers who are first in their families to find their way through educational systems are reported as inspirational as young learners start believing that they too can go on to gain degrees and

work in their own areas of interest.

Case Study:

Three refugee families, Somali heritage single heads of households, arrived in Britain in June 2020 from a UN Refugee Camp in India. After 6-7 years of learning Hindi and finding their feet, they didn't know anyone in Britain and found themselves surrounded by fear and confusion in a global health lockdown crisis.

One had a severely disabled teenager who struggled with the layout at home, didn't know how to turn on the heat or affordable shopping for basic family needs. She finally spied a visibly Somali heritage woman passing her door, pleaded for help and was signposted to us for help. Through her, we also met the others dropped in Sheffield from the Indian refugee camps and helped them throughout the pandemic with paperwork, registering kids for school, appropriate warm clothes and basic items like kitchenware and food.

The older children were put in classes with their age group though they spoke very little English. We asked the schools whether they could provide additional support for these bewildered students, we were told such services no longer existed locally.

It soon became clear that these young people were frightened, unclear of what was going on and simply didn't know what to do. Testing suggested their academic level were lagging so our English tutor asked to run an additional 1/2 'private' session for 5 young refugees joining our Homework Club.

Two years on, these students who were initially unable to understand what was being said are excelling at school in spite of one family being made homeless when the ceiling in their house, so damp that carpets were soaked and family members were prescribed ventilators because of resultant breathing problems, with the Homeless Department insisting they return until, after three days of sitting in the office with AWHG's Project Manager and refusing to return, they were finally temporarily housed in a hotel far from school. We feel immensely relieved that each young person concerned has been able to demonstrate resilience and courage in the face of inhumane conditions...

Partnerships

Outside of formal partnerships with *Sheffield College*, *Skills for Life*, *Red Tape* who provide Childcare training, the *Subud* Centre and *Darnall Children's Centre* who offer work experience placements to our Childcare students and *Voluntary Action Sheffield* continues to facilitate key information-sharing hubs where we learn and share learning about the experiences of some of Britain's hardest-to-reach BAME communities. Our Chair has continued to represent excluded

voices via Sheffield Partnership Board and with the CCG's BAME Health Network.

Thanks is also due to the *Centre for Refugees and Asylum-seekers* for sending an *Employability Worker* each month to support women in learning to create CVs and search for work online just as the volunteer-led *Food Hall Project* provides food packs for households simply unable to make ends meet.

Cross-referral networks are also key to helping service-users to access services at a time of shrinking funds for services including the CAB, which sadly no longer facilitates face-to-face appointments and is getting harder to reach by telephone, well as Asiana, which supports women facing domestic abuse, local schools in Darnall, Attercliffe and Tinsley, GP surgeries, hospitals and our local allotments in Darnall which have offered fresh produce, seeds, growing tips and hope! Many thanks to them all...

Thank You

Many thanks to our funders including the ***Big Lottery's Reaching Communities programme, BBC Children in Need, Sheffield City Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), South Yorkshire Community Foundation***, and the *Subud Centre* who's venue we use, supporters and volunteers who enable us to provide services at a time when cuts to public services and welfare have put vulnerable women and families at higher risk than ever.

Special thanks also to ***Sheffield College*** for funding our ESOL classes and ***Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life*** who funded our *Volunteering, Childcare Training and Health & Social Care* for providing resources and tutors to help local women believe and achieve improvements to their lives!

ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Azim & Wakas

Chartered Certified Accountants

537 Abbeydale Road

Sheffield S7 1FU

CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member Dated 30-06-22

(TREASURER)

Committee member Dated 30th June 2022

(CHAIR)

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2022

Balance B/F 01.07.2021

£
£
Total
24714

Grants Received (Restricted)

Sheffield City Council	
Sheffield City Council	14940
Sheffield Yorkshire Community	6250
NHS Sheffield CCG	9900
NHS Sheffield CCG	5000
Main Grants	14820
WU Community Allie	26274
Sheffield College	6606
BBC Children In Need	1200
WU Community Allie	9940
	3603
	98532
	123246

Payments

Salaries & Wages, Seasonal Workers, Project Support & Social Workers	54206
Outreach Support Workers	1000
Admin Workers	2150
Consultancy Fees	4328
Freelance Workers	2449
HMRC-Paye	4722
Leafletting	200
Foodhall Project	120
Bank Charges	55
Cleaners	600
Catering	795
Premises Rent	9150
Web Design	500
Telephone & Internet	455
Travel & Refreshments Cost	1985
Stationary & Equipment Purchase & Repairs	5044
Accountancy	430
Voluntary Expenses	217
Child Care	1548
Misc	9417
Total Expenses	
	99371

Restricted Funds Available As At 30.06.2022

23875

BALANCE AT BANK 30.06.2021

Less: Cheques presented after date

25524

1649

23875

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2022

AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL 0114 2588067

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Azim & Wakas

Chartered Certified Accountants

537 Abbeydale Road

Sheffield S7 1FU

CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member Dated 30-06-22
(TREASURER)

Committee member H. Mohamed Dated 30th June 2022
(CHAIR)

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
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AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2022

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Accounts

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Background

Set up and led by women from hard-to-reach communities who have clubbed together to offer health advice, advocacy and interpreting support, signposting and information, African Women's Health Group (AWHG) is a constituted voluntary sector charity and unincorporated association which works in the deprived ward of Darnell in Sheffield. It is also governed by an annually elected voluntary Management Committee team composed of local women who themselves have faced challenges in finding their way through life.

We support isolated and disadvantaged women – particularly those of *Black and Ethnic Minority* heritage, refugees and asylum-seekers - in accessing much-needed health advice, advocacy, training and services and aim to:

- Reduce isolation, stigma towards single parenthood and discrimination by helping affected women strengthen social networks and confidence to become better integrated and active into their locality;
- Reach out, empower and equip disadvantaged women with advocacy, awareness and interpreting support, health, legal and practical tools to make informed decisions and take action;
- Address high levels of unemployment by providing basic skills, literacy, vocational training, childcare and homework support for a further generation of young people enabling isolated women and families who might be living in poverty with skills to achieve their full social, emotional, civic and employment potential.

Working Together

A majority of AWHG's service-users are unemployed or from low-income households in a district experiencing some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation. Most are from migrant or refugee communities and of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian and Ethiopian heritage and come with below age-related educational expectations in education.

Most hear of our services by word-of-mouth. As all of us come from a position of shared experiences, we understand and support one another while each newcomer can see how other women have

developed new skills and moved forward in life. In this sense, we provide ideal role models through our collective efforts.

Classes, workshops, craft activities and preparations for celebrations and outings help build confidence and bond women and young people together while establishing networks to which they can turn at times of alienation, potential bullying and disenfranchisement which can lead to negative outlooks on life and poor self esteem.

While coming to learn and gain skills, women also say that it gives them a chance to get out of home, learn how to go about improving their own lives and above all, to enjoy themselves in the process!

Better peer networks also make the experience more sociable as learners meeting others in similar circumstances helps break down taboos of shame as learners start to rebuild new lives. Our welcoming venue offers refreshments which women can help themselves as they please while meeting others in a safe space where they feel can come for help.

