

Report April 2010

With the constraints of voluntary manpower at the Helpline, apologies no report has been produced for the last 24 months*. We have however strived to keep the service operative 5 days a week 4 hours daily, i.e. from 10-1pm.

The cases presented to us are an assurance that it is pivotal for the users nationwide. 95% of calls received at the Helpline are mental health related, be it depression, sexual abuse or relationship breakdown (see below).

Despite lot of government funded programmes, the Muslim community still hasn't managed to differentiate between what requires medical attention and what could be dealt with by effective therapies like listening skills, effective communication or anger management programmes to mention a few.

Clients relate that they are sometimes coerced by families and others to resort to Muslim scholars for spiritual *Duas*. Whilst spiritual *Duas* are vital to Muslims, we cannot ignore that it's got to be reinforced with some of the above mentioned skills and even medication. On the other extreme we have GP's who readily only prescribe anti depressants.

There are a lot of new therapies being offered by private individuals but as they may be complex, time consuming and charged for, the uptake by clients is low. All the service providers have a duty to raise the awareness level in the community of what services clients' can access. Muslim organisations. and private therapists need to fill the gap in services by tailoring it to fit the needs of our community rather than being engaged in complicated and complex programmes which do not meet the needs of the community and sometimes have others' agendas.

Most of the relationship breakdown problems presented to us from the younger generation are from well versed spiritual teachings individuals who do not know the practice of it or resort to extremes, eventually causing more problems than not. Simple Islamic teachings with practical examples and moderate thinking mentors especially for males can change the equation.

We have noticed a rise in calls from mature clients which is worrying as there are hardly any organisations dealing with this. The added problem in this case is the language barrier. At the Helpline many are helped but not all as the languages spoken by the volunteers is limited.

Total calls for 2009 were in the region of 900+. This is a major achievement considering the shorter hours of the service. If the Muslim community feels the need to extend the hours, they need to finance it as most of its operations are voluntary. Please contact us to make donations.

Apart from taking calls, time permitting, the volunteers do go out in the community raising awareness on certain issues. Recently I was in Peterborough at a mental health awareness day, Adeela delivered training at MIHE, Leicester for imams and chaplains and Sarah has been involved with the National Coalition for Independent Action, to name a few.

The friends' of the Helpline too are invaluable and the reason for this service to exist up to now. In that regard, it's appropriate to mention here that one of our dedicated supporters – Hajira Qureshi recently won an award from The Co-Op Bank for her fundraising activities. Finally, many thanks for your support which no doubt will be forthcoming in the years to come.

NAJMA EBRAHIM, APRIL 2010

EXAMPLE CASEWORK

1) From a leading homeless charity:

Dear helpline,

I work as a counsellor for a homeless charity XXXX in XXX and I would like to find a Muslim counsellor who can work with a Muslim man from NAfrica who is seriously depressed and has physical health problems too. Can you help at all or suggest anyone who might?

2) Please dont think bad off me, i'm living with soo much guilt and disgust in myself :(My name is XXXXX and I am a xxxyear old Muslim woman who needs some help and advice. I have committed the worse sin AND i have just found out that i am pregnant and im soo confused about what to do.....

3) Dear Sister I urgently need to speak with you regarding my XXX. She was raped in her childhood and now her life is a disaster. Basically not only she but my parents need help too.

4) Helpline was being called every single day by a male from the xx who is mentally-ill and who needs to talk and be listened to. He can tie up the phone explaining why he only wants Muslim input for his problems.

5) Extremely distraught woman whose family is being harassed on an estate they live on in the NE. Despite numerous complaints to council and police, haven't been re-housed - council say they want to keep people on the estate for fear it will become a 'sink' estate. Other residents also have trouble, but the youths involved particularly target her family for Islamophobic abuse and she was almost at point of breakdown.

6) Call from Islamic centre re: male with mental health/memory loss. How to care for / get services for someone who can't account for his whereabouts for the past few years. No one wants to take responsibility for him and the centre can't either. Many such 'lost' souls in need of support and help in the community or a referral to health / welfare services. After advice sourced on how to deal with the particular case, this organisation was urged to speak with other such organisations and centres to coordinate some sort of a response.