



# ELSHF

## East London Self-harm Forum

Newham Asian Women's  
Project

Volume 1, Issue 2

March 2007

### Everybody Hurts

Newham Asian Women's Project kicked off its 20th Anniversary celebrations this year, by hosting the 'Everybody Hurts' conference at the Barbican on 14th March 2007.

The event saw the launch of two new resources:

**Painful Secrets:** A qualitative study into the reasons why young women self-harm—A report summarizing the key findings of our year long study on self-harm with young women aged 11-25 from across five London boroughs.

**A Training DVD on Young People and Self-harm**—Written, produced, filmed, directed and acted in by young people in collaboration with The Mouth That Roars. This unique DVD is the result of extensive consultations in England, Scotland and Wales with young people and professionals on the issue of self-harm.

The conference was attended by over 160 people and included presentations and workshops by the Camelot Foundation on the National Inquiry into self-harm among young people, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Mental Health Foundation, the Bristol Crisis Service for Women and a host of young people as well as a range of other services working with the issue of self-harm across the country.

Focusing on the theme of self-harm and young people, the conference was planned and delivered in collaboration with young people. Discussions focused on a number of key areas which included: self-harm in relation to policies and procedures and legal responsibilities and concerns; self-harm in relation to the media; information and resources and awareness raising; self-harm in relation to alternative therapies, harm minimization and models of good practice; and a round-table discussion that was facilitated by young people focusing on key themes identified by young people.

Key Recommendations included: safe reporting that uses positive language in relation to self-harm; the need for mental health awareness and education to be introduced in the early years; making a range of 'therapies available such as art and music therapy; and the need to look at the individual and not the file.

A post conference report summarizing the key themes and discussions will be available shortly. For more information on the conference or to request copies of the report and DVD, please contact Dipa Shah at [dshah@nawp.org](mailto:dshah@nawp.org) or on 0208 472 0528.

### Forthcoming Events:

- **Working in Emergency Care with People who Self-harm.** A&E treat up to 170,000 people a year following self-harm. However, staff in ambulance services and acute medical settings receive little training on self-harm and often feel ill equipped to respond. This is a practical course supporting skills development, by professional and service user experts. For more information, contact the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 0207 7977 6652.
- **Mental Health Awareness for Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) Providers.** Information, advice and guidance is a crucial part of getting people back into learning, voluntary work or other community activities. Good IAG that provides appropriate support empowers people to take control of their lives and make most of opportunities and their potential. IAG can be part of the recovery process that enables people to get on with their lives. **18th May 2007** at the Kings Fund, 11-13 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0AN. Fee: £198. For more information contact NIACE Conferences and Courses team on 01162 285 661/courses@niace.org.uk.

### DID YOU KNOW?

March 1 is Self-injury Awareness Day.

Self-injury Awareness Day is a global awareness day, and yet it is not supported by any nations' governments, because it is a grass-roots idea. Somehow, in the mists of time, the date was set as the 1st of March, and organisations around the world make extra efforts to raise awareness ready for SIAD. lifeSIGNS has created a booklet which will be available to buy, along with wristbands and posters to raise awareness about self-injury/self-harm. For more information and the latest news on SIAD, go to [www.lifesigns.org.uk](http://www.lifesigns.org.uk)

### Girls make suicide calls to childline

One in six calls to ChildLine last year concerning mental health were made by girls who talked about suicide.

Some even rang the 24-hour helpline while attempting to take their own life and others said they had tried to kill themselves and were thinking of trying again.

More than 6,000 children and young people – some as young as five – called about mental health problems last year, including depression, eating disor-

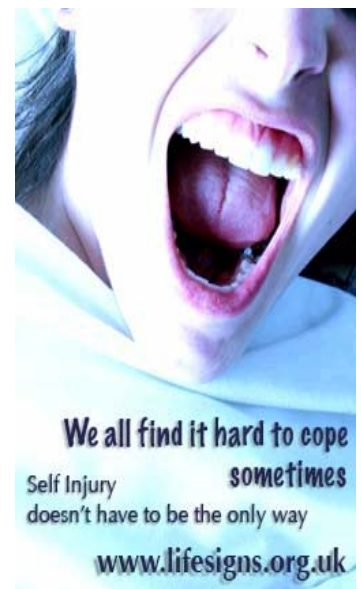
ders, family troubles and sexual abuse.

Assistant director of ChildLine Joelle Leader said:

"The number of children who rang to talk about mental health issues last year could have filled 250 classrooms so it's a big problem.