Staff

AWHG's *4-days-a-week Project Manager* and a part-time English, Arabic and Somali-speaking *3-days-a-week Outreach Advocate* who supports and helps advocate for isolated women, refugees and families while providing logistical support for family activities including our *Home Work Club* advocates for women have been supported since 2017 by Big Lottery's *Reaching Communities* programme. Both are DBS-checked and *Safeguarding, Health & Safety* and *First Aid* trained as are core Trustees and volunteers.

Management Committee Team

As we are a self-help group, our Management Committee is made up of local women, some of who first came to our centre as service-users and volunteers who help with advocacy and outings are themselves from the local community.

Thanks to the efforts of our Acting Chairperson, Halima Mohamed, our Secretary, Rima Akhayat, our Treasurer, Amina Warsama and Committee members Fatima Noore, Cudbi Warsama and Ramadath Kaidafra Alkasadir, we managed personal and practical challenges faced over the lockdown period to continue supporting women asking for help.

Halima Mohamed, Amina Warsame and Deequa Ibrahim, first set up AWHG in 1992 to help local women, most of whom were single parents coming out of Somalia as refugees, desperately wanting help with paperwork, interpreting support for doctor, school, benefit and housing appointments. Health problems, family and limited English language skills made it difficult for them to make friends, get

to know what is going on locally and find their way around life in Sheffield.

Partnerships were also formed with local organisations including the *NHS* who visited to facilitate **healthy living workshops** to address health complaints for particularly marginalized local women. But while services were made available for such activities, it is thanks to the core team of *AWHG* members who networked, organized and publicized events, provided advice and advocacy support to a growing stream of women seeking them out for help while managing *Homework Club* tutors and supporting *ESOL* tutors from *Sheffield City College* with recruitment, registration, exam and certification processes.

AWHG Management Committee Trustees met quarterly and willingly gave their time to keep the center running. Some voluntary Trustees who had given over 2 decades of their limited time to managing this very community-embedded service wanted to move on as work, health and family issues were beginning to negatively affect their ability to help and while newcomers continue to be invited to join, we were finding it more difficult in recent years to involve newcomers as pressure on unemployed women to undertake rigorous job searches increase while those in work have limited time between family duties and jobs.

Until this time, *AWHG* had never sought more than small grants to cover the overhead costs for their activities but Management Committee Trustees decided it was time to explore funding to create a post for a part-time Advocacy Worker who could offer advice with support from interpreters and volunteers as well as a part-time Coordinator to make sure services could run if volunteers were unable to attend.

Thanks to help from the *Big Lottery*, three-years funding was made available to fund these posts, cover some of the organizational overheads and to build capacity of volunteers, staff and Trustees in the team from October 2017. Volunteer Trustees were encouraged to apply as they knew the working of the organisation and had personal experience and networks amongst particularly marginalized women with whom we work.

The good work of *AWHG* continues to be recognized and services are running smoothly so while the question of Trustee recruitment has been revisited several times, particularly as several Trustees, one with growing work and commitments and two with personal or family health issues had talked of resigning but had been persuaded to continue when the team struggled to identify newcomers from within its grassroots neighbourhood to join at *AWHG's* 2018 AGM.

But when several members finally made their long awaited moves to resign at *AWHG's* June 2019 AGM, coupled with discussions held in preparation for a quality assurance review, it became clear that *AWHG* needs to re-double efforts to encourage new recruits from amongst students formerly attending their Homework Club who have the skills and confidence to learn to help manage this very grassroots charity, as well as women coming for services or to support our range of activities.

Volunteers

Outreach, registration, learners assessments, signposting and advocacy support are facilitated by AWHG's own staff and volunteer interpreters including five of Syrian, Somali, Kurdish and Pakistani heritage who speak community languages including Somali, Arabic, Urdu – and even Swedish and Dutch!

Ten volunteers have helped our *Advocacy Worker* this year with giving advice and, when necessary, accompanying women to appointments and helping as interpreters. Volunteers also take class registers, photocopy learning materials and preparing refreshments for break times. Some even help as teaching assistants when individuals in large classes need a bit of extra help! We couldn't ask for a more committed, skilled and enthusiastic team than our volunteers who are listed below:

Some become volunteers and help with our crèche which looks after the children of women coming to our center while others go to local nurseries where they undertake placements once a week. In this sense, our services helps women take small but important steps to gain skills, confidence and experience to lead informed, independent and fulfilling lives. Each, in turn, becomes a role model for peers and neighbours searching for confidence to take first steps out of home.

Adults achieving qualifications and young people, for instance, who have attended our Homework Club and managed to go onto university often come back to support us as volunteers and trainee teachers. In turn, they also serve as a role models and peer advisors for others who's parents might have limited educational experiences and are at a loss as to how to positively intervene when young people feel like failures and become depressed, distressed and don't know what to do to improve life prospects.

By offering hope, social networks and support from peers role models and advisors, we hope to build confidence, resilience and positive motivation amongst hard-to-reach women and a generation of disadvantaged young people who share survival skills on how to manage at times of financial precarity and when feeling bleak about the future. It allows us all to dare to dream and achieve our personal, professional and civic aspirations!

Xxxx	xxx
Xxx	xxxx
Xxx	xxxx
Xxx	xxxx
Xxx	xxxx

Partnerships

Given the closure of normal ESOL and Childcare classes normally provided by tutors from *Sheffield College* and childcare tutors sent by *Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life* team, lockdown meant we were forced to put childcare courses on hold while we worked closely with *Sheffield College's* ESOL tutor as we helped women from households with Smartphones and laptops to remotely access ESOL classes via a WhatsApp group created. While some women turned to their teens and children for digital advice, others were painstakingly supported by our staff and volunteers who talked them through each process.

Somali restaurant

Corrie

Childcare) Entry Level 1 training over the course of each academic year for 12 women each term in partnership with *Red Tape*, *Sheffield Council's Skills for Life* tutor Helen Haythorne. *Darnell Community Nursery* also provide work experience placements for AWHG trainees.

Now that I've spoken with Voluntary Action Sheffield I'm beginning to be invited to join hubs and attend meetings which means we are now getting recognition that we never had before...

Finding employment. We also receive referrals to our weekend Homework Club from local secondary schools and are supported with advice and signposting to funding opportunities by *Voluntary Action Sheffield*.

Supporting South Yorkshire Community Foundation

SYCF has helped AWHG for some 20 years, coming down when we were first learning to apply for grants and showing a great deal of understanding. We felt we could share our insights and learning as a group supporting minority ethnic women whose voices are not always heard in wider forums. We wanted to help them in return, so when SYCF first asked whether Halima Mohamed, our Chair, might

be willing to join their grants panel and help reflect those wider voices, we were nervous about the responsibility but quickly agreed.

I have gained a range of skills from training offered and from learning for peers making decisions about applications; I've also learnt a huge amount from reading about what different organisations are doing and now know about organisations that I didn't know existed before. It's useful for signposting women coming to us for services and I've learnt about different ideas of how different organisations deliver services. It has also allowed me to offer input from a BAME perspective as I am the only panel member representing this view so can offer insights to team members, who are really friendly to work with, and help share learning.

