

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

30th September 2021

Dear Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

Re: The Comprehensive Spending Review and Funding for the Ending Violence Against Black and Minoritised Women and Girls Sector

Imkaan submit this letter as a formal representation to the Comprehensive Spending Review.¹ We are asking for there to be a specific allocation of funding to support specialist led by and for Black and minoritised violence against women and girls (VAWG) services in the coming financial year. These life-saving services are supporting 129,765 women a year and are currently working at a funding shortfall of 39%.²

[Imkaan](#) are a specialist second tier organisation supporting 41 Black and minoritised led by and for organisations across the UK who work tirelessly to end VAWG. Our sector's expertise saves the public purse millions of pounds every year and provides innovative community-based services that work effectively from prevention through to recovery. We believe that it would be fundamentally misguided to overlook our sector in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review. We would ask that the Treasury consider *both* the human cost of failing to adequately fund our sector and the many cost benefits that our members services could bring to the economic recovery ahead.

The total cost of delivering specialist support services in the Black and minoritised women and girls sector is **£97,085,661** annually. This cost includes an inflationary increase of 3.20% and the funding shortfall of 39%. The annual cost of providing refuge services total £13,253,569. The annual cost of delivering trauma-informed wrap around holistic support services total £83,832,092.³

Annual Investment Needed for the Black and Minoritised Ending VAWG Sector⁴	
Cost of providing refuge services	£13,253,569
Cost of providing trauma-informed wrap-around holistic support	£83,832,902
Total costs	£97,085,661

¹ Imkaan writes this letter in addition to the submission of a Joint VAWG Sector letter, which is consistent with the data in this submission.

² Sheil, F. 2020. Calculating the Cost of VAWG and COVID 19 on Specialist Services for the Black and Minoritised Women and Girls Sector in England, Wales and Scotland. London. Imkaan.

³ Women-centred, trauma-informed, wrap-around, needs-led support includes the following support services (refuge services stated separately): counselling and therapeutic support, support groups, advice and advocacy covering the following issues: all forms of VAWG including sexual violence, mental and emotional health and wellbeing, legal rights, housing and resettlement support, support to young women and girls, support to children, advocacy and casework support.

⁴ We submit full costs inclusive of refuge provision, holistic trauma informed support, 39% existent underfunding, Covid related costs and shortfall, staff absence, inflationary increase. Other estimates for the sector exclude the above.

Funding Context and Cost Considerations

15 years of austerity cuts and the year-on-year decommissioning of specialist community based Black and minoritised services under public procurement has had a devastating impact on the sector and the safety of Black and minoritised women and girls.⁵ Yet, throughout 2020-21 in the midst of a Pandemic that disproportionately impacted on Black and minoritised communities, our member services continued to deliver vital services to Black and minoritised women who were excluded from and unable to access universal support. This 15-year cumulative reduction in funding has severely impacted on the long-term sustainability of these organisations leaving their staffing capacity vastly reduced. At present there are only 286 full time staff working across 41 organisations leaving a full-time staffing shortfall of 185 full time workers and services are now unable to meet current demand.

Additional Impact of Lockdown on Black and Minoritised Communities

During lockdown our member services moved to an online environment and staff began working from home however office rent, utilities, insurance, audit and professional fees and all other costs associated with running offices still had to be paid. Organisations not only covered the cost of working from home and the costs to maintain the office from their reserves (very few workers from the sector went on furlough) but also set up mutual aid initiatives for their communities as demand for crisis support increased.^{6 7} Considering the existing funding shortfall, the continuation of office-related costs and the addition of COVID-related costs, Black and minoritised women's organisations are now operating at a severe deficit for the foreseeable future. Long-term sustainable funding is a major concern for the sector, if we lose anymore specialist led by and for services it will have a detrimental effect on Black and minoritised women and children's lives and the economy.

Unfair Commissioning Landscape Increases Risk of Harm and Cost the Public Purse

Non-specialist generic providers have been able to enter the VAWG and refuge sector to provide services by commercialising provision thus undercutting the cost of support offered by specialist services. Under this commercial model women accessing support are often provided with reactive minