



The Manchester
Maya Project

Supporting BAMER Women and Girls in Manchester



IMPACT REPORT 2019/2020

'A Good Future Ahead'

Enabling Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee
[BAMER] Women to Live the Lives They Want

The Maya Project Partners

The partner agencies core service areas are:



Ananna
supporting Bangladeshi women and girls and those from other communities



Bauer Academy
communication and digital skills training



CDM UK
practical training on manufacturing skills and support to predominantly BAMER women



Himmat
supporting Asian carers and their families



Saheli
(lead agency) – supporting south Asian women who have experienced Violence Against Women and Girls



Wai Yin
supporting BAMER people, including dedicated support to Chinese and Polish people.



Women's Voices
supporting BAMER women to challenge the barriers from reaching their full potential and to strengthen their voice.



Wonderfully Made Woman
supporting BAMER women and girls, predominately from the African community.

Partners' Statement

We are proud to introduce our Impact Report for the Maya Project.

The Maya Project is a partnership which provides a collaborative approach to supporting Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) women and girls in Manchester; dealing with crisis, accessing help and support, developing aspirations and achieving dreams.

We bring together seven grassroots organisations for BAMER groups, and one broader training organisation. As grassroots frontline organisations, we are led and staffed by BAMER women offering services for BAMER women. This facilitates trusted relationships in safe spaces, with informed and responsive service delivery. Each partner brings a wealth of knowledge and experience of working in Manchester across a range of issues. The Project has been funded for four years since June 2016 by the National Lottery Women's and Girl's Initiative.

The BAMER women who we support are facing a range of complex difficulties and adverse situations. They are often facing a long journey out of crisis and oppression to a more settled life. About 800 women per year have attended our services, many of whom are given in-depth support. We have by far exceeded our overall target of 2000 women over 4 years. Demand is high, and we are unable to meet it all. The women have told us how much they value that the support came from BAMER led

organisations who are based in the community where they live, have cultural understanding and are able to speak to them in their own language.

We are presenting our work with outcomes statistics and through anonymised case studies which illustrate how we address some of the key issues for the BAMER women we see: domestic violence, destitution, poor mental health and isolation. These issues overlap for so many women in need. We also show some of the ways in which we support women to improve their health, develop their confidence & resilience and employability and how there has been increased collaboration in services for BAMER women. In the three and a half years since we started the partnership, we have seen many women begin to flourish, whilst others are still taking small steps. We work only at the pace of each individual, and are very aware that to really transform their circumstances we need ongoing interventions, where women are able to access support as needed over a long period of time.



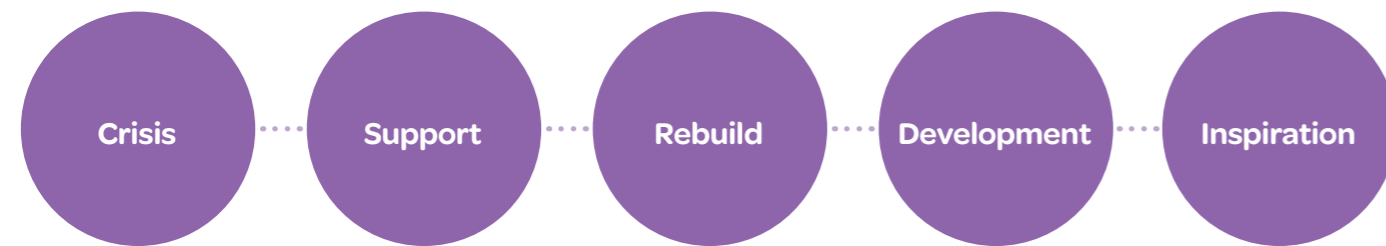
About the Maya Project

Vision

BAMER women and girls aged 11+ from Manchester will be inspired to raise their aspirations, so they can live the lives they want to and realise their dreams.

Maya Pathway

The Maya Project has a 5 step pathway:



A woman can access any of the elements of support at any point of the pathway and exit at the point she feels appropriate.

A woman might come to Maya because of a crisis issue such as domestic violence and receive immediate support such as

safe accommodation, then be supported to access longer term housing, develop social networks, build confidence and skills and may then complete her Maya journey. She may continue through a further range of support, learn new skills and get a job or set up a business. Other women come to the project

to access support and activities, without being in crisis. Each woman will shape her own journey with the project supported by staff and volunteers, referrals for specialist input where required (e.g. mental health) and a network of activities and services across the service delivery partners.

Services and Activities

These are provided from eight partner bases across Manchester - and include:

One-to-one practical and emotional support, advice and advocacy

Drop-in sessions

Home visits

Peer support groups for women including young women's group and over 50s group

Awareness and training sessions on domestic abuse, hate crime, speech and language therapy, parenting for children with autism, women's health, basic first aid, fire safety and mental health 'good food good mood'

Creative activities including sewing, crafts and creative writing sessions

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes

Activity sessions including yoga, swimming, walking, dance and gardening

Employability drop-in sessions

About 32 activities and classes are offered per week.