She added that there were not enough therapeutic services for children and ChildLine was urging the government to give the issue greater attention.

- Community Care, February 2007





## Painful Secrets: A qualitative study looking into the reasons why young women self-harm

**Painful Secrets** is a qualitative study that aims to understand the issues impacting on the emotional well-being of young women and the coping strategies they employ to deal with their emotional distress. In addition, this piece of work also aims to determine whether there are any key differences in the issues impacting on young South Asian women compared to their non-Asian counterparts. The research was conducted across five East London boroughs: Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, and Redbridge and Ilford to assess if there were any significant differences in issues across boroughs.

The impetus for this piece of work came from research conducted by Newham Asian Women's Project (NAWP) in 1998, looking at the mental health needs of young South Asian women in Newham. Issues leading to distress were identified as including the pressures of conflicting roles and living dual lives, transitions to different life stages, domestic violence, a lack of freedom at home, an absence of avenues in the family to communicate distress, racism and bullying at school (*Newham Inner-city Multifund and Newham Asian Women's Project, 1998*). The research also suggested that self-harm was a hidden coping strategy for many young Asian women, although for others it did represent an actual suicide attempt.

NAWP's experiences of providing support and services to young women in difficult situations, including those who escape domestic violence and who may be self-harming, combined with epidemiological studies suggest that young South Asian women between the ages of 15 and 35 are two to three times more vulnerable to suicide and self-harm than their non-Asian counterparts (Merrill and Owens, 1986, Soni-Raleigh, 1991, 1996, Bhugra and Desai, 1999, 2002). This presents a strong case for attempting further to understand if and why young South Asian

women are in fact a population at higher risk of self-harm.

Although our expertise lies in working with young South Asian women, our investigation was expanded to include all young women so as to develop a holistic understanding of the issue of self-harm among young women. In addition, by comparing the experiences of South Asian young women with young women from other ethnicities, we can plan and develop appropriate support services that meet the gaps in current service provision.

### Definition of Self-harm

Self-harm is the deliberate injury of the body, as a method of managing emotions that are too painful to express in words. It is not associated with an intention to commit suicide and covers a range of behaviour. For the purpose of this study, self-harm was never defined as any particular behaviour, in the belief that many young people may not be aware that they are self-harming. In addition, self-harm is often defined on the basis of what is considered socially unacceptable, and this may have influenced respondent's accounts.

### Methodology

Sixty-nine young women were consulted for this study. Of these, nine young South Asian women with a history of self-harm were individually interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and in-depth. Seven focus groups of a semi-structured nature were held. In addition, 51 professionals were consulted.

Participants opted in to the research, and were given the option to take part in either a focus group or individual interview. The project was publicized through professional networks as well as through extensive outreach work.

### Key Findings

Based on these interviews and focus groups, we found that a variety of environmental and personal factors impacts on the emotional

health of young women between the ages of 11 and 25. These included domestic violence, racism, bullying, family and home life, education, work/employment, sexual abuse and the experience of being a refugee. Family and home life, education, work/employment and racism were the most common factors amongst the sample group - testimony to the difficulties these issues raise for adolescents and young people, regardless of class or ethnic background. There were no key differences in the issues raised across boroughs.

While the issues impacting on the emotional well-being of young women were not significantly different between ethnic groups, the research findings do show that young South Asian women face a number of barriers that make accessing support increasingly difficult. The male privilege within South Asian communities, the significance of being part of a tight community and family honour or *izzat* were identified as playing powerful roles in young South Asian women's experiences.

These additional pressures impacting on young South Asian women make non-fatal deliberate self-harm one of few accessible options in the management of their distress, allowing them to maintain privacy while providing a method of release.

### Key Recommendations

#### Availability and access to culturally specific mental health services.

In order to provide appropriate support to an otherwise out-of-reach population, respondents felt that culturally specific mental health services are necessary. This could mean ensuring services employ a range of staff that reflects the local community and who speak the languages

of the local community. This is especially important in places like A & E which are often the first point of call for young people who are self-harming.

#### Cultural awareness training to be made mandatory for school staff, youth workers and parents.

This was identified as a key measure to raise awareness around mental well-being and to improve communication between generations - thereby increasing the avenues available to young women for accessing support. The training must cover a range of issues from confidentiality, child protection, self-harm to cultural awareness.

#### Mainstreaming of effective early intervention and prevention services.

To address completely the high rates of self-harm among young women, it is also crucial to mainstream effective early-intervention services. Respondents suggested that schools and after-school youth groups adopt programmes of a preventive nature that raise awareness, build confidence and self-esteem in young people, allowing them to find positive coping strategies.

