

2015-2016

Annual Report



AMINA

The Muslim Women's
Resource Centre

Contents

Chair's Report	4	Take Ownership	15
Highlights	5	Befriending	16
Employability	6	Refugee Support	17
Ending Violence Against Women	8	Volunteering	18
Helpline	10	Women's Friendship Group	19
Schools	12	Support Us	20
Building Bridges	13	Acknowledgements	21
Saving Energy, Saves Money	14	Our Staff and Board of Directors	22

Copyright @ 2016 Amina MWRC

All content within this document, including text and images, is protected by copyright. It may not be copied, reproduced, republished, posted, broadcast or transmitted in any way except for your own personal and non-commercial use.

No part of this document may be distributed or copied for any commercial purpose.

Chair's Report

2015/16 was again a year of changes for Amina MWRC. After further funding uncertainty we have retained our main sources of funding for at least another year, and have continued to diversify our funding sources. Sadly we lost the funding for the Climate Change Project, and had to say goodbye to a number of staff including our long time staff member Asma Abdalla.

We have had a lot of staffing changes during the year. In the summer Smina Akhtar, our Director, left to take up new opportunities, so for a short period myself and Yasmina Ferrigan from the Board, covered in a job share Interim Director role to ensure continuity. Shortly before Christmas we were delighted to appoint Samina Ansari from a strong panel of candidates, to the re-named post Chief Executive Officer. As Amina MWRC has continued to grow, especially in the Dundee office where we have new projects including refugee support, we have needed to strengthen our management structure, and thus appointed Shohana Shabnam to the new post of North of Scotland Coordinator.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff, those who are still with us and those who have now left, for their commitment, hard work and above all enthusiasm – and to welcome our newer members who are already bringing us their ideas and experience to strengthen Amina. I would also like to thank all the volunteers, without whom we could not continue to run much of what we do, and the Board members who give up their time to ensure the good governance of the charity.

In these difficult financial times and political climate, 2016/17 will again be a challenging year, but I am sure Amina MWRC will be well up to the task of ensuring Muslim and other Minority Ethnic women have the opportunities and support they rightly should have.

Aziza Khand, Chair



Highlights

It's been a productive and exciting period of innovative work making an impact on the communities we work with and wider. The addition of new support projects in Dundee and a new office base in Edinburgh has welcomed more staff and volunteers.

1

Cumulatively we **worked with and supported over 4000** Muslim and Minority Ethnic **women** across Scotland

2

In order to raise awareness of **honour based violence**, Amina produced it's first ever **professional theatre production**, *If I Had A Girl*, based on the **real stories** courageously shared by women that trust us

3

For the first time ever we successfully piloted working with **young Muslims**, specifically around challenges that they face growing up with **multiple identities** and the **rise of islamophobia**

4

Our creative and engaging **employability events** brought together nearly **200 women** with **50 different professions**

5

We had a **record number of volunteers** join Amina and **support** all aspects of our **work** from counselling to marketing to working one to one with our clients and more

Employability

Amina's 'Inspiring Aspirations' employability team engaged, empowered and supported over 550 Muslim and Minority Ethnic women across the cities of Dundee, Glasgow and Perth last year, enabling women to identify, explore and overcome their personal barriers to progression.

We delivered employability training programmes, personal development workshops, English conversation classes, ESOL for Employability (in partnership with WEA), introduction to IT (in partnership with WSREC) and 125 individual support sessions.

Premised on inclusion, equality and participation, the project continues to evolve, grow and expand provision of its responsive and barrier free learning environment to a record number of women. Last year, we more than doubled the free English language provision, totalling over 200 hours of tutor time.



"We need to work together to enable these wonderfully inspiring women to achieve their full potential. Today has been an education" (Human Library, A-Z of Employability, Al Maktoum College, Dundee)



"It is a fantastic idea and is something that is definitely missing.