Outcomes

For BAMER women and girls in need:

Improved life circumstances

Increased confidence and resilience

Better health

Decreased social isolation

Increased employability and volunteering

For organisations:

Increased collaboration within the partnership and externally

Targets per year:

250 women in need of individual casework support

250 women through general access to services and activities



Because the support was from women who speak the same language as me, it is so much easier to understand as English isn't my first language. They are women so I feel safer and because they know my culture, it is better. Other organisations that are not BME are often culturally unaware.

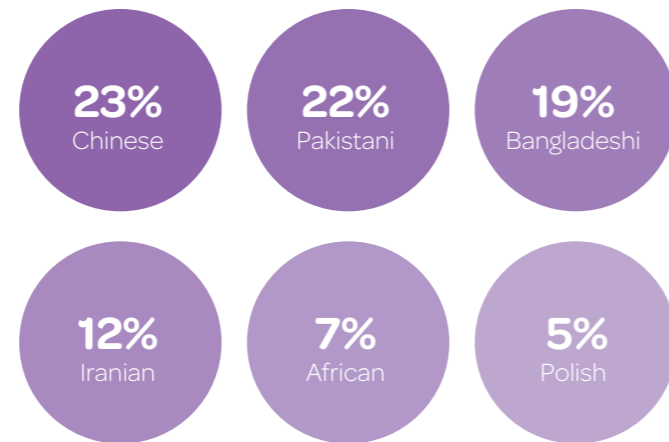
BAMER woman





Women attending the Maya Project

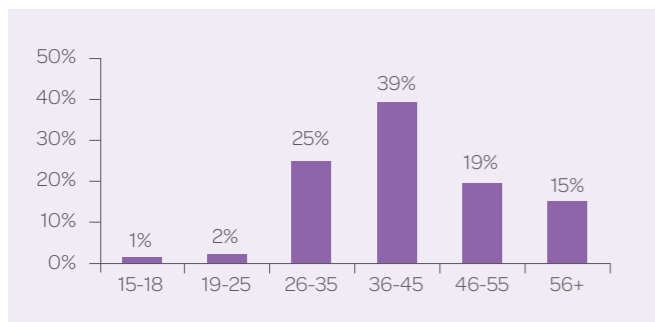
Every year around 800 women attend Maya Project activities. In order to make monitoring manageable for each organisation, partners have gained data from BAMER women attending project activities using an online survey and sampling process, where numbers sampled are proportionate to the size of the partner organisation. The statistical data presented in this report is for 124 women surveyed during November 2019 to January 2020. This sample comes from across the service delivery partners, and represents a range of ethnic backgrounds, ages and types of engagement with the project.



Ethnicity

Women self-describe their ethnicity. There is a wide range of BAMER women both British born and born elsewhere. The majority are Chinese (23%), Pakistani (22%), Bangladeshi (19%), Iranian (12%), African (7%) or Polish (5%). In the sample there are women whose ethnicity is Afghani, Arabian, Congolese, Ghanaian, Hungarian, Indian, Nigerian and Sri Lankan.

Age



Disability

10%

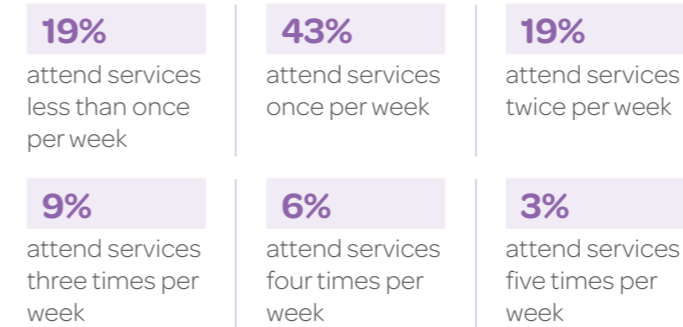
of women have a disability, many of which are physical disabilities including mobility problems, back and neck problems and arthritis.

6%

of women have mental health problems including depression and anxiety.

Note: these statistics are as completed on the survey form; our experience is that many more women have mental health issues of stress, anxiety and depression, as shown in our health and well-being impact reporting.

Maya Services attended



Individual case work with women might be for just a couple of sessions, but for some women it is considerably more – up to about 20 sessions.

How long been coming to Maya Project

Been to a partner organisation before Maya started	33%
Since Year 1: July 2016 to June 2017	13%
Since Year 2: July 2017 to June 2018	18%
Since Year 3: July 2018 to June 2019	20%
Since Year 4: July 2019 to present	10%

Outcomes statistics

In the survey, for a number of questions women are asked to rate their response using a scale of 0 to 5. Where statistics in this report say that the rating is 'to a significant extent' this represents a rating of 3 and above.



