A Welcome from the Trustees

It is our privilege as Trustees of the Network of International Women for Brighton & Hove to share with you some of what we have achieved and tell you of our future plans.

The Network began in 2017 as a response to the call of many in the City who, as women not born in the UK, told us of the barriers they face in re-establishing themselves and their families' lives and achieving their ambitions. Our inclusive approach of enabling all of us who identify as 'International Women' to come together in a safe space, share our resources and support one another sustains us. The increase in membership, the pleasure, laughter, learning and successful outcomes of our activities demonstrates that.

However, we take our responsibilities seriously. This year time has been given to 'behind the scenes' work, putting in place the organisational systems and procedures which provide a solid foundation for the Network to sustain well into the future. We are very grateful to the Lloyds Foundation who have provided the resources to enable us to achieve that; your support, funding and shared expertise are invaluable. Ruksar Hussain, our talented Administrative Officer builds on that work.

Women whose lives are fractured by trauma, violence, unmet health care needs and insecure immigration status have increasingly put their trust in us to help them, as have the specialist organisations in the City with whom we work. It is our absolute priority to provide the most professional response to you all.
Siri Areelertworakul, our Caseworker is central to that provision; going above and beyond with her expertise and commitment to do her very best, resulting in life-changing outcomes for many women. She, and much valued partners, have added the Cost of Living Programme to the pool of resources on which we and increasingly, our sister organisations can draw. Its first aim, to provide practical assistance to reduce fuel poverty and support women to receive their entitlements has led to the opportunity to work with the national organisation 'Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA)'. So, we set our sights on a broader ambition: to increase the economic independence of International Women. We hope with the support of partner organisations in the Violence Against Women and Girls Forum, this will lead to a new City-wide approach – an exciting ambition for us all!

Our confidence in our approach, that trusted social connections provide 'bridges' which are prerequisites to feelings of safety and security and being able to successfully access services also leads us to commit to putting in place an evaluation framework which we firmly expect to support findings of past research (Indicators of Integration Framework/Home Office 2019). We very much hope we can work with colleagues in Sussex University to achieve this priority.

So, we come full circle, back to the pleasure of what we enjoy most, resourcing creative activities as our shared language, spending time together and welcoming newcomers. In this, our heartfelt thanks to all those in Jubilee Library and the wider service. The Wednesday morning 'drop in' is front and centre of our shared approach and service. The Network could not be what it is without you.

The biggest thank you however, is to all International Women who live in our City, who share their stories, lived experience and cultural heritage with us all. Many of you volunteer your time and skills to help lead the Network. Your generosity, friendship, trust and courage is an inspiration and we will continue to do all that we can to support Brighton & Hove feeling like home and a place of sanctuary for you.

Trustees

Cathy Maxwell
Kate Howell
Laila Rashdan
Yasmin Valli
Irene Solar
Synne Dyvik
Elizabeth Reading
Renuka Chandraker
Eugenia Markova
Fiona Sharpe
Linda Beanlands

Our Activities and Events

We are more than 605 women from 78 countries who speak 69 languages



Our Open Door - Wednesday Library 'Drop-In!

You will always find us on Wednesday morning in the community space of Jubilee Library. The 'drop in' and safe space is the heart of our activities – the opportunity to welcome newcomers and visitors and for us to spend time together, often using creative sewing as our shared language.

We plan upcoming activities, make friends, learn from each other and enjoy refreshments. Each week, 30 to 40 women join us. Wednesday mornings provide the chance to share important information and advice, including access to our Casework service, advice on energy saving and cost of living support, city wide events and to welcome local organisations who tell us about their work.

Sewing Collective

Many Network women are skilled sewers who benefit from a Monday morning teaching class provided in partnership with the Adult Learning Hub of the City Council. The learning also incorporates business skills which help women market and sell their work. We established the Sewing Collective in 2022, a co-operative and sustainable textile social enterprise which provides technical training and an opportunity to earn some financial independence alongside mentoring, social and personal support. The Collective sources donated and waste fabrics and creates beautiful items in addition to securing commissions from sustainable textile projects locally and nationally. Partnerships include with local creative artists, ReFAB, Fair Trade Brighton, Float Spa and Beauty Works Hove.

The Collective now sells at charity fairs and local markets across the City, also benefitting from invitations to events with Thrive (female only entrepreneur events) and a charity partnership with Lush Brighton plus for the second year, showcasing at Brighton Sustainable Fashion Week.



Outdoor Living in the City, Downland and Beyond ...

We have walked the Downs from Mile Oak and Rottingdean village. Exploring our city's green spaces and surrounding areas is a shared pleasure which combines improved fitness and wellbeing with the opportunity to talk and build friendships. The twice-monthly walks and Ecotherapy sessions have enabled many women to discover new parts of the city and countryside and learn about local flora and fauna.

