

2022 Annual Report



Al-Hasaniya

Arabic speaking women's centre

INTERODUCTION

Established in November 1985, Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre is a community-based organisation in London, that provides support and services to Moroccan and Arabic-speaking women and their families. The organisation was founded in 1985 in response to the need for culturally sensitive support for Moroccan and Arabic speaking women in the UK, who often faced unique challenges and barriers.

Al-Hasaniya offers a range of services and programmes designed to meet the needs of its diverse community. These include free legal advice and advocacy, support for victims of domestic violence, language classes, and health and well-being programmes. The organisation also runs a drop-in service where women can access information, advice, and support in a safe and welcoming environment.

In addition to its direct services, Al-Hasaniya also works to raise awareness of issues affecting Moroccan and Arabic-speaking women, and to promote their rights and opportunities. The organisation advocates for policies and initiatives that support the empowerment and well-being of its community and works closely with other organisations and agencies to achieve its goals both on a national, and international level.

Al-Hasaniya has had a significant impact on the lives of Moroccan and Arabic speaking women in the UK, providing much needed support and services in a culturally sensitive and inclusive way. The organisation continues to play an important role in promoting the rights and opportunities of its community.

FORWARD

As the world emerged from its fenced habitat of almost two years in strict confinement, we began to really assess the damage the pandemic had caused and were and remain very concerned at the lasting effect and impact this confinement, has had on our client group.

The combinations of poverty, undesirable housing conditions, unsettled immigration status for some, and indeed ill health have all impacted exceedingly, leaving mental health concerns top of our agenda for 2022.



We remain hopeful that together we can make a difference in a positive and durable manner.

As we work towards celebrating 40 years of excellent service delivery to our client group we are delighted to share with our partners and friends what we have achieved this year of 2022

And so, the work began in earnest, at times finding it a struggle to support those with limited leave to remain, as our laws are not inclusive. They batter those who flee Domestic Violence as they have no recourse to public funds. The status quo pushed our team to work exceptionally harder than ever and ensure the voices of those we support, were heard and they were supported, because we believe it to be the right thing to do.

2022 has been a packed year of not only supporting on a one-to-one basis but indeed persevere on influencing national policy, and joining partners and stakeholders, to work even harder and ensure quality service provision is open to all.

Coupled with the current high cost of living the future is bleak for those we support. As the majority of those who live on the breadline, often come from violent homes and/or are elderly and living in exceptional isolation and poverty.

Souad Talsi MBE

Founder & Interim Chief Executive

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES



The Community Investment Programme (CIP) is the mechanism we devised to ensure that local community organisations, groups, charities and social enterprises can benefit from our buildings.

Our community projects and initiatives at Waltham Forest are not just about the buildings.

Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre

Grant Youth Brent Foundation



‘Dir Ikhayr, telkah’

‘Do good, and you will find good’.

(Arabic proverb)

'Dir Ikhayr, telkah'

'Do good, and you will find good'. (Arabic proverb)

As the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, lingers on we have been incredibly busy, working hard and ensuring the voices of the silent minority remains heard as much possible. The added dread of the high cost of living has not helped our client group either.

2022 started with the exhilarating news that our centre will be kept open for business, thanks to The Tudor Trust grant. It meant the worry for the next three years was no more and we embarked on our work, supporting the vulnerable and the destitute.

As soon as we returned to the Centre after the end of year break, we found that extensive damage had been caused to our centre's floors, walls, and heating systems because of the two flats above continuously flooding, and in addition to the poor guttering system outside the building.

Having contacted the Council to no avail, we decided to go public and posted photos of our building, along with the number of Kensington and Chelsea residents we are supporting and basically pleaded with senior decision makers to help us. It worked and Councillor Kim Taylor-Smith could not have been more supportive.

Quotes received and contractors agreed, the major work of our centre began in mid-July and ended the last week in August.

