



ANNUAL REPORT

2020/2021

Apna Ghar



**STAFF FIND
NEW WAYS
TO WORK**

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**SUPPORT
FROM
FUNDERS**

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Dr Shobha Srivastava MBE

MANAGEMENT BOARD Members

Shobha Srivastava MBE - Chair

Otilia Popescu - Deputy Chair

Amina Hyder - Treasurer

Surajah Hunter - Deputy Treasurer

Elaine Crompton - Secretary

Drupathy Senayake - Deputy Secretary

Kishwar Haque - Member

Saira Malik - Member

Asia Rahman - Member

The Apna Ghar Centre team

Susan Stevenson - Projects Coordinator

Nasrin Begum - Finance and Family Support

Shellina Begum - Finance/Community Support/
Domestic Abuse

Farida Ansari - Community Support/Domestic Abuse

Akhi Azad - Community Support

Rajwant Kaur - Domestic Abuse Officer

Naiema Ali - Admin Assistant

Caroline Moralee - Domestic Abuse Officer

Lynda Aboushammala - Domestic Assistant

The CHAIR Reports

"It has been a pleasure and a challenge to have been elected Chair of Apna Ghar Minority Ethnic Women's Centre again in 2020 – 2021.

Before March 2020 we didn't know what was in store for us in the coming year. Many of us had not heard of 'Zoom', 'Teams' and many such terms, but in a months' time if we didn't learn these it would be at our peril. At the start of the Lockdown Apna Ghar suddenly went quiet. We furloughed the few staff we had and forwarded phone calls coming to the centre to one of the senior Trustees.

Very soon realisation dawned on us that our services were required even more than before due to the need of our many clients who did not speak English, hence did not know what was going on. With schools and workplaces having been closed these ladies had to cook and clean for many more family members at home all of the time and therefore could not go out, meet with friends and family. Mental health and well-being and indeed physical health started to suffer and Domestic Violence and Abuse increased manifold. My trustees started to meet at regular intervals via Zoom and decided we needed our staff back and indeed to appoint more staff especially a lead worker for Domestic Violence and Abuse. Thanks to many funders who stepped up to help us so we could appoint a Coordinator, Domestic Violence and Abuse worker and two more staff including a lady from the Arab community so that we could reach out to ladies of this community also. We opened the centre and work started following Government guidelines.

One of our new projects was all about

Covid and the stories emerging due to Lockdown. This was called The Sitara Project, we asked ladies and children to write down their experiences during these unusual times.

This culminated in the publication of a book, 'Rising Stars'.

I must thank my Trustees who have been doing their duties while at home. The idea of Covid stories came from one of them, and helped the mental health of many ladies and children. We continue to meet monthly just as we did before March 2020, although these are not face to face.

Staff took the challenge to heart and have been working above and beyond their call of duty. A massive thanks to them. The Domestic Abuse team are doing a sterling job under the leadership of the Lead worker and many ladies have been helped and possibly lives saved. With the easing of Lockdown our English classes, Sewing classes, IT and other classes have resumed according to Government guidelines. I must thank the Coordinator who has kept the team together and ensures all activities are run without a hitch.

Last but certainly not least, a huge huge thank you to our funders The National Lottery, Police Crime Commissioner's fund, Community Foundations of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland and Durham, South Tyneside Council, Ballinger Trust, Garfield and Western Fund, Lloyds Foundation, and many others who appreciate the work we do. We could not have helped so many women without the funds.

Dr Shobha Srivastava MBE

We're on a MISSION

Apna Ghar is a centre run by and for Minority Ethnic Women.

By providing a wide range of opportunities it aims to develop confidence and empower women to recognise their full potential whilst allowing them to maintain their cultural identity.

Our strategic aims include:

- Enhancing awareness of the range of opportunities and services provided by Apna Ghar
- Extending the number of users who utilise the services provided by Apna Ghar
- Promoting and developing effective links with the community between a wide range of organisations,
- groups and individuals
- Offering a range of vocational and non-vocational training opportunities
- Respecting and valuing the diversity of cultures
- & our objectives are:
- To provide outreach and link workers support to the community
- To actively promote the services of Apna Ghar to the community of South Tyneside
- To provide a culturally supportive and safe meeting place
- To make the services more accessible to the senior citizen members of the community



Sharing our VISION

Apna Ghar was established more than 34 years ago with a vision as strong today as it was all those years ago.

As the only Minority Ethnic Women's Centre in South Tyneside ...