Impact on improving life circumstances of BAMER women

98% of women have been able to address more of the practical issues in their lives and **81%** have improved financial circumstances.

BAMER women face many challenges in their lives, some of which affect women from all ethnic groups and some of which are more pronounced for BAMER women living in the UK. Many of the women attending the Maya services - particularly those needing one to one client appointments or drop-in services - have multiple, complex and intersecting needs and vulnerabilities, including but not limited to:

Violence Against Women and Girls – either current or historical, including domestic abuse, forced marriage, or female genital mutilation (FGM)

Poverty/destitution (in need of basic provisions such as food, clothing and sanitary products)

Poor housing or homelessness

Insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds

Financial dependence with finances being controlled by their spouse or in-laws

Mental health issues

Exclusion and isolation due to language barriers and lack of knowledge of their rights and entitlements

Lack of education or employability skills

Family issues including caring responsibilities, child contact arrangements, larger families, or children removed and placed in local authority care

Physical health problems and disabilities

Racism, stigmatisation and hate crime

All of these issues can lead to BAMER women having a profound lack of confidence.

Outcome: Improved life circumstances

As a result of attending the Maya Project, BAMER women have been supported to make significant and life altering changes to their circumstances. This has been through individual case work and by attending classes and courses.

98%

have been able to address more of the practical issues in their lives; 91% to a significant extent

89%

feel more able to plan their lives and achieve their goals; 77% to a significant extent

81%

have improved financial circumstances; 67% to a significant extent

94%

have more knowledge about the help available to them from other services; 85% to a significant extent

Ms Wang went to Wai Yin for help because she wanted to separate from her husband but was worried that she and her children would not be able to cope without her husband's financial support. She also suffered from depression because of isolation. She moved to live in the UK from China without any friends and family close by. She speaks very little English, knew very little about her new surroundings and was very much depending on her husband. He did not allow her to make friends with others and was controlling how much money she could spend. He also forced her to have sex even when she was not willing. Ms Wang didn't know these are classed as abusive behaviours. For her, obeying her husband and being passive and submissive were considered to be her duties. She let all these happen even though she did not feel it was right.

When Wai Yin intervened, Ms Wang knew that the relationship was not healthy but she still worried about herself and her two children without the support from her husband so she choose not to deal with this abusive relationship. Then when her husband turned more controlling and used physical violence toward her, the police were called and her husband was taken away. Wai Yin supported Ms Wang to apply for benefits, housing, school submission for the children and register with a GP when they moved to a new house. They provided emotional support as well as practical help. They also encouraged Ms Wang to join an English course and other activities when her emotions had become more positive and she was ready to integrate more to the outside world. She made friends through these activities and she stated that she is "starting to see some light her new life".

Priti was referred to Saheli by another agency. Priti had suffered domestic abuse from her husband and was forced to leave home after having experienced physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse.

She had No Recourse to Public funds, and this meant she could not access benefits. When Priti came to the Saheli Maya project she was very scared, extremely distressed and her mental health was very poor. She had been homeless for a few days and had not eaten properly for many days. She had been accommodated in a hostel and was only allowed to stay there in the night. Every morning she was asked to leave and come back in the evenings. She had no money and had not changed her clothes for some days. Her partner was threatening to harm her and her family back home. She was very scared that he would find her and hurt her. She was suffering from depression.

Saheli staff met with Priti and provided her with the support she desperately needed. They referred her to a solicitor, who applied for her Domestic Abuse concession. The Saheli Maya team made sure she had food and new clothes and staff were available to

provide emotional support. A safeguarding referral was made based on the risk she was facing. The perpetrator managed to locate her in the hostel, and Saheli had to take immediate steps to ensure her safety. Staff fundraised for this case through cake sales and found her temporary accommodation as there was no space in the refuge. They also provided her with her food and money for public transport. Staff worked with other agencies and she was accommodated at a refuge within two weeks. She continued to obtain counselling at Saheli and culturally specific emotional support. Saheli funded her financially until she obtained her benefits.

Today she lives an independent life, and has her own accommodation as well as working and studying science at university. She has become an advocate for many women survivors of domestic abuse. She obtained her Indefinite Leave to Remain status (allowing her to continue to live in the UK) and was extremely grateful for the support she had received and thanked staff. She is now settled and independent and feels empowered to lead a happier healthier life. Priti said, 'I never knew angels existed, until I met the staff at Saheli Maya'.

Wai Yin: practice example of child protection issues

Due to their culture, background and upbringing, a lot of our women don't understand the UK system and norms relating to children. They often copy how they were treated by their parents in their own country when they were young when dealing with their children, i.e. with physical and verbal punishment. They believe that telling children off is a way to teach them to learn better, and do not believe in praising. This leads to many court cases against parents being taken by social services (which affect their children). Our key workers spend lot of time working with social workers, schools, solicitors and supporting parents during court hearings and providing parenting courses to them. This situation has been happening very often in the Chinese Community.



