



ANNUAL REPORT
2015/2016

انجمن افغانان لندن

**AFGHAN ASSOCIATION OF
LONDON
(HARROW)**



Figure 1: Celebrating the ancient Nowruz- which means New Day in Farsi/Dari -marks the start of Spring

Acknowledgment

It is through the sheer dedication and commitment of staff and the growing numbers of volunteers, backed by members, supporters, partners and our generous funders that we have been able to continue with our activities and services. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has made a contribution towards our work. Many of our projects would not be possible without this generous support from grant giving bodies. In particular, we would like to thank our current funders, Tudor Trust, Trust for London, Awards for All, John Lyons Charity, and the Clothworkers' Foundation for their generous support.



LOTTERY FUNDED



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Message from the Chair for the year ended 31 March, 2016

On behalf of the trustees, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2016. It has been an eventful year for the Association. We were successful in securing funding for two new projects. The funding has enabled the Afghan Association to negotiate a new lease and to move to a larger office space in the same building. We were also able to secure funding for the purchase of desperately needed new PCs and office furniture. The new office has provided additional space for advice sessions in addition to a small meeting area. Our staff and volunteers has benefited tremendously from the purchase of new PCs, meeting space and other facilities. As a direct result of moving to a better office environment, the capacity of the Association has increased considerably, allowing us to recruit new volunteers who are currently assisting with different tasks and activities including; provision of advice and information, facilitating social and cultural events, and educational projects. The new office environment has also positively changed the image of the Association and has enhanced professionalism. In the last few years due to the economic crisis it is increasingly becoming difficult to secure core funding for the Association in order to create relative stability to sustain the current services and activities, whilst focusing on developing long term development strategies. Without our dedicated staff and volunteers, it would have been extremely difficult to continue with our services and activities. I would like to thank all our funders, partners, supporters, our dedicated volunteers and staff for their hard work. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that due to other commitments I have decided to step down from my role as Chair of the Afghan Association. It has been a privilege to Chair the Afghan Association through this challenging time. I will continue serving the Association as a member of the Board of Trustees. I would like to wish my successor, Karim Shirin, all the best. I am positive that the Afghan Association will be strengthened further under his leadership.

Dr Sara Ahmadi

Sara

Karim Shirin

Karim Shirin

Objectives, structure, governance and management

The main objectives of the charity are to:

1. To relieve poverty amongst the Afghan community in the London Boroughs of Harrow, Brent and Ealing particularly, by the provision of an advice and interpreting service.
2. To advance education amongst the Afghan community in the same areas, particularly by the provision of language classes and a library.
3. To provide facilities for the recreation and other leisure-time occupation of persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their poverty or social and economic circumstances with a view to improving their condition of life.
4. To relieve the aged, particularly those from the Afghan community; and
5. To protect and preserve public health by the provision of advice.

Trustees are jointly the governing body and have ultimate responsibility for running the Afghan Association, its premises and finances, and the employment of staff. Trustees are appointed in accordance with the governing document at the AGM. The trustees may appoint co-opted members in order to bring specific skills and expertise to the organisation.

The trustees will help plan the strategic direction of AAL and its work. They will be involved in developing and making policy decisions. The trustees bring with them knowledge, experience and relevant skills necessary for the effective management of the organisation.

Achievements and performance

AAL is now running a number of projects and services this section describes progress over the last year.

General Advice and Information

Due to decades of continuous conflict, political upheaval, instability and persecution, thousands of Afghan refugees have sought sanctuary in the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the number of Afghan refugees have increased considerably, from 2009 census figure of 56,000. In the last few years, London has been hosting an increasing number of new refugees from Afghanistan. NW London and in particular Harrow are home to the largest populations of Afghans in the UK. The renewed conflict after a period of relative stability and the current uncertainty about the future of Afghanistan will no doubt have contributed to a further increase in the number of Afghan refugees seeking protection. According to a senior UN official in Geneva and recent statistics, Afghans constitutes the second highest number of recent arrivals in Europe after Syrians. Due to the existence of a well-established Afghan community, the North-West London boroughs will no doubt attract new refugees to these areas. The integration process for Afghan community into the host society has been extremely slow. In most