Apna Ghar's vision is to remain a leading supplier of services for **Minority Ethnic Women**. It has the aim to enhance the services provided by continually reviewing and understanding the needs of its members.

Apna Ghar has a commitment to **funderson, clients, members and the community** in which it serves. In the following pages, we look at some of the ways Apna Ghar has been transforming words into actions over the past year.

Apna Ghar wants you to know how they work and what a difference it makes to the women of the community in which it serves.

Farewell to Apna Ghar's patron



We are sorry to report the death of Apna Ghar's much loved Patron, Shahida Ali who passed away in August 2021.

Shahida came to South Shields in the 60s from Pakistan with her husband who was in the Royal Air Force and who had later fought in the Falklands War.

Shahida had qualified as a social worker and after a successful career in social work practice she retired as a senior lecturer at

Sunderland University. She liked gardening, drawing and painting and enjoyed meeting people and socialising. She had a gift for making people feel very special and a way of caring for young and old and bringing different communities together.

She remained active until her very last days.

Shahida leaves behind many mourning fans and friends, two sons and two grandchildren.

Shahida was a past chair of Apna Ghar Board and will be remembered for her contribution towards the rights of Minority ethnic women and highlighting issues of discrimination and domestic abuse within South Shields and the need for services for domestic abuse victims. She will also be remembered for her assistance proofreading and contributing to Apna Ghar's book, Rising Stars.



Ten service users attended a three week Writing Workshop, funded by the National Lottery.

English Teacher Leyla Al-Seyadi hosted the sessions via Zoom.

The object of the workshop was to learn how to structure a piece of writing, learn essential writing techniques as well as advanced writing techniques such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, similes, and metaphors. Learners used the techniques to write an extended piece of writing about their experience of 'Life in a Pandemic'.

Leyla said: "Every learner's confidence increased by being able to speak and add intelligent comments in the chat in front of others. Learners were challenged to learn and apply literary techniques, a skill covered by many of their children studying GCSE English."

With breakout rooms and writing exercises, all those attending appreciated the time to concentrate on something to distract them from the second lockdown.

Here are some comments from the students...

"I wanted to improve English language by learning this course"

"My English writing is not good that's why I attended the course and I also want to work as a dinner lady or carer"

Community Foundation steps in during unprecedented times



It was with the greatest relief that funders stepped in to support the work of Apna Ghar, during a very uncertain year for the women's charity.

Projects Coordinator Susan Stevenson explains: "When the pandemic hit, this was at a time when previous funding was coming to an end. The future looked very uncertain, but thanks to a Community Foundation Covid Response grant our work was able to continue, albeit in a very different way."

Community Support Coordinator Nasrin Begum explains: "During the first lockdown we continued our services remotely and identified families who needed support to claim Universal Credit. Many of

them were claiming benefits for the first time ever. The reduction of income meant families could not keep up mortgage and rent payments. We supported members with these issues in line with government advice via information on their website and signposted them to relevant agencies for specialist support.

It was sad to see how it was affecting their general well-being and mental health due to these issues. Isolation was causing an increase in anxiety and depression within our elderly service users who already had existing health problems. Single parent families and those living with extended family members were also

affected. Regular contact was made to check on the well-being of our vulnerable service users, with GP surgery and NHS111 contacted when needed.

We identified that families were struggling with home learning due to school closures. We offered support by contacting schools and the local education department explaining the issues some of the BAME families were experiencing, such as language and communication barriers with schools and lack of technology equipment for the children to use from home.

Later, feedback received from the families were positive, as a lot of schools were supportive after these problems were reported to them.

These are a few of the many issues identified within the communities and we are very fortunate to have been able to continue our invaluable services to the people who needed it most.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION COVID SCHEME funding enabled staff to deliver 30 activity packs to families, benefiting 70 children to help relieve boredom during lockdown and distract them from the worry of the pandemic. One recipient of the pack said: "Me and my children were very happy to receive the activity packs that the Apna Ghar staff delivered to our house. My daughter had not been going to shops due to the pandemic so to get things in this pack she was very excited -thank you."





