# AMINA MWRC ANNUAL REPORT ANNUAL 2020 2019-2020

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Amina is an award-winning recognised by Muslim organisation, communities and key partners within Scotland for its pioneering and responsive approach to addressing key issues and needs of Muslim women. Having invested in this specialist area where there was previously a gap in services in Scotland, The organisation has been instrumental in initiating and tailoring services to meet the needs of Muslim women to ensure that they are able to fully participate in society without fear of discrimination or inequality. Amina offers a range of tailored support services on a one to one basis eg national 'listening ear' helpline which also offers Islamic advice through a scholar, employability guidance, befriending, as well as through peer group support.

Through the cumulative and vast experience of staff and volunteers, Amina also creatively raises awareness of key issues through our engaging campaigns such as 'You Can Change This' (raising awareness of violence against women), 'I Speak for Myself (challenging negative stereotypes/misconceptions of Muslim women) as well as our successful school's work which engages directly with over 2000 young people to tackle prejudice and hate crime. Founded on the principles of community development, our work is underpinned by community empowerment, participation and partnership working. Vital to creating a fairer Scotland for all, is our engagement work with Muslim women to ensure their voices are able and empowered to contribute to national policies and that mainstream agencies, government bodies and policy makers have an informed understanding of barriers preventing Muslim women from accessing services and participating in society.

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#### CHAIR'S REPORT

While change brings with it a level of uncertainty and fear of challenges, it also brings with it an opportunity to learn, improve and grow. These are uncertain and difficult times. It has taken a global pandemic to further shine a light on the inequalities, which exist in our society, it has also taken this pandemic to highlight that organisations such as Amina are in the forefront supporting, listening and being the voice of Muslim and Black, minority ethnic (BME) women in Scotland. This year has been a difficult year in more ways than one, the pandemic highlighted what we have known and advocated on for a long time, that inequalities are all pervasive, to the extent that these even affect our BME communities health outcomes. While Amina's 2019-2020 report ends when the pandemic started, 2020 since has shone the spotlight on a number of issues which now more than ever need our attention and support as a collective, from the Black Lives Matter movement to Islamophobia.

The year 2019-2020 has been a year of change, transition, learning and innovation; and we take this opportunity to thank you all for playing an active part in this, as Board of Directors, organisational members, staff, volunteers and most importantly - as service users and members of the community.

Sarah Anne Todd Chair of Board of Directors



#### **CO-CEOS' REPORT**

The period of change and transition for Amina, started well before the pandemic, at the beginning of the financial year in 2019. Our longstanding staff member, Samina Ansari moved on from her position as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Amina after her contribution of fourteen years. Samina's journey with Amina started as a Development Officer, progressing to the role of Project Co-ordinator and finally became the organisation's CEO in Dec 2015. We thank Samina for her hard work and for her contributions to the organisation. To ensure Amina as an organisation steadily progressed along, filling in the CEO's position became a priority of the Board. During this period of transition. Board's then Chair - Raisah Ahmed. also moved on from the organisation, we thank her for work at Amina. The responsibility of Chairperson was very ably picked up by our current Chair - Sarah Anne Todd.

Following an external CEO's recruitment drive, in January 2020 the Board nominated the current Acting Co-CEO's as an interim arrangement. Like a number of organisations within the charity sector, we faced several challenges over the course of the year - funding losses, staff changes and the pandemic. With challenges, we also experienced responsive innovation. Staff at Amina fundraised and adapted the 'Hardship Fund' to the current needs of the women within the Muslim, BME community. Additionally, while lockdown measures meant remote working, it did not mean remote communities for us. We were one of the earliest organisations to identify ways and means to connect digitally with our women. As we move to a different way of connecting and working with women, we are also aware that some Muslim and BME women may not feel digitally confident to access services at a time when they most need them, during the times of a pandemic.

### **CO-CEOS' REPORT**

On one hand we have been reducing digital inequalities by starting a tablet loaning service, mental health, lifestyle and employability classes online on the other, over the last few months calls to our helpline increased by almost forty percent, as more women turned to the helpline, which would have been a lifeline for some. This year more than ever, staff at Amina have demonstrated their commitment and dedication by stepping up and taking on additional responsibilities. Be it through creating innovative online sessions, reaching out to women in communities at the beginning, or throughout lockdown through phone calls or bringing in funding. As this period of transition continues, our goal as an organisation is certain, to be there for the Muslim and BME women in the community, and ensure we are fully able to support your needs in these uncertain times.

