

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2016/2017**

**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.



## Contents

	Page Number
• Message from the Chair	3
• Names of trustees	3
• Objectives, structure, governance and management	4
• Financial review	4
• Achievements and performance	4-11
• Reference and administrative information	11
• Statement of trustees' responsibility	12
• Declaration by the trustees	12
• Financial statement, Independent examiners report, SOFA, balance sheet & notes to the financial statements	15 As an Attachment

## Message from the Chair for the year ended 31 March, 2017

It has been a real privilege to Chair the Afghan Association of London's Board of Trustees. On behalf of the trustees, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2017. It has been an eventful year for the Association. We were successful in securing funding for a fantastic new initiative, youth and sport project. The funding has enabled the Afghan Association to create a new post of Youth and Community Worker to develop and deliver a wide range of sport, leisure and educational activities aimed at young people. As a direct result of receiving new funding from Tudor Trust, the capacity of the Afghan Association has increased considerably, allowing the charity to create new volunteering positions. Our volunteers are making enormous contribution, taking an active part in different activities including; provision of advice and information, facilitating social and cultural events, and educational projects. Securing additional funding will have a positive impact on our services. The image and professionalism of the charity will enhance as a result. In the last few years due to the economic crisis it is increasingly becoming difficult to secure core funding for the charity to create relative stability and 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 continue with our search for resources to be able to sustain our desperately needed services to the community and to initiate new projects in response to emerging needs. I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees over the next financial year.

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.

### **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, Tudor Trust, Trust for London, for different projects and services including; youth and sport, volunteering, and advice provision, respectively. 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. 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 is 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 UN official in Geneva and recent statistics, Afghan refugees 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 increasing numbers of queries, on a wide range of issue including welfare benefit, housing, health, employment and education.

We have provided 2000 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, 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.

### **Specific Cases**

- The Afghan Association has provided tremendous support to a client in the process of family reunion and in the early stage of their integration in the UK. It was a complicated case, involving tremendous amount of work. Our volunteers have assisted the family in the process of finding a suitable accommodation, GP registration, and school admission for children, in addition to claiming benefits, interpreting and dealing with numerous practical issues.
- 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.
- As a direct result of the Afghan Association's intervention, the family tax credit of

a client was reinstated and the misunderstanding with regard to a £4500 overpayment was resolved.

- We have successfully assisted a family of four to achieve naturalisation as British Citizens.
- We have successfully challenged a Local Authority's decision on entitlement of a blue badge to a disabled client.

## **Volunteering**

2016/17 has been another positive year with 60 volunteers supporting our work over the course of the year.

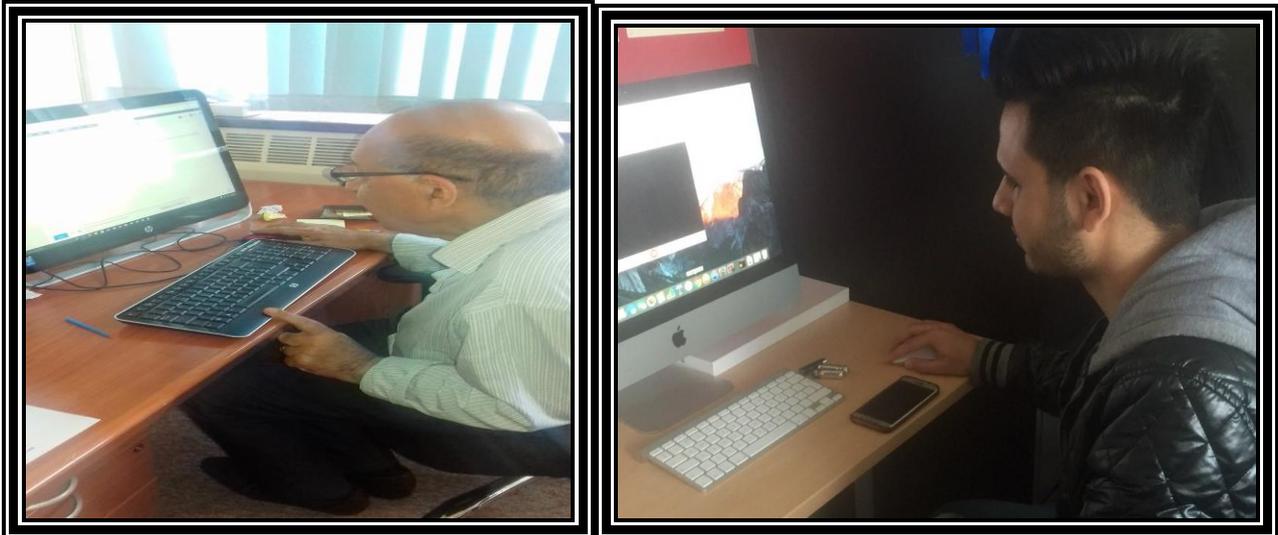
During the year, we broadened our volunteer base and developed a number of new and exciting roles, both within advice provision and across the wider activities. We also focussed on involving more young people as volunteers.

Volunteers are 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.

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 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 JCP, providing volunteering and work-placement opportunities. We have been hosting one of the volunteers referred to the Association as part of our partnership agreement.

We very much appreciate all the help given by our volunteers through 2016-2017 which has made such a difference to the lives of our community members. **Thank you**



**Figure 1: 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.*

### **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 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**

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, for instance we have successfully secured a car insurance for a client, £400 cheaper from the current provider. They have helped a client seek exemption for medical/dental bill of nearly £400. The volunteers have successfully prevented homelessness by assisting a client to secure alternative accommodation, just to highlight few examples of the positive outcomes for clients as a result of the Afghan Association's intervention.

**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. The volunteering project has seen a noticeable positive change in the lives of volunteers. 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**

An appreciative audience attended two separate poetry evening at the Afghan Association's offices in Harrow. Prominent Afghan Poets and Writers took part in these events. The audience and participants found these evenings educational, enlightening and entertaining. The participation was lively and enthusiastic in a warm uplifting atmosphere.

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.

### **Calais Visit**

Further to a successful visit to Calais last December, distributing desperately needed clothes and money to vulnerable refugees, the Afghan Association has joined Citizens UK's 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 were one of the main beneficiaries of the campaign. 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.



## 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: *Karim Shirin*

## Pictures of activities



Winners



Planning meeting at AAL Offices



Winners of the football tournament



Eager to start the tournament