We work with women who have experienced the worst life can offer and yet are not afraid to pick themselves back up and make a change in their lives, to become more independent and gain control over their future.

Staff member

One of my sons is autistic and this project helped me to gain confidence to attend my children's parents meeting, speak to school, hospital, GP and access all the necessary help he needed. I get information and support when I come here. I understand the system better.

BAMER woman

I am able to manage my life better, cope with the trauma of domestic violence and am better with my mental health. I have been able to support my children and look after them better and I have so much more hope for a better life.

BAMER woman

They know how domestic abuse affects black women differently, I have been to other organisations before but they just tick boxes without listening well.

BAMER woman

Impact on improving BAMER women's health and well-being

100% of women feel less stressed, **84%** feel more confident and **two thirds** do more physical exercise

Poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion are key, consistent determinants for poor mental health and low well-being. Many BAMER women living in Manchester experience high levels of deprivation which contribute to a range of personal circumstances which indicate mental health vulnerability including to stress,

anxiety and depression. In addition, BAMER women are more predisposed to some long term illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes and strokes. There can be a lack of understanding on the part of the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies about the specific concerns of the women and how these are expressed, which can lead

to women in need being dismissed, for example by medical professionals. Barriers to improving physical health also exist. Many BAMER women are not used to attending exercise classes and may not go because of: a lack of sessions that are culturally appropriate; cost of classes; and embarrassment.



Outcome: Better health

As a result of attending the Maya Project, a large proportion of women have improved their physical and mental health through activities including yoga, swimming, dance and walking.

68%

do more physical exercise – either at the project or elsewhere; 53% to a significant extent

98%

have reduced their anxiety; 93% to a significant extent

100%

have reduced their levels of stress; 92% to a significant extent

Outcome: Increased confidence and resilience

As a result of attending the range of services offered by the Maya Project, many women have significantly increased their confidence and resilience which has had a huge impact on their lives. This is a very important underlying shift for women on their developmental journey which facilitates them to make many of the other changes that they wish to.

84%

have increased in confidence; 51% to a significant extent

83%

are more able to cope and manage challenges; 51% to a significant extent

90%

feel able to access other services/ opportunities; 81% to a significant extent

96%

feel more emotionally supported; 93% to a significant extent

91%

feel inspired to follow their dreams; 71% to a significant extent

Olivia I came to know about Wonderfully Made Women in 2017 through a friend. I was depressed when I came to the group, always blaming myself of what I was going through and there was nobody to understand me, but when I came to the group, the first day, I can remember they asked all the women there to write some bad things that is disturbing them and some good things that is working for them. I remember crying while writing that I cannot carry on in life because the stress was too much for me. They encouraged me not to give up. The staff and the volunteers are very friendly. I am a widow with two boys. In the process of helping myself I entered into an abusive relationship, I later had another son which made it three boys, and things became worse. My main problem was that I was totally ashamed of myself.

There is nothing the organisation did not to do support me and my boys, food, clothes, always calling, texting to make sure we are ok. The workshop helped me build my confidence. I was always looking forward to the dance group and confidence building, which is so wonderful. I have never seen an organisation that cares like this.

I have been attending, built my confidence to a point where I go and dance in other community groups, I started making friends with the other women, my life became better. Two years later, I now have my visa with their support. I have started college, started a new life and my confidence level is great. I have also passed my driving test and now driving, something I never dreamt of. Wonderfully Made Women told us to always dream big and never give up.

Sarita I used to be in a violent and abusive marriage which gave me very serious mental health problems. I was very traumatised and unable to cope. My children were also unhappy because of me and our situation. They weren't taking part properly in school classes and their school got social services involved. I told the social worker about the abuse and they helped me and the children escape from that house and marriage. I was sent to NHS psychotherapy because of my poor mental health and they also referred me to Ananna. Ananna have a really good mental health worker. She came to visit me at home and also went with me for my GP appointments. She was very persistent with the NHS as she was so concerned about my mental health. She pushed and pushed them until I was referred for professional psychiatric consultation and treatment, and received the right medication.

My worker also helped me to apply for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit which at first was denied. She fought again for me and helped me appeal – gathering evidence from mental health nurses, doctors, specialists and consultants. Eventually my PIP was not only approved but backdated. She has also helped me with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and housing benefits. So now I am financially secure and able to support my children.

During this time I have been attending classes and activities at Ananna like English class, parenting skills, gardening, yoga and domestic abuse awareness. My confidence has really returned and I have got my life back. Without Ananna's support my life would be unthinkable. They support my continued well-being which makes my children happy and settled too, and now I am able to help Ananna by volunteering there.



You can see how the women are oozing with confidence now. Now they want to volunteer and help out.

Staff member

I used to stay indoors, I had chronic depression, anxiety ... since I've been going out my life is improving. I feel relaxed and relieved. When I get home the house looks new to me, I feel refreshed rather than staring at the four walls, it gives you hope.

