



# Until all Women are Free

## 30 Years On: Immigration, Racism AND Struggle

Annual Report  
2017



"I am not free while any woman  
is unfree, even when her  
shackles are very different from  
my own." *Audre Lorde*

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## Foreword by the Management Committee

The Management Committee of London Black Women's Project is proud to present the Annual Report 2017, marking 30 years of organisation. This year we focus on immigration, racism and the struggle of black women. These issues have been critical to our formation as an organisation and the rights-based work we have developed and delivered over three decades. Today, 30 years on, they remain central themes in our work. Why? Because women continue to struggle against racism and for the rights of immigrants. Because 30 years on, we are still struggling as we see social policy consolidating in ways that undermine and weaken rights-based work and the approaches we have developed to support women. In this report, we highlight the work we have done to address the themes and map the journey forward. **UNTIL ALL WOMEN ARE FREE!**

### Our Achievements 2016-2017

We launched a new three-year project focusing on therapeutic and counselling for young women up to age 21. The aim of the project is to use writing – the narrative construct – in the process of healing and recovery from violence. This work emerged from women and girls' use of written word expressions in the process of self-healing. The project requires us to transform counselling and therapeutic space moving away from the western clinical model of intervention towards a more holistic engagement based on the whole experience of women and girls lending itself more easily to an intersectional approach in counselling and therapy. **THE CONCEPT OF HEALING AND RECOVERY IS BASED ON SELF-REALISATION THROUGH THE RECOVERY OF VOICE.**

We have continued work on the community-based law project offering advice surgeries around housing, welfare and domestic violence using a case management approach supporting

500 women per year with expert legal advice, court representation, case preparation and evidence gathering. We have developed expertise in supporting women with insecure immigration status creating a network of legal advice and information ensuring women are able to receive the support they need, when they need it. We aim to work in a way where no woman is turned away because of her immigration status.

We have continued to develop and grow the community advocacy project reaching the most isolated and vulnerable women in the community who have had little or no experience of services because of the barriers they face. Among the barriers, women face discrimination when approaching services for support. Women continue to say that they are judged, victim-blamed and treated unfairly. Under the programme, volunteers who have been service users, are trained on basic legal and human rights. They use the awareness to reach out to other women in the community in need of support, breaking down community and structural barriers and isolation. **THEY CREATE SAFE PATHWAYS TO SERVICES ENHANCING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LEGAL RIGHTS ADVICE AND INFORMATION.** The community advocacy programme has become a power co-production tool giving women who are trained as advocates and those who are reached by the programme a critical voice in developing support provision, agreeing needs and addressing the cycle of violence.

We have successfully delivered a project challenging women's access to privatised legal processes and their legitimising agents under legal pluralism by creating safe pathways to appropriate legal rights information and advice services under British law. We have directly supported women with correct information about their rights and have encouraged them to seek rights-based services in recognition that here is one law for all and women should have

equal access to it. This work is also supported by meeting women's intersectional need through the specialist and dedicated holistic service framework designed to support BME women and girls. this has been a critical success factor in reaching out to women and protecting their rights which are denied when access privatised legal processes.

The work in our refuges continues however, the whole of the accommodation-based service is undergoing transformation making it fit for purpose to meet demand and future need. **THE SERVICE IS BEING STRENGTHENED AROUND THE WOMEN-LED OUTCOMES-BASED APPROACH TO ADDRESS MULTIPLE AND INTERSECTING NEED.** Some of the changes include developing and improving casework documentation, strengthening early intervention, detection and prevention which is more crucial due to pressures on resettlement support and ensuring a culture change within refuge provision by developing staff to work successfully under the re-newed and strengthened approaches. There will be three key transformations: imbedding the empowerment-based woman-led outcomes approach developing it further as a co-production model underpinned by appropriate and adequate case management which meets needs, mitigating risk through the needs-based approach (addressing women's needs as critical to support and intervention) and ensuring multiple intersectional needs are addressed. Empowerment and co-production are central themes in the new approach and voice, recovery and move-on are critical to support.

We have amalgamated central support functions combining reception and administrative duties in cost effective ways to create a more dynamic post which functions as back office support but also delivers as a service user interface. The new post will provide staff with more development opportunities central to VAWG work and remove the isolation within which back office functions can exist. This improves alignment to

the vision of organisation for back office staff and especially, the policy around zero tolerance.

This year we completed research on the impact of legal pluralism and privatised legal processes on the lives of women accessing or interacting with them. The research found that some women had some degree of knowledge of the British legal system and their rights under British law, but they continued to access privatised legal processes because they felt the British court system was challenging, difficult to access and costly in terms of time and resources. It was evident that for these women, pathways needed to be created enabling them improved access to the British court system. While they prioritised short term gain and expediency to leave violent relationships and dissolve marriages, they understood that in the longer-term, they would require assistance to legally free themselves from marriage. Overall, only a small number of women who tended to be more educated, could use the courts for expediency nonetheless, carrying risk in the long-term. All these women who accessed privatised legal processes felt that they did not present the best 'option'. For those women with little or no knowledge of the British court system, they also tended to have little knowledge of their rights and felt that they had no access route to British courts. These women tended to remain in violent marriages. Both situations need to be addressed ensuring women have adequate legal advice and representation under one law, and have safe access to their legal rights.