#### Transforming notions of patriarchy and assigned gender roles at the community level.

If young Asian women are to access support, it is necessary that notions of patriarchy and femininity that exist within their communities are challenged. Community-based women's organizations are in prime positions to do this work, alongside faith and other community groups. Continued funding and support by local authorities and other stakeholders is important for the overall impact of this research.



## ASIST– Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

*ASIST* provides practical training for caregivers seeking to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. Participants often include:

- people concerned about family, friends
- emergency service workers
- counsellors, teachers
- mental health practitioners

Working mostly in small groups of one trainer to no

more than 15 participants, *ASIST* uses many different teaching processes to create a practice-oriented and interactive learning experience.

The emphasis of the *ASIST* workshop is on suicide first aid, on helping a person at risk stay safe and seek further help. You will learn how to:

- recognise invitations for help
- reach out and offer support

- review the risk of suicide
- apply a suicide intervention model
- Link people with community resources.

Evaluations have shown that the workshop increases caregivers' knowledge and confidence to respond to a person at risk of suicide, that intervention skills are retained over time and that they are put to

use to save lives.

NAWP now has 2 *ASIST* Trainers that can deliver the 2-day workshop to you/or to your organisation. **For further information** about the training or to book, please contact **Gurpreet Virdee** or **Ami Gill** on: 020 8519 9136 or [bookings@nawp.org](mailto:bookings@nawp.org).

## Healing the Scars of Violence — Ayanna Serwa

A 'we' moons self-help guide.

- A complimentary health care A5 size book/manual
- Incorporates complementary health for survivors of DV and Child sexual abuse
- Has a section on 'wound healing' a seven step guide
- Strategies to aid the prevention of self-harm and mental distress
- Ayannas Aromas Product List

A change in statistics, reflecting the number of people using complementary therapies in the 21st century denotes a 'revival' in its use. This

book suggests that one particular group who would greatly benefit from being active participants of this 'revival', are women who have overcome experiences of sexual, emotional and physical violence. Domestic violence is equally highlighted as it encompasses all the above, therefore is a generic term. The book does not ignore the notion of men as victims, but places emphasis on women, as statistics reveal prevalence of domestic assault, are far higher

in this group and that women must battle against a power dynamic in relation to their male counterparts.

*Ayanna is available for health consultations, treatments, workshops and training facilitation. She works with groups, organisations and individuals.*

*BSc. Hons, ITEC, MIPTI, ITHMA*

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### Newham Asian Women's Project- 20th Anniversary

NAWP is celebrating 20 years of working for women, working against violence. We are holding a benefit/fundraiser to celebrate the achievements of women especially those who have accessed our services and have re-built their lives. We also continue our commitment to women and the struggle against violence against women. We invite you to join us in celebration on **Sunday 24th June 2007, from 7pm-9pm** at **Strarford East Theatre, in Stratford, East London.**

Tickets will go on sale at the Stratford East Box Office from May 2007.

We look forward to seeing you on the 24th!

## Domestic Violence and Mental Health Training

The Greater London Domestic Violence Project began work on mental health early in 2003 having identified both a strong link between women's experiences of domestic violence and mental distress and huge gaps in services for these women. As the Department of Health report *Into the Mainstream* confirms, women's experiences of violence and abuse frequently lead to mental distress.

### Open Training Days

The Mental Health Project

will be offering open basic awareness training days for domestic violence workers. These are aimed at those agencies (both statutory and voluntary) who already work in the domestic violence sector and wish to provide a more integrated response across the two sectors. Domestic violence training for mental health workers will be provided if there is sufficient demand.

### Borough Specific Training

The Mental Health Project will also offer borough spe-

cific trainings with the aim of effecting sustained long term change. These can be tailored to the needs of your borough and focus on partnership working between all agencies working on the issues of mental health or domestic violence. Details about consultancy and training options are available on request.

For more information and a booking form, please contact Chelsea McKinney on 020 7785 3860 or [Chelsea.mckinney@gldvp.org.uk](mailto:Chelsea.mckinney@gldvp.org.uk)

### Children and Young People-Mental Health Group (C&YPMH)

For the past nine months Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium (NVSC) has been facilitating a group of C&YPMH Tier 2 service providers. This group meets on a monthly basis.

The purpose of this group is to provide a forum which can feed in to the CAMHS group and to the Health and Well Being Local Area Partnership Board. It also provides an opportunity for the VCF sector reps on these two Boards to share information and take soundings on agenda items. The meetings are fairly informal and we occasionally have guest speakers.