By the beginning of September, we were in our new centre fully refurbished and ready to start our group activities, which we had not been able to hold regularly due to the damage caused and the damp and smell it produced.

Our spirit was never dampened by this as we increased staff and volunteer membership, and we reached many more people in the year ending 2022, than any other year before.

As in every year, the year 2022 theme was to focus on domestic violence and mental health, and to work harder than just supporting clients on a one-to-one basis, but also to attend conferences and apply for our quality assurance mark to enhance our work and maintain our professional credibility as we did campaign in partnership for those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

2022, saw us secure new funding for the following posts:

- Two posts to support Domestic Violence victims with their housing through the London Whole Housing Specialist Project, a partnership with Advance Charity and other partners and funded by the GLA
- A part-time Psychotherapist. Covid increased mental health conditions immensely, and we were very grateful for the funding from The National Lottery Community Fund
- A full-time post for the over 65 elderly project, which is London wide and funded by Independent Age to support with poverty and the high cost of living.
- A part time post for a Health Advocate within the Mental Health project for advocacy and well-being funded by the BME Health Forum
- Unrestricted funding from the Lloyds Bank Foundation to support our work in securing funding for the post of a CEO.

We also saw our team of volunteers increase by 40% and we now have 7 active, and 12 registered volunteers, including an ESOL teacher who was once a service user. Having been supported by the centre, she went on to study and fully qualify as a ESOL teacher. She is now giving back to the community by teaching, and so the theme of social responsibility remains at the very core of everything we do.

2022, saw us participate on local, regional, national, and international levels, especially on the subject of Domestic Violence.

We organised our 37th anniversary at the House of Lords celebrating our success as well as taking advantage of the venue and the high level of attendees, by ensuring our voice as a minority was heard. We were also invited by the APPG on Domestic Violence to participate in an event and attended the various UN events pertaining to women and their rights via zoom.

We published a book titled 'Breaking the violent silence'. It discusses international agreements together with national laws and how protective or, in many cases, not, they are of those who suffer violence.

We produced a documentary telling the stories of those who survived the violence too.

We participated abroad and discussed resolution 1325 on women security and peace and its relevance to our work and our women. We called our paper, 'Working globally to serve locally'.

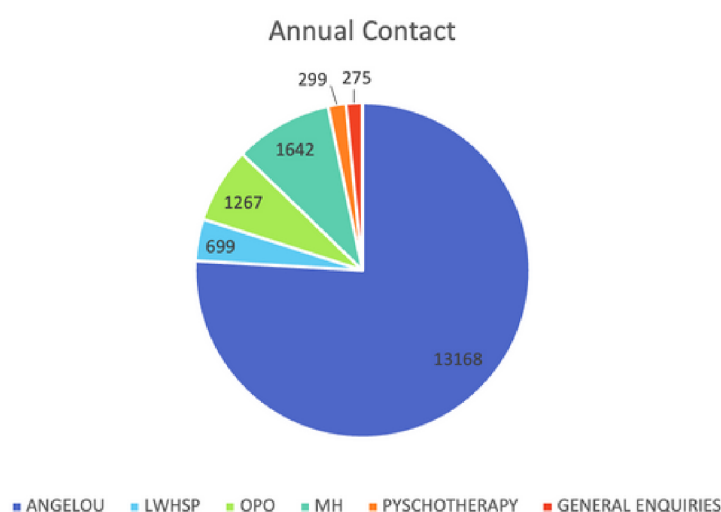
We launched our report which discusses the findings of the impact of covid on our client group during the lockdown and what it meant to have a service such as ours. This was attended by the Moroccan ambassador, Consul General of Morocco and the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea. We also planted a tree for peace in remembrance of those who perished in the Grenfell Tower fire.

Nadia Elbhiri
Centre Manager and Finance Director



OUR ANNUAL CONTACT OF THOSE WE SERVED REACHED A STAGGERING 17,350

These figures are divided into different projects as demonstrated by the following chart.