If I don't understand anything in relation to what I need to know to be a panel member the staff at the Foundation are always available to talk and explain. They have been very supportive; I also get emails and information updates on meetings, new developments and anything I need to know.

Our Activities

AWHG's strength is that our team of workers, Management Committee members and staff are *very much part* of the community in which we live and work.

The fact that women hear of us by word-of-mouth from friends and neighbours means we are able to reach lone parents, older women and families who are not likely to have the confidence, digital and/or the language skills to go to mainstream services or get information online.

It may seem that we 'do too much' for some, taking them as needed to doctors' appointments, solicitors' offices and schools, these visits often mean that really vulnerable women learn in the process about steps they can take to sort out any problems arising in future. Connecting them with peers also means they can then share experiences and informally create a gradual collective for learning as women build confidence and skills to do these things on their own.

When we first started our organisation it was horrible – there was a bi community organisation and the only one which existed.

We faced so much opposition when we wanted to start our group, they didn't want us to be in competition; everyone knew them in the council and we didn't know anything really – we just wanted to give

women the support that they needed and just kept on doing what we were doing. It made a lot of difference to peoples' lives.

Yet with the number of refugees coming to Sheffield there weren't enough people to help – they were knocking on our doors. We were not involved in the bigger networks, we just kept on doing what we knew what to do – it wasn't about recognition but about delivering the service.

We didn't give up. We used the council building which was free and we were all volunteers. We just wanted to help the women and children coming to us – we were completely self-help.

The first time we put in an application as we wanted to take the women out – it was the first payment ever for women and children to go out on a day trip.

No one could believe that we managed to put this together as they thought they were the only ones who could deliver services. It was the most simple thing – and they were not happy.

Young people run it now and they are open-minded.

Now that people have seen us join festival meetings

Outings: Exploring Local Public Resources

Outings have been particularly popular this year. Each has given an average of 17 women the chance to join one of 20 2-hourly sessions and get out to explore our wider neighbourhood.

A number of participants have taken home seeds to grow vegetables, herbs and flowers in their own gardens. While some cultural communities including women of Bangladeshi heritage have shown themselves adept horticulturalists while others, including women of Somali heritage who are from nomadic herding cultures, are only just beginning to learn.

While equipping themselves to make better use of garden spaces and grow food for themselves and their families, our fledging team of home growers have benefited from an excuse to get outside, with or without children, for gentle exercise.

We look forward to encouraging further walks, learning about horticulture and, if possible, encourage women from different communities to share experiences to learn from one another!

Advocacy Support and Learning from Lockdown Anxiety, Food Poverty, the Power of Reconnection and Creative Community Resilience

Advocates for women seeking help with correspondence from doctors and schools, learning about disability and caring benefits or for signposting for family support, basic skills training or how to progress into employment. She is supported by volunteers including interpreters who translate

As our face-to-face activities were suspended, AWHG's two p/t staff began to receive telephone calls for help. We began to undertake home visits to help families and older women shielding and unable to leave home to source much-needed medication, food and help. Before long we were joined by a dedicated team of volunteers who helped daily in delivering food, activity packs for restless children, paperwork in need of review and signatures by clients supported in filling forms via telephone and WhatsApp. When lockdown was lifted over summer months, volunteers also stepped in to join groups of socially-distancing women, many elderly, as well as children and families taking walks, exercising in the park, cycling and visiting the Darnall allotments Wednesday mornings with support from Corrie Moss from SAMCHa who provided allotment space, seeds, fresh produce and tools which visitors could take back home to grow in their own back gardens and window boxes.

Families, young and old, faced constant change as frontline workers in retail, catering and

Khadra working quite hard with women arriving from India

Changes in complex family welfare circumstances daily, working remotely often our team had to take clients, step-by-step, through a process of identifying the nature of letters and paperwork received by first identifying logos at the top of a letter, then dates and reference numbers, often moving between telephone conversations, photographs and, occasionally, WhatsApp video calls as we guided women through mini-lessons on reading paperwork in tandem with tips for improved digital literacy.

While the process of teaching and empowering service-users with a range of new skills which, just one year ago, we thought were

impossible to achieve, this also meant our advocacy support calls also doubled as capacity-building tutorials. This also meant it took far longer than usual to help women sort out or be signposted externally to sort out specialist welfare issues, particularly as families losing wage earners also found women becoming heads of households and dealing with some issues for the first time.

As BAME women, often:

- Lack digital technology and equipment, finances for Wifi access and digital skills to speedily and effectively work remotely, our support sessions to some of the hardest-to-reach women in Sheffield have also included sessions for digital education;
- BAME clients, most of whom are single parents caring for young children excluded from school over COVID lockdowns as well as family members who are unwell;

BAME women with limited digital, English language skills, equipment, school books and experience of British educational systems face additional challenges in trying to assist their children, who are statistically falling behind in fulfilling their educational potential, and have routinely turned to AWHG's team for advice in managing additional parenting and educational challenges;

- BAME women with whom we routinely engage are often extremely isolated, experience anxiety and depression as they face particularly challenging issues including bereavement, homelessness and their own illness while caring for shielding children and parents – often on their own. As AWHG's team might represent the only people they speak to who they feel might be able to help them dig their way out of intertwined financial and emotional crisis, telephone advice sessions took far longer than normal;

Additionally, our own staff have been similarly juggling needs of children, family and convalescing family members - as well as our own illnesses and confinement.

In light of increased anxiety amongst women calling for help and concerns about the wellbeing of some clients, we are looking to facilitate further Safeguarding training so staff, tutors and volunteers alike are better equipped to detect and address safety issues ranging from financial and child abuse to domestic violence, as well as First Aid Mental Health training to update and review our approaches when listening to clients and helping identify strategies for coping with isolation, family demand and fears of an uncertain

future – particularly where women have come from war zones and often, have never spoken or explored issues arising as a result. The word ‘depression’ does not, for instance, exist in Somali –meaning that language to explore poor mental health is very limited. One woman, for instance, regularly visited us when face-to-face services were available to silently cry – tears streaming down – without saying a word.

Mainstream mental health services, in addition, are rarely available in Somali languages and often lack insights into the cultures, social expectations and needs of women from marginalised cultural communities.

A lack of digital skills and understanding of processes as services continue to be transferred online has made some of our most marginalised residents increasingly more vulnerable. As face-to-face help and guidance on processing systems face closures and replacement by online services, concerns have also risen for increasingly more socially excluded communities.

Women lacking literacy and digital skills to flag, respond to online queries, or check that benefit payments are made on time and correctly and, where administrative errors are made, address under-payment, missed deadlines and opportunities to claim much-needed entitlements.

More than anything, an absence of face-to-face and ‘one-stop-shops’ support from local authorities and advice agencies means clients have nowhere to turn for personalised support to review complex and uncertain circumstances where work has stopped, started, decreased or family wage earners are deceased, or to help unpick issues in times of change and distress.

‘One-size-fits-all’ online service-formats do not always apply to individual circumstances or allow for further clarification needed where residents are seeking help. As they additionally require a level of confidence, administrative, English language and digital skills which exclude some of Britain’s most socio-economically and culturally marginalised communities, statutory and voluntary sector drives to cut costs are further excluding those for whom the services are purportedly designed.