We are currently reviewing the membership of this group as we recognise that there may well be groups who do not currently attend. So if you are a Voluntary, Community or Faith Sector Tier 2 provider of therapeutic services to Children and Young People in Newham please get in touch with Corrine Hutcheson—[Corrine@nvsc.org.uk](mailto:Corrine@nvsc.org.uk) or phone her on 0208 519 9500



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To contribute an article or news story for the next edition of the newsletter, please contact Ami Gill at [agill@nawp.org](mailto:agill@nawp.org) or Kamna Muralidharan at [kmuralidharan@nawp.org](mailto:kmuralidharan@nawp.org) or telephone 0208 519 9136.

### Self-injury and people with learning difficulties.

Bristol Crisis Service for Women and the Norah Fry Research Centre have just started an exciting new research project looking into the experiences of people with learning difficulties who self-injure. The purpose of the research is:

-To find out more about the experiences of people with learning difficulties who self-injure, and their carers/supporters -To explore in what ways they have been supported by the services and professionals -To identify ideas, and then produce resources, for training and policy development, which would enable them to get the positive support they need in this area.

If you know or work with people with learning difficulties who self-injure who we could interview about their experiences please get in contact. There are no distance limitations on this - we are covering England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

If you want further information or regular updates about the progress of the study, please let us know. Dr Pauline Heslop on 0117 331 0987 or Fiona Macaulay on 0117 927 9600.

Young Women aged between 11-15 from NAWP's Girls Allowed Youth Group have completed their Bronze Award in the Youth Achievement Awards. Portfolios were moderated and evaluated by external moderators. The girls will now work towards achieving the Silver Award.

In order to complete their portfolios, the young women took part in a number of challenges which included completing a mosaic tile and workshops on relationships and body image.

The Awards have been successful in letting the girls engage with other local projects.

### Working for women, working for wellbeing

Zindaagi (meaning 'Life') is a project led by NAWP. The project delivers a range of services aimed at reducing the incidents of self-harm and suicide amongst Asian women and girls and actively works to promote emotional wellbeing and self-empowerment.

#### We offer a range of free services including:

- \* One to One counselling in the Main South Asian languages
- \* Support, Information & Resources on Mental Health
- \* Therapeutic Support Groups
- \* After-school Clubs
- \* Residential Holidays & Summer Programmes
- \* Workshops & Activities
- \* Capacity Building & Training for Frontline Professionals on Self-harm
- \* In-school Services

#### Zindaagi Core Values

**Choice**—We offer Asian women and girls the choice to access support services that are based on increasing self-worth, self determination & well-being

**Support**—We provide support services within a space that is confidential, non judgemental, culturally appropriate & gender sensitive

**Needs Led**—We listen, consult & involve Asian women & girls in the planning and delivery of services

**Voice**—We provide a forum for Asian women & girls to have their say and to be heard and for this to influence their personal, social & political lives

**Defiance**—We challenge the inequality and injustice that Asian women & girls experience

**Awareness Raising**—We raise awareness of the issues faced by Asian women & girls experiencing mental health difficulties, specifically in relation to stigma and marginalization; in turn working to promote a more positive understanding of their experiences

**High Quality**—We commit to providing high quality services to Asian women & girls experiencing mental health difficulties

**Empowerment**—Through the integration and commitment of these core values, we support the self empowerment of Asian women & girls

### Training & Development Course

The Training and Development Course for young Asian women aged 13-19 in Newham proved to be a great success. Nine young women from Lister School and The Royal Docks Community School participated in this twelve week course, which was developed to address the wide-ranging educational, social and personal development needs of young Asian women.

So far, the young women have participated in a variety of workshops to enhance their personal and educational development, for example 'Developing my talent', 'Building my self-esteem and confidence' & 'Assertiveness Training'. As part of the course, the young women

also worked with Rahima Begum, a freelance artist, to explore the expression of emotions through art as well as Sudha Buchar, Artistic Director at Tamasha Theatre Company, to create a play which was performed at NAWP's Youth Achievement ceremony. The play explores a range of personal and social issues faced by young Asian women in East London. During the process of script-writing, the group explored and furthered their own understanding of issues such as domestic violence, self-harm, and relationships. The process of creating plotlines and exploring characters has proven to be a highly successful way of enabling the young women to understand the nature of difficult situations and relationships, the range of choices available, and the consequences of decisions made.



"What would self-confidence look like?" - Young women at the training and development course express their views on self-confidence.