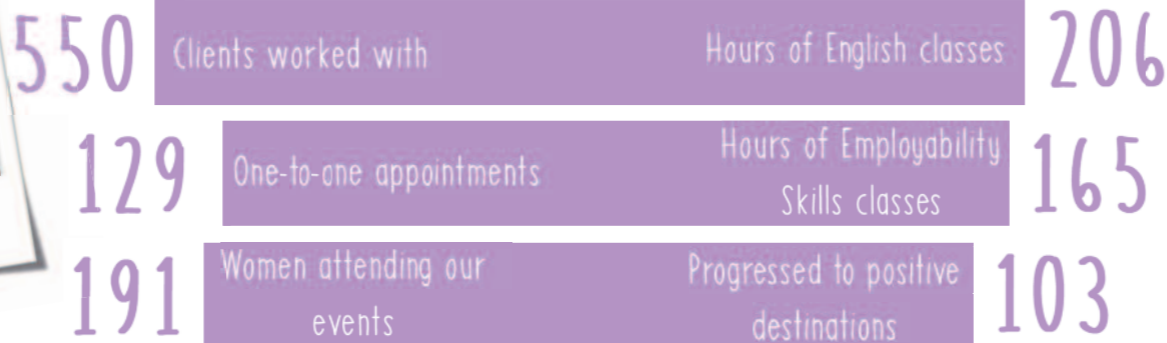
I think it's a good motivator and definitely more of these sessions are needed."

(Business workshop attendee, Glasgow)

Key events about starting up your own business and connecting women with other women in various fields is vital to creating meaningful pathways, and allowing women to increase peer support and networks.

This year 3 events in Glasgow and Dundee attracted nearly 200 women. Our innovative events included:

- **'Onwards & Upwards' Speed Mentoring**, facilitated conversations between professional Muslim and ME women from a variety of fields, with our client group; sharing advice, tips, guidance and inspiration in a 7 minute allotted slot, thus overall engaging with 20 potential role models, mentors in just under 2.5hrs.
- **A-Z Employability Human library**, each letter of the alphabet represented pioneering Muslim and ME women, ie Author Leila Aboulela for A; Nutritionist Shehnaz Bashir for N, etc and women had the opportunity to explore various professional and business fields.
- **Bespoke Business Start-up Workshops** which took the approach of realising and utilising resources you have at home as a means of turning them into a product and a viable income.



Ending Violence Against Women

Storytelling and self-care workshops were held for survivors of honour based violence and domestic abuse. Coping strategies were also explored during woodlands workshops in conjunction with the Forestry Commission. The participants wanted their stories to be shared to provide hope for other women. Ultimately, this led to a ground breaking project for Amina, a theatre production, written and produced by the VAW Programme Coordinator, Mariem Omari entitled, 'If I Had a Girl'. The play opened at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow and sold out within a few weeks reaching over 300 people.

March was an intense period for VAW, not only was the play a resounding success but we were awarded £50,000 from the People's Project after receiving the most votes via a national STV campaign. The media coverage during the campaign and post play allowed for greater exposure to the important work of Amina.



8

A training day for the staff and volunteers at Amina was held both in Glasgow and Dundee on understanding VAW issues, providing them the confidence to discuss the issues within their community, on Amina's Helpline and during campaigns.

Additionally, community members from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe have benefited from awareness raising around honour-based violence and VAW more widely.

This took various forms such as attendance at film screenings for Amina's new Baby Steps to Gender Equality film, becoming aware of Amina through the People's Project TV and social media coverage, listening to our content on Radio Ramadan both in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and meeting our team at collaborative events as part of the 16 days of action against VAW.

The ending Violence against Women programme aims to increase awareness and understanding of issues and relevant services surrounding domestic abuse and honour based violence to Muslim and Minority Ethnic women in Scotland, with the hope of making them feel less isolated and more confident in raising VAW issues in their communities.

The Men's workshops is the second key area of work for the VAW Programme.

We were honoured to be working with Shaykh Abdul Aziz to produce and deliver two interactive workshops on domestic abuse and Islam, in Glasgow Central Mosque and Al Makhtoum Mosque in Dundee.



"Absolutely excellent, clarified complex issues in a simple and relatable manner"
(Dare to Care participant, Glasgow)

9

Helpline & Development

This year our national helpline service recorded 1110 helpline calls from Muslim women. Twenty helpline volunteers were trained to assist with providing a free listening ear and signposting service, Mon to Fri from 10am-4pm. The helpline also acts as a 3rd party reporting centre for women experiencing hate crime due to race, religion, disability status, sexual orientation or transgender identity. We supported a record number of women to report hate crimes, which were predominantly about Islamophobia and or racism. The 'Imam and Alima on the helpline' in its 4th year running continued to provide a vital service for Muslim women that sought Islamic advice in order for them to make informed and empowering decisions, and were unable to either approach or access other sources such as mosques.

Top 10 issues that women have called about...