Women Together Partnership

Management Board Member, Kishwar Haque explains:

Lloyds Foundation Enhanced grant, was an 18-month project which successfully ended in July-2021. The grant was to support the BME 'Women-Together-Partnership' (WTP) of five agencies: Apna-Ghar (lead agency), Hindu Nari Sangh, Aspire, Diverse Women Network, Sangini. It contributed towards the development across all five agencies in the sphere of-Strengthening the governance, developing Black Feminist Leadership and assisting with strategic financial planning. The needs of individual organisations were varied but the strategic planning was successfully adapted in line with the grant proposal, including sharing experiences/ learning, building confidence, solidarity between organisations and developing constructive relationships with high levels of trust, most notably demonstrated in the acquisition of further grant funding through Comic Relief. All partners benefitted from the Lloyds Covid-React fund to support beneficiaries with activities, towards general physical and mental wellbeing, along with provision of PPE and digital equipment. Apna Ghar's rolling programme of physical fitness was a great success.



GREAT TYNESIDE BAKEOFF
Thanks to the Community Foundation Covid Response fund 30 families received activity and baking kits. Nasrin Begum was one of the staff members involved with this project. Nasrin says: "We identified families who were struggling financially during Covid and with home learning due to schools being closed. Activity packs and Baking kits were delivered to these children, which they could do as part of their home learning and have fun whilst gaining life skills. The smiles on their faces and beautiful pics showing them involved with their packs and their baking skills were fabulous and proved how much they welcomed and enjoyed these activities."

The RISING STARS of Apna Ghar tell their Covid stories

Forty Apna Ghar members and their families shared their Covid stories, which were collated and published into a book entitled Rising Stars. The book, which is now available in all libraries and community centres across South Tyneside and many schools across the borough was published with thanks to the funding from The National Lottery Community Fund.

Paul Craig, Headteacher of St Joseph's Primary School in Jarrow said: "I just wanted to thank you for the fantastic book that your group have produced. My staff have been touched by the stories, from both young and old, and it is a credit to your centre and community."

After printing, the books were launched live during a zoom meeting on Monday 8th March 2021.

If you would like to read the book, please contact a member of staff who will either send you a digital version, or will arrange for a paper copy for you to read, or, why not pop into your local library and ask to for a copy of Apna Ghar's Rising Stars.



“ LOTS OF PEOPLE AT THE HEALTHNET MEETING ON FRIDAY SAID HOW MUCH THEY ENJOYED READING THE STORIES AND SAID IT'S A FABULOUS PIECE OF WORK ”
MARGARET ADAMS, DIRECTOR OF HEALTHWATCH SOUTH TYNESIDE



Promoting the Covid-19 Jab

Following the success of flu vaccination clinics in Apna Ghar, staff went on to promote the Covid-19 vaccine to service users and their families.

Apna Ghar's Chair, Shobha Srivastava, who is a Covid champion promoted the vaccine via an online video, which was shown across the region.

Shellina Begum was one of the staff members who had conversations to publicise the jab.

Shellina says: "We spoke to service users and promoted the Drop-in sessions at the local health centre, weekend sessions at the local mosque and gurdwara. It was good to know we could do our bit to help protect our community."



Food Hygiene

When many projects were paused during the pandemic, five members of staff took the opportunity to obtain their Food Hygiene certificates, through the training provider, Training in Care. Since achieving their certificates, staff have been sharing safe cooking and hygiene practises with Service Users in the Women's Luncheon Club.

Staff Member Akhi Azad says: "We all enjoy sharing our knowledge and have spoken to luncheon club members about the course and how to ensure they store and prepare food safely. I was happy to attend the training session and to receive my certificate."

Flu jab on Luncheon Club menu

During the majority of the financial year, the pandemic severely disrupted the delivery the Women's Luncheon Club, which was funded by Ringtons, through the Community Foundation. With members keen to learn about healthy eating, nutrition and how to live a healthier lifestyle the centre stepped in to host a flu vaccination clinic. Projects Coordinator Susan Stevenson says: "We were very much aware of the fact that many of our service users were wary about receiving their flu jab. Between lockdowns, we arranged with the local health authority to hold two flu vaccination clinics



A service user receives her flu jab in Apna Ghar.

in our centre."

The team spoke to service users and reassured them that the building was Covid secure and encouraged a total of 71

ladies to receive their jab.

"We were very pleased with the turnout," said Susan. We were told that usually 30 people attended, so our 40, plus additional 31 was a remarkable result."

Staff arranged for a one way system to be in place and appointments five minutes apart, to ensure social distancing.

"It was like a military operation," said Susan, "We are so pleased we were able to reach out to so many ladies."

As a result of last year's success, Apna Ghar is pleased to have been approached to host sessions again in the centre this year.



