REPORT 2025

The Network of International Women Brighton and Hove



73 LANGUAGES

Afrikaans
ALBANIAN
KOREAN
Amharic
Yeman
Arabic
ALGERIAN
BAHASA
INDONESIA
Bengali
Brazilian
Bulgarian
CANTONESE
CATALAN
Chichewa
Creole
Croatian
CZECH
DARI
Dutch
English
Farsi
FILIPINO-
TAGAOG
FRENCH
French Creole
Galician
Gambian
GERMAN
GREEK
Gujarati
Hindi
Hungarian
INDONESIAN
IRISH
Italian
Japanese
Kannada
KHMER
KINYARWANDA
Konkani
Korean
Krio
KURDISH
LINGALA
Lithuanian
Makaton Sign
Language
Malay
MALAYALAM
MANDARIN
Orisa
Oromo
Pashto/Pashtu
PERSIAN
POLISH
Portuguese
Punjabi
Romanian
RUSSIAN
SERBIAN
Setswana
Shona
Sinhalese
SLOVAKIAN
SLOVENIAN
Somali
Spanish
Swahili
SWEDISH
TAMIL
Telugu
Thai
Tigryan
TURKISH
UKRAINIAN
Urdu
Welsh
Xhosa

84 COUNTRIES

Afghanistan
ALBANIA
ALGERIA
Angola
Argentina
Australia
BANGLADESH
BELGIUM
Botswana
Brazil
England
BULGARIA
CAMEROON
Canada
Caribbean
Chile
CHINA
COLOMBIA
Cuba
Czech Republic
Democratic
Reublic of
Congo
EGYPT
EL SALVADOR
Eritrea
Ethiopia
France
GAMBIA
GERMANY
Greece
Guinea
Honduras
HONG KONG
HUNGARY
India
Indonesia
Iran
IRAQ
IRELAND
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
JORDAN
KENYA
Kurdistan
Lebanon
Liberia
LIBYA
LITHUANIA
Malawi
Malaysia
Mexico
MOROCCO
N IRELAND
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Norway
PAKISTAN
PERU
Philippines
Poland
Romania
RWANDA
SAUDI ARABIA
Scotland
Serbia
Sierra Leone
SLOVENIA
SOMALIA
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
SUDAN
SWEDEN
Slovakia
Syria
Thailand
TUNISIA
TURKEY
Ukraine
USA
Venezuela
WALES
YEMEN
Zimbabwe

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 continues to sustain us. The increase in membership, the pleasure, laughter, learning and successful outcomes of our activities demonstrates that.

During the past year, **Ruksar Hussain**, our talented Operations Manager, has put in place the organisational procedures which provide a solid foundation for the Network to sustain into the future. We are very grateful to **Ruksar** and to the **Lloyds Foundation** who have provided the resources to enable us to achieve that; your expertise, support and funding are invaluable.

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 specialist partner organisations in the City. Our priority is to provide the very best and most professional response to you all. **Ghada Ezzo** and **Rosie Blunden**, caseworkers, joined **Siri Areerlertworakul** this year, providing an increase in our casework capacity while Siri enjoys maternity leave. Like Siri, Ghada and Rosie go above and beyond with their expertise and commitment to do their very best for every woman, achieving life-changing outcomes for many.

We continue to deliver, with much-valued partners, the Cost of Living Programme, which provides practical assistance and resources. Together with the national organisation, **Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA)**, we also deliver a project to tackle economic abuse and increase the economic independence of women, especially those from racially minoritised communities. This project is now embedded in our broader work to reduce all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). It is a privilege to contribute to the Council-led **VAWG Partnership** to work towards achieving that. Huge thanks too to our funders **(Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, SEA and National Lottery)** who enable us to deliver this important project.

We have confidence in our approach, that trusted social connections provide 'bridges' which are prerequisites to feelings of safety, access to services and wider social and community cohesion (Indicators of Integration Framework 2019). We are hugely grateful to **Linda Morrice** and **Synne Dyvik** from **Sussex University** and the **Roddick Foundation** for partnering their expertise and resources to undertake an evaluation of the impact, outcomes and cost benefits of our activities. We also appreciate the advice given from **Judy Sebba** and **Brian Parkinson**. We look forward to sharing the findings of this research (mid 2026). We aim for it to be the basis for the design of future services for migrant and racially and ethnically minoritised women, particularly those who have experienced trauma, abuse and violence.

So, we return to 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 'safe space and drop in' is front and centre of our approach and service. The Network would not be what it is without you.

Our biggest thank you 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 ensure Brighton & Hove feels like home and a place of sanctuary for all.

Signed in no particular order: Elizabeth Reading, Laila Rashdan, Elaine Crush, Fiona Sharpe, Linda Beanland, Kate Howell, Elizabeth Reading, Renuka Chandraker, Cathy Maxwell, Synne Dyvik-James and Aicha Lhihi.