We thank everyone for all your support and contributions and hope that you find our Annual Report both motivating and informative.

Ghizala Avan and Dilraj Sokhi-Watson

Acting Co-CEOs





AMINA MWRC was invited to the Bank of England community forum, which was held at the V&A Dundee on 30th April 2019. This was the first of a series of meetings and since then, especially during the pandemic, this platform was a crucial space to express the impact Covid-19 has had on Muslim, BME women in Dundee.

#### Amina's employability staff met with DWP Secretary Paul Schofield, Head of Civil Service. The meeting had a very positive outcome with the Secretary wanting to know more about partnership collaborations within the community.

2019/20

HIGHLIGHTS

Amina's Employability programme concluded with a national partnership event at The Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow called 'Include Me'. The focus of the event was barriers Muslim and BME women face when accessing jobs and, good practice knowledge exchange. Attended by 28 sector practitioners the event was featured on 'That's TV Glasgow'

Cabinet Secretary Aileen Campbell sought a meeting with Amina team at Dundee premises where she was given detailed background on the work Amina is currently doing in Dundee and how this work can be progressed in response to the needs of Muslim and BME women in the city and surrounding areas.

Church of Scotland's Moderator hosted a 'Building Bridges' dinner on behalf of Amina and the Church of Scotland's Gender Justice Officer. The dinner brought together heads of secular women's organisations to share conversations about spiritual abuse and how faith/belief can be a source of empowerment and strength for many women who are in abusive situations

# HELPLINE

There are many services which are part of the 'Helpline' – the helpline itself, live chat, the Islamic scholars, befriending and the volunteers. The volunteers provide an invaluable service – without them it would be impossible to meet the needs of so many women.

You have contributed to helping me change the way I thought about myself

- Helpline Volunteer



Amina's Helpline is a signposting service and listening ear for Muslim and BME women across Scotland. The Helpline is a free service and the Helpline number does not appear on phone bills. All calls are strictly confidential and non-judgemental; we also provide a faith and culturally sensitive approach based on the needs of women. The Helpline has recently increased the number of volunteers, adding to the range of language and skills. **Our Helpline handlers speak** English, Arabic, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu, but we support all languages using interpreters. Before volunteers start taking calls, they undertake three days of training and shadow helpline staff taking calls.

### LIVE CHAT

During Helpline hours, the 'Live Chat' service is available for anyone that may be uncomfortable calling the helpline. This platform has been particularly popular with younger women and is free, confidential and nonjudgemental, just like the Helpline.

#### ALIMA AND SHAYKH ON THE HELPLINE

These are Islamic scholars who understand the rights of women in Islam. They provide a key role by using Islam to empower Muslim women to take certain difficult decisions in their lives e.g. leave abusive relationships.

#### BEFRIENDING SERVICE

Amina is committed to tackling social isolation and offers a weekly telephone support service to women. We train volunteers and offer this service in some of the main community languages and this has increased our engagement and community reach.

Calls on the Helpline increased from 997 in 2019 to 1665 in 2020 with more women becoming aware of this service,

I was looking for something to do, but I didn't know what it was, this is it! I feel so good & that I have achieved something. It is rewarding & I enjoyed it.

- Befriending Volunteer



# HELPLINE IN DATA!

The top 5 issues this period:

Marital/relationship (376)

Domestic Abuse (286)

Social Isolation (271)

Mental Health (233)

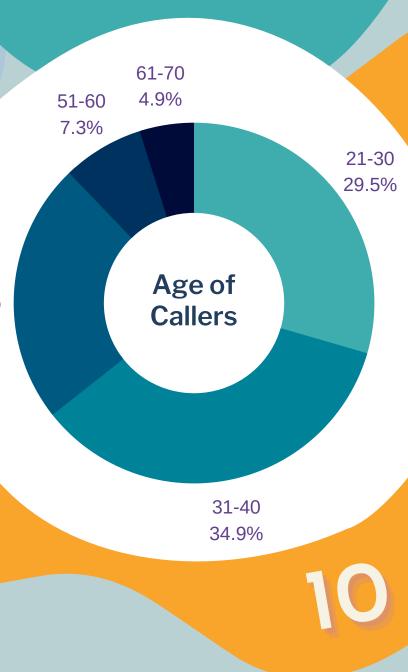
Agency Request (271)

Pakistani, Pakistani/British (683) Indian, Indian/British (29) White, British, Irish, Romany, Polish, Other (28) Arab, Arab/British (22)

"Mashallah it has been a brilliant service that has been provided. It really helps women in their lives and then helps their children because they feel better."

