

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2017/2018**

انجمن افغانان لندن

**AFGHAN
ASSOCIATION OF
LONDON
(HARROW)**

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, Harrow Young Foundation and the Clothworkers' Foundation for their generous support.



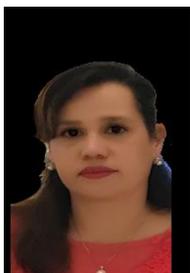
Figure 1 - Nawruz Celebrations and the launch of our new project; to promote equality and social inclusion of Afghan women into UK society



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Message from the Chair for the year ended 31 March, 2018



Welcome to our Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2018, which I am delighted to introduce. I am proud of the progress we made in 2017-18. We are incredibly pleased of the difference that our services, projects and activities made for our clients and the Afghan community. Our staff and volunteers provided practical support and advice to over 1500 clients. It has been an eventful year for the Charity. We were successful in securing funding for a fantastic new initiative, to promote equality and social inclusion of Afghan women into UK society. The funding has enabled the Afghan Association to start a new and exciting project. We have successfully organised the project's first event, participated by more nearly 300 participants. Our impressive pool of volunteers are making enormous contribution, taking an active part in different activities, services and projects. Securing additional funding will have a positive impact on our services. In the last few years due to different factors, including fierce competition for already shrinking resources, and the economic crisis it is increasingly becoming difficult to secure core funding for the charity to create relative stability in order 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. We are working hard to ensure we are financially sustainable. We continue with our search for resources to be able to continue the invaluable services to the community.

Finally, I want to thank the Board of Trustee colleagues for their support over the past year. The contribution they make to the charity is very much appreciated and valued enormously.

A year has passed since chairing my first Board of Trustee meeting of the Afghan Association and while I do not underestimate the challenges facing the charity, I remain as enthusiastic as ever and inspired by our staff, volunteers and supporters.

Dr Sara Ahmadi

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. 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.

Financial review

The board of trustees are pleased that AAL has finished the year in a relatively stable financial position. AAL has secured additional funding from John Lyons' Charity, and Awards for all for different projects and services, however, in the absence of core funding to cover the main operational costs of the charity, it will be a challenge to sustain the current level of activities and services. We will continue with our search for additional sources of funding.

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. In the last few years, London has been hosting an increasing number of new refugees from Afghanistan. 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.

We have provided 1500 face to face and telephone advice and information to our clients, the most vulnerable segment of the British society.

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.

Advice Provision – Advisor’s key roles



Specific Cases

- The Afghan Association has successfully challenged a local authority to prioritise and provide housing for a family with two children.
- The Afghan Association has assisted an Afghan family in financial crisis to restructure the monthly payment of their debt to a manageable size, before launching a successful application for debt insolvency.
- We have successfully assisted a family of four to achieve naturalisation as British Citizens.

Women Empowerment Project

We have successfully established a new project, called the Afghan women empowerment project. The project will provide a platform for Afghan women to raise their profile and to highlight their issues and to provide opportunities for women to actively participate in social, political, economic and cultural activities. The project will establish referral pathways with key women organisations tackling women issues for referral purposes. The project will establish a women forum for discussing key women issues in addition to social and emotional support. Our Sessional Workers and volunteers will help Afghan women to access their basic rights and to rebuild their lives and to successfully integrate. The Afghan women's rights have been severely restricted, and often lack the language skills and self-confidence to cope independently in an unfamiliar new environment. The Afghan women are the most isolated and vulnerable segment of the community. This is due to many factors including; the existence of a strong male dominated cultural, moral codes and social norms, economic dependency, in particular the existence of a strong negative attitude and prejudices towards women empowerment and independence. In addition, Afghan women are facing serious challenges in the process of their integration, to name a few; lack of qualifications & work experience, social networks support, low self-confidence, lack of understanding of the system. We frequently receive phone calls from women who are in need of our services but cannot visit the Association's premises. It is often these women who need help most of all and, although some assistance can be provided over the phone.

Women Group Event

Our Sessional Workers and volunteers have organised a fantastic event, combining **Nawruz** (New Year) celebrations with the launch of the women project. The event attracted nearly 300 participants. The feedback from the participants have been most encouraging. The women forum is currently working on a second major event to be held in September 2018. We would like to thank the participants, volunteers and in particular the musicians who contributed tremendously to the success of this major event.

Volunteering

2017/18 has been another positive year for the Afghan Association of London, with 60 volunteers supporting our work over the course of the year as part of different services, projects and activities.

During the year, we broadened our volunteer base and developed a number of new and exciting roles, both within advice provision and across the wider activities. We also focussed on involving more young people as volunteers.