Where clients do not know how to access help online, do not know how to call and make appointments and have been shielded due to their own or wider family vulnerabilities, it is likely that many have not accessed the right support and are not receiving the correct entitlement with possible overpayments occurring.

In spite of concern arising from anecdotal evidence that further sectors of vulnerable and isolated individuals have as yet been

unable to access services to make welfare claims where they are shielding, don't know where to turn for help or where their work, housing and immigration status are in flux, demand for benefits such as Carers' Allowances have increased.

Case Study 1:

Counselling

It has been a challenging year as we sought to rebuild and reconnect with local BAME women, many in crisis because of poor physical, emotional health variously juggling with additional caring and parenting responsibilities, isolation, a loss of employment and income, bereavement, food poverty and rising energy bills where individuals or whole families spent long, cold winter months locked down at home.

Even as our team addressed changes in their own personal lives, an alarming rise in plea for support with critical welfare issues at a time when mainstream services and statutory bodies closed, re-grouped remotely and experienced their own disruptions forced us to think quickly, creatively and flexibly to keep reaching and helping others navigating through difficult periods.

Our team were also concerned about safeguarding and safety issues, particularly where service-users for whom we might be a key contact for advocacy, guidance and support are isolated by language and digital barriers from mainstream information.

Even as anxiety levels soared, so did domestic violence. While household confinement with an abuser typically amplified scales of abuse, services available to help them escape an already challenging situation were closed, harder to find, as were friends who might normally help when not shielding.

To better address family wellbeing and, in the case of women living in nuclear and extended family households, trying to help prevent further family breakdown and welfare issues, we identified and engaged a qualified and experienced BAME counsellor to facilitate groups on Zoom and, where issues were complex and in need of a greater level of confidentiality, one-to-one session as well.

English as a Second Language Classes (ESOL)

Our learners are of Pakistani, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese,

Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Syrian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Afghani, Iraqi, Kurdish and Turkish heritage. Most are over the age of 25 and the oldest, mostly in pre-entry classes, are over the age of 60.

While most say they want to improve their English language skills so they can fill forms, speak with GPs, teachers and neighbours, others want to move into volunteering, basic skills and vocational training for employment.

Crucially, women joining classes say it offers them a unique chance to get out of home and meet others. Bonds formed move beyond the classrooms and help knit together a community of women who help one another out in times of challenge.

From September 2019, 20 women attended one of two *Pre-entry Level 1* classes facilitated during term time at our Subud Centre base, and a further 50 attended *Pre-Entry Level 2, 3 and Level 1*.

Childcare

We normally run three cycles of 12-week *NVQ (National Vocational Qualification Childcare) Entry Level 1* training over the course of each academic year for 12 women each term in partnership with *Red Tape, Sheffield Council's Skills for Life* tutor Helen Haythorne. *Darnell Community Nursery* also provide work experience placements for *AWHG* trainees.

Digital Drop-in

Given the growing digitalization of public services including the management of doctors' appointments, housing forms, school news and welfare support, women who have no digital devices at home have increasingly come to the Subud Centre asked for help. Many need help to fill out statutory forms, to search for employment, update their CVs or coaching on the history of England so as to take *Life in the UK* exams.

By helping women to improve their digital skills, we hope to empower a wider community to become more self-sufficient and better manage their own lives.

provide activities in a safe, pro-active and friendly environment. While sharing skills with a wider community of women, it also equipped participants with nationally-recognised certificates improving their track record and chances to secure potential further volunteering and employment opportunities!

Lockdown, of course,

Sewing Sessions

Outings and Family Activities

Cycle rides - 6 per groups - once or twice a week

Walks around Sheffield - groups of 10 women - some of the volunteers

2-3 times a week - guided walks

Kids - Corrie can take them -10 at a time - 3 x a week - 2 sessions back-to-back - Corrie teaches one kid from each family and they then go on to teach siblings

Kits of pots and plants - home kits

Crafts - given bits for home crafts - some don't have it -

Craft packages and weekly Zoom meetings to connect

ommunication is Key!

African Women's Health Group and Covid Challenges in 2020-21 May 2021

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Sometimes when women get in touch, it isn't just to get information because sometimes we are the only people they have been able to talk to about the stress and challenges they are facing and struggling to cope with. Sometimes it helps people just to be heard as it help them to work out what to do next, with or without much input.

When some women come to the centre to learn English, they really really want to learn - they ask lots of questions, feel safe because it's a women-only centre and they can meet women just like themselves.

a) Refugees have been dropped into Sheffield from Indian UN camps during lockdown - and are now told they are only

entitled to a housing support worker for the first 12 months – after which they have no more help. They aren't even signposted to where they can go and if they try to call the number again, they're told not to call again.

Some are depressed, others have disabled children and inappropriate accommodations, some have problems at school and are in need of help and support. That's when we step in and spend whole days helping to sort paperwork out, go with women to hospital appointments or, where older women might be distressed and have trouble remembering their appointments or simply don't feel confident to go on their own we go with them.

b) A Lack of Accountability is becoming worse as Face-to-Face Services disappear - increasingly women who *do* speak English are contacting us to say they have spent hours on the phone, calling and calling again for services which then cuts off after 45 minutes – after which they have to ring again. **This also means that our own workers are spending more time with women simply trying to get through to help.**

c) Frontline workers such as cleaners and social care workers on zero hour contracts did not know how to claim when they were isolating after getting Covid and had no income to help their families. Many did not make claims for grants which they were entitled to; the benefits office say a lot hasn't been claimed but that people need to come forward and that they cannot contact the people to tell them it's available. Meanwhile families are struggling.

d) Furlough: Other women who do **cleaning and are social care workers** were on **furlough** also did not know they were entitled to 20% of their salaries from elsewhere. **Without knowing what their contracts say, they don't know what their rights are, have sometimes gone out to work with Covid as they cannot afford not to work and have no idea that they are entitled to support elsewhere. They are also afraid to say anything about their employers as they fear they will lose the income upon which they depend to support their families.**

e) Others are sent to find **private accommodations** and will be charged more than they should for housing; they are obliged to pay the balance over what **Universal Credit** will contribute which comes out of money for utility bills family food and care.

f) Women who are here on spousal visas are also sometimes sent home by their husbands and don't know what their rights are.

Inequality of access to service, language barriers, digital challenges and simply trying to cope with not getting a break from the stress of

being single parents or being alone with kids at home while their husbands were out at work has been an issue over Covid with many of the women we work with.

AWHG is considering doing work to help publicize this and perhaps help women fill out forms.

Perhaps a joint project with CAB, ourselves and others could help us advertise in posters, online and face-to-face, to help local people gain the funds they are entitled to.

A further round of government lockdown restrictions in early January 2021 alongside a rapid increase of COVID cases locally - which also affected members of our own staff -

As our face-to-face activities were suspended, in a neighbourhood where a higher-than-national-average residents have died 2021, leading to major changes in complex family welfare circumstances daily, working remotely often our team had to take clients, step-by-step, through a process of identifying the nature of letters and paperwork received by first identifying logos at the top of a letter, then dates and reference numbers, often moving between telephone conversations, photographs and, occasionally, WhatsApp video calls as we guided women through mini-lessons on reading paperwork in tandem with tips for improved digital literacy.