We have been engaged in a project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and led by Colchester Women's Aid to document and archive our history as women's refuge providers. This year, we will be preparing an exhibit to showcase the history. This is a unique project looking at refuge development in the 1970s and 1980s. LBWP offers a unique perspective on the black women's refuge movement which was based around intersectional concerns of race, gender and class. **ANTI-RACISM FORMED A CRITICAL PART OF THE WORK IN**

**REFUGEE DEVELOPMENT.** In the 1970s and leading to the 1980s, there was significant resistance from new migrant and settled black communities which had migrated in the 1940s, led by Asian, African and African Caribbean groups against the racist policies of state exercised through immigration control and restrictions on employment. Finding that institutional practices and state policy created racist tension, black people relying on a history of struggle dating to colonialism, independence and anti-imperialism, began to mobilise for better housing, employment opportunity and the right to live free from racism. While the struggle continues, Newham Asian Women's Project, now **LONDON BLACK WOMEN'S PROJECT, EMERGED AS A BLACK FEMINIST, ANTI-RACISM ORGANISATION WORKING TOWARDS PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.** The project documents this very critical period in history.

We launched a three-year research project to test a measurement tool focusing on the effective response and intervention for services addressing the needs of BME women and girls. we aim to identify more effective measurements and outcomes of specialist and dedicated VAWG intervention especially testing non-clinical, more dynamic approaches to counselling and therapy.

We launched EmpowerHouse 2: The Dawn of Women. EmpowerHouse is a theatre project based on raising awareness addressing all forms of VAWG. The first EmpowerHouse was held at Stratford Theatre Royal on 9 November 2015. The production covered written word and one act plays placing women and girls at the centre of the production. We will continue to use creative agency to showcase the work and raises awareness. We aim to present the theatre production at the end of 2018.

We have developed a specific co-production model that we are integrating to every aspect of service development and delivery. LBWP

believes that co-production goes beyond the consultation and participation of women and girls in their support. Co-production is about a fundamental shift in power from the service provider to the service user. The primary aim therefore is to achieve a shift in the balance of power from provider to user where women and girls, exercising their agency (ability to take action through empowerment), identify their needs and agree their support. The secondary aim is to provide holistic person-centred support to women and girls experiencing domestic and sexual violence and other forms of gender violence through empowerment based approaches based on the shift in power to aid their recovery. The aims are achieved through co-production starting at the initial point of contact and integrated to every stage in the recovery process. The definition of co-production is to achieve a shift in the power dynamics between provider and service user.

We came together with other specialist and dedicated black women's organisations to form the OYA Consortium. The purpose of the consortium to is work together to provide BME women and their children with the best possible options for emergency and move-on accommodation. We will provide more information on this next year.

### The Year Ahead

In the year ahead, we will continue to deliver the work highlighted above. We aim to expand various aspects of the work including community outreach, partnership working through the consortium, development of strategic housing initiatives and publication. Regarding publication, we aim to document various aspects of our work using different platforms and integrate social media as a way to promote the work. All of this will all be developed and delivered under a co-production framework which we have articulated as a working model with substantial experience of delivery.

## Meera Syal

### Patron, London Black Women's Project



For 30 years, London Black Women's Project has delivered services to BME women and children in the community addressing the most complex need arising from violence. They have supported close to 1,000 women, girls and children each year. Without LBWP, many women would not have a place to go, would not have the vital support they need, when they need it. What makes LBWP unique is that they have an understanding that women have challenging lives and face many barriers to support. Women are often conflicted about how they wish to address violence that is affecting their lives and the lack of choice affects how they seek re-dress. When women seek help from agencies, they can be judged and questioned in ways that causes them further distress and harm. For 30 years, LBWP has known the importance of creating women-only safe space and they have gone further. It is not just about the safe space but also how the space is engaged. Women need to know they feel safe and women need to know that their voices are heard, protected, and represented, that they are not made invisible by institutional settings, that those who provide services to them, look like them, understand their histories and mobilise around their concerns. Women want services that are not tick-boxes, that once complete do not resonate in the reality of their lives. Women want services that reflect the narratives of their lives, that use their words expressing their experiences so that they are made visible. LBWP will not rest until all women are free!

## Brief History of Support to Women with Insecure Immigration Status

At financial year end March 2017, LBWP supported 47 women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), 64 cases of women with other insecure immigration status, and processed 29 cases under the destitute domestic violence concession (DDV). Women were provided with free legal advice and information on housing, resettlement and domestic violence. Women were also supported with awareness about the Human Rights Act and how it applied to them and their rights under British law. From casework analysis, it was found that women lacked basic awareness about their rights and protections under British law. For those who had some understanding of their rights, they believed that the exercise of their rights would be arduous, costly and time-consuming, having to navigate through a legal bureaucracy that they did not understand and where the outcome was not clear nor guaranteed.

**For women with any form of insecure immigration status, little value was placed on protection before the law believing that their situation as migrant women left them vulnerable and exposed.**

For women with insecure immigration status there were two significant impacts. First, they lived longer in situations of violence, insecurity and vulnerability. The reason indicated most often was the lack of access to their identity documents which were retained by the perpetrator(s) as a way to exercise control and coercion over them by

subordinating, depriving, exploiting and regulating them. As part of the cycle of abuse, women believed that they had no protection under British law. This view was not only perpetuated by the perpetrator(s) but also by media and society that delegitimised their claims to citizenship rights, viewing them as the perpetual outsider, the other and with criminal intent (assumed illegality in status). These messages were reinforced by the perpetrator(s) as women found themselves under threat where the immigration status was used to exercise intimidation against them. Second, was the fear of deportation and detention where women met with hostility and discrimination. Eventually, they 'dropped-off' the radar, became exposed to further violence, repeat victimisation and risked lethality.

LBWP had a long history of support to women with insecure immigration status. In the 1990s, LBWP called on the government to abolish the two-year-rule for women with no recourse to public funds. There was ongoing concern that women with insecure immigration status, who had been subjected to gender-based violence with no recourse to public funds, remained unprotected and had no access to social welfare assistance. In 2012, LBWP welcomed the Home Office concession allowing victims of domestic violence on spousal visas with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) to access benefits and social housing while they applied for settlement under the 'domestic violence rule'. While many women benefitted from the concession, LBWP provided services to women with insecure immigration status who did not benefit from the exclusive and discriminatory safety net. From 2012, over 80 women per year with insecure immigration status accessed LBWP's legal advice and information service, more than half of whom were ineligible for support under the new concession. **With limited options, women also had fewer choices to free themselves from violence. This meant that they were living in situations of violence for longer periods of time, risking health and life, and were often made more vulnerable by circumstances of poverty, exclusion and isolation.** There were further impacts. With cuts to legal aid under austerity occurring in the same time period, it was even more difficult for women to access appropriate immigration advice and related services which put progress of cases in jeopardy coupled with a system that was already over-burdened.

It was obvious that women who experienced any form of VAWG required services regardless their immigration status. LBWP supported the full recommendations to the Home Office of the NRPF Campaign to ensure all women had full access to benefits and services and that specialist support services were appropriately funded to deliver advice and assistance. LBWP also considered its

arguments in the broader context of gendering sustainability where safeguarding of women, regardless of immigration status, who experienced violence was at the heart of policy. This not only made good economic sense and led to savings in the long-term but also protected women from further harm and addressed the problem of violence in society generally.

For even one woman to access her rights, the struggle could appear insurmountable. Nonetheless, many women approached LBWP for support. As a grassroots community-based law project it must be understood how and why this occurs. LBWP provides safe women only space, putting women in need of services first and foremost in the approach to service delivery. This approach is based on the protection of rights through the safeguarding of women's voice – nothing without us, without us. Beyond this notion,

is an **understanding of the intersectional oppression experienced by women and the circumstances of vulnerability perpetuated by their immigration status, situation of poverty and race.**

## Thirty Years of Development of Organisation to Meet Needs of Women with Insecure Immigration Status

For 30 years, the rights-based approach to the work delivered by LBWP has paved the way to support and freedom for women. In this report, we look back on 30 years of immigration, racism and struggle, reflecting the experiences of migrant women and the work that was developed over decades to support their needs. In 2007, LBWP, then known as Newham Asian

Women's Project (NAWP), struggled for funding to re-launch the grassroots community-based law project. The service had been funded by London Borough of Newham (LBN) for close to 10 years. Funding ended when LBN declined to re-new the contract stating funding cuts for the need to decommission services. This left the service and the women who accessed support in limbo – the demand for the law project was high especially for women with insecure immigration status but funding options for services like ours were few and far between. This was a critical time in immigration policy when rights-based work was in high demand especially for migrant women. LBWP was based in Newham East London which had a historically high concentration of migrants. The need for services and rights-based work was well documented yet women's services struggled.

In 2009, while LBWP was facing funding cuts, Female Prisoners Welfare Project (FPWP) and Hibiscus (2009) conducted a study finding that there '2,454 foreign national receptions into the female prison estate' making up 19% of the population in custody and 26% of new untried receptions. Untried cases meant that right to justice was temporarily waived/suspended with women being held in the prison system. In 2009, the Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act was introduced. This act amended the rules so people from outside the European Economic Area had to have residential status for eight years before being eligible for naturalisation. Those seeking naturalisation through marriage had to be married for five years. For women married to British nationals experiencing domestic violence, the Act legally kept them in situations of domestic violence for a minimum of 5 years.

In 2009, LBWP began to see an increase in cases of women concerned about the new immigration law. During that year 527 cases were being supported by a skeleton staff of which, 9% or 50 cases presented with NRPF. **Women felt trapped in violent relationships with many expressing destitution and depression. LBWP began to document cases where women felt fearful of being deported, returning to home countries and facing further violence, specifically, honour-based violence either from their own families or the families into which they had married.** LBWP began an emergency counselling project for these women as many expressed suicidal thoughts.

It was a period of massive cuts in funding to legal aid and to community-based legal rights work with community-based outreach ceasing as a result of the loss of funding. **The most vulnerable women in society were targeted underpinned by an adverse and hostile policy environment.** It must also be said that within this context, we began to witness a shift in public sector response to specialist BME women's organisations who had been on the frontline in supporting women with insecure immigration status. LBWP and specialist and dedicated BME organisations were targeted by government cuts and scrutinised as BME women-only services. There were three levels of 'attack' on BME women: the legal policy framework that failed to protect rights of women most vulnerable opting for detention and deportation as a response to violence against them, a systemic institutional framework that used the economic climate to close services fuelling an adverse climate against BME women's specialist and dedicated services which undermined the need for intersectional anti-racism work. **Effectively, 'race', 'racism' oppression was being erased from critical VAWG intervention.** The third level was therefore social, a climate fuelled by media demanding immigration control.

In 2010, 2,799 women were taken to Yarl's Wood and one-third of the women held had already completed a prison sentence this meant that they were doubly incarcerated. Women expressed fear of physical and sexual abuse and 25% had experienced rape (FPWP and Hibiscus, 2009). Women also lacked legal representation, knowledge of the court system and proceedings against them, and were exposed to systemic repeat victimisation. By the end of 2010, LBWP, with funding from Reaching Communities of the Big Lottery Fund launched the new community-based law project to meet the needs of women with insecure immigration status.

RK was among the first woman supported by LBWP in 2010. She was homeless, had been living with a friend after she fled domestic violence. Her friend had used LBWP services for her own domestic violence case and signposted her to us. For 30 years, we have found that 'word of mouth', women talking to other women about our services, created a necessary and safe pathway to support. RK said that she had been abused by her husband and his family. She described the abuse as emotional control at first, leading to physical violence. She said she had to 'play the role of the good wife' however the rules and conditions of 'the good wife' kept changing. She soon realised that regardless her behaviour, she could never meet the expectations placed on her. The physical abuse then started and continued for several years. Her perpetrators were various members of her husband's family including her husband. The physical abuse left her with permanent pain in parts of her body. RK had been in the UK for close to 4 years however, she fell into the insecure immigration trap as she still had no right to abode and had NRPF. At the time she left her husband, her life was in danger. RK was informed of her right to

remain in the UK however she had little knowledge of the legal system. LBWP was able to secure refuge space and fund her stay. NRPF meant she was not entitled to assistance under the law even though, she was at risk of lethality. RK needed medical treatment for her injuries. As someone with NRPF, she could not register for a GP. When RK first arrived in the refuge, she experienced depression and confusion. She felt that as someone who had lived in this country for many years, that she had right to abode. RK was required to 'sign-on' at the Home Office as a condition of her appeal. She was constantly terrified that she would be in breach of her appeal if she did not 'sign-on' and this left her feeling anxious most of the time. She had already missed a date and risked detention as a result of it. She suffered from headaches and sleeplessness, conditions that started with abuse. She lived on £30 per week and she spent most of her allowance calling her family in Pakistan leaving her little money for food and other amenities. She felt she had no choice but to call her family as they were supportive and after her calls, it made her feel good about herself. In July 2010, RK attended her first court hearing to appeal

against the Home Office decision in refusing her application to allow her residency in the UK. The handling of her case by the Home Office did not help her emotional and physical health and actually caused her to deteriorate, leaving her feeling lethargic and emotionally distressed. RK's case was never resolved by the Home Office. She eventually contacted the International Organisation for Migration who assisted her to return to her home country. The main reason the Home Office failed to resolve the case was that they were unable to obtain sufficient information about the case from RK as RK could not provide all of the details regarding her status in the UK as she had no access to her passport. When she finally obtained a copy of her passport for the Home Office, information about her immigration status conflicted with what she had given them. For example, she did not know that she had NRPF and while she did not access public resources,

it was felt that she omitted vital detail about her status. There was also no record of domestic violence as she had obtained a Shari'a divorce. During the divorce proceedings, no records were made about the reason for divorce. This is not unusual as she did not manage the legal information herself during her marriage and we have many cases where women are denied access to information especially their own as a form of control. LBWP was able to make contact with women's organisations in her home country prior to repatriation so that she could continue to receive emotional and psychological support building up a safety network for her. By the time she left, she no longer wished to remain in the UK feeling that the system had failed to protect her because it lacked a basic understanding about how abuse occurred especially concepts of honour and shame, and intimidation, coercion and control.

Many cases continued to be presented at the law project over the years. Staff were able to improve their expertise especially around evidence gathering in such cases and ensuring they were asking the pertinent questions early on in the intervention. For example, such questions included confirmation of marriage status and any information regarding dissolution, documentation of evidence of domestic violence, and clarification on civil and legal proceedings as well as any intervention of privatised legal processes. Ultimately, the success factor in such cases is right to abode. RK met with systemic barriers which affected her ability to exercise her rights with her only lifeline being LBWP.

## Intersectionality Addressing Immigration and Race

We are living in the new age of racism (Kuddonani, 2007) except the old age never went away. This new age is described as one where three conditions converge in public policy – migration, terrorism and segregation (Kuddonani, 2007). The new age is rooted in 'old' racism, based on the fear of the other as usual, proliferation of difference and division and systemic exclusion. In the new age of racism, the word racism is not used when describing racist incidents and experiences. The new age falls in the 'post-racist' era when acts of racism are viewed through policies on migration control and counter-terrorism. This has the effect of legitimising systemic and structural acts on the basis of race. **There is a gendered perspective to the new age of racism – it is based on continued oppression, 'double' or multiple discrimination and a crisis of austerity limiting access to resources and services by those most vulnerable in the new age.**

Reflecting on the data above, a crisis point emerges with services supporting women with insecure immigration status and NRPF which creates insular reflection and

reduced services. While need and risk continue to rise, capacity is diminished. Detention and deportation then become perceived as 'viable' state policy options (by the state). In the new age, the systemic and structural nature of racism is legitimised in policy concerns and responses. However, the new age targets black women in particular through immigration status. For women experiencing domestic violence or any form of violence against

them, immigration status becomes a further vulnerability category, but it is different in that, where it is a category, it adds to women's fears, increases their isolation making them more vulnerable and exposing them to the risk of repeat victimisation and lethality.

**INSECURE IMMIGRATION IS A KEY FEAR BECAUSE IT PREVENTS WOMEN FROM ACCESSING**

**SUPPORT.** From a VAWG perspective, there is no opportunity for prevention and early intervention as inequality is exacerbated and rights are targeted. The targeting of rights by combining policy outcomes for example, gender with counter-terrorism which targets women with insecure immigration status and realigns counter-terrorism objectives of foreign policy with women's rights-based agenda. Immigration and counter-terrorism legitimises hate speech and racism to specifically target migrant populations with the most vulnerable, women with insecure immigration status and children on the frontline of attack. Counter-terrorism and race is the ongoing proliferation of existing social division and tension especially acute in post-Brexit Britain and the targeting of people and 'communities'. These dynamics raise questions of national sovereignty, nationalism, and Britishness using the lens of racism to distinguish the other and outsider.