Volunteers are becoming an 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, admin support, IT, youth & 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.

Outcome for Volunteers

Involving volunteers had profound positive impacts for the Afghan Association and the community. The reciprocal nature of volunteering has long been established and participation can have substantial positive benefits for volunteers themselves. It is important to highlight five of our volunteers have already secured employment as a result of their volunteering activities with the Afghan Association. The Afghan Association has been working in partnership with Urban Futures London Limited in Partnership with DWP and Job Centre Plus, providing volunteering and work-placement opportunities. . 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. We have created four new volunteering positions for two of the Job Centre Plus clients and two students from College of North West London, as part of our partnership agreement.

The Association has successfully facilitated a meeting between Casting Director, Sophie Holland and a group of potential actors for a new film called **The Kill Team**. Two of our volunteers have been selected and featured in the film. The shooting took place in Spain. The project has assisted another volunteer to secure a temporary marketing job with a furniture company in London.

A Volunteer's Synopsis on AAL's Role in the Afghan Community

Volunteer's perspective

This is my second six months stint as a volunteer worker at Afghan Association. I have observed that AA is a charity which provides invaluable advice, information and guidance to Afghan refugees in England whose first language is not English, so that they will become informed on how to integrate well into the community.

N.B. Without generous donations from funders and supporters, Afghan Association would not be able to continue providing such a valuable and necessary service to refugees whose first language is not English



Consultation Event

We have facilitated a very successful consultation meeting between the Afghan community and the representatives of **Spark the Difference**, a social enterprise working with Clinical Commissioning Groups. The main aim of the consultation was to identify community needs, to look at different ways of engaging individuals and families with healthcare services, how to improve access to healthcare services and how to find out useful information about the current healthcare provisions. The consultation findings were shared with the healthcare commissioners to take into consideration in the process of planning and reviewing services. The insights will inform community engagement and participation.

Language Support for Afghan Doctors.

The Association is facilitating the Afghan Doctors Association's Saturday training sessions. The training will assist the Afghan Doctor's to successfully pass the English language exams as required to ensure fitness to practice for all overseas doctors in UK. These training sessions will prepare the participants to possess the language skills necessary to function effectively in an English-speaking environment.

Family Reunion Project

Every year thousands of unaccompanied child refugees arrive in Europe, seeking safety and protection. They are unaware of their rights, take dangerous journeys. Either because they have a close family in their destination country who can look after them, or because of the Lord Dubs amendment to the Immigration Bill, which offers protection in the UK to some of the most vulnerable unaccompanied refugee children in Europe. Lord Alf Dubs is tireless campaigner leading efforts to help a new generation of unaccompanied child refugees in Europe on their arrival to the UK. Safe Passage is campaigning for unaccompanied refugee children to reach safety without risking their lives.

The Afghan Association of London has facilitated a meeting between the Safe Passage and the Afghan community. The meeting provided a perfect opportunity for Safe Passage to introduce the project and to establish a referral mechanism between our respective organisations. The Afghan Association has written letters of support to influential individuals including MPs, encouraging support for Safe Passage's campaign.

The Afghan Association has joined Citizens UK, Safe Passage, Refugee Council and other major charities' campaign led by **Lord Alf Dubs and Rabbi Janet Darley** to bring refugee children to UK. The Afghan Association of London is grateful to **Lord Dubs**,

Rabbi Darley and Citizens UK for their robust support in reuniting refugee children with their families in the UK. Afghan refugee children are one of the main beneficiaries of the campaign. Hundreds of the children in Europe 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.



Our Beneficiaries

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. Older people are at particular risk of social isolation and disengagement and this has negative impacts on their health and well-being. The project is providing volunteering and engaging people from the Afghan community who are suffering from various forms of socio-economic exclusion.

Isolation, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and distress are understandably not uncommon in refugees.

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 another 7-a-side, football tournaments. 8 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 and 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. 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.



