



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2018/2019**

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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. In particular, we would like to thank our current funders, Tudor Trust, Trust for London, Awards for All, John Lyons Charity and Harrow Young Foundation for their generous support.



Figure 1&2 – English and Math Support Class and the second successful event of the Women Empowerment Project



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## **Message from the Chair for the year ended 31 March, 2019**

Welcome to our 2018/2019 Annual Report, which I am delighted to introduce. Despite constant search for funding for our vitally important services and projects, I am proud of the progress we made in 2018-2019. We are incredibly pleased of the difference that our services, projects and activities have made for our beneficiaries and the Afghan community as a whole. Our staff and volunteers provided practical support and advice to over 1600 clients. It has been an eventful year for the Charity. We have organised the Women Empowerment Project's final activity, a very well attended event in Harrow. We have created a database of women event's participants and have successfully established a Women Forum to promote equality and social inclusion of Afghan women into UK society. We have successfully completed the Women Empowerment Project. Our impressive pool of volunteers is making enormous contribution, taking an active part in different activities, services and projects. We are searching for funding to continue with the women project. Securing additional funding will enable the Charity to continue with its services and to make a positive change in the lives of our beneficiaries. 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 and funding to be able to continue with the provision of our invaluable services to the community. I am really keen to diversify our sources of funding, in particular, I would like our community members to contribute financially.

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.

**Karim Shirin**

**Chair, Board of Trustees**

## **Objectives, structure, governance and management**

The main objectives of the charity are to:

1. To relieve poverty amongst the Afghan community in the NW London Boroughs, 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.

## **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**

The Afghan Association of London 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 1600 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 – Specific examples of cases

- The Afghan Association has successfully assisted a client to enhance their rates of Personal Independent Payment as a result of a Tribunal’s decision.
- The Afghan Association has successfully challenged a local authority to prioritise and provide housing for a family with two children.
- The Afghan Association has secured a donation of £1200 from a national charity to assist a family in financial crisis.
- We have successfully assisted a client to challenge the local authority to make improvements in their property. As a result of the Afghan Association’s intervention the Local Authority has prioritised the repair.
- We have successfully assisted a client to receive a huge sum of money from their bank after being subject to a sophisticated fraud. We have also successfully assisted a family to apply for debt relief order in partnership with a local CAB office. It was a huge debt.



Figure 2 Farishta - Women Group Leader

### Women Empowerment Project:

We are grateful to Awards for all for funding the Women Empowerment Project. We have successfully completed the Afghan Women Empowerment Project. The project provided a platform for Afghan women to raise their profile and to highlight their issues. The project has encouraged Afghan women to actively participate in social, political, economic and cultural activities. As part of the project a forum has been established specifically for Afghan women to provide them with a unique opportunity to network, share experiences, concerns, aspirations and to debate and discuss key issues. A database of the participants of women events have been created for sharing information purposes. The final event of the project was a great success. The event attracted huge number of participants. The main theme of the Women

Empowerment Conference was “promoting the success of Afghan women in UK society”. The key speakers of the event were Afghan professional women sharing their experiences within a range of employment and creative industries.

### Volunteering

Thanks to a generous funding from Tudor Trust, the Afghan Association has established a volunteering project. The Afghan Association has benefited tremendously from the volunteering project in a number of ways: increased activity of the charity; increased variety of services, creating new projects, for instance the women project and sport activities; reaching out to more users; advice and support

to our beneficiaries from volunteers; making users more aware of the Afghan Association's services and activities. Volunteering is now an integral part of the Afghan Association's service delivery. 2018/19 has been another positive year for the Afghan Association of London, with 30 volunteers supporting our work over the course of the year as part of different services, projects and activities. We have established partnership arrangement with external agencies. We share job opportunities in the voluntary sector with our volunteers and encourage them to apply. The volunteers have enjoyed the office environment and made a great contribution to the work of the charity.

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 volunteers in sport activities, in addition to social and cultural activities; as well as fundraising.

## **Outcome for Volunteers**

The reciprocal nature of volunteering has long been established and participation can have substantial positive benefits for volunteers themselves. It is important to highlight that 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.

## **What Volunteers have said about their experiences of volunteering**

**"It has been a marvellous opportunity to help my community and to feel less isolated myself"**

**Mrs F a volunteer**

**"It is a great environment, having access to a PC has helped me to improve my English" Mr D, a retired volunteer**

**"I really enjoy over 40s football, I never thought that at my age, I would be able to kick a ball again" Mr. S aged 57**

### **A volunteer's Role**

My role as a volunteer involves assisting in the general administrative running of the office. I have been asked to produce for AAL Excel spreadsheets; type letters on behalf of refugee clients to

various Government departments, Legal offices and NHS bodies etc.; I have also configured and implemented various report formats incorporating e.g. smart art etc., for AAL.

The tasks are varied and interesting for me. I believe that the work done at AAL is a proven valuable and worthwhile service for the community of Harrow and other boroughs in London.

Meeting some of the clients have given me a compassionate and better understanding of the plights and struggles they are facing whilst trying to integrate in the U.K.

## **Language Support for Afghan Doctors.**

The Afghan Association continues with 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 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.

## **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**

We are grateful to John Lyon's Charity for funding the Afghan Association's Youth and Sport activities.

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 issues, AAL facilitates different youth and 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 facilitating 7-a-side, football tournaments annually. The latest tournament was scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019. 12 teams London football teams with participate. These events are very popular and attracting new participants. The feedback from participating teams are 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 annually for the last three years.

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.

### **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. The Taekwondo Club is another story of success. 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 the 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.



### **Elderly Project**

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.

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

### **Chess Club and Chess Competition**

We have successfully established a Chess Club in Harrow. The Chess Club meets every Monday 18:30-22:00. The Chess Club is becoming one of the most popular activities in Harrow. We have also hosted a chess competition with huge participation.

### **Social Outcome for volunteers and the 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.

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. 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.

### **Over 40s Football**

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.

### **Celebrating Achievements' Events**

In order to celebrate the achievement of different sport teams and individuals, the Afghan Association has organised a very successful event in London. The event was a perfect opportunity for us to appreciate these achievements by issuing certificates to sport teams' leaders and to publicly acknowledge their accomplishment. It was a very well attended event, which was publicised widely in an Afghan TV based in London, and the YouTube.

We very much appreciate all the help given by our volunteers through 2018-2019 which has made such a difference to the lives of our community members. **Thank you**

Pictures of activities



Chess Club



## Volleyball

The volleyball is another success story. Volleyball is a healthy way to get some exercise. Regular exercise is crucial for the players health because it helps keep their heart in good working order, as well as helping to prevent illnesses and diseases. Playing volleyball on a regular basis is one way to increase the players physical activity level, which will help them get fit.



## 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 and Harrow Young Foundation, for women and youth projects 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.

### Declaration by the Trustees

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Law

By order of the Trustees:

Signed: *Karim Shirin*

Date: 22 May 2019

Name: Karim Shirin