In this context, there is a rise of integrationism and localism. The problem is who speaks for the so-called community assuming the community is a homogenous construct. The many conflicting interests are disregarded through the acceptance and legitimisation of a few spokesmen (often male). Anti-racism political culture emerges within this context (Kundhani 2007). The local structure defined as community with local decision making vested in local leaders remains non-democratic, aligned with non-progressive interests and patriarchal. Manea (2016) discusses this in terms of the British Muslim 'community' as a construct of the state where Islamic law within such a construct is interpreted as universal law with no notion of women's rights unless exercised as legitimising the interests of the family or dominant group. The argument critiqued by Manea (2016) is rooted in essentialism and culturalism relativism where different laws and their application are assumed for different groups and where there is an acceptance of multicultural citizenship and group rights. The UK Arbitration Act 1996 is an example of the acceptance and proliferation of legal pluralism and privatised legal processes in the context of cultural relativism and essentialism. The long-term implication is the dismantling of human rights and a weakening of gender as a perspective in public policy.

Considering essentialism and cultural relativism, with immigration and the new age of racism, we undertook some frontline research obtaining views from service users about a key change in policy – the benefits system. The survey was conducted over the month of May 2014 with 49 interviews completed. 88% of the respondents to the survey had experienced VAWG in the last 12 months and had accessed LBWP for support. The rest had been service users for longer than 12 months. In the context of VAWG, access to benefits affects choice, options and decision making thus impacting upon women's access to pathways to safety and freedom from violence. 100% of respondents accessed JSA and/or other benefits suggesting how factors such as economic poverty has disproportionately impacted on women. Respondents were asked

to rate various aspects of their experience of accessing JSA and the benefits regime. 56% said that staff they spoke with were not very friendly in their approach to them. One respondent said "*...sometimes benefits staff do not know how we feel...*" 57% found making an application 'difficult' with language being a key barrier. 57% found that staff were not very supportive or helpful in the application process. 59% said the staff were not sensitive to their situation which made them dread going to appointment with benefits agencies. 53% said getting an application completed was 'difficult' and they struggled to provide the correct information on the visit as they did not know what information would be required.

The results suggested that physical access to offices was not a barrier women, however once they began the process of accessing the system, it became difficult and inhibiting. The majority of respondents suggested that they wanted to improve their economic circumstances and that employment was a key goal. However, in the immediate term, there were more pressing issues such as

Women provided detailed feedback on how policy and practice could be improved. The length of time taken to receive benefits from the time the application was completed could be improved. They suggested that a more responsive system based on addressing need and reducing barriers to access would be critical to the approach. 'Customer care' was essential in difficult times. Women suggested that they were

childcare, secure and sustainable housing and 're-integration' whether it was through language or by addressing other exclusions they faced. Women felt that accessing benefits was not a long-term outcome but rather an essential lifeline in the immediate term. After the application was completed only 59% of respondents said that they had received JSA (at the time the survey was conducted). Length of time in processing claims was a key factor adversely impacting women's economic and social wellbeing. Women were asked about how they viewed their economic situation in the next 12 months bearing in mind that most were already negatively impacted by the rising cost of living and other economic determinants. 51% said that in the next 12 months they could witness their situation changing (increasing poverty) where they could access the benefits' system again.

often treated insensitively and did not receive support they required. Cuts in benefit was a major concern as it was not enough to sustain basic living costs, and this required review. There was a lack of consideration for specific situations like the care needs of a disabled child. **WOMEN FELT THAT THE SYSTEM WAS NON-RESPONSIVE TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS. WOMEN FELT THAT THEY WERE BEING FORCED INTO WORK WHEN THEIR PRESENT SITUATION COULD NOT FACILITATE A RETURN TO OR START-UP OF WORK.** They felt a more comprehensive approach was needed to consider all circumstances was needed. The survey found that there was a politics of indifference most notably viewed as gender desensitisation leading to a politics of fear where the fear was legitimised as rational and appropriate against groups of people. Race was a factor in the experiences of women prior to and after visiting benefits agencies.

The socio-economic situation of black women was covered in the Annual Report 2013. LBWP became concerned about the economic austerity on women's lives knowing that many of the cuts in spending disproportionately affected women services especially, specialist and dedicated black women's provision. LBWP conducted a second survey in 2013, as follow-up to findings from the experiences of women with benefits' agencies and also to determine women's views on the current economic climate. 61 women were interviewed. Women were asked if their income had increased over the last year and 80% said that they had experienced no increase in income over the time period. Women were asked if their expenses/cost of living had increased over the last year and 86% said that they experienced an increase in their living expenses. **Looking at the link between violence and poverty, 54% said that if they had better access to financial resources than it would be easier for them to leave the violent relationship and this also meant, accessing services to leave the violent relationship as women feared living in further poverty by themselves with their children or risk homelessness altogether.** Where women had children, they feared that a homelessness circumstance could mean that they would lose their children.

Economic poverty was a key factor in the lives of women when the survey was conducted limiting and affecting their choices. For women experiencing violence, poverty could affect their ability to seek

support outside the home. This meant that they lived in violent relationships longer and for some, they risked health and life. In terms of benefits, it is often expressed in the public realm that women from certain race and socio-economic backgrounds claim benefits. The survey sample showed the contrary as women aspired to independence through improved access to housing and employment. For the majority of women, they experienced no change in their income while expenses increased. This indicated the 'bread or milk' scenario (we highlighted in the 2013 report), as affecting women's lives, reducing their economic and social participation, reducing their political participation and inclusion and creating additional barriers leading to risks in their lives. Racism was an undercurrent of that experience.

## History of Race – Formation of Newham Asian Women's Project and the Experience of Intersectionality

For 30 years, race was a critical factor in mobilisation, consciousness raising and organisational identity at LBWP. In this section, reference is made to Newham Asian Women's project (NAWP) which became London Black Women's Project (LBWP) in March 2016. Race in a historical context intersects with gender violence, class struggle and forms what is often criticised today – identity politics. We go back in time to the 1970s, the decade before NAWP formed. Ramdin (1999) described them as 'sari-clad Asian women on picket lines' as the new lines of development in industrial disputes in Britain. Solidarity among women came together with the emergence of the black women's movement around class, race and gender. New black women's organisations emerged like Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) who were on the forefront of industrial protest (Ramdin, 1999). This was the working class struggle except this struggle was based in intersectionality – racism, gender and class.

