



About AMINA MWRC

Amina is a leading grassroots organisation for Muslim and BME women and key partners within Scotland for its pioneering and responsive approach to addressing key issues and needs of Muslim and BME women. Our specialist services aim to fill a gap in services in Scotland. The organisation has been instrumental in initiating and tailoring services to meet the needs of Muslim and BME women, to ensure that they are able to fully participate in society without fear of discrimination or inequality.

Amina offers a range of support services on a one to one basis. We offer services through our Scottish National Helpline for Muslim and BME women funded by the Scottish Government, the helpline provides support to women in crisis. We aim to empower women by offering a listening ear service, befriending service, domestic abuse casework, employability guidance, financial inclusion casework, housing and immigration clinic as well as various creative arts projects.

AMINA and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) work

The violence against women and girls work Amina deliver, receives funding from Delivering Equally Safe fund and previously from the Violence Against Women Fund. Our Intervention and prevention work covers all aspects of vawg. Amina work with the BME and Muslim community and organisations and raise awareness through campaigns, workshops, training and webinars to help prevent issues of gender based violence by educating communities to create change.

Our service users are often disadvantaged and marginalised women. The women we provide services to have complex support needs due to intersectional issues around race, religion, and disabilities, which prevents them in accessing mainstream services in education, work, social care, and

health services. Women that access Amina's services are more likely to face inequalities due to being females and are further burdened by expectations which are created by harmful social norms and gender roles, which restrict their rights to material resources and access to power within households and communities. The barriers to support for BME and Muslim women experiencing abuse can be:

- Lack of knowledge of local services
- Very little or no understanding of the English language
- Being kept in isolation
- Being misinformed of their rights
- Immigration in particular no recourse to public funds
- Cultural barriers which create harmful gender roles and minimise abuse

Amina also set up the hardship fund, which is funded through community donations. The hardship fund has been accessed regularly for women fleeing abuse with no recourse to public funds. Our hardship fund has helped pay for taxis, food and hotels for women fleeing abuse.

- **Priorities for the £100 million promised to address violence against women and girls**

The Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy highlights the importance of meeting the needs of BME women in an intersectional way, recognising that certain groups of people have multi-faceted disadvantages, which increase their level of risk of experiencing VAW. Amina responds to the multi-faceted way domestic abuse and community pressures play out differently for Muslim and BME women. Many mainstream services often deal with aspects of women's experience such as mental health, wellbeing, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment in compartmentalised ways. Many BME/Muslim women struggle to understand this 'compartmentalised approach' and find it hard to access these services.

Women also tell us they want support and resources which are grounded in an understanding of their religious beliefs and cultural experiences. Therefore, they are less likely to access mainstream services and resources, and many face barriers in doing so.

With the pandemic we experienced an increase in demand for our services especially from women experiencing domestic abuse. Through our helpline we were supporting more cases than we could manage at times. The cases during the pandemic restrictions especially, were more complex in nature and harder to support with such limited resources. Amina sourced additional funding from other funders for a women's right caseworker to provide advocacy support for women experiencing abuse.

The specialised support provided by our caseworker has been invaluable and life changing for many women. We have been instrumental in providing BME women with equal access to services as well as supporting them accessing benefits and grants. This has allowed the women we work with take steps to leave their abuse and to achieve financial independence. However this service due to funding will end in October 2022.

Priorities for the £100M promised needs to focus on specialised services supporting marginalised women. AMINA are ensuring that BME women have fair and equal access to services. We are empowering BME women to leave abusive relationships by actively showing them that they can live independently by helping them secure housing, benefits, and support from other agencies. However we cannot continue to fund these services which are a lifeline for many women with additional barriers.

We also recognise the need for more BME women to be referred to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and robust safety planning for women with intersectional needs. Within Scotland we do not have many qualified Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate's (IDAA's) workers who are BME. Amina, through our own funds have paid for staff to train as IDAA's, we recognise the only way for high risk domestic abuse BME victims to receive the continued support is through the buy in of the MARAC service. We hope the further £100 million promised will help organisations like AMINA provide a domestic abuse case work service by qualified BME IDAA's, who can help identify high risk women and creates pathways to keep them safe.

- **What measures would best underpin, or help in, the prevention of violence and control?**

In Scotland, VAW issues specific to BME and Muslim women, such as Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage, tend to focus largely on the protection of women primarily through shelter or legal support (Rape Crisis, Legal Services Agency etc.). These are all important and necessary frontline interventions to keep women safe; however there is very little focus on support provision to work through community based services, such as peer groups and awareness raising which is key to prevention work. Many BME and Muslim community's still have very rigid gender roles. Women who do not conform to these rigid gender roles face honour based abuse or domestic abuse through their partners and extended family. AMINA continue through our community training, webinars, men's workshops and focus groups to help breakdown and challenge these gender roles and help communities realise the harm to women and girls by conforming to these roles. We help communities in speaking up to and challenging this abuse. Part of our prevention work going forward is to focus on Intergenerational Trauma with BME communities, which will work with women of all ages to breakdown the role of a women, where the harmful expectations can be passed down from generation to generation. We hope in enabling women to recognise the cycle of abuse, challenge and co-create new social norms to help prevent VAWG.

- **Work done or required with men and boys on positive masculinity to prevent violence.**

Amina have worked with Muslim and BME men. We also released a short video to promote our men's work, the You Can Change This Campaign; a campaign which aims to encourage men to be changemakers in our culture and society which enables and perpetuates violence against women. The video included various men, including Shaykh Hassan Rabbani who uses a faith perspective, talking about ending violence against women and highlighting some statistics from the Amina helpline. The video can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mShHQPlenUw>

Amina will continue to work with men by delivering a series of pre-marriage courses promoting positive gender roles within relationships. We have already explored sensitive issues which range from sexual harassment, rape within a relationship and marriage, pornography, indecent image abuse and for young people relationships outside of marriage. We hope by working with men and exploring these topics it can help men in changing and challenging attitudes that are harmful to women and girls.