41-50 23.5%

"You have been very down to earth, I was afraid of what you were going to say. I was feeling very low and you have made me feel so much better. I cannot thank you enough." Ethnicities of callers who chose to disclose:



# CAMPAIGNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Our work is evidence-based, and the views of women shape how we work and what issues we work on. Amina is a channel through which Muslim and BME women can access opportunities that they might not otherwise have had.

One of the major events at the end of last year was 'Scottish Women Stand'. By partnering with The Parliament Project, we were able to transport women to the Scottish Parliament to join over 400 women involved in a takeover of the Scottish Parliament on 7th September 2019. Amina facilitated a workshop about the barriers to politics - where representation really counts. This is potentially a gateway to further work on developing Muslim and BME women to be 'political.'

Pictured Right: Councillor Sorvia Siddique, Amina Development Officer and former MP Tasmina Ahmed Sheikh at our workshop for Muslim and BME women in politics at Scottish Women Stand event - Parliament September 2019

The event was a great networking barriers that we have yet to to see and hear about the drive for change

opportunity and you got a lot of insight into the overcome in politics for women, but it was inspiring



#### - Scottish Women Stand, workshop participant



# WORKSHOPS

Throughout the year we have arranged several workshops on Islamophobia and what it means for Muslim identity in Scotland. These workshops created space for Muslim women to discuss issues that mattered to them. Hate crime is an issue that continues to surface and therefore, is an important part of our campaigns and community work. We were also invited by Police Scotland to input into the training of new probationary officers, our focus was on the treatment of victims of hate crime and the recognition of the impact of hate crimes. We also worked across two local authorities - North Lanarkshire and with Perth and Kinross Association of

Voluntary Services to facilitate discussions on how sustainable improvements can be made on equalities



issues.

Pictured Left: Our Interfaith week event in partnership with Side by Side: Involving Muslim and BME women in the creation of an Interfaith Gender Justice movement-November 2019

Pictured Right: Equality and Diversity Steering Group for North Lanarkshire at our women's community event - October 2019





"It's really good to have these spaces where we can share these experiences and not feel like I shouldn't talk about it because that's just life" (workshop participant, North Lanarkshire)

"There are a lot of frustrations around, and it was good to have the opportunity to speak about them but also move beyond them. So I would say that we had a much more focused, developmental conversation than we would normally have and that was thanks to Ghizala (Amina staff member)" - Pauline Kelly, Glasgow City Council, Hate Crime Awareness Week workshop



# SCHOOLS

Each year we reach out to schools across Scotland, offering their students workshops on Islamophobia and dispelling myths about Muslim communities. Since developing our 'Schools' Toolkit, we have been able to reach many more schools.

We had approximately 1040 beneficiaries of the project between April 2019 – March 2020. Working in partnership with Edinburgh Interfaith Association, we co-facilitated our first ever Interfaith Schools training.

This year we were invited to deliver training to Postgraduate teaching students at the University of Strathclyde, and speak at a conference on tackling prejudice, organised by Youthlink in Aberdeen.

the presentation worked really well.....and the sections where you spoke from personal experience about e.g. Hajj etc had a big impact because that is exactly the kind of first-hand experience that the visits can transmit so teachers can visualise what that will bring to a lesson. - University of Strathclyde Lecturer That's the most engaged I've seen them for a while... you really got the pupils engaged with the personal stories, we couldn't ever give them that much detail and they were asking more questions after you left **- Rebecca Henderson, RME SI Mearns Castle** 





## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

#### **BEST OF MEN**

We were pleased this year to have focused delivery of our 'Best of Men' workshops to younger men through youth groups including a successful workshop in partnership with Al-Meezan in Glasgow and Muslim students across Universities of Glasgow, St Andrews and Dundee. The workshops are facilitated by Islamic scholars and are for Muslim men, exploring gender roles, domestic abuse and honour based violence from a faith perspective.