By the beginning of the 1980s, Newham Asian Women's Collective (NAWC) was established to campaign for the rights and support needs of South Asian women in the London Borough of Newham. NAWC identified gaps in services for South Asian women due to racism and discrimination, and social, political and economic exclusion affecting access routes to vital services. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WAS A KEY CONCERN, BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT WOMEN WERE NOT ACCESSING SERVICES TO GET THE SUPPORT THEY NEEDED BECAUSE OF THE EXPERIENCES OF RACISM THEY FACED.** NAWC expanded into the neighbouring East London Boroughs of

Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, and Waltham Forest. Barking and Dagenham and Canning Town in Newham were hot beds of activity for the National Front (NF) and also served as bases for NF activity. East London was defined with high concentrations of South Asian and Afro Caribbean populations and other migrant communities, with NF at the doorstep and Thatcher in power. **The situation was volatile, violent and filled with racial tension.** NAWC was organised in this context leading to the formation of the East London Asian Women's Group (ELAWG) created specifically to address the needs of South Asian women in East London.

In 1987 NAWP was formed. As a BME women's organisation we grew out of historical circumstances. We were a part of the movements that defined our participation and space and in the early days, many of those movements were anti-racism movements. We identified as black feminists because of intersectionality. History was important because it helped to ground the work we did in historical space. We were not a-historical. It is meaningful in terms of identity - why we did what we did? What were the influencing factors and how did they influence us to organise? How we organised our space and our organisations and what we learned along the way? What lessons are still relevant today that help us to continue to develop and grow? Historical relevancy is an important criterion to our work. It helps us to

understand our development as a political, social and cultural process. It provides ideological significance to the work and a framework for operating. **The framework is intersectionality – lives of black women are affected by race, gender and class oppression among other oppressions, and there is no hierarchy of oppression.** We address all forms of violence holistically as integral to a black woman's experience.

In 1991, NAWP joined forces with sister organisations to challenge the No Recourse to Public Funds rule for women with insecure immigration status fleeing domestic violence. In 1992 NAWP joined black, immigrant, refugee and anti-racism groups calling for just and fair treatment for all citizens living in Europe. Panayi (2010) discusses movement and anti-racism work as opposing two sets of policies by

the state in an inherent dualism – racism with multiculturalism, ethnicity and identity with Britishness, and hostility and 'welcoming' of migrants for specific employment. Winder (2003) discusses the same in terms of identity politics and the construction of identities within cross border and diasporic experience. NAWP addressed identity politics as relevant framework for organisation.

Race was the most critical discourse in transitioning from NAWP to LBWP in March 2016 or in other words, from Asian to Black. Intersectionality suggests that there is no hierarchy of oppression and women can be subject to multiple inequalities at the same time and these include race gender and class among other oppressions such as oppression from sexual orientation and homophobia, disability and migrant status. The transition to LBWP is shaped geopolitically and historically, contextualised in colonial and post-colonial struggle, progressive struggles for change around the world and a form of feminism that women from 'developing' country context identify. Black feminism most closely aligns with socialist feminist as a social change project requiring change to the system of oppression and inequality, where the object is not to re-create patriarchy. **Patriarchy for black feminism is defined as white man's privilege, entitlements and exercise of authority acknowledging that not all men have equal access to power and wealth generation. Using 'race' a central discourse, LBWP closely meets the objectives of VAWG as a question of women's unequal status whether political, social, economic and/or cultural. The race framework links to more progressive feminist movement and politics which views a post capitalist world as essential (progressive feminism is a critique on capitalism).** The existing structure of power and economic systems and the racially based content of these systems which are oppressive forces are based on unequal relationships/inequality is imbedded in these relationships. The next chapter in the history of race struggle at NAWP is London Black Women's Project.

## Refuge Service – Providing Safe Reflective Space

For 30 years LBWP has provided emergency accommodation to women and children in need of safety and security from domestic violence. LBWP expanded its provision in Newham by doubling bedspace capacity and retained refuges in Haringey developing independent models of provision under VAWG specified objectives. LBWP developed a counselling and therapeutic support service for women and children in the refuges to meet critical need for recovery from trauma. The holistic approach based on keyworking, counselling and therapy, and resettlement support has provided women and children with intensive person-centred support. Through these developments LBWP has taken a progressive approach to addressing the needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence.



**PERFORMANCE** In the last 12 months the Refuge service at LBWP has achieved the following:

- 206 women and 41 children were accommodated in emergency accommodation.
- 64% of women moved on from refuges within 12 months.
- 9 women supported with DDV (Destitute Domestic Violence) concession who otherwise faced homelessness and/or continued exposure to violence.
- 85% of women improved in areas of coping and resilience including awareness of domestic violence and unhealthy relationships, self-esteem, self-confidence, feeling independent, feeling empowered and improved parenting skills.
- 80% of children were observed to be developing healthier relationships with mother as part of recovery from domestic violence.

### FUTURE PLANS

- Introduce an on-line case management system to improve the needs-based approach to the work.
- Develop a co-production policy suitable to the work in Refuges.
- Upgrade and develop the support work around needs and outcomes addressing multiple intersecting need.

## Community Law Project – Protecting Women’s Rights

In November 2015 LBWP launched the new Legal Advice Service for black minority ethnic women and girls in East London and Haringey. The new service builds from the work of previous years where the foundation for rights-based advice, information and community education around issues such as domestic violence, housing, immigration and welfare was laid. An important aspect of the service is the community advocacy project involving women in the community volunteering as local human rights advocates working at grassroots facilitating women’s access to services and raising awareness of domestic violence and the legal rights-based framework.