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It's so upsetting when you have no one to turn to and no one to help you out - spent a whole day with a refugee lady who has a disabled child - it seems their key refugee support worker did nothing when she asked for help in having a word with the school because her daughter has been coming home regularly with bruises on her hands - but no one did anything at all.

Coronavirus:

Covid lockdown and isolation caused severe mental distress to many of our service-users including single parents, older women and refugees who had previous experiences of trauma, displacement

and bereavement which amplified their levels of anxiety, depression and loss.

We offered a lot of telephone support over the Covid period, guiding women with filling housing and benefits forms, particularly where women have limited literacy and writing skills, while advising and emotionally supporting women who were feeling vulnerable. With help from five volunteers, we also delivered 100 food packs, medicines, activity packs and homework sheets for ESOL class participants who could not go online. This included older people and our Homework Club children. We also intervened when self-isolation and hospitalisation meant women needed support in collecting medicines, foods etc.

Patience and help from children, funders and Sheffield College who enabled us to secure a total of 17 laptops for women, children and families most in need, led to half our 90 ESOL students joining classes via WhatsApp and children attending weekend Homework Clubs. Both served to connect and raise morale.

As many spoke of struggling with parenting, maintaining positive mental health and being in crisis, we offered twice-weekly group counseling groups for five women in each group while speaking one-to-one with individuals on an informal basis. Our online weekend Homework Club also supported young people preparing to pass exams and helped us identify children who left at home alone when parents have been to hospital and left them alone – and without food. Young people attending our Homework Club were also invited to online talks with former learners who explained how they made their way to university where their parents had never been and how they work in their chosen field of interest. As with adults, our aim is to share hope and stay connected, helping refugee families who have arrived during lockdown periods with limited support and no awareness of how to find their way.

Over the summertime we also informally organised walks with older women, meeting in the park when the weather was good enough to go out, and invited families and groups of up to 10 to meet Corrie Moss who organises Wednesday afternoon food growing sessions at the Darnall allotments in spring and summer. Our Outreach Advocate was also asked to support family cycle rides to safely socialise and exercise when neighbours saw her go out with her own children and asked to join in!

Our team was also contacted by refugees who were brought to Sheffield during lockdown from a UN camp in India and we continue to support a Somali-heritage single mother who's disabled child struggles at school and in housing with steep steps; sadly it seems

the agency responsible for helping her to settle failed to address a range of issues which we are only just learning about now.

As women come out of lockdown, some having lost wage-earners, some now widowed or single heads of families, they are coming to us for help with learning how to go online, how to fill out forms and where to go for help. Many have limited IT, English language skills and confidence to fill out forms even as more and more services now require that they go online to address housing, doctors' appointments, further training for employment and welfare benefits.

AWHG's Somali-speaking Outreach Advocate is struggling to keep up with demand as she also accompanies women to appointments when they need advocacy and interpreting support while also interviewing BAME women about whether they have had Covid vaccinations, their experiences if they have and why they haven't had the vaccination if not; all this information is shared with the CCG to help raise awareness about community concerns about Covid vaccination programmes.

While about half of our ESOL learners have been able to continue courses and are now taking exams, many haven't been able to progress as they normally would in learning over the lockdown period. We look forward to a time when we will be able to open our centre again and safely resume face-to-face sessions in our risk-assessed centre!

As the good weather finally arrives, we are also keen to resume outings to growing sessions at our local allotment or at home and, according to circumstances, healthy cooking sessions linked to growing veg and herbs at home and sewing sessions!

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Example: Sunday, Monday and Tuesday:

We work with women and their children so in the previous question, we just said women; the funding allowed AWHG to meet the needs of women who were in crisis in a way which we would not have been able to do without additional help. We would most likely have continued to talk to women and help deliver food and advice wherever possible but we most likely would have burnt out and not been able to keep helping new people calling because they were lonely, kids had no adults at home, people were losing their loved ones or single parents, who represent most of our service-users, were overwhelmed by caring for children alone at home, stressed, bereaving and where women had previously experienced war situations as refugees, were traumatised as bad memories returned as we faced an uncertain future. Several young people have also committed suicide but we are unsure whether they were stressed or depressed.

Our service is varied – so here's an example of a week during lockdown periods:

Sometimes we get calls from young people saying their mothers are seriously depressed, asking us to come visit, take them out or help shift them into a more positive mood. As we have listened, supported, encouraged women throughout the last year who sometimes feel to be on the edge of a breakdown – particularly where they have previously faced trauma and displacement which studies confirm makes people more vulnerable – we started our week on Sunday by taking a group of

16 women and children to the Peak District in a small minibus for their first group outing since lockdown. These outings are really special because most of the women coming to us don't have the transport, resources or knowledge of what resources exist for them to join. We walked, picnicked and were amazed by the number of people passing by who called out to us and ask how we were, cheering us on and making us feel welcome.

Several have called to say it was the best thing they have done in over a year and that they feel like a cloud has been lifted. As we can only take small groups at present, we are also planning a series of trips with a small grant to take women and children who've been locked indoors for months on end to go swimming, for walks, exercise in the park and outdoors activities to help get them going again.

While some clients are able to negotiate issues with a bit of signposting, advice and encouragement, many simply don't have a good enough command of the English language to understand what they have to do, where to go and what to say. We often find, for instance, that older women will not have opened letters and have missed crucial deadlines for action. This means, for instance, that we spent hours on Tuesday at an office trying to get help for a woman at risk of missing the deadline for completing paperwork for her Settled Status. Even getting laptops on offer from Sheffield College resulted in our P/t Outreach Advocate accompanying women to fill out paperwork as they were unsure where to go, who to speak to and were lacking confidence to make this happen. This means taking small steps to show women where to go and how to get services they need through practical joint visits.

Monday morning we were inundated with requests for help from women taking Entry Level 2 ESOL exams who had been redirected to Sheffield College to take their exams; we took seven women down to the college to make sure they know where to go as they are sitting *speaking, listening, reading* and *writing* exams on different days this week. Some women are breastfeeding and we might help find babysitters and help them get there and back quickly as they might otherwise cancel altogether and not progress as our facility is currently closed.

We are also about to start registering further 95 women for next year's ESOL classes and, as it is now online, some need help with filling the forms and knowing what evidence they need to send to be able to attend without paying fees. We will also be able to take new students off our waiting list for Entry Level ESOL classes in September as several of our older students have passed away this year.

Part of Monday was spent with a refugee family who arrived from India during lockdown last June; the disabled child of one mother has repeatedly come home with bruising which the g them in explaining their needs to a GP, addressing a disabled and recently arrived child's needs at school after she has repeatedly come home with bruises.

Lockdown

Lockdown has led to a lot of family breakdown, bereavement and women visiting one another when they feel isolated. We spent a lot of time reminding families of the risk they were putting themselves and their families under before women began to share these insights and change their visiting habits. Our Outreach Advocate has also been undertaking interviews with neighbours and parents at school gates, in shops and parks to learn about why people might not have been vaccinated and to share insights from learning we have gained through joining a series of Zoom meetings over the past six months with doctors sharing information to address fears and rumours about negative side effects of Covid.