cases it has been a parallel life from the mainstream community. There is a strong evidence to suggest that the Afghan community experience social exclusion, isolation, inequalities, financial hardship, poor housing, a high level of unemployment and mental health due to past experience of trauma. AAL was established in 1995 to assist the Afghan refugees in the process of their integration into the UK society. As a centre point for Afghan community and relevant external agencies, the Association provides a wide range of practical support, help, advice and services to the community. Since its' inception, AAL has assisted thousands of Afghan refugees to successfully integrate and to make a positive contribution to the British society.

The Afghan Association as centre point for the Afghan community and other relevant agencies, has raised awareness of the obstacles and barriers our community face in the process of accessing mainstream services and provisions. AAL is assisting the Afghan community to overcome barriers, disadvantages and obstacles in the process of their integration into the UK society.

AAL's staff and volunteers have dealt with an increasing numbers of queries, on a wide range of issue including welfare benefit, housing, health, employment and education.

We have provided 2050 face to face and telephone advice and information to our clients, the most vulnerable segment of the British society.

Due to our knowledge of the culture, languages, tribal affiliations, history and social-economic context of the Afghan community, we are in a unique position to understand the needs of the clients. The Association services and provisions are designed to empower our community to achieve their full potential as active members of British society, to contribute to the community, and to become fully able to exercise their rights and responsibilities. We would like to address the barriers our community face, whilst promoting British and universal values, instead of encouraging a parallel existence and separation from the mainstream community.

Volunteering

Volunteers are integral part of the AAL. The Association benefits from the contribution of a pool of dedicated and committed volunteers, who assisted the Afghan Association with general advice and information, mother tongue classes, extra-curricular activities, admin support, IT, organising sport, social and cultural activities; as well as fundraising. Our volunteers will help clients in the process of their integration into the society, through participation in a wide range of educational, sport, social and cultural activities. The volunteers will assist our community to access essential mainstream services and provisions. The Afghan community is disadvantaged and vulnerable due to a number of factors, including; language barriers, lack of knowledge of the systems and institutions, rights and entitlement, poor access to essential services, compounded by poor health and mental health issues as a result of trauma connected to their past experiences and the current situation in Afghanistan, unemployment, poor housing and financial hardship. The above factors can seriously impede their integration into the UK society. Volunteering will assist them to feel less isolated and to integrate within wider societal and cultural activities and to access mainstream services. The aim is to enhance their understanding and knowledge of the system, services, provisions, rights and entitlements.

Isolation, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and distress are understandably not uncommon in refugees. Our volunteers provide one-to-one support to people seeking help, and signpost the most vulnerable to further specialist help. Volunteering will offer opportunities for our community members to take a vital step towards paid jobs, learn new skills, share expertise

and experiences, build friendship, overcome isolation and develop a feeling of self-worth through their contribution to the community.

It is important to highlight that four of our volunteers have already secured employment as a result of their volunteering activities with the Afghan Association. The Afghan Association is currently working in partnership with Urban Futures London Limited in Partnership with DWP and JCP, providing volunteering and work-placement opportunities. We are currently hosting one of the volunteers referred to Association as part of our partnership agreement.

We very much appreciate all the help given by our volunteers through 2015-2016 which has made such a difference to the lives of our community members. **Thank you**

Photo: Zohal, two of our dedicated volunteers, providing advice to a client of the Association

Youth and Sport Activity



The Afghan youth are vulnerable and experience isolation and exclusion from different aspects of social life. They are affected by the lack of support, resources (sport and leisure facilities) and support networks. The families are seriously concerned about the influence of radical elements on disaffected youth which can lead to radicalisation. Many young people have difficulties settling into educational institutions and consequently fail to do well at their studies. They, therefore, have limited employment opportunities and as a result may adopt a pessimistic outlook to life. In addition, young people are dealing with a range of issues such as lack of

UK qualifications, lack of work experience, low self-esteem and confidence, little motivation or aspirations and a lack of positive role models. As a result, it's more likely that they will feel isolated which can lead to alcohol and substance misuse and other negative tendencies such as crime and gang culture. In order to address these issue, AAL facilitates different youth sport activities.