BAMER woman

In the past I used to be very, very scared, I couldn't speak to people properly but I can actually speak up now. I'm getting there.

BAMER woman

The most important change for me was to feel comfortable and be ok with my learning disability and to learn that it is not a problem. They helped me to realise that I can achieve anything I want in life and that my disability should never be a barrier for me.

BAMER woman

The focus is supporting women to realise their potential whatever the starting point, maybe from domestic violence or mental health issues. Sometimes their confidence has been knocked out of them, especially by domestic violence. They are rebuilding what they already have to offer which is a lovely approach. It's helping women realise their own aspirations.

**Partnership Manager,
Department for Work and Pensions**

Impact on increasing social connections of BAMER women

90% of women have made new friends and **77%** socialise with friends more when not at the Maya Project

For many BAMER women culture plays a significant role in their lives and confining to cultural values is a strict rule within the family setting. Many of the women have migrated to the UK and do not know who to connect to or about local services. Some women feel they are being 'controlled' by spouses, in-laws or

other family members who impose restrictions to personal freedom. Feeling isolated, lonely and being socially withdrawn is prevalent. Inability to speak or write English is often the greatest contributory factor to social isolation. This makes it extremely difficult for some women to engage with outside agencies on

their own or to attend activities where only English is spoken. Other issues that lead to isolation include: caring responsibilities; controls due to their immigration status; being divorced and disowned by family and extended family; the stigma of being divorced; and not knowing what support services are available.

Outcome: Decreased social isolation

As a result of attending the Maya Project, women have made new friendships and taken part in social activities.

90%

have made new friends; 77% to a significant extent

77%

socialise with friends more when not at the Maya Project; 52% to a significant extent

74%

have attended activities - Maya Project classes, groups or events

78%

feel more connected to other people; 54% to a significant extent

Outcome: Increasing community connections

Partners report how communities are being built as a result of the project. Communities are more involved with each other and women have successfully engaged in community activities. Partners have found that change is slow but once started, barriers have come down and peoples' confidence to engage increases. More change has been observed in the latter years of the project. For example:

Wai Yin and Ananna both separately found that parents who have children with autism were initially reluctant to discuss issues. Now each partner has support groups with many members. Wai Yin has a social media 'WeChat' group of 100 people.

Through partners' individual and joint activities - such as women from different communities have become more open to connecting with each

other. BAMER women from many communities - such as Pakistani, African, Indian, Bangladeshi, Iranian, and Chinese - have attended workshops and events and accessed each other's services.

Ananna has taken their young women's group to inter-cultural and hate crime events. They learnt about other cultures and it was mutually beneficial for community integration. They also took them to a synagogue

- they had no idea previously what it was. This was described as 'a life changing experience.'

The achievement of partners in supporting women's access to employment, starting a business and volunteering has been significant. This was described having a 'massive' impact on their families and the community - including financially and socially.



They are all meeting the needs of the community. For example I like that Women's Voices are diverse and embracing of one another. They have Kurdish and Iranian refugee and asylum seeking women who are teaching Pakistani and Bengali women their cultural decorating of cutlery, plates, glasses and candle holders. Some are Christian, some are Muslims.

Coordinator for Greater Manchester, Near Neighbours

Vinita has accessed support from Himmat. She is a full-time carer for her 36-year-old son who has a severe disability, and her husband who suffers from long-term illness. Vinita was depressed and isolated before seeking support through Himmat. Over the years, support through Himmat has helped to improve her mental health and reduce her isolation: "When you stay home

and just looking at your own family and you just feel more depressed ... most of the time I used to cry or really get in a temper or something, and then we come here, and we see other people and talk to them and you feel better". Vinita currently accesses Himmat twice a week and is involved in a range of activities including bike riding and walks in the park.

Jasmine I am from Pakistan. After I married my husband, we lived in Italy and then came to England six years ago as we wanted our children to be educated here. I was a housewife looking after my husband and family. My English was very basic and my husband would take me places I needed to go. Sadly my husband passed away two years ago. I was left on my own and was very distressed. My friend told me about Women's Voices so I came here.

At first I was very shy and scared to talk to anyone. By taking part in the classes and activities, I have really improved my English and my confidence. Now I come to Women's Voices 5 times a week and have been to so many classes - like sewing, driving theory, healthy & beauty, radio training, yoga, how to start an online business, and home hygiene. I have even presented three programmes on the ALLFM radio station. We

chose our own topics so did Pakistani culture, hate crime and women of the day - showing how women become doctors, teachers and other roles. I loved it and am going back again to do a 6 week course.

Before I came here, I had no idea how to use the buses - buying tickets and how to know where they go. Women's Voices have taught me that, and soon I am going to learn to drive. I want to keep improving my English - I can understand but have difficulty explaining. I do English classes here and later I want to study English at college. I also want to start a health and beauty business from home. I'm no longer scared of the women - I have met many very nice people and made friends that I also see outside. My children are settled and happy and we have a good future ahead. Women's Voices have helped me to know about my rights, develop skills and become strong.