I CAN'T SPEAK ENGLISH, SO WOULD BE EASY FOR ME TO COME HERE, THEY ALREADY HAVE AN INTERPRETER



Winter warmer hampers



As temperatures plummeted in the winter and lockdown continued, staff braved the Antarctic-like conditions to lift spirits of service users to deliver Winter Warmer hampers. With funding from The National Lottery and with the kind help of staff from Morrison's, South Shields, 29 Hampers containing everything needed to make a wholesome warming soup was delivered to local service users. One of the grateful recipients of a pack was surprised but very pleased to receive a winter warmer hamper. She said "The soup was very nice - me and my kids liked it. Thank you so much."

A stitch in time helps saves sewing class from Covid

The first task for sewing class members following lockdown was to make their own face coverings. (pictured below).



SEW GOOD: Student's first task when the sessions restarted was to make face masks, to ensure they were all safe in class and in the community.

During lockdown the sewing class was understandably suspended. A cross stitch project was given to members, to enable them to develop a new skill. When restrictions were lifted, the class was overjoyed to enter the building once more. "I have always wanted to learn sewing," said one of the students, "It's so expensive to

have a dress sewn. I can now make my own dresses. Thanks for the classes." Another student, who took part in a six week Learn to Crochet class said, "I didn't think I would enjoy crochet this much. I am addicted. I've made bookmarks and a scarf. I really enjoyed the classes." The aim of the sessions has been to build confidence,

expand communication skills, embed English speaking and writing, and maths, as well as learning the skills of using a sewing machine and dressmaking. Class tutor Aneela said: "I am pleased to say every single student achieved that goal. Students have attended regularly and timely, which showed their dedication."

“ **THANK YOU APNA GHAR FOR HELPING ME FIND MY PASSION [FOR SEWING]** ”



ESOL (English for Speakers of other languages) classes have been held in Apna Ghar by South Tyneside College over this year. Jill Whitehead was tutor to a total of six students who studied in the centre with all students achieving their ESOL certificate at the end of the academic year. Jill says: " This accredited qualification can often lead to a pathway to further education

or employment. With demand for ESOL sessions so high in South Tyneside, we are very happy to host the sessions in the centre." Susan Stevenson, Projects Coordinator for Apna Ghar says: "This course is vital to help with the integration of these women into the community. Many thanks to South Tyneside College for their continued support and delivery of this course in our centre."



CONVERSATION CLASS SUCCESS

Two 15 week English Conversation classes have been held in Apna Ghar this year. One block of sessions was for an introduction to spoken English and the other at a slightly higher level, with a pathway to ESOL accredited courses. The courses were run thanks to the Tampon Tax fund.

Jill Whitehead ran the beginners class. "We did a lot of activities matching words with images," said Jill. "They really enjoyed learning and every week we covered a new topic, which would be useful to them: family and friends, neighbourhood, shopping etc. They progressed very well, and I certainly saw an increase in their level of understanding from the beginning of the 15 weeks to the end. They were able to talk about things and their confidence grew in talking within the group. They were a pleasure to teach as they were always enthusiastic and showed a great willingness to learn."

Mary Thompson was tutor for the pre-intermediate class. "The ladies were very keen to build on their skills and make progress with their English," said Mary. "The ladies took part in some lively discussions and it was wonderful to see them overcoming initial shyness and putting their opinions forward on a range of topics."

The course covered reading, writing, speaking and listening with students producing a piece of work, which was subsequently published in the Apna Ghar book, which was published (see p5).

Website is attracting new members

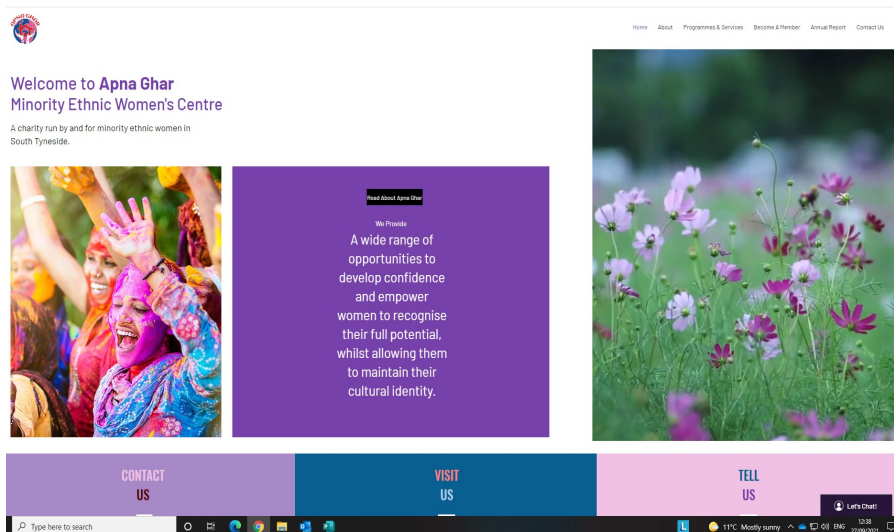
Thanks to funding from The Lloyds Foundation, Apna Ghar is celebrating the launch of their bright and lively new website.