Football Team

Our Football team is going from strength to strength, encouraging young people to participate in sport activities, as a great way of keeping healthy and fit physically, while making new friends and having fun. Football is one of the most popular sports amongst the Afghan community. We have assisted 4 football managers to participate and successfully complete a coaching qualification.



7-A-Side Football Tournament

The Afghan Association of London has initiated and successfully facilitated a 7-a-side football tournaments. 10 London football teams have participated in the one-day tournament. The event was well attended, and the feedback from teams that participated was extremely positive. We would like to thank John Lyon Charity for their generous funding support which enabled the Afghan Association to organise such a successful event.

Sport activities will assist our young people to build up their health and self-esteem, learn the ideals of teamwork and tolerance, and be drawn away from the dangers of drugs and crime. In order to facilitate cross-cultural understanding, the Association was keen to have an inclusive approach, and draw people together, across boundaries to enjoy football. In addition, sport and football in particular, have provided an attractive distraction from negative influences of extremism and radical elements. Interacting with young people from mainstream and other communities have create a perfect platform for cross-cultural communication and acceptance of differences and the importance of universal values of respect and tolerance. Involving people from different backgrounds in shared activities will break down barriers and will promote community cohesion.

Taekwondo Project

John Lyon's Charity's funding has enabled the Afghan Association to establish a Taekwondo Club in Harrow aimed at Afghan teenagers and young adults. The Taekwondo club is one of the most successful projects in Harrow, providing excellent opportunities for 50 young people to keep fit and healthy, overcome isolation by making new friends and having fun. Considering the progress made in a very short space of time, the Taekwondo Club is a story of success, exceeding all expectations. As a quality assurance measure, the Taekwondo Club is affiliated to the British Taekwondo Association. We have been fortunate in attracting a pool of dedicated and hard-working volunteers including professional trainers and coaches, willing to assist our Club. The Taekwondo classes have improved the learning performance of children and young people, and have encouraged school attendance and a desire to succeed academically. As outlined as part of the beneficiaries' feedback, the Taekwondo classes have played a major part in helping young people to build their confidence and self-esteem, overcome behavioural issues, and acquire life skills, in particular those who have been disenchanted with or disengaged from school. It has highlighted the importance of education and the danger of involvement in criminal activities.

Calais Visit



Thanks to the generosity of our community and friends, we have collected desperately needed clothes and donations for unaccompanied children in Calais. The trip was a great success. The Afghan Association has highlighted in a letter to Harrow West MP, Gareth Thomas, the plight of Afghan children and in particular, unaccompanied asylum seekers in the refugee camp in Calais. Hundreds of the children in Calais have a full legal right to reunite with their families in the UK. Because of failures in administration they are left to languish in the Jungle, risking their lives each night with the traffickers or the train tracks. Gareth Thomas has

reiterated his support and promised to highlight the protection need and wellbeing of refugee children in Calais.

Elderly Project

We have successfully planned a day out trip/visit to Bosworth Battlefield for a group of Afghan elderly to find out more about British History. We have translated the Battlefield's literature in our community languages. The elderly project has helped clients with different issues, for instance we have successfully secured alternative insurance for a client, £400 cheaper, helped a client seek exemption for medical/dental bill of nearly £400, have successfully prevented homelessness by assisted a client securing alternative accommodation, to highlight a few examples.

Reference and administrative information

Statement of trustee's responsibility

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law. The trustees prepare financial statements, that gives a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity, the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure of the charity for the year.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) regulations and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Declaration by the Trustees

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Law

By order of the Trustees:

Signed:

Date:

Name:

Pictures of activities



Financial Statement

As an Attachment