Domestic Abuse

Divorce

Family

Marital/Relationship

Mental Health

Talk to Amina
Muslim Women's Helpline

0808 801 0301

Child Sexual Abuse

Housing

Social Isolation

Signposting

Immigration

"I tried calling other helplines but nobody understood my religion so I felt like I couldn't fully explain things. It is so easy to speak to you because I know you understand. Thank you for helping me, I feel so much better now." Helpline Caller

The development work which this year committed to raising awareness of key issues, tackling Islamophobia via Amina's I Speak for Myself campaign, building capacity of communities through Muslim women, started with a focus on voting in light of the UK general election that was taking place in May.

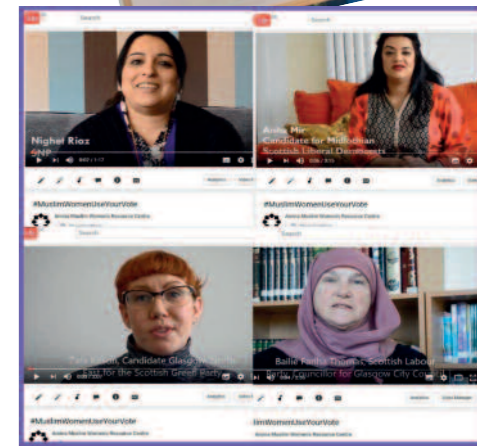
All of the major political parties were approached and female representatives from each were filmed highlighting why Muslim women should vote generally as well as for their party. These films were shown at women's groups across Scotland and uploaded for social media engagement and interaction.

With a record number of hate crimes recorded on our helpline, our annual national conference, 'Speaking for Ourselves', considered the rise and challenging Islamophobia, politics, confidence and intersectionality. It attracted 70 women from across Scotland with our key note speaker being Talat Yaqub, a Muslim woman, feminist.

We need more similar events in the future. Write something down to give it to the government, put it in policy." Speaking for Ourselves participant

As a response to heightening concerns about the rise in Islamophobia, and additional stakeholder and agency conference was organised, 'Understanding & Tackling Islamophobia' which sought to explore collaborative working and with a commitment from all to tackling this issue, in Scotland.

Later in the year a collaborative opportunity with 'Mellow Bumps' allowed for the project to work with Muslim mums to be, to feel more confident about themselves as well as in their abilities as a mother. The sessions also allowed for key concerns raised by participants to be addressed in a safe space, such as cultural expectations of bringing up a child or being a mum.



Schools

Amina has been running the Schools project successfully for 5 consecutive years. The project involves recruiting, training and supporting volunteers to attend RME classes at Secondary Schools, supported by staff, to dispel common misconceptions about Muslims, share the practical aspects of practicing the faith in Scotland today, as well as through interactive exercises challenge thinking, negative stereotyping and prejudice.

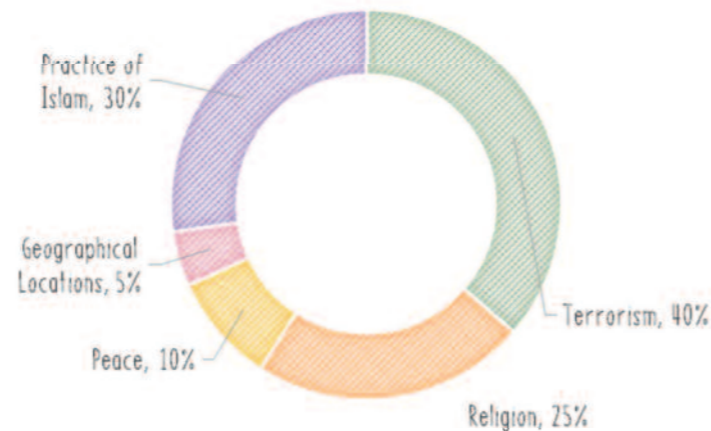
This year with limited funding, the focus of the project was predominantly Glasgow. In total through 16 volunteers and 2 staff we engaged with 16 schools, 62 classrooms, 1500 pupils.

Recognised for its success with teaching staff and pupils, the project continued to work in partnership with Interfaith Scotland and Islam Awareness week too.

4 different workshops were developed or improved to tie in with the curriculum:

- ⇒ The Basics: 5 pillars and 6 beliefs
- ⇒ Love and Marriage
- ⇒ Sharia, Jihad and Terrorism
- ⇒ Misconceptions & Frequently Asked Questions

At the beginning of each class, pupils were asked to write down what word comes to mind when thinking about Islam/Muslims. The answers related to:



I am so grateful to you for helping us challenge stereotypes and hope we will be able to work together again in the future."