While we sometimes signpost clients to telephone translators for GPs or ask volunteers to help, in critical situations where a client needs an advocate to make sure they receive the support they need which might not otherwise be forthcoming, we accompany them in person.

As p/t workers, we are also organising to take some young people horse riding as lockdown ends with funds saved on venue costs from a small grant obtained over lockdown.

7. Learning, sharing, and networking

We will ask you to report on progress during the grant, so explain how you will track your progress and learn from this so that it helps you to develop and improve. Tell us about:

- _how your learning will be shared and used more widely and how you will apply it to refine and improve your work.

In terms of monitoring our impact, we keep registrations for all classes, group activities and each advice issue or visit needed with notes about why people have come and how we progress. Teachers at each class of 10-20 students ask each to tell whether they feel they have progressed and how so we can measure our progress; as most of our service-users communicate by word-of-mouth, we also hold meetings twice a year to ask whether women need different services, a different way of doing what we already provide and how we can do better. Our Homework Club students also have termly reviews to which parents come which also sometimes leads to learning about issues families might be facing which might not otherwise have come to light. All of this information is pulled together in reports to funders and also in our annual report which comes out with our accounts each year.

Outside of formal partnerships with Sheffield College, the Subud Centre, Darnall Children's Centre who take work experience placements from our Childcare students and Red Tape who provide trainers for our Level 1 and 2, our Project Manager and Acting Chair has also been invited to be part of the Sheffield Partnership Board which runs hubs such as the Vaccine Voluntary Action Sheffield Covid Response hub or Migration Matters.

While this has strongly connected us with a range of health, statutory, voluntary sector and community partnerships to consider issues ranging from debt management, a lack of Covid vaccination uptake amongst BAME communities, the Windrush legacy and more, it also helps us learn about wider issues affecting local communities which we did not always have time to think about while running around to help women in neighbourhoods with personal emergencies.

The network also looks at hardship funding, Covid recovery strategies and means of finding solutions; we have been told that our own input on how it has impacted BAME communities has also been really valuable.

AWHG also regularly cross refers clients to local advice organisations such as the CAB, with whom we have developed a stronger relationship through online meetings over the Covid period, as well as with Asiana, to whom we refer women faced with domestic abuse and in need of specialist support, local schools in Darnall, Attecliffe and Tinsley, GP surgeries, hospitals and our local allotments where the wonderful Corrie Moss supports our families each Wednesday afternoon by showing them how to plant, when, what seeds to use and to sample the produce through healthy cooking information and normally, through practical sessions at our centre.

Over the lockdown period, as we have moved online and begun to access Zoom meetings for the first time to join discussion panels about poverty, the impact of the pandemic and how it has affected BAME women in particular, our Project Manager has often represented the voice of women who's needs might not otherwise be considered.

While connecting with a range of local organisations who were unaware of AWHG's work, this has also helped us explain to larger service providers about the challenges that some of our service users face when trying to access mainstream services.

Our Project Manager was also invited three years ago to join a grants panel with *South Yorkshire Community Foundation*, and has learnt, on the other hand, from reading through a range of grant applications about different approaches community organisations have taken to addressing challenges faced by vulnerable residents from around our region as well. They have been very supportive and recently wrote to say thank you for insights!

She has also been invited to join *Voluntary Action Sheffield's* interview panel for a new CEO; while each new invitation also brings a bit of nervousness, with a bit of courage, one small step in taking part in new forums, online or face-to-face, has led to more learning while allowing us to help explain the issues faced by really isolated BAME women so their needs are better understood by wider community networks.

Women Win a College Badge!

With lockdown in place and classes moved online, Sheffield College asked for women to come to their main campus to register for classes rather than attend sites at their local community centres. It isn't next door and some women with limited English language were scared to go alone, particularly after tales of a fierce and impatient college receptionist emerged when she told a hesitant woman lacking confidence in her spoken English that she *didn't have time to wait around all day* and urged the woman to speak faster.

In the event, Khadra volunteered to take a group and travelled with six women to sign in. As part of the process women who might never have finished secondary school or held a certificate from the UK were issued with Sheffield College photo IDs and numbers with their names emblazoned. Dazzled as they emerged from the college, tags round their necks, one woman held up her card and stated she was ...*'going to tell my husband that now I am an official college student he'll have to remember to treat me better!'*

Photos were duly taken of the occasion with women proudly holding up their freshly pressed IDs.

Media Profile

We are not great at chasing media coverage but BBC Children in Need – our Project Worker has been meeting with others via Darnall Partnership and Voluntary Action Sheffield meeting and noticed that some groups don't know we exist – but the *Zoom* meetings are the best thing that has happened as we have met so many other people at meetings we might not have to otherwise attend.

BBC Children in Need who fund our Homework Club have also just gotten in touch as they want to know more about how we managed with help they gave over lockdown, so it does help when we get chased to give information about our work and get the word out!

Vaccinations

Our Outreach Advocate has outreached weekdays to women at school gates, shopping centres and in parks where she has informally engaged with some of our ward's hardest-to-reach BAME women of Arab, Somali, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage to ask whether they have been vaccinated, if not, why, as we seek to source feedback on reservations people might have about being

vaccinated. It is helpful that she has primary school aged children as it brings her into contact with a range of local residents daily, including older women she visits at home.

Our Outreach Advocate has facilitated in-depth interviews with 15 women to date.

Some women have not as yet received notification for their vaccinations while others feel they want to wait and see what more information comes out about vaccine safety before taking a decision to go ahead.

Our Outreach Advocate regularly checks up on older residents as many have been shielding since March 2020. An 80-odd Somali heritage woman said she hadn't as yet been offered an appointment but, upon following up, it turned out that she hadn't opened much of her correspondence as she doesn't read English and so was unaware that an appointment was available for her. We therefore followed up and booked an appointment for her to receive her vaccination shortly.

One aspect of our work is to follow up with clients and help them learn to identify logos at the top of letterheads so they know who has written to, check headings, dates of appointments and information as we empower local women with tools to overcome limited English language skills and to take first steps in better managing urgent personal matters and alerting us when they need direct help and interventions.

Now that our Outreach Advocate has been vaccinated and is less likely to pose a health risk to vulnerable residents, she will continue outreaching informally to parents at school, parks and a wider community out shopping while visiting older residents who are shielding, isolated and more likely to struggle with following instructions to access vaccinations. She will at all times wear a mask, gloves and maintain social distancing so as to limit any risk to negatively

SURVEY: 22nd April 2021

Vaccinations

What activities have you undertaken over the last two weeks?

Our Outreach Advocate interviewed a further seven women both to find out if they have been vaccinated and to learn why they might and might not want to be vaccinated; while speaking to BAME parents at school gates and in parks, she is also approaching BAME neighbours on her street.

How many people have you reached?

Seven heads of households have been interviewed.

Insights?

A lot of families are being cautious as we come out of lockdown so are likely to be in public spaces or to chat outside school gates as we normally do.

This means it's a bit more difficult to speak to strangers so most of our interviews are being made with people that we know but the learning we are sharing is spreading because the people we speak with highlight friends and relatives being offered vaccinations who might be hesitant to take them up.