When she first came, she didn't have self-confidence, never wanted to associate with others. Over the years she gained more confidence, joined the dance session and now she has her leave to remain in the UK. She is currently looking for work, she recently got accommodation.

Staff member

Now I am able to stay focused even when I am going through tough times - I don't allow issues of life to depress me. I used to get depressed all the time but since I came to this organisation many things have changed for me. I am happier and I don't stay isolated again.

BAMER woman

You can get a job, you can get a benefit but unless you feel included in your community it's really difficult. That's what Maya offer. Their social impact is massive.

Partnership Manager, Department for Work and Pensions

They are meeting the needs of social isolation, addressing loneliness and social needs. There's a lot of hate at the moment they give opportunities for people to come together and get support. It's really important for people who've come from abroad and don't speak the language.

Coordinator for Greater Manchester, Near Neighbours'

Impact on increasing employability and volunteering of BAMER women

Half of women have volunteered and/or become employed or self employed

BAMER women face a unique set of challenges that prevent them from accessing and thriving in the labour market fairly. Many BAMER women who have migrated to the UK do not have qualification and employability skills, or if they do their qualifications are not recognised so they are not able to access the job market and have to re-train. They may be subject to immigration controls which do not allow them to work. Where BAMER women are dependent on their

husband for income, they may not know of the opportunities available to them or understand the benefits of work and volunteering.

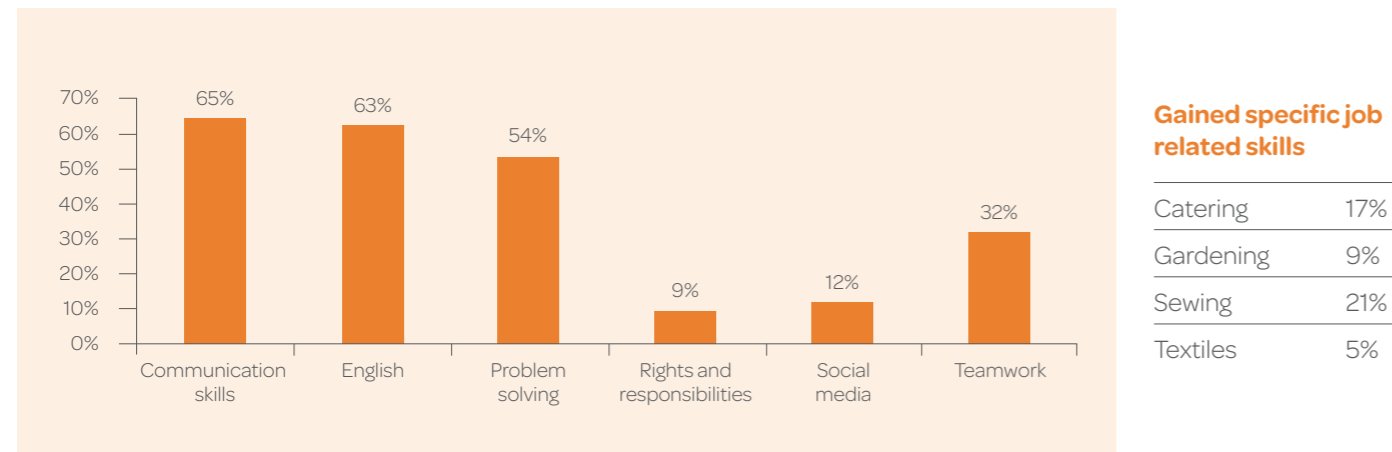
For many BAMER women wishing to develop their skills for either employment or volunteering there is a lack of accessible places of education and training that fit around school and caring responsibilities and courses that are realistic for women to do.

For those BAMER women who have qualifications, they still face barriers in

the UK job market. Childcare access, the type of work available and racism and sexism in the workplace affect their access to employment. They can face discrimination and bias at every stage of the recruitment process and once in post. Even when qualifications are taken into account, ethnic minority women are more likely to be unemployed than white women. [Intersecting Equalities, Women's Budget Group and Runnymede Trust, 2017]

Outcome: Increased employability and volunteering

Through the Maya Project, women have attended a range of training courses including ESOL classes, employability training such as CV writing & communication skills, and vocational courses including sewing, hair and beauty, cooking and gardening. As a result of attending the Maya Project, women have:



Gone into employment and/or volunteering

49%

of women have volunteered and/or become employed or self employed

39%

have volunteered

18%

have gained employment

6%

have started a business

Bauer Academy

Bauer Academy delivered five sessions with Wai Yin within their organisation and one exciting finale session in the exciting radio studios at Hits Radio in Deansgate, Castlefield.

Many Wai Yin service users who moved to the UK to gain employment have a language barrier. These sessions were focused on using digital as a vehicle to help Wai Yin participants learn English. We used radio microphones to record learners speaking podcasts in English, we then listened back and reflected.