Hermitage Academy

Building Bridges

Aware that many women from all walks of life are unable to take advantage of the full benefits of society because they suffer from high levels of isolation due to cultural, religious, language and other barriers, the Building Bridges project started in December 2015, funded by the People's Health Trust, with a Dundee focus to support our client group to improve their skills and become more confident in participating in their and wider communities.

Following on from consultation with Muslim women in early February, project activities which included creative arts, information sessions on eg health and wellbeing, photography, self expression, story telling, women's rights started in February. We delivered 20 weekly activities and managed to reach over 276 participants from diverse backgrounds and age groups.

One of our most popular activities was Walking Football, in partnership with Dundee International Women's Centre and Dundee Football Club. More than 30 women attended with majority of participants reporting that it was the first time they accessed such a facility.

"Thanks a lot through Building Bridges I am doing things I never dreamt of meeting women from different countries and different backgrounds speaking to them and laughing together."

The activities have helped build intergenerational relationships, with participation in the project from 16-60 years old. The diversity of the group has also allowed for increased understanding and appreciation of different cultures, opening more opportunities for learning.



Saving Energy, Saves Money

Amina's climate change project aimed to engage with Muslims and Minority Ethnic communities in the North and South of Glasgow on issues of climate change, energy efficiency measures and saving money, in order to reduce carbon foot print as a result of reducing energy consumption.

The project based on the Islamic principle of looking after the planet, promoting the conservation of natural resources recruited and trained 82 community volunteers, to work directly within their own local communities and networks to promote and further deliver this vital work.

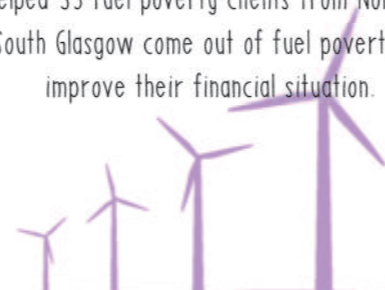
Through direct one to one support and community workshops, clients were supported to gain confidence in dealing with energy matters, become more open about their energy issues, increase their understanding of climate change causes.



14

Over the year, we...

- ...Offered intensive direct help to 115 clients to reduce their energy consumption.
- ...Delivered 24 workshops on climate change, energy efficiency measures and how to adopt low carbon life style and behaviours to 303 community members in north and south Glasgow.
- ...Organised 4 trips to environmental sites for community members.
- ...Helped 35 fuel poverty clients from North and South Glasgow come out of fuel poverty or improve their financial situation.



The project has helped fuel poverty families to write off debt totalling £6,931.91

Take Ownership!

"Take Ownership!" was an interactive pilot project aimed at young Muslims aged between 14-25 years old, to empower them to be active members of their community, encouraging them to feel proud of their Scottish Islamic identity whilst providing a safe space for them to discuss issues that may affect them such as islamophobia, internet safety as well as deconstructing arguments posed by extremist groups.



A series of roadshow interactive workshops which took place in Glasgow, Falkirk, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, attracted over 160 young people, who resoundingly noted in feedback, an increase in confidence, being understood and feeling more able to report a hate crime.

In addition to the workshops, a short term Glasgow based young women's youth group was created to tackle social isolation, low confidence and self esteem, which met weekly for discussions, drama and swimming.

Following on from the excellent feedback from the Take Ownership workshops, Amina hosted its first ever Muslim youth conference, 'Infinity and Beyond' at the Scottish Youth Theatre in April, registering 120 young people for an evening of inspiration, issue based workshops and empowerment.

Munawer Hussain, the first British Muslim to go into space was the key note speaker and delivered a powerful spoken word on reaching for the stars, despite challenges he faced around mental wellbeing. He shared his personal journey of challenging stereotypes, being proud of your identity, success as a YouTube blogger, and more recently a charity fundraiser.

Workshops offered on the evening included dealing with anxiety, selfies and self-confidence, future aspirations, art and pursuing your passion.



15

Befriending

This Dundee based project restarted in September and has supported 27 Muslim and Minority Ethnic women over 50 years old, experiencing loneliness and isolation through group as well as 1:1 befriending. The client group stems mainly from the established community of Urdu/Punjabi speaking economic migrants from Pakistan settling in Dundee in the late 60's and 70's. Many of these women continue to face complex and multiple barriers to full and active social engagement despite having lived, worked and raised families here in the UK for many years.