The community advocacy project is a part of an ongoing community education and awareness-raising initiative to ensure that women make informed choices when they interface with legal systems and that such choices are not affected by the lack of access to legal remedies found in British law. Over the first year of the new service we found lack of knowledge and understanding by some women of their basic awareness of rights under British law specifically related to marriage dissolution and divorce rights. In this vacuum some women accessed PLPs assuming that such courts represented their only recourse for legal remedy. The community advocates project strengthens women’s access to information at community level and promotes a rights-based framework providing women to further choices and options. This means that women who are suffering domestic violence or at risk are able to access appropriate rights-based support and prevent a solution based in mediation as is most common if they had accessed PLPs. They are also ensured the right to representation and advocacy which is also denied them when accessing PLPs.

Another critical arm of rights-based work is training to frontline professionals on women’s legal rights, human rights and British law to ensure improved responses to women across the board when they access services for support. The project focuses on training around harmful traditional practices and VAWG specific to BME women and girls .

**PERFORMANCE** In the last 12 months the Advice service at LBWP has achieved the following:

- 500 women supported through legal advice and information.
- 111 women supported with safety plans.
- 20% of the presenting issues for women involved immigration cases (NRPF and insecure immigration status) and they were supported through advocacy and access to specialist solicitors.
- 5% of the presenting issues for women involved housing issues and they were supported through housing advice and information.



- 2% of the presenting issues involved rape and another 4% involved sexual abuse and these women were supported through access to holistic services within LBWP combining rights-based work with therapeutic support and intervention.
- 7% of the presenting issues for women involved coercive control again requiring holistic support to address such issues.
- Two thirds of the case work was completed in 12 months or under suggesting a more efficient and effective service for women with complex need enabling them to move on from violence as early as possible as a result of the expertise delivered by the service.
- 16 cases involved concerns and issues raised by women of PLPs where the service interfaced to provide more appropriate support.

## FUTURE PLANS

- Accreditation of the training programme with 12 training modules delivered over the calendar year.
- Casework on PLPs to be used to inform policy and practice towards best outcomes for women and girls.
- Strengthened in-house expertise on housing advice and immigration specifically linked to VAWG interventions to improve policy and practice.
- Renewal of AQS accreditation.

## Young Women and Girls Service



The Young Women and Girls Service was previously called Project Life or 'Zindaagi' which is ground breaking, avant-garde and liberating. Project Life offers support services to women and girls from black minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds. Project Life provides early intervention and prevention services and therapeutic support.

The work focuses counselling and therapeutic intervention and work with young women and girls in youth-led space using empowerment approaches. The service is developed and delivered through co-ordinated programmes to support young women and girls, providing guidance to enable them to make informed choices, raising awareness around the impact of violence, building confidence and self-esteem, and by providing a range of opportunities through support networks.

Four projects make-up Project Life Young Women and Girls' Services at LBWP. The key defining aspect is specialist and dedicated support delivered in all aspects of provision including early intervention, prevention and intensive support. The projects are:

### Project: Free Choice

Provides early intervention and prevention services to women and girls affected by or at risk of forced marriage. The services provided include pathways to safe refuge space, advocacy and awareness raising support.

### Project: Aware

Provides young women and girls key work support and advocacy to address issues around grooming, CSE and sexual harassment. In providing support the project aims to address the normalisation, tolerance and acceptance of violence and abuse against women and girls taking an intensive and individualised approach as well as addressing violence and abuse as a need for social change through awareness raising directed at changing attitudes and behaviours.

### Project: Life

Provides intensive counselling and therapeutic support to women and girls affected by domestic and sexual violence.

### Vision of Me

This is a new project aimed at meeting needs and working intensively with women and girls to achieve outcomes around recovery. The project is co-produced by women and girls, replaces conventional needs assessment with artistic expression (written word, one act plays, poetry and art) to engage women and girls in the process of their own recovery, and uses the artistic work created through the exercise of women and girls' creative agency to identify needs and deliver support.

**PERFORMANCE** In the last 12 months Young Women and Girls Service at LBWP achieved the following:

- 213 young women and girls supported through counselling.
- 25% achieve intensive counselling covering issues around CSE.
- 8% required intervention for risk of forced marriage.
- 16% of cases had aspects of coercive control.
- 6% of cases presented with HBV.
- 9% of cases presented with sexual abuse and 26% with risk or experience of sexual exploitation.
- These cases represented complex intersecting need requiring increased capacity and expertise to address. The service was able to develop good case management systems to identify need and risk and respond through early action and prevention support.

**FUTURE PLANS** In the next 12 months the project will deliver the following:

- The Community Assets Register will be established under Vision of Me and available for access to all women and girls supported by LBWP.
- 500 women and girls will benefit from new approaches to needs assessment and support delivery through Vision of Me and the artistic expression will serve as the first set of work towards EmpowerHouse.
- EmpowerHouse will be fully developed as a project combining art and support.
- Consolidate therapeutic support around the approach to addressing the normalisation, acceptance and tolerance of violence.

# Counselling and Therapeutic Support Service



A dedicated and specialist BME women's project addressing all forms of gender violence including harmful practices through counselling and therapeutic support. Issues addressed through counselling include domestic and sexual violence, forced marriage, so-called honour-based violence, rape and FGM. The service is delivered around an empowerment-based approach to address the negative impact of violence effecting BME women taking account of cultural nuances and working from a gendered perspective. The service offers 1:1 intensive counselling support, support groups with women and play groups with children, and structured workshops raising awareness of domestic and sexual violence and mental health and well-being aiding recovery.