It helps that she herself and her husband has had Covid, was nearly taken into hospital in January 2021, and have since both had the vaccination, though she is only in her late 30s. Her husband works in a warehouse so pro-actively went to the hospital to ask to be vaccinated as he does not want to get Covid again or spread the disease. This means our Outreach Advocate can also speak from experience when encouraging neighbours and older people, in particular, to consider doing the same.

Stories reported still include a taxi driver who said that the vaccination makes people infertile but some attitudes are beginning to change as more people they know are being vaccinated and after talking to them, it has made a lot of difference as they feel more fearful.

Case study

Since first speaking to women about taking the vaccine, five women have come forward to have vaccinations themselves; one spoke of hearing negative stories but had gone back to do research and decided to go ahead. The team she saw spoke to her about side-effects and what might happen which gave her confidence and she will be returning for a second vaccination in due time.

Another woman said she was very nervous and scared when she went for her vaccination but the staff were very helpful and encouraging. She had headaches and tingling after having her vaccination but felt normal again after a few days.

'My overall experience of having my Covid vaccination has been positive; I had heard good stories and so when I finally decided to get the vaccine and book an appointment after I got my letter, I had a very bad headache and felt weak which the nurse said was a side effect of the virus. I felt better after 3 days...' Client 1

'When I received my vaccine I did not know what to expect. The only difference I felt was the pain in the arm. I had slight headaches the day after but did not experience discomfort and have already booked my second appointment.' Client 2

'I had read so many things online which made me scared to take the vaccine but after seeing other people who had taken the vaccine, I decided to take it and am ok. I did have a chest problem for 2 weeks, though, and went to my GP who looked at it, and I was sent straight to the hospital. I was seen immediately and they gave me a lot of tests and I realized that the doctors in the hospitals were more concerned about patients who had already had the vaccination than otherwise to make sure they can monitor any possible problems. They took really really good care of me to make sure the vaccine didn't do anything bad to me and have booked me for more scans. I couldn't believe how thoroughly they were checking me to make sure the chest problem was not caused by the vaccine.' Client 3

What will you do over the next two weeks?

Over the next two weeks the aim is to get a better idea of who has and hasn't had the vaccine to help people overcome fears so as to help talk through safety and the statistics of how many people actually experience blood clotting as a result of vaccination.

People are also asking what types of allergies prevent you from taking Over the next two weeks the aim is to get a better idea of who has and hasn't had the vaccine to help people overcome fears so as to help talk through safety and the statistics of how many people actually experience blood clotting as a result of vaccination.

People are also asking what types of allergies prevent you from taking vaccinations as they are not clear about which ones are of concern. The question has been raised many times and the information online isn't very clear.

Homework Club: Our Proudest Successes!

Thanks to funding from *BBC Children in Need*, our sought Sunday morning Homework Club sessions for Year 7 & 8 students, Year 9 & 10 and Year 11 students in English, Maths and Sciences still thrives!

Led by two qualified tutors supporting 40 young people aged 11-16 with an hour each of GCSE-level Maths, English and Science, the programme is particularly helpful to households where parents have limited English language, educational experiences and resources to support children struggling at school.

Sessions are supported by two volunteers who themselves came to our Homework Club and, having succeeded in attending college, have become role models for learners who's own families might be torn apart by migration and parents seeking to find their way in sometimes 'chaotic' new circumstances.

We provide refreshments at the start, break-time and at the end of each club session. It helps make learning more sociable and breaks down stigmas amongst students who might feel embarrassed by school failure and afraid ask for help. Attempts to address poor academic achievements otherwise come late and parents, lacking skills and financial resources to find help, feel helpless. Those left behind by age 11 have a mountain to climb, do not know where to turn for help and often feel they are failures.

Originally established when parents came to tell stories of children failing at school, of their distressed and frustration at being unable to help, our Club soon became a place where young people, struggling with poor academic achievements and fast losing belief in themselves, could come to ask questions they were afraid to ask in class.

Older siblings, parents and neighbours are our best publicity routes as stories of former students, now working as lab technicians in local hospitals, in IT and analytical sciences, have become models for a further generation of young people who come with low educational attainment levels hoping we can help.

We interview each young person joining our group and listen to their personal, academic, emotional and home experiences as we try to gauge how best to help. Volunteers who themselves have attended our homework club are available to spend more time with individuals in need of additional help.

Our approach to teaching is shaped by their needs. As time goes by, we learn through class feedback, parents and one-to-one

conversations arising at breaks about further hidden needs which young people are embarrassed to talk about. We also ask young people about additional workshop topics they would like to explore.

By offering young people hope, social networks and support from teachers, peers and former learners as role models and advisors to help improve their performance in school, we hope to build confidence, resilience, 'know-how' and positive motivation amongst a generation of disadvantaged young people feeling bleak about the future.

Talks and outings to help them find their own ways through educational systems and issues such as bullying, school failure and a lack of understanding of what they can do, went online by inviting former Homework Club students, for instance, who have gone on to university and to jobs of their choice, to come back and talk to younger peers about how they found their way. While inspiring younger generations who's parents have often not completed secondary school to aim high, we continue to share learning through peer role modeling, with our own staff team, volunteers and Management members often demonstrating how each of us can take small steps and keep going until we do things we never imagined possible ourselves!

BBC Children In Need

Outings: Exploring Local Public Resources

For 7 members of staff inc tutors and MC members in online safety in working with children

Cycle rides - 6 per groups - once or twice a week

Walks around Sheffield - groups of 10 women - some of the volunteers

2-3 times a week - guided walks

Kids - Corrie can take them -10 at a time - 3 x a week - 2 sessions back-to-back - Corrie teaches one kid from each family and they then go on to teach siblings

Kits of pots and plants - home kits

Crafts - given bits for home crafts - some don't have it -

Craft packages and weekly Zoom meetings to connect

Website and online platforms

The Future of our Homework Club

Subject to funding, we hope to invite young people over the next year to team up to lead monthly workshops on topics such as online safety, knife crime, cooking and, in light of a rise in racism, anti-bullying strategies to stay safe.

Our aim is to ask teams of young learners to help research, present and decide upon outings which might be free or low cost where we can visit at the end of each term and which young people might visit in their own free time.

We also hope to ask individuals to lead monthly hour and a half cooking sessions so we can explore topics of healthy eating and equip a younger generation with skills to take better care of themselves and their families.

Former attendees regarded as 'success stories' will also be invited to come back and talk about their learning and professional experiences so as to serve as role models, advisors, a source of hope and motivation for each young learner to do their best.

We hope that as a result of participating young learners will feel:

- More inspired;
- More informed about strategies to address knife crime, cyber bullying, addiction to gaming and healthy eating;
- Better networked to share information about school homework, exam preparation, where to go for further study after finishing school;
- More motivated to achieve their personal best;
- Less distressed;
- Less likely to feel depressed about their futures;
- Better equipped to deal with challenges ahead; and
- More positive about their futures!