Our group befriending activities include provision of a monthly lunch club, yoga classes, support with IT and English conversation, as well as visits to places of interest, with a view to supporting women to build their self esteem, enhance and increase their social circle and become better engaged in the local community.

Recognising prevalent health conditions and issues amongst Muslim and ME women such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis and high blood pressure, the project endeavours to provide information sessions in a faith and culturally sensitive way.

Volunteer befrienders are vital to the project, and reach those who are less able to engage with group activities with a view to offering them support and companionship.



'I feel like I look after myself better, I started doing exercises at home because I don't like going out in the cold weather, but after the lady told us about the movements which helped Arthritis pain, I often do them at home'.

Case Study: A client was referred to the project via the job centre. A survivor of domestic violence and with several health conditions, with limited English proficiency, the client suffered from emotional anxiety and low self esteem.

From joining the project, the client was supported at her pace to engage with group activities, and reported increased emotional wellbeing, and progressed to attending a VAW peer support programme.

"This project has been a valuable support and a good way of meeting other women, making new friends"

Refugee Support

This new project came into being in December 2015, although we were already involved in raising awareness of the plight of refugees from Syria well before that. From September, we spoke at a vigil at Broughty Ferry and campaigned for Dundee to join the Vulnerable Person Relocation scheme.

When the first refugee families came to Scotland, we met them at the airport and have supported them ever since, with each family having a named Refugee Support Officer working with them. We can now see the results of the hard work with the first families, as they are all well-placed to support new families in settling into life in Dundee.

"The way people have treated us here compared to Lebanon is a big difference. People are kind and helpful. The services from Amina were excellent and nothing should be improved. Safa [an RSO] has helped us to get to know Dundee and all the facilities"

We ran an English Language class initially, but now our provision is shifting to reflect the changing needs of the families, and as they become more confident finding their way to different facilities and desire to meet new people. English language provision will now be provided through the City Council and various other providers, including our own Employability Project.

We will continue to support the refugee families with integration and with finding their feet in a new country. Refugee Support Officers, who speak Arabic, keep in regular contact with the families, ensuring they know where to go for support, information and financial and housing needs. They also act as a first point of contact for other agencies such as social work, housing, NHS to provide information about appointments and other services.



Volunteering

You can start volunteering with Amina!

Send us an email at info@mwrc.org.uk OR apply through our website!

Volunteers are at the heart of Amina. We could not function without their commitment, time and energy!

With a fab total of 56 volunteers, ranging from 16 years to 70 years old we saw an overall 20% rise in new volunteers across Dundee and Glasgow, which increased support across all of our projects.

Our volunteers have participated in events, filming, raising awareness of key issues,

academic research, delivering training, raising the profile of Amina, fundraising, supported clients, participated in World Hijab Day and lots more!

Annually we organise a volunteer appreciation event, and this year it was afternoon tea in Glasgow and ice skating and a meal in Dundee.

"You can make a £1 donation to make a difference, but if you've got a little bit of time, you personally can make a difference to a women's life, and that feels invaluable"



Women's Friendship Group

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, Rukhsana Ghani and Ann Sholi, the Women's Friendship Group (WFG) continued to meet bi-monthly in the southside of Glasgow.

Membership is made up of women only, most of whom are Pakistani, however we also have members who are Sikh, Arab and White.

This year the WFG participated in an array of sessions to build capacity and knowledge coupled with meeting new people, and belonging to a group brought together by women, for women. Over the year women attended workshops on understanding anxiety, goal setting, entrepreneurship, herbal remedies, fuel efficiency, hate crime, voting, ageing well and 6 drama workshops run by the Women's Theatre Company and more. The women also created banners for a performance about 'privilege'.

The group also hosted a Bemis funded event 'Friendship in Harmony', where they introduced visitors to traditional biryani cooked with Scottish grown produce, and an opportunity for multi cultural dialogue.

"The Pollok Park trip and finding out about herbal remedies was great, natural remedies are the best"

"This group has given me motivation and a feeling of accomplishment."

"It's a safe space to meet new members"

Support Us

You can donate by:

- sending a cheque to our Glasgow office, payable to:
Amina The Muslim Women's Resource Centre.
- Payroll giving
- Credit/debit card via our website
- Standing order
- PayPal

Some of the invaluable work we do, wouldn't be possible without your financial support.

By donating to Amina, you are providing vital support for this work to continue, and allowing us to work with some of the most vulnerable women in society, ensuring Muslim and Minority Ethnic women feel safe, empowered and included in Scotland.