The Ecotherapy sessions led by Liz Ingram from the Centre in Stanmer Park, have been a huge success, culminating in a stunning Bluebell Walk in Stanmer Woods. We are thrilled to have secured a grant from the Changing Chalk branch of the National Trust, which allows us to continue regular city walks and monthly Ecotherapy sessions until August 2025.



Cost of Living Support

Working in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council Welfare Rights Team, Energy Works at Citizens Advice and Southern Water, we have delivered face to face sessions with one to one support with interpreters and outreach sessions for the Oasis project and the food bank of RISE.

This initiative has been supported by Centre for Sustainable Energy, SGN Network and Sussex Community Foundation (Rampion Community Benefit Fund). Since 2022, 356 women have been supported, with many receiving fuel vouchers and energy saving devices. We are proud that the initiative was chosen as a case study by the Centre for Sustainable Energy.

This critical work will continue while we explore a potential partnership with the national Surviving Economic Abuse organisation to launch a city wide approach aimed at increasing women's financial and economic independence.



New Communities Outreach

In partnership with the City Council, we support asylum seekers, refugees and families including those placed in temporary housing by the Home Office. Sessions offer a chance to relax and share food. Essential personal items, and much needed assistance from Housing officers and specialist organisations are also available. In collaboration with 'Stand for Ukraine Brighton and Hove'; we provide welcome sessions, an opportunity to support one another, to receive advice from specialist officers and to celebrate our new Ukrainian community in the City.



Casework Service for individual women

Siri Areelertworakul is our highly skilled Caseworker providing confidential, trauma informed, one to one support for women and families.

Siri works closely with statutory and third sector organisations to ensure the immediate and long term safety of women and children, helping them access the health, housing and welfare services to which they are entitled as well as wider wellbeing support.

The cost of living crisis has significantly impacted on the women we help, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds, single parents, survivors of domestic abuse and individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Our referral rate and demand for our service has increased by nearly 50% in the past year.

By working holistically and with cultural sensitivity, our Caseworker bridges the gap between the needs of women and the support they require and need.

Food of the World

Laila Rashdan leads our much loved cooking together events at the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership's Community Kitchen. At each cooking evening, women from a particular country teach us how to cook their favourite dishes. We join in with chopping, stirring, mixing and eating the delicious food we have made together. So far, we have had Syrian, Moroccan, Italian, Spanish, Thai, Yemini, Indian and Kuwaiti evenings as well as a traditional English tea. Along with the cooking evenings we hold "Bring a Dish" events at least twice a year as well as a mid-summer picnic. .

Spotlighting / Showcasing our unique initiatives:



Listening to 'Seldom Heard' Families - Research with Sussex University

The Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth at the University of Sussex was delighted to partner with the Network in an important study shaping plans for UK wide research. Network women advised on the research which was conducted by Professors Janet Boddy and Linda Morrice with Dr. May Nasrawy, Dr Alison Lacey and Professor Rachel Thomson.

The research (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council), sought to identify the barriers that lead to migrant women and families being missed in long term studies of 'ordinary' childhood and family life in the UK (see https://www.sussex.ac.uk/esw/circy/research/listeningtofamilies). Network women drew on their day to day experiences to participate in Advisory Panels and interviews.

They were able to identify key considerations- the 'what it would take' to enable families from different kinds of migration backgrounds to be included in future studies, highlighting the importance of feelings of safety with a trusted organisation as key to establishing relationships with researchers .The work has been well received and the ESRC are currently planning how to take forward the learning in future studies.

All thanks for the opportunity to contribute to such significant research.

Janet Boddy: Professor of Child, Youth and Family Studies: Centre for Innovation & Research in Childhood and Youth: Linda Morrice: Professor of Education and Migration: Co-Director of the Centre for International Education: Dr, May Nasrawy: Lecturer in Applied Social Sciences; School of Education & Social Work).

Contact us here:

www.niwbh.org

www.facebook.com/intlwomensnetwork

email: info@niwbh.org

Welcoming you to our 'Libraries of Sanctuary'

We are supporting all Libraries in the City to become 'Libraries of Sanctuary', using our creative skills to make individual Banners for each of them. Our first was for Jubilee Library who commissioned and inspired this project. Those for Hove, Saltdean, Hangleton, Patcham, and Woodingdean are nearing completion and we continue to design and make banners for Whitehawk, Coldean, Hollingbury, Moulscoomb, Portslade, Rottingdean and Westdean. Each one combines hand sewn images of iconic local landscapes with our creative designs. Keep an eye out in your local library for our banners!





Our Future Plans
How we aim to secure the future

1. Embrace our growing membership and empower Network women; amplify their voice in cultural and civic life and ensure their lived experience influences service design, particularly services which reduce inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls.