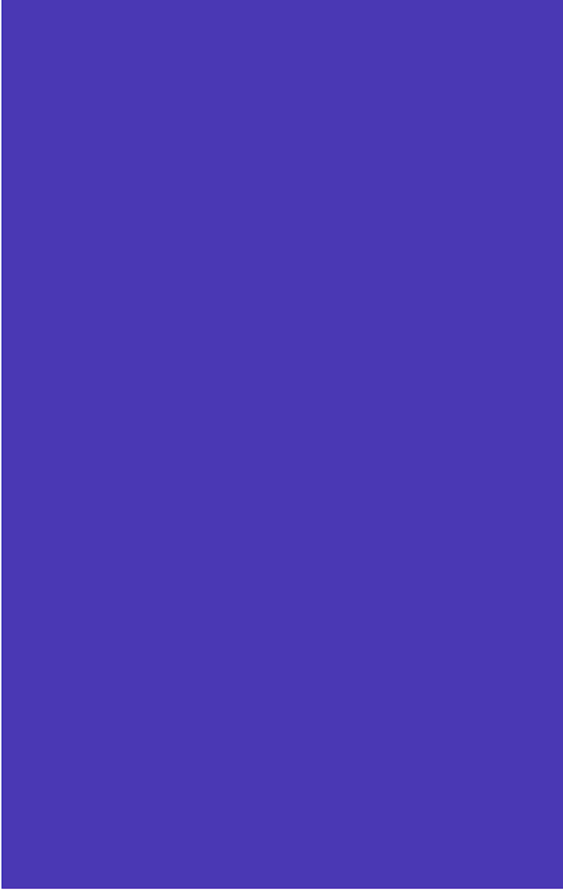


As stated right at the beginning, 2022 was a year we focused on Domestic Violence as a theme on all fronts. We believe we have made an impact in raising awareness on the issue of Domestic Violence and Mental health, and hope we continue to do so for a better community.

Ten years after it was signed, the UK ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the 'Istanbul Convention'), in July 2022. There was a condition to this ratification and that was a reservation on article 59 within the convention which effectively absolves our government from committing to support those on temporary leave to remain in the UK.

This is a critical international convention which recognises violence against women and girls as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women. The landmark 'Istanbul Convention' commits governments to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women – including prevention through eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions, and all other practices which are based on women's inequality and delivering equal protection and support for all victims.





However, the UK has been criticised for reserving the right not to be bound by Article 59, which compels states to protect migrant women whose residency status is dependent on that of an abusive spouse or partner, including by suspending deportation proceedings to allow victims to apply for residence permits.

The UK Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which received Royal Assent in April 2021, however, should provide an inclusive non-discriminatory protection to all women and therefore anyone who has suffered domestic abuse, should be treated as a victim first and foremost, regardless of immigration status.

Yet as a specialist service provider “by and for” minoritised women, we know that the law is in fact defective in this regard, because first and foremost a victim’s nationality and immigration status DOES determine the level of support she receives at the first instance, and until there is a real change, our women will continue to face insurmountable barriers to accessing their rights to protection and support.

Our role therefore is extremely pertinent not only in continuing to offer critical one-to-one support but also to continue our campaign against the exclusion of women with insecure immigration status from the Act - fighting for essential changes to the law, which will guarantee women with ‘no recourse to public funds’ access to support, welfare systems and legal tools on an equal basis, and ensure that women can safely report domestic abuse without fear of immigration enforcement.


COVID-19 has laid bare the lack of protection and support for women and children experiencing domestic abuse and demonstrated the urgent need to improve responses.

In a piece of research supported by the Churchill Fellowship and undertaken by our Trustee Saeida Rouass, which could not have come at a more critical time, an insight is offered into the status quo and how compounded by the brutal pandemic effect, those whose voice was already muffled have suffered during the extreme lock down. It demonstrates that the lockdown did further impact on their personal situation, exacerbating the abuse and violence they encountered.