I remember I was attacked. I remember he stormed out after. And I remember I was sobbing so hard I worried the neighbours would hear so I cried into a pillow. I felt consumed so I drew. I drew the words the ones slicing me. And I drew me - a woman so defeated by it all that she wanted nothing more than to just die. I know I tore the corner of that picture shortly after and to this day I've no memory of what was so awful that I couldn't bear to look at it again.

#### THIS REMINDS ME OF YOU

Many live with the reality of abuse every day long after leaving their relationship, a head of broccoli or a child's toys can trigger memories of violence, sexual abuse and coercive control. To mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, survivors participated in our campaign 'This reminds me of You...' on social media and we created an exhibition based on their stories. You can become part of this campaigning by telling us your story:









#### STREET ART

During the 16 days of action, we collaborated with street artist Craig Crawford to create an image with spraypaint based on the imagery of the UN 16 days campaign. This was created outside Dundee House, in a site protected from the elements so that the image lasted for the whole 16 days. The location meant we could reach out to people paying council bills, accessing services etc who would not otherwise hear about our work nor the 16 days events.

#### CHALK

To mark International Women's Day 2020, Amina and Zero Tolerance created Chalk. Chalk was 4 short plays giving an intimate view into realities of everyday violence many women face. The stories of accepting the often-blurred lines of violence and abuse, of women's drive to escape, erase and rewrite aspects of their lives, and of stigma which prevents women from seeking help.

Sharing these stories is our call for solidarity, to draw the line and take action to challenge social attitudes that make violence against women acceptable and allow it to take place. Our scripts reflect stories shared with us by women from Muslim and BME backgrounds. We believe it's important for people to be able to see themselves reflected in creative work, no matter their culture and heritage. The plays were followed by fruitful discussions. We'd love to take the plays else where in Scotland in the future.

#### WHAT'S MY CRIME?

Following the findings of our survey exploring victim blaming, a short film was produced with the aim of ending victim blaming. The film powerfully portrays how survivors of abuse are often punished by their communities.

Over 60 organisations were contacted to share the film on their social media pages on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Genital Mutilation in order to make maximum impact. about time these issues are highlighted, I was told it was my fault when my husband used to mentally torture me. - Someone who watched the film



#### SELF CARE DURING LOCKDOWN

In the first month of lockdown (March 2020), we produced a series of short self-care videos to help women overcome anxieties held in relation to covid-19 and lockdown. We received contributions from health care professionals, our friendship group, yoga instructors, life coaches, parenting coaches and mental health professionals. The videos were posted on our social media accounts and have averaged 1000 views.



### EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT

The 'Inspiring Aspirations' project provided culturally sensitive and accessible services across Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh. The project continued to attract women from diverse backgrounds, originating from countries such as: Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Nigeria, India, Syria, Kurdistan, Iran, Morocco, Scotland, Ghana, Afghanistan, Bangladesh. Service user's native language ranged from: Urdu, English, Punjabi, Arabic, Swahili, Kurdish, French, Farsi, Hindi, Sorani, Bengali, Italian, Ghanaian and Persian.





We delivered 112 one-to-one individual resource intensive appointments. We also delivered 72.5 hours of English language provisions, including ESOL via our partnership with the Workers Education Association (WEA), to a total of 52 women. We also delivered simplified employability programme for New Scots where we hosted and facilitated 3 annual events across all three cities. 70 women attended the events and took part in various personal development workshops including dramabased techniques for confidence building, storytelling for self-expression.

Pictured Left: Employer engagement workshop in partnership with CEMVO 30th October 2019, Glasgow Pictured Above: English Conversation Class end of session evaluation July 2019, Glasgow

#### PROJECT FEEDBACK

"I thought this place was only for Muslim women, but after coming here I feel better and know Amina will help me." "I am very grateful for the help I got here; I would never have been able to get this job without it." "I am grateful and have changed since I first came here. My daughter had to call and make an appointment for me and made me come to the Employability programme. Then I volunteered and attending lots of other things here and I feel like a different person to how I was when I first came here."

As a conclusion to the programme, an annual practitioners' event in Glasgow was organized - called 'Include ME -Championing Change'. The aim of the event was enhancing capacity, encouraging representation and visibility of Muslim and BME women in the Scottish workforce. The event aimed to bring together mainstream and other employability service providers offering stakeholders a platform to discuss some of the barriers Muslim and BME women face when accessing labour market opportunities and how these barriers can be addressed.