Thank You

Many thanks to our funders including the **Big Lottery's Reaching Communities programme, BBC Children in Need, Sheffield City Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Talbot Trust and South Yorkshire Community Foundation**, the Subud Centre who's venue we use, supporters and volunteers who enable us to provide services at a time when cuts to public services and welfare have put vulnerable women and families at higher risk than ever.

Special thanks also to **Sheffield College** for providing resources and tutors to help local women achieve and believe in improving their lives!

Case Study: 488/500 words

While AWHG's Homework Club attracts learners and families seeking help with schoolwork, it also provides a vehicle through which to address other issues arising in young peoples' lives.

Our Outreach Advocate joins lessons each Sunday to monitor online teaching and take registers; this also provides a chance to check on the wellbeing of students who don't sign on and whether they have support at home. Recently a young person reported that their father went into hospital, then their mother and the children became anxious, stressed unable to think of anything else or do normal things.

Our Outreach Advocate listened as they described their situation before helping the eldest identify an auntie in a nearby town who ultimately came to stay for three weeks before their parents returned home. She also provided shopping and support, even after the parents returned, as their children then became their carers.

As described by the oldest in the household in a thank you email to our team:

I thought it was impossible that something like this would happen to us so I didn't take life very seriously. When this happened, it changed my perspective and thinking. It's made me think more positive about things as the people in these kinds of organisations really do their best to help and make a difference. For this I am truly grateful – they were there for us when my brothers, sisters and I were in a mess. It made a difference to my life.

Our Project Manager has also been learning about the challenges faced by parents of Somali children who are autistic and was invited to join a group run by a Somali woman in London had autistic child and went to a college to do a Masters and realised her daughter was not getting support she was entitled to so educated her child at

home instead; three different wards –one in school, one outside and one at home as children fight, school neglect and child gets bullied and outside, members of the public back off when seeing the child's behaviour.

By joining weekend sessions, we are also learning more about specific challenges facing BAME women and children at school so we are better equipped to listen, informally identify learning difficulties faced by children attending our Homework Club and begin to help parents, teachers and young people begin to seek help; it was our Project Worker, asked by teachers and parents for help, who realised a young person joining our Homework Club might be autistic and shared this insight with parents and teachers at school who didn't know what was wrong. He continues joining our supportive and inclusive Homework Club sessions where he sits in the classroom with others, does what he wants to do and clearly wants to sit with the others; his mother noted he loves attending the Homework Club but does not enjoy going to school. He particularly loves joining our refreshment breaks!

What difference does the funding make? 63 words

We earned a further £5000 thanks to this grant.

When young people wanted more activities facilitated after school including cooking, fitness and outings, we were able to secure a small grant with a local trust thanks to having networks already established with young people attending our Homework Club. Your funding has therefore helped us sustain this crucial link which will also enable us to build on and explore further potential youth work.

Case Study 131 of 500 words

Before we were able to distribute laptops, parents were struggling to keep their children engaged, particularly where four children would fight to share one laptop. Family confrontation and friction contributed towards relationship breakdown while young people appeared to be depressed, lying in bed and complaining that they had nothing to do.

Some parents now say their children are actually enjoying learning from home and are keeping up with school work for the first time in the absence of destructive influences including drug abuse and gang violence.

Access to laptops also provides information to young people about how to stay safe online while following news at school

and with peers. In some cases, families also share laptops with neighbours who also have limited digital access or need help with printouts and homework.

**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 2021**

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

Balance B/F 30th June 2020	1,000.00
	1,000.00
Receipts	
Grants Received (Sheffield)	
The Talbot Trust	2,000.00
RBC Children of South	1,000.00
Community Fund (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Sheffield College	1,000.00
Sheffield City Council	1,000.00
WGS Sheffield	1,000.00
	7,000.00
2020 Repatriation Scheme (WGS)	1,000.00
	8,000.00

Payments	
Grants Received	1,000.00
Support & Link Workers	1,000.00
Wages	1,000.00
2020 Office	1,000.00
Admission Fees	1,000.00
Support Workers	1,000.00
Programme Fees	1,000.00
Programme A (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme B (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme C (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme D (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme E (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme F (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme G (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme H (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme I (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme J (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme K (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme L (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme M (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme N (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme O (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme P (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme Q (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme R (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme S (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme T (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme U (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme V (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme W (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme X (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme Y (Sheffield)	1,000.00
Programme Z (Sheffield)	1,000.00
	14,000.00
Balance C/F 30th June 2021	1,000.00
	15,000.00

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2021

**AZIM & WAKAS
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU
TEL 0114 2588067**

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2021

ACCOUNTANTS REPORT

Balance B/F 01.07.2020

£
Total
20362

Grants Received (Restricted)

The Talbot Trust	5000
BBC Children In Need	12915
Community Fund (Covid Response)	26560
Sheffield College	1540
Sheffield City Council	4980
NHS Sheffield	5000

55995

Job Retention Scheme-HMRC

7673

84030

Payments

Sessional Workers	4919
Support & Link Workers	1870
Salaries	17526
Wages	10206
HMRC-Paye	2552
Admin Workers	1000
Support Workers	3770
Premises Rent	1115
Telephone & Internet	575
Travel & Refreshments Cost	1085
Stationary & Equipment Repairs	3033
Equipment Purchased	4000
Interpreter	1050
Accountancy	430
Training	350
Voluntary Expenses	1400
Voluntary Action Sheffield	175
Capacity Building & Consultancy Fees	3510
Solicitors	550
Misc	200

Total Expenses

59316

Restricted Funds Available As At 30.06.2021

24714

BALANCE AT BANK 30.06.2021

24714

Less: Cheques presented after date

0

24714

ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Azim & Wakas
Chartered Certified Accountants
537 Abbeydale Road
Sheffield S7 1FU

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TEL: 0114 266 8067

CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member Rima AlKhayat Dated 30/7/22

Committee member H. Mohamed Dated 30.7.2022

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 2021

AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

Balance B/F 30th June 2020	1,000
	1,000
Grants Received (Sheffield)	
The Talbot Trust	2,000
RBC Children of Gaza	1,000
Community Fund (Sheffield)	1,000
Sheffield College	1,000
Sheffield City Council	1,000
SNL Sheffield	1,000
	7,000
2020 Repatriation Scheme (RPS)	1,000
	8,000

Payments	
Grants Received	1,000
Support & Link Workers	1,000
Salaries	1,000
Wages	1,000
2020 RPS	1,000
Admin Expenses	1,000
Support Workers	1,000
Programme Fees	1,000
Telephone & Internet	1,000
Travel & Transport Costs	1,000
Referrals & Professional Fees	1,000
Equipment Purchase	1,000
Insurance	1,000
Legal Expenses	1,000
Printing	1,000
Utilities & Repairs	1,000
Charitable - Admin (Sheffield)	1,000
Charitable - Training & Development Fees	1,000
Charitable	1,000
Wages	1,000
Total Expenses	14,000
Balance C/F 30th June 2021	2,000
	2,000
Balance B/F BANK BALANCE	2,000
2020 Transfer (Balance Sheet 2020)	2,000
	2,000

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2021

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AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP
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ACCOUNTANTS REPORT

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CLIENT'S APPROVAL

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member R. Rina AlKhayat Dated 30/7/22

Committee member H. Mohamed Dated 30.7.2022