Apna Ghar's Chair, Shobha Srivastava says: "In this day and age, to own a good website is vital. We were lucky enough to receive the funding to create a lively and eye-catching website, communicating our programmes and services."

Apna Ghar are currently looking for a volunteer to keep their website looking crisp and fresh and up to date.

Projects Coordinator Susan Stevenson says: "If you, or somebody you know would be willing to devote a little of their time to help, please make contact with us, we'd love to hear from you."

Visit our website at <https://www.apnagharwomenscentre.com>



Demand for support rises

More than 40 new service users accessed our Information, Advice and Guidance service in the six month period, following lockdown. This was in addition to the existing service users who

accessed appointments with family support staff over that period.

Community Support worker Shellina Begum says: "We have dealt with an increasing number of cases via the telephone,

with service users reluctant to leave the house due to fear following lockdown. Housing, accessing healthcare and help with translating important official documents have been in great demand."

A SERVICE USER SAYS:

"I don't know where I would've went or who to if it wasn't for Apna Ghar staff. I live on my own and I regularly speak to staff for advice and guidance. They are always ready to help me even throughout the lockdown. Thank you for your hard work."

The treasurer reports



Apna Ghar's Treasurer, Amina Hyder gives us a rundown of the charity's finances for the year. Amina says:

During the 2020/21 financial year, Apna Ghar received income from a number of sources as stated below:

£5000 from South Tyneside Council

£5000 Covid Scheme grant through Community Foundation

£4960 Lloyds BME Partnership Project

£7669 Lloyds Foundation Covid React Fund.

£3508 from the Government's Furlough scheme.

£4000 Ballinger Trust who contributed for the second year towards our running costs for the centre.

Major funding sources were:

£26770 from The National Lottery Covid 19 Response. This covered the salaries and core

costs for the centre to assist a greater number of people during the year.

£27341 from Northumbria Police

Commissioner. This grant enabled Apna Ghar to start a much needed service for a group of Domestic Abuse cases.

In addition, I take this opportunity to report two unrestricted funding grants:

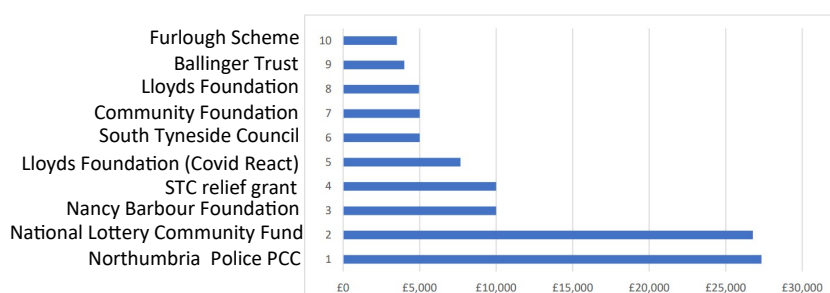
£10000 from Nancy Barbour Fund through Community Foundation and

£10000 from South Tyneside Council MBC Relief Grant, which partially supported our core costs and contingency fund.

The grants were used effectively and beneficially in recognition of our services to the community and I am proud to say that Apna Ghar continues to make excellent progress.

Finally, the trustees and myself are extremely thankful to our funders and hope that we can continue to rely upon their support and guidance in the years to come.

The contribution of all management members and dedicated staff is gratefully acknowledged.



What else?

As well as all of the funders listed, we also extend our thanks to many organisations for their support and guidance throughout the year, which is greatly appreciated by us all.

Acknowledgements

Apna Ghar Minority Ethnic Women's Centre would like to thank all who have supported them during the 2019/20 financial year, including the following funders:





Registered Charity No. 1013583

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