The report evokes three crucial analytical points:

- The role specialist service providers such as our organisation play.
- Current flawed laws we have in protecting victims of violence on an equal basis.
- The serious impact of mental health; the pandemic and violence against our women has played.

We are deeply grateful to both, the Churchill Fellowship for supporting this piece of research and our Trustee Saeida Rouass, for delivering an excellent academic piece that not only evokes the reality that’s often hidden, but also extrapolates the urgent need for change in law, if ever we are to protect everyone against the abhorrent crime, that is domestic violence.





For full details of the report including its recommendation, please visit the Churchill Fellowship website on the following link:

<https://www.churchillfellowship.org/news-views/blogs/the-pandemics-impact-on-moroccan-and-arabic-speaking-women-and-services-in-west-london>

And so challenging violence, discrimination and ensuring those who come to see for whatever issue they may have, are supported could not be implemented without a physical centre. A base that is fit for purpose, safe and well maintained.

In 2023 our focus will be on how the high cost of living is impacting on our client group, especially the elderly. Those who are isolated and have no one to support them. Their mental health will surely be exacerbated by increasing costs and low incomes.

The funding received from the Independent Age will not only serve those beyond the confinement of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, on a one-to-one basis, but will also allow us to assess the extent the current cost of living impact and how it is damaging our older community. We will be publishing our findings at the end of the year 2023.

It goes without saying that today's' constraint on resources and the sheer competition for the same pot, means the voluntary sector is under duty to ensure complementary service delivery and that needs good and consistent collaboration with stakeholders, partners, and supporters.

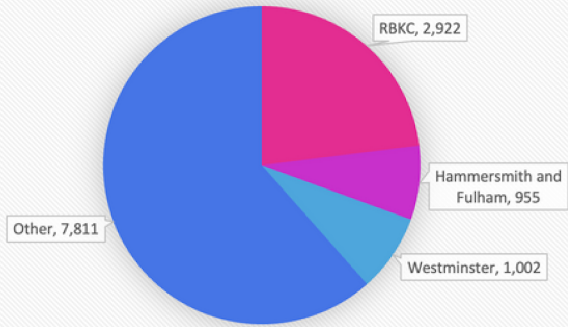
We are grateful to both our partners for the superb collaboration and support and our funders, without who we simply we would not be able to exist.