**PERFORMANCE** In the last 12 months the Counselling and Therapeutic Support Service at LBWP achieved the following:

- 100 adult women supported through counselling intervention including therapeutic support groups.
- 100% of women and their children entering the refuge provided with an introductory session of counselling and therapy with the in-house counsellors.
- 273 individual sessions of counselling delivered to women.
- 56 family therapeutic sessions held with women and their children.
- 82% of women attending counselling sessions indicated that they had suffered coercive control in the context of the domestic violence they suffered and 61% indicated mental health issue and self-harm as a need for counselling support.


## FUTURE PLANS

The key priority moving forward is fundraising for the continuation of services.

London Black Women's Project  
(Formerly Newham Asian Women's Project)  
Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

		Restricted	Unrestricted	2016 Total	2015 Total
	Note	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds</i>					
Voluntary income	2		35,134	35,134	53,655
Investment income			97	97	136
<i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>	3				
Safe accommodation and housing support			649,201	649,201	490,172
Legal advice		59,337		59,337	24,158
Children & Adult -Mental Health Services			40,000	40,000	80,000
Newham Counselling Services			21,952	21,952	22,000
Comic Relief		39,608		39,608	39,608
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation - Key Worker Post		30,000		30,000	30,000
City Bridge Trust		30,000		30,000	-
FCO - Forced Marriage Unit		19,436		19,436	-
<b>Total incoming resources</b>		178,381	746,385	924,766	739,729
<b>Resources expended</b>					
<i>Cost of generating funds</i>					
Fundraising and publicity			10,038	10,038	-
<i>Charitable activities</i>					
Safe accommodation and housing support			710,640	710,640	596,074
Legal advice		57,748		57,748	87,289
Children & Adult -Mental Health Services			51,596	51,596	72,783
Comic Relief		45,127		45,127	39,333
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation - Key Worker Post		35,181		35,181	30,877
Newham Counselling Services			23,943	23,943	21,665
FCO - Forced Marriage Unit		11,588		11,588	-
City Bridge Trust		22,331		22,331	-
<i>Governance costs</i>			16,276	16,276	20,141
<b>Total resources expended</b>	4	171,975	812,494	984,469	868,162
<b>Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers</b>	5	6,406	(66,109)	(59,703)	(128,433)
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	12	6,058	(6,058)	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		12,464	(72,167)	(59,703)	(128,433)
<b>Funds brought forward</b>		31,799	125,002	156,801	285,234
<b>Funds carried forward</b>		44,263	52,835	97,098	156,801

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in note 12 to the financial statements.



Anjum Mouj  
Chair of LBWP

## LBWP Staff and Management Team

### Management Committee

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Chair	Anjum Mouj
Vice Chair	Surriya Ahmad
Treasurer	Rena Pathak
Secretary	Saika Alam
Members	Palvinder Kudhail

### LBWP Staff

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Director	Baljit Banga
Deputy Director	Parmjeet Bhambra
Central Services	Shahina Begum (resigned November 2017) Yasmeen Iqbal (left November 2017) Pushpa Patel
Advice	Taranjit Chana Camille Rouse
Refuge	Frida Loney Mina Khanam Farah Mian Margret Olaniyan Laxmi Rai Fatima Seedat (resigned May 2017) Shabana Sharif Lioba Sibanda
Young Women and Girls	Kealy Davis (left July 2017) Josephine Jengo Husnara Kabir (resigned July 2017) Keely Olanipekum Jaheda Youssuf (resigned September 2017) Blah Samantha Zouankouan
Counselling and Therapeutic Support	Poppy Banerjee (resigned October 2017) Zephyr Devon Farzana Nizami Pavlina Skoutela

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London Black Women's Project thank all of its funders for supporting our work towards ending violence against women and girls:

City Bridge Trust

Comic Relief

East London Foundation Trust

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

London Borough of Newham

Reaching Communities Big Lottery Fund

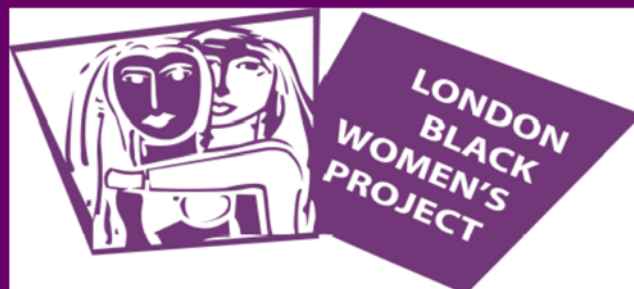
Women and Girls Initiative Big Lottery Fund



The photos used in this report are extracted from a book called 'From Violence to Safety and Freedom – A Photographic Journey of Women' published by Newham Asian Women's Project in 2012. The photos and the images they depict appearing in the book were selected by women survivors of domestic violence. For the women who participated in the project, the photos represent memory, history, independence, and strength. The photos are used in this annual report to remind us that such images are held within us. The photographer for the project was Vicky Coachman. The writer was Baljit Banga.

London Black Women's Project thank all of its friends, volunteers and supporters who have collaborated with us and offered their guidance and support over the year. Together we have worked towards the common goal of ending violence against women and girls, laying the foundation over many journeys travelled together across space and time to create a future of safety and freedom.

**UNTIL ALL WOMEN ARE FREE!**



*Working for Women, Working against Violence*

**661 Barking Road | Plaistow | London | E13 9EX**

**T: 0208 472 0528**

**W: [www.lbwp.org](http://www.lbwp.org)**

**E: [info@lbwp.org](mailto:info@lbwp.org)**

This report is written by the Director of LBWP Baljit Banga  
This report was designed by Josephine Jengo, LBWP Support Worker