"Very informative and relaxed course " "Raised awareness of number of different groups working with BME women. Excellent networking event."

"Excellent event: lots of incredibly useful information I will take back to my organisation to inform the development of our work."

"Providing the opportunity to engage in open and honest dialogue."



# ENTERPRISE PROJECT

Amina's Enterprise program was an inclusive and inspirational initiative for Muslim and BME women. This project successfully promoted enterprise to Muslim and BME women over three cities Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh.

Business Mentors and one to one support were also provided. The attendees managing to secure extra platforms for possible stall/business opportunities, showed that in some cases the ripple effect of small successes led to larger ones. The Enterprise workshops established better links with organisations and therefore encouraged conversations about ways to support and provide new opportunities for Muslim and BME women.

Classes included: skills identification, hijab styling, budgeting money, business plan writing, photography for product sales, social enterprise, confidence and assertiveness, business tax and insurance.

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Pictured Left: Participants at Business Tax workshop, Pictured Above: Hijab styling workshop Pictured Right: T-shirt printing workshop



### WOMEN, FAITH AND MENTAL HEALTH

This project which started in October 2018, employed an Outreach and Research Assistant, along with freelance consultants to work with Muslim and BME women in Glasgow. This work was funded by a successful application to the 'Awards for All' grant scheme run by the National Lottery. The project explored women's beliefs in Jinn and black magic through workshops, and how these impact on support-seeking behaviour e.g. do women go to faith healers and/or mental health care professionals.

The exhibition of the artwork created during the 2nd phase of this project was due to be launched in March 2020, however due to Covid-19, this had to be postponed. In partnership with UWS, we built on our previous published qualitative research, and developed methodologies to capture quantitative data on the experiences of Jinn and black magic in relation to mental health.

Due to the success of this project, we secured further funding from South East Integration Network (SEIN) to develop the 2nd phase of this project. This phase focussed specifically on older women, younger women and women with disabilities and their carers, living in the South East of Glasgow. Artist, Mila Brown worked alongside Mariem Omari who shared self-care techniques with women and encouraged them to share their stories about jinn, black magic and mental health.



Pictured Above: UWS Mental Health Stall



## INSPIRE, CONNECT & ENABLE (ICE)

The ICE project was launched on the 28th of August 2018. The activities have been a mix of skill sharing sessions, outdoor trips, and milestone events. These have all been centered on health and wellbeing, increasing knowledge around rights and entitlement, and learning new skills. In the first year the project engaged with a total of 486 women that attended 37 sessions. During this time, the project also connected with 19 organisations in delivering workshops and information sessions.

Some of the activities that have taken place over the last twelve months are:

Eco friendly beauty and cleaning products workshop with Gate Church International's carbon saving project. Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) tour and etching workshop Middle Eastern dance skill share by an enthusiastic Libyan dancer. Algerian Cuisine cooking skill share by two women from the regular ICE group External trips including a trip to St. Andrews and Scone Palace

project exposed her to exploring parts of Dundee she had



#### V&A DUNDEE TRAINEE TOUR GUIDE PROJECT

Funded by the Rank Foundation, Amina MWRC and V&A Dundee in partnership, launched the Trainee tour guide project in the Autumn of 2018. The project aimed to provide creative skills and development opportunities to Muslim and BME women in Dundee. As part of the project, the participants delivered BME community language tours of V&A Dundee as paid freelancers - part of the V&A Dundee staff. By providing community language tours in languages such as: Urdu, Bengali, Nepalese, Mandarin and Arabic, plus option for French and Italian (as two of the participants are multilingual), the trainee tour guide project opens up creative spaces such as V&A Dundee, Dundee Rep, Dundee Science Centre, McManus Galleries and the Frigate Unicorn to participants of the project. Over the last twelve months the two cohorts have received training on subjects including; conversational English, confidence building workshops, blind describing sessions, flower arranging sessions to teach colour theory, curatorial training, and an introduction to Scottish Design.





#### V&A DUNDEE TRAINEE TOUR GUIDE PROJECT

The focus has been on quality of engagement and the building of relationships. In total the project's goal was to train 10 participants over two years, and with the completion of cohort 1 and 2, six women so far have completed the program, with one of the participants finding paid employment. In December 2019, the participants from cohort one and two were supported to promote their tour guide services and celebrate their successes in a graduation ceremony.