Activities and Events

Our Wednesday Open Door - Creativity and Conversations

Wednesday mornings in **Jubilee Library** are at the heart of our activities, offering a safe space to drop in for friendship, creativity, information about our opportunities and access to help and support.

Using our hands as a shared language, we are proud to have completed 10 beautiful banners for local libraries, helping them become places of sanctuary and welcome in their neighbourhoods. Many thanks to **Aicha** for assembling these so skilfully.

Our new collaborative textile project focuses on protecting nature, aligning with our walks and ecotherapy sessions. Workshops continue too (origami, quilting, poetry and story writing), each showcasing individual talents and offering fresh inspiration.

We look forward to another year of making, sharing and growing together. Come and join us on Wednesdays.



Our knitted Red Roses decorated windows of local shops and the Council's stall in the 'Fan Zone' to welcome the English Rugby team. Thanks to **Katia** for leading this work and to the Network women for enriching the wider life of the City.

Singing and Dancing!

Dancing with the **Ceyda Tanc Dance Company** has been a joy. It was exciting to be included in their film shown during the Brighton Festival! Led by **Ken Wakia**, recipient of the Voice Achievers Award and founder of the Nairobi Chamber Chorus, our '**One Voice Choir**' opened the celebrations for Refugee Week. Many thanks to **Ken** and **Ceyda Tanc** for sharing your incredible talents with us and for giving us the chance to take part in city-wide events.

Improved Health and Wellbeing

We invite expert guest speakers from the **NHS** and specialist services to talk to us about the benefits of preventative personal care and 'difficult' subjects such as cancer, diet, dementia, navigating health services and answering personal questions and concerns. We also routinely share online information from **Sussex NHS** providers, often highlighting detailed guidance at our Wednesday 'drop-in'.

We combine exercise and walking with discovery! We walk the City and the Downs. Delivering our banners to neighbourhood libraries, exploring the town of Lewes, nature reserves, and the city's oldest church, St Helen's at Hangleton. We have walked the Downs from Rottingdean to Portslade and elsewhere.

Friday mornings are set aside for gentle seafront walks, stopping for tea and chats. Thank you, **Julia**! Links with '**Changing Chalk**' enabled us to enjoy walks with '**BugLife**' in Stanmer Park, visits to Benfield Hill Nature Reserve and a walk led by a **National**



Art Group

Our Art Group has resumed at Albion Hill Community Centre. Thank you **Michael** and **Ian** for generously providing the space. Led and inspired by **Isabel Mullery**, the group offers women quiet, therapeutic time for self-expression through drawing and painting. We are seeking funding to ensure it continues. A heartfelt thanks to **Isabel** and **Debbie** for all your support.

Food of the World in the Community Kitchen

We come together to cook and share meals, learning, tasting, and celebrating our diverse cultures and cooking traditions. This year, Network women from Ukraine, Thailand, France and Syria have led the sessions. We love doing this together- all thanks to **Laila** who makes it all happen!





Trust guide on Devil's Dyke. All thanks to **Liz**, the **Ecotherapy project** has welcomed over 63 different women to forage, cook and share meals outdoors, dye fabrics and reap the mental and physical health benefits of the nature around us. Huge thanks to **Kate** and **Cathy** for their meticulous planning and for leading the walking programme.

Welcome and Sanctuary for Newcomers

In partnership with the **City Council** and **All Saints Church (Hove)** and enabled by an incredible group of very hard-working volunteers, we provide a weekly 'drop-in' for asylum seekers, refugees and families many placed by the Home Office in temporary accommodation. We offer a chance to relax, share food, receive personal support and access one-to-one expert advice from **Voices in Exile**, Housing Officers and our Caseworkers. **BestFoot Music** often plays for us all and **Helen** is always with us, offering Origami teaching and making. We continue to be alongside our sisters from **Stand For Ukraine** – we are always here for you!

Sewing Collective

Many Network women are highly skilled sewers and embroiderers. Always using donated and recycled fabrics, they have come together as a co-operative to make and sell beautiful products, providing each of them with some income while also helping to reduce textile waste. This year, the Collective set up its stall at thirteen 'market' events and fulfilled commissions from local businesses. They also took part in **Slow Fashion Week**, **International Women's Day** and a variety of festivals and fairs, including **One Garden's Sustainability**, **Brunswick**, and **Patcham**.

None of this would be possible without **Nicole's** teaching and studio space, **Jules'** drive and energy and now **Aicha**, **Vanina**, **Laela**, **Silvia**, **Meryam** and all the Collective women who are increasingly leading and inspiring their stitching community. We have been supported throughout by Bek Kimber (Create) **Enjoolata**, **Another Way**, **Amir (Adult Education Academy)** , **Thrive**, **ReFab**, the **Raw Foundation**, **B&H Bus Company** and the **Circle Store**. Thank you all so much.