Elderly Project

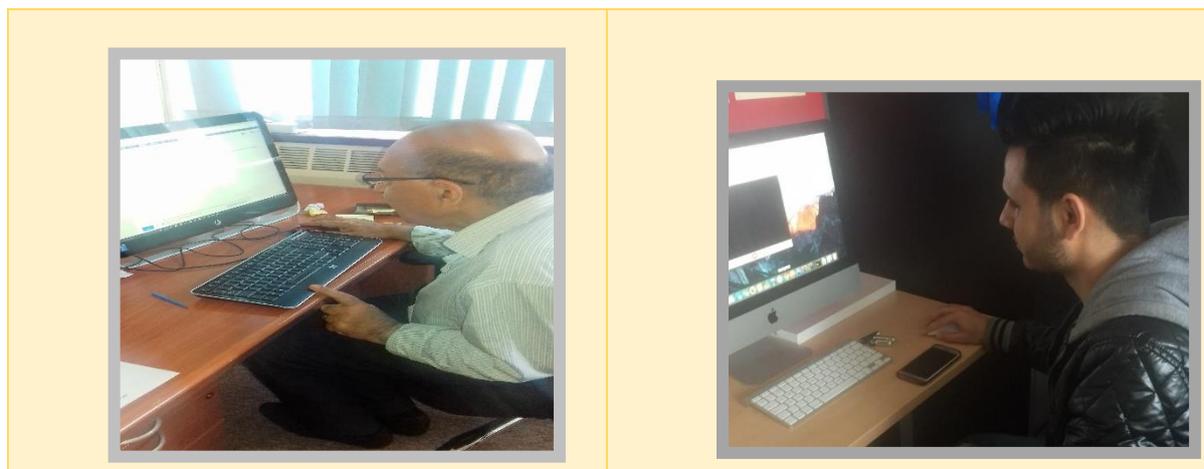


Figure 2: Mr Z. Aged 65 - Zabi Aged 20

Older people are at particular risk of social isolation and disengagement and this has negative impacts on their health and well-being. The project is providing volunteering and engaging people from the Afghan community who are suffering from various forms of socio-economic exclusion. *“I managed to create an email account for the first time in my life” Mr Z.*

As the popular saying goes “prevention is a more cost-effective option than cure”.

Our volunteers have successfully planned social and cultural events. The elderly project has helped clients with different issues.

Social Outcomes for the Afghan community:

While the volunteers bring a lot to different services, activities and projects, it is important to highlight that they have also benefited further from their volunteering experience – by helping to learn new skills, maintain and deepen skills, knowledge and social networks; increase their sense of belonging to their community; and above all, by giving them a sense that they are playing a useful part in helping vulnerable members of the Afghan community. The Afghan women and elderly are experiencing loneliness and lack of social networks. Engaging people that suffer from socio-economic exclusion and participating in volunteering and social activities are seen as a vital support system. Civil life can also be strengthened by the sense of community and belonging that people feel about their neighbourhood. The increased interaction and participation in sport activities has the potential to build a more cohesive society – one where people from different background can agree on a common purpose. As well as a sense of belonging, community cohesion is seen as ‘living in strong communities, where people get along with each

other, where no-one feels excluded and where everyone has a chance to play a full part in local life.

Different researches have indicated a clear links between social activities (volunteering) and well-being - taking part in public life (work and volunteering) and the belief that by taking part you are making a difference, can have a positive effect on well-being.

Over 40s Football

It is a known fact that promoting holistic physical, mental and social well-being cannot be achieved by the principal institutions of the existing health and social care systems. There is an increasing body of medical research on the positive effects that participation in sport, social, cultural and leisure activities can have in addressing objective medical conditions and outcomes.

Volunteering activities will make some contribution to the high levels of well-being enjoyed by the individuals. In addition to feelings of self-worth and of being a valued member of the community, the social aspects of getting out of the house and meeting other people are seen as key to improving social cohesion, levels of trust and feelings of belonging, all of which can contribute to both individual and community wellbeing. Our volunteers have recently initiated a mini football team for over 40s. The over 40s Football team is becoming very popular with new members joining every week. The feedback from participants has been very encouraging.

Cultural Events

The Afghan Association's social, sport and cultural activities will have a positive impact on community cohesion and building bridges with other local communities.



Local 'connectedness' is deemed important as there is an assumption that the more contact people have with other people, the more their levels of understanding, tolerance and trust will increase towards other people.

We very much appreciate all the help given by our volunteers through 2017-2018 which has made such a difference to the lives of our community members. **Thank you**

Pictures of activities



Chess Club

We have successfully established a Chess Club in Harrow. The Chess Club meets every Monday 18:00-22:00. The Chess Club is becoming one of the most popular activities in Harrow. We have also hosted a chess competition with huge participation.



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.

Financial Statement

The board of trustees are pleased that AAL has finished the year in a relatively stable financial position. AAL has secured additional funding from Awards for All, for an exciting new project; To promote the integration of Afghan women into UK society. However, in the absence of core funding to cover the main operational costs of the charity, it will be a challenge to sustain the current level of activities and services. We will continue with our search for additional sources of funding.

Declaration by the Trustees

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Law

By order of the Trustees:

Signed: *Sara Ahmadi*

Date: 20 June 2018

Name: **Sara Ahmadi**