Nadia Elbhiri
Centre Manager and Finance Director

CLIENT SERVICE DELIVERY 2022

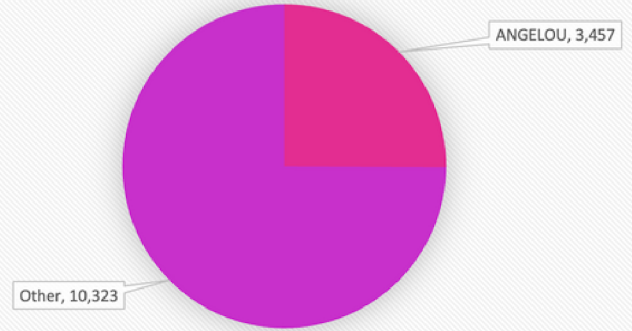
18,723 contacts made

Total Contacts Made



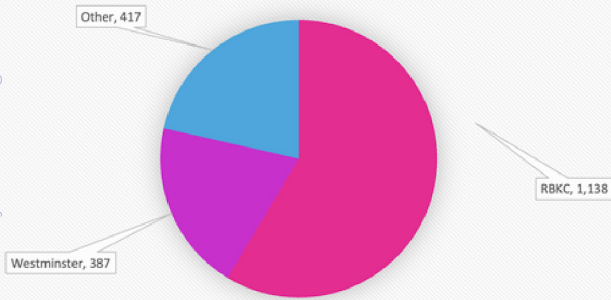
13,780 Domestic violence cases

Domestic Violence



1,942 Mental Health & Wellbeing Project clients registered

Mental Health



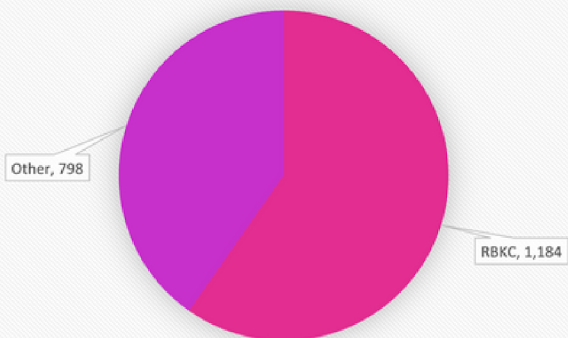
360 Psychotherapy clients registered

Psychotherapy



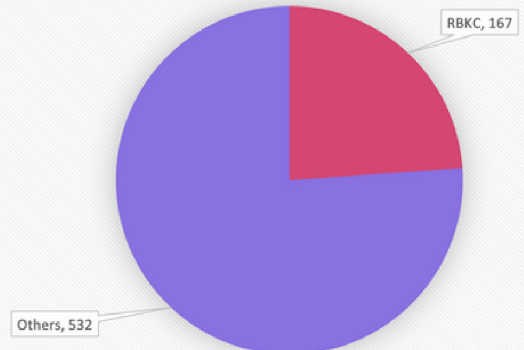
1,467 Older people registered

Older People Supported



699 total number of contacts - LWHSP Team

London Wide Housing Specialist Project



2022 EVENTS



23rd May 2022 at Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre

Together for Grenfell Eid Event/Grenfell memorial

As Eid coincided with the anniversary of the tragedy of Grenfell, we held this event to celebrate life where clients were invited to gather, listen to music, and celebrate the memory of those who lost their lives.



1st June 2022 Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

A party was held in the centre to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with the elderly clients. It was an event that brought together the two cultures and showed gratitude to the British Monarchy.



24th November 2022 at the House of Lords House of Lords Event

This event was as poignant as were the speeches delivered therein. It was in celebration of our 37th anniversary as well as CEDAW's 43rd anniversary, hosted by Baroness Garden of Frognal, and attended by the ambassador of Morocco, HE Hakim Hajoui as the guest of honour, his speech was strong, clear, and very supportive.



7th December 2022 - House of Commons Event

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence and Abuse, chaired by Apsana Begum MP organised in partnership with Women's Aid to discuss how the cost of living is costing women's lives. Our interim CEO Souad Talsi MBE joined, other panellists: Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE, Founder and CEO of Surviving Economic Abuse, and Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director of the Women's Budget Group, joined in the debate, highlighting the inefficiency of our laws including the Istanbul convention, that although ratified by UK government, its reservation on article 49 means unequal support and discriminatory treatment for those whose immigration status remain unsettled in the UK.



9th December 2022 at Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women Centre

Research Launch on Domestic Violence

Right at the start of the pandemic, in April 2020, the Executive Director of UN Women, described the situation as “a perfect storm for controlling, violent behaviour behind closed doors,”[1] while UN Women described the rise in violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic and national restrictions a ‘shadow pandemic.’[2]

Based on a qualitative study with Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre and supported through a grant from the Churchill Fellowship, our trustee Saeida Rouass and a fellow, undertook a study and produced a report on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures on Moroccan and Arabic-speaking women and services in West London. It will go on to capture the lessons learned and make recommendations for future policies.

The launch was attended by the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Cllr David Lindsay, the Moroccan ambassador HE Hakim Hajoui, Consul General Mr Abdessamad Tajerramt, Deputy Consul General Nezha Bensaid, Chair of the Kensington and Chelsea Liberal Democrats Jean -Francois Burford, partners, stakeholders, and service users who all joined in the discussion. It was followed by a trip over to our Moroccan garden in Meanwhile Gardens for the planting of a tree for peace in memory of those who perished at the Grenfell fire.