Wonderfully, **Enjoolata** has just informed us of sustained funding for the next three years

"We have been so impressed and inspired by the Sewing Collective and how it has grown into such a thriving community group as well as a business. We hope this ongoing funding will help to unlock further support from other funders and elevate the project to its next stage in becoming sustainable." Enjoolata

Casework service and addressing poverty and abuse

Our holistic and trauma-informed Casework service provides confidential one-to-one support for many women whose unmet needs are more complex due to insecure immigration and housing status, cultural considerations and marginalisation experienced by many in racially minoritised communities.

This year, **Siri** was joined by **Ghada** and **Rosie**, who are highly skilled in meeting the immediate and longer-term needs of women and children, many of whom have experienced significant domestic and sexual violence and continue to be at risk. Safeguarding is a priority, as is enabling women to access financial entitlements, health care and longer-term wellbeing support.

Capacity allowing, our Casework service is open to referrals from partner organisations. It is a privilege to work alongside **Brighton Women's Centre** (and the **Trust for Developing Communities**), particularly at their weekly food bank and Hub in Kemptown.

This is enabled by the **City Council 'Thriving Communities Fund'**. Thank you so much for the opportunity to extend our reach into the wider communities of the City and to benefit from your expertise. We also support other neighbourhood services whenever possible.

Cost of Living Project

Funded by **SGN** and with their much-valued support and that from other energy providers, our Cost of Living Programme tackles fuel and wider poverty.

Alongside our single hub, where women can access comprehensive advice from different advisors, free energy-saving devices and personalised support, the project now provides outreach sessions. Since February 2025, we have connected 207 households with this support – a remarkable achievement.

Increasing Economic Independence

Domestic Abuse can include women having no or little control of money and wider family finances, trapping them and their children into abject poverty.

In partnership with the national organisation **Surviving Economic Abuse**, our small group workshops (with interpreters) support women to recognise the signs of economic abuse, create personalised safety plans, access financial and debt advice services and work towards rebuilding lives and economic independence.

So far, we have supported eleven women to complete the two-day programme, with feedback being hugely positive. More workshops are planned. We are privileged to be discussing with **SEA** the ambition of further joint work to incorporate our shared learning into the development and production of best practice guidance, contributing to wider efforts to address Violence Against Women and Girls.

Strong partnerships and working together are key to achieving life-changing outcomes for women and families. We have received referrals from **RISE**, **Oasis**, **Victim Support**, **Brighton Housing Trust**, **Sussex Interpreting Service** and **Southdowns**. We have outreached for additional support from **Age UK**, **Money Advice Plus**, **Flexible Fund**, **Money Works**, **Citizens Advice**, **Energy Reach**, **Pelican Parcels** and **Brighton & Hove City Council**. We are hugely appreciative for the leadership of the **City Council** and the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the strategic and wider services to address Violence Against Women and Girls.

This work is of the highest priority. **The Partnership Forum** and joint working groups are brilliant – thank you to **Anne**, **Tess** and all our partners for our shared commitment to bring about positive change.



Our Future Plans How we aim to secure the future

1 Embrace our growing membership and empower Network women and racially and ethnically minoritised communities by strengthening service design, particularly services that reduce marginalisation, discrimination and violence against women and girls.

2 Expand our holistic Casework Service, Cost of Living and Economic Abuse Programmes. Together with partners, reduce domestic violence and increase women's economic independence across the city, particularly for those in minoritised communities.

3 Inspire and foster creativity by using creative work and activities as our shared language to build friendships and trust. Showcase women's talents and cultural heritage through collaborative projects and community events that say 'this is who we are and these are our stories'.

4 Sustain the activities most enjoyed and those that improve health and wellbeing, including Food of the World, city and country walks and ecotherapy.



5 Continue developing our Volunteer Programme so that it respects women's aspirations, maximises work opportunities, skills and qualifications and opens pathways to employment and career choices.

6 Support newcomers and wider community cohesion by contributing to partnerships that make Brighton & Hove welcoming and safe. Continue our Friday sanctuary drop-in that provides advice for asylum seekers and refugees.

7 Deliver, with Sussex University and the **Roddick Foundation**, an evaluation project on the Network's impact, extending evidence of how trusted social connections build feelings of safety, access to services and social integration.

Our Finances and our thanks for all your support

Our accounts for last year, 2024/25, are published on ours and the Charity Commission's website.

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

At the beginning of the financial year (April 2025) we carried forward £87,928 restricted funds and £4,369 unrestricted funds, after designating £33,914 of this to meet future commitments.

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



Our Funders and Supporters

A huge thank you to all of those who are grant-aiding us now and in the past.

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

Our contact details: visit: www.niwbh.org | email: info@niwbh.org

CHARITY NUMBER: 1191407