2. Inspire and foster creativity; using creative work as our shared language, build friendships and trust, showcase women's talents and cultural heritage through collaborative projects and community events which say 'this is who we are and these are our stories'.

3. Sustain the activities that are most enjoyed and which improve health and wellbeing, including the Food of the World programme, city and country walks and Eco-therapy initiatives

4. Expand our specialist, one to one, Casework Service and Cost of Living Programme, helping to reduce poverty and together with partners, increase the economic independence of all women in the City

5. Launch a Volunteer Programme that respects women's aspirations, maximises work experience, skills and qualifications and opens up pathways to employment and career choices

6. Develop an Evaluation Framework; in collaboration with academic partners, build on published research to extend the evidence base as to the importance of trusted social connections in providing bridges to feelings of safety, access to services and to wider social integration.

7. Support Newcomers; contribute to partnerships that make Brighton & Hove a welcoming and safe place and continue outreach programs including welcome 'sanctuary' and advice support for asylum seekers and refugees

Our Finances
and our thanks for all your support

Our accounts for last year, 2023/24, are published on our website and that of the Charity Commission.

Our Treasurer, Renuka Chandraker, keeps us in good financial order with the much appreciated oversight by Steve Marshall, our Independent Examiner. We are very grateful for their time and expertise.

At the beginning of this financial year (1st April 2024) we had a carry forward of £100.428. Almost all of that is restricted funding to pay for planned and committed activities in the current year and allocated to meet contractual commitments to our two staff members.

We continue to apply for funding to sustain and secure those commitments, increase casework capacity, and deliver on the activities that women most enjoy.

Huge thanks to all of those who are grant-aiding us now and have done so in the past:

We also receive personal donations for which we are very grateful and allocate with care.

Our Cornerstone
Partnerships and Volunteers



The value of the time, skills and kindness gifted to the Network each day is huge; they are the cornerstone which enables us to make a positive difference to the lives of so many women and their families. Many volunteer to inspire, inform and deliver successful projects. Some extend their role and work on our Steering Committee which plans and manages the programme of activities. We are very grateful to you all. We could not do without you.

We are also fortunate to benefit from the generosity and expertise of much valued partner organisations in the City. Whether it has been a quiet word of advice or information sharing, joint problem solving within a city wide, council led, Forum or more formal referral and joint working arrangements, your openness to the Network and a shared commitment to meeting the needs of the women we serve is just brilliant. We hope that we help and contribute to the achievement of your organisational objectives too.

Our Funders and supporters

Brighton & Hove City Council · Enjoolata Foundation · Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove · Community Fund · SGN · Sussex Community Foundation · Lloyds Bank Foundation England & Wales · National Trust Changing Chalk · Sussex Community Foundation · homity · The Raw Foundation · The Chalk Cliff Trust · The Hilden Charitable Fund · Thrive · Lush · Another Way · Let's Fix Our Future · Fight Sad Network

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LANGUAGES

Afrikaans
ALBANIAN
AMHARIC
Arabic
Bahasa
Bengali
BULGARIAN
CANTONESE
Catalan
Chichewa
Creole
CROATIAN
DARI
Dutch
English
Farsi
FILIPINO
FRENCH
French Creole
Galician
Gambian
GERMAN
GREEK
Gujerati
Hindi
Hungarian
INDONESIA
IRISH
Italian
Japanese
Kannad
KHMER
KONKANI
Korean
Krio
Kurdish
LITHUANIAN
MALAYALAM
Malay
Mandarin
Orissa
OROMO
PERSIAN
Polish
Portuguese
Punjabi
PUSHTU
ROMANIAN
Russian
Serbian
Setswana
SHONA
SLOVAKIAN
Slovenian
Somali
Sinhalese
SPANISH
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Swedish
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Telugu
THAI
TIGRYAN
Turkish
Ukrainian
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WELSH
YEMAN
xhosa

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COUNTRIES

Afghanistan
ALBANIA
ALGERIA
Argentina
Australia
Bangladesh
BOTSWANA
BRAZIL
Bulgaria
Canada
Caribbean
CHILE
CHINA
Colombia
Czechoslovakia
Egypt
EL SALVADOR
ERITREA
Ethiopia
France
Gambia
GERMANY
Greece
HONDURAS
Hong Kong
Hungary
India
INDONESIA
IRAN
Iraq
Ireland
Italy
JAMAICA
JAPAN
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Kenya
Kurdistan
KUWAIT
LEBANON
Liberia
Libya
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Mexico
Morocco
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NICARAGUA
NORWAY
Oman
Pakistan
Palestine
PERU
PHILIPPINES
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Somalia
SOUTH AFRICA
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REPORT 2024

The Network of International Women Brighton and Hove

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