Just £5 can pay for a call to our confidential helpline, so women can receive the support they need, by a trained member of the team. This small amount can be life changing.

All donations are welcome, and don't forget it can be as little as £2 a month.

Acknowledgements

Huge thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers who have provided support through this period!

Banker: Cooperative Bank

Auditor: Robb Ferguson

OUR funders during the year were ...

Scottish Government – VAW & Gender Equality, People and Communities Fund,
Climate Challenge Fund, Community Jobs Scotland

South East Integration Network; South East Vibrancy Group;

Scottish Sadaqa Charitable Trust; Clydesdale Bank; Royal Bank of Scotland;

Rank Foundation; People's Health Trust; Awards for All; Commonwealth Fund;

Hugh Fraser Foundation; Forestry Commission and Dundee City Council

to whom we give thanks

Our Team

Directors

Smima Akhtar—Director (-Aug 15)

Aziza Khand & Yasmina Ferrigan—
Interim Directors (Aug 15 – Dec 15)

Samina Ansari—CEO (-Dec 15)

Shohana Shabnam—North of Scotland
Coordinator (Dec 15-)

Violence Against Women

Mariem Omari—Coordinator

Dilraj Kaur—Officer (Sep 15–Mar 16)

Safa Yousaf—Officer (Apr 16-)

Educating Against Extremism

Safa Yousaf—Officer (-Mar 16)

Employability

Samina Ansari—Coordinator (-Dec 15)

Vijiha Bashir—Officer

Somaya Naas—Assistant (Mar 16-)

Gihan Temraz—Outreach Assistant

Noshaba Saleem—Outreach Assistant

Helpline & Schools

Sophie Hall—Officer (Jun 15-Jun16)

Zakiya Ibrahim—Assistant (Oct 15-)

Sarah Anne Todd—Assistant

Nahrumah Huq—Assistant (Apr 16-)

Saving Energy, Saves Money

Asma Abdalla—Coordinator (-Mar 16)

Dilraj Kaur—Officer (-Sept 15)

Amina Afzal—Assistant (-Mar 16)

Maymoona Awan—Assistant (-Dec 15)

Nahrumah Huq—Assistant (-Mar 16)

Administration

Sarah Anne Todd—Officer

Kiran Dhanda—Officer (Dec 15-)

Gemma Mackintosh—Officer (Dec 15-)

Finance and HR

Azmina Abubakar

Helpline

Maggie Chapman—Coordinator (Aug 15–Apr 16)

Vali Hussein—Imam on Helpline (-May 16)

Nausheen Karim—Alima on Helpline & Assistant

Violence Against Women

Florence Germain—Officer (-Sep 15)

Sara McHaffie—Assistant (Nov 15-)

Building Bridges

Rana Abu-Mounes—Officer (Dec 15-)

Community Engagement

Rania Edris—Assistant (Jun 16-)

Administration

Undram Munkhbat—Officer (May 16-)

Sara McHaffie—Officer (-May 16)

Refugee Support

Sara McHaffie—Coordinator (May 16-)

Safa Rohani—Officer (Dec 15-)

Marjorie Gourlay—Officer (Dec 15-)

Shaween Al-Talabany—Officer (Dec 15-)

Employability

Lori Hughes—Officer (-Dec 15)

Coordinator (Jan 16-)

Naheed Altaf—Assistant (Feb 16–June 16)

Befriending

Lubaba Qasim—Officer (-Sep 15)

Fatoumata Minty—Assistant (-Mar 16)

Board of Directors

Aziza Khand (Chair)

Fariha Thomas (Vice-Chair)

Robina Khan (Treasurer)

Yasmina Ferrigan (Secretary)

Jamilah Hassan Adewunmi

Bano Younas

Fizza Nasir

Farhatnissa Shabir

Hatham Al-Joubouri

Faten Hamid (-Sep 15)

Sobia Fraz-Khan (-Sep 15)

Glasgow

Citywall House
32 Eastwood Avenue
Glasgow
G41 3NS
0141 212 8420

Dundee

1st Floor
6 Whitehall Crescent
Dundee
DD1 4AU
01382 787 450

Edinburgh

Greyfriars Charteris Centre
138/140 The Pleasance
Edinburgh
EH8 9RR

Inspiring and Empowering Muslim Women

0808 801 0301

info@mwrc.org.uk

www.mwrc.org.uk



AminaMWRC



@AminaMWRC