The radio microphones opened new opportunities for learners to critically reflect on their English skills. This included pronunciation, structuring sentences, and

understanding context. The podcasts recorded were edited down and provided on USB's for learners to listen back to continue their learning.

The finale session at The Hits included a full tour of the studios and an opportunity to use the radio studios. This was a really new experience for learners.

The service users enjoyed these sessions because it opened opportunities for them to learn English in an engaging and practical way. These sessions also enabled learners to develop their digital skills through using and recording themselves speaking into the microphones completely independently.

Upma is a young Asian woman in her late 20s who attends CDM UK. In the beginning she would always stay in one corner of the room, never talking and engaging, and this went on for months. CDM UK staff were patient and tried to engage with her and start a conversation. After a few months, her mum came to visit CDM UK and said this is the first place in her daughter's life that people didn't shout at her and instead spoke to her with kindness, with an honest focus to help her better herself. Her mum added that all the schools, colleges and other establishments she had been to didn't understand her or how to interact with her.

Upma has now been with CDM UK for over two and half years. CDM UK believe her to be severely autistic although her mum hasn't had her diagnosed. After weeks and months went by, she began to learn textiles skills such as cutting, embellishing and sewing which has given her the independence to now become self-employed. She still comes and goes at CDM UK as she pleases and sits in the same position and still has some of the same characteristics, but through the support from CDM UK she has grown to become more independent and confident in herself.



We helped P and her children to be safe, and to access housing and benefits. She is now our volunteer. You can notice straight away that now she is a confident and positive, smiling person who can ask questions and seek advice, and is not afraid of challenges.

Staff member

Two of our women are leading a workshop on hate crime and are going to lead and deliver it together. And get the other women to talk about hate crime.

Staff member

I came here depressed, lost hope but they gave me hope, they told me to have the 'I can do' attitude. Now I am in paid employment working with NHS, something I never thought would happen soon. They changed my life for good.

BAMER woman

From jobless abused woman to an employed woman. That's a big difference in my life.

BAMER woman

The partners I know are very proactive at advocating for women. And they are a gateway for us to BAMER women, collaboratively working to look at the barriers they face on the journey into work, and helping get them the benefits, skills and social support they need to be economically and socially sound.

**Partnership Manager,
Department for Work and Pensions**

Impact on increasing collaboration in services for BAMER women

The Maya Project has increased the provision of specialist support across Manchester for BAMER women. This has happened through increased services at partners own venues and through the partners working together to enhance what is provided. Regular

collaboration meetings at both management and service delivery levels have been held. Collaborative initiatives have mainly been led by the Maya Project coordination team, but some initiatives have also been led by partners pairing

up or working in small groups. The strength of the partnership approach was acknowledged when the Maya Project won the Collaboration and Partnership Award at the 2018 Spirit of Manchester voluntary and community sector awards.

Outcome: Increased collaboration within the partnership and externally

Joint working events

- Range of collaborative events bringing BAMER women together from across the partnership have been held including: International Women's Day celebrations, Eid celebrations, Bazaar, Health Awareness Day. Partners have taken different organising roles for partnership events. For example, International Women's Day events were held at Women's Voices premises which led to them taking a lead role in managing and planning the event. A Bazaar to support BAMER women to sell new and second hand items was coordinated jointly by Himmat and Wai Yin.
- Joint events have been held between smaller linkages of partners. For example, a Hate Crime event between Women's Voices and Wonderfully Made Women.

Sharing of good practice and resources

Partners have supported each other to improve practice and to increase the resources available to women and girls. This includes:

- Partnership meetings providing a mechanism for staff to build links, seek advice and exchange skills. They also allowed partners to share promising practice, discuss thematic issues, share knowledge and experience of what works, and discuss challenges or concerns.
- Shared training opportunities. For example, Saheli co-delivered a session on female genital mutilation (FGM) with Wonderfully Made Woman which increased understanding and awareness of the issue among project staff. Training has also been made available across partners for immigration law, social media and disability awareness.

- Donation of second-hand computers from Wai Yin to Wonderfully Made Woman which are now used by the women accessing the service.
- Women's Voices volunteers have been to work in Saheli's Zesty Café and learn catering skills

Attendance at strategic meetings

- The Maya Project partners' senior staff attend strategic meetings across the city including those for Domestic Abuse, Modern Slavery, and Preventing Hateful Extremism. The Project Coordinator has also attended meetings and events on a number of core issues for BAMER women including homelessness, hate crime, vulnerable migrants, safeguarding and modern slavery. Individual partners are engaged in a range of strategic initiatives relevant to their own organisational work, and have an agreed set of key messages about the Maya Project to inform these meetings.
- Several of the Maya partners are involved in the BME Research Advisory Group which was formed as a result of Maya, and advises university researchers how to tap into BME groups
- The Project Coordinator attended a round table discussion on Extremism and Violence Against Women, held by the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University
- The lead partner Saheli reports being invited to an increasing number of strategic meetings as a result of the Maya Project work, including:
- Strategic consultation at Greater Manchester level about domestic abuse issues for BAMER women
- Membership of the panel for the NCVO and Lloyds Foundation research on how grass root organisations and bigger charities are working collectively and collaboratively. The learning from the Maya Project will be fed into this research.