They were presented with a certificate of completion, and a gift bag containing the following; a year's family membership to the museum, books covering local and community tourist spots, V&A Dundee and Amina MWRC merchandise, and of course flowers and chocolate!



My family and friends are so proud of me and I feel so proud of myself to explore, learn and give more and more

- Project Participant



### **RESILIENCE PROJECT**

In August 2019 we were successful in receiving a grant from SSE- Resilient Communities Fund. This grant funded work on building the resilience of Muslim and BME women in Dundee, enabling them to empower themselves with skills, tools, and increased confidence to engage with different emergencies and hate crime effectively. The project aimed to address issues around general awareness around emergencies, issues such as energy management, hate crime, mental health crisis in vulnerable Muslim. BME households in Dundee. This happened by facilitating training sessions for Muslim, BME women about different emergencies supported by engagement with first responding organisations and through confidence building workshops in different themes related to the project outcomes.



Pictured Above: Staff training session



# WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Women's Friendship Group (WFG) is a social network where Muslim and BME women exchange ideas, have discussions, and join in social events with their group. The group provides women with an opportunity to make new friends, improve their spoken English, increase their knowledge and confidence and build peer support. We have around 65 women who are on the group, with each session being attended by 15-25 women.

The fortnightly sessions included:

- Climate change
  - Eye health care
- Cancer awareness
- Film screening on violence against women and girls
  - Visit to the Glasgow Museum resource centre
  - Creating a handling kit for the Burrell Collection
- Sewing classes, in partnership with Awaz Fm and Langside College

I have learnt so much from this group and have made some lovely new friends. My confidence has increased and have learnt new things which have made positive changes to my life. We hope Amina continue these sessions for us, as we are all really benefitting from it. - **WFG Participant** 



Pictured Above: The Eye Health Care workshop, facilitated by Glasgow Caledonian University



# FRIENDSHIP GROUP IN PHOTOS!

Pictured Above: Workshop on Breast Screening (left); A session on Climate Change with West of Scotland Race Equality Council Pictured Below: The Eye Health Care workshop facilitated by Glasgow Caledonian University (left), Women participating in the accredited sewing class



# VOLUNTEERS

This year at Amina MWRC, we had 49 incredible volunteers join us. We truly value our volunteers' commitment, time and effort and they are at the heart of our organisation. This

year, they participated in many events, including our charity dinner and bake sale to fundraise for our hardship fund as well as the Festive Brunches in our Glasgow and Dundee offices. Our trained volunteers continue to support women on the helpline and befriending projects. During Covid-19, the volunteers were available to help us with the increased number of calls. Annually, we celebrate our volunteers by holding a dinner and giving them certificates. This year, all our volunteers received personalised cards and flowers delivered to their home.

Volunteering at Amina has increased my confidence. I was nervous to start volunteering but the staff made me feel welcome and comfortable. Volunteering at Amina has been an enjoyable experience as I have been able to access a variety of opportunities. I just like being around you guys!

- Glasgow Volunteer

I feel very fortunate to meet all of you guys, and for all the experiences and opportunities. Good times!



#### - Dundee Volunteer



### SUPPORT THE WORK WE DO

Amina MWRC is largely project based; as such we are not funded to help in ways which fall outside of our funding outcomes. In order to carry on our legacy of supporting the most vulnerable Muslim and BME women in Scotland we rely on donations; even small amounts can change a woman's life.

You can donate by:

- Using the donate button on our website
- Sending a cheque to us made payable to Amina-the Muslim Women's Resource Centre
- Standing order
- Payroll Giving
- Signing up to websites like "Give as you live" and "Amazon Smile"



**Pictured Above: Enterprise Project Hijab Styling Workshop** 

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A wide range of organisations have worked collaboratively with us this year, some have donated their resources and shown their approved support towards Amina. The Board and staff would like to take this opportunity to thank all the partner organisations, funders, volunteers, individual donors and corporate bodies for their significant and valued contributions and support to the charity.





Scottish Sadaqa CHARITABLE TRUST







#### Foundation a pebble in the pond

#### **Glasgow Head Office**

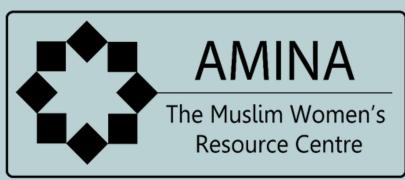
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