• Maya Project led strategic activities

- In 2018-19 the partnership worked collaboratively with Sisters for Change – who seek justice for women - to carry out research to examine local authority approaches and responses to domestic abuse, and commissioning & funding of domestic abuse services across Greater Manchester. Four of the Maya partners were closely involved. The resulting report 'Unequal Regard, Unequal Protection 2' was presented at a conference in Manchester which was attended by the members of Mayor of Greater Manchester's team, senior officers from Manchester City Council, local Councillors, and stakeholders from both voluntary and statutory organisations.



We have used the report during advocacy for the domestic abuse bill and have referenced findings from the report whilst giving evidence to the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill. We have sent it to many organisations including Amnesty International. There was a lot of social media attention after the launch of the report and a front page article in the Guardian Online.

Legal Director, Sisters for Change

The report was interesting and useful. It highlighted the lack of services for BAMER women and the particular challenges those women face.

Commissioning Officer, Directorate of Homelessness, Manchester City Council



International Women's Day

Every year, the Maya Project has arranged an event in March to celebrate International Women's Day. It has been held in Longsight, close to three of the project's organisations and women have attended from across the city. Lunch is provided along with dancing and craft activities. It is a rare opportunity for women from the whole range of BME cultures as well as cross-generationally to socialise together. As time has passed the structure has become more informal as women attending have become more confident to strike up new conversations and relationships.

Feedback from women is universally extremely positive with many people loving the dancing.



I enjoy having a laugh with new people. Good event for women's empowerment. I enjoyed looking at other people's cultures. What I liked was that they asked the women what they want. It was for the women and led by them. Each of the eight organisations contributed. It was a celebration for them all.

Coordinator for Greater Manchester, Near Neighbours

Summary of Maya Project Impact

The Maya Project has increased the provision of specialist support across Manchester for BAMER women. This has happened through increased services at partners own venues and through the partners working together to enhance what is provided. Regular collaboration meetings at both management and service delivery levels have been held. Collaborative initiatives have mainly been led by

the Maya Project coordination team, but some initiatives have also been led by partners pairing up or working in small groups. The strength of the partnership approach was acknowledged when the Maya Project won the Collaboration and Partnership Award at the 2018 Spirit of Manchester voluntary and community sector awards.

Key Learning from the Maya Project

The partnership has identified key learning from its experience, which is fully documented in the Project's Evaluation Report 2020 (available from the Project). In summary, the key learning topics are:

The Maya Project Service Model

The service model provides evidence of what works in empowering BAMER women and girls. It offers a holistic range of services in a partnership of BAMER women led organisations in trusted community locations

Partnership working

The conditions which support effective partnership working include due diligence, development phase, an appropriate number of partners, understanding each partner's differing development needs, and recognising the lead partner needs

Strategic influencing

The collective voice of partner organisations enables them to more effectively influence strategy and policy.

Funding

There are small funding items which can make a difference to outcomes and to ease of working. Length and security of funding facilitates achieving better outcomes.



Future developments

The Maya Project was funded until December 2020. Recent national reports highlight the impact of austerity on the poorest people in society, and BAMER women are particularly affected. The need for the Maya Project services continues to be high. The partnership as a whole has not secured ongoing funding. Looking forward the Maya Project partners plan to:

Continue to provide and develop services for BAMER women.

Disseminate the learning from the Maya Project to the voluntary and statutory sectors and to funders.

Continue collaboration and networking beyond the life of the project in order to continue to jointly meet the needs of BAMER women.

Increase efforts to improve policies and practice in relation to BAMER women and girls and achieve systems change, through sharing good practice and influencing strategy and policy.

Seek funding to continue service delivery working individually and jointly in smaller partnerships.

Seek to evolve sustainable ways of working and diversity of funding.



'I'm very confident now – I talk to everybody at the project. My English has really improved. I've met a lot of people from different cultures and I feel everybody here is my family. I have lots of friends and I'm very happy. We go shopping together and sometimes to the park or go walking. Since coming here I have learnt new things and have gone back to other things I used to enjoy. I feel good.'

BAMER woman



Acknowledgements

The Maya Project partners would like to thank everyone who supports our work in achieving positive outcomes and impact for BAMER women, including staff, volunteers, board members and the statutory and voluntary sector organisations we work with. And our funders.

We are constantly impressed and humbled by the strength and resilience of the BAMER women we work with.

Report author: Sarah Forster, Independent Consultant.

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The Manchester
Maya Project

Supporting BAMER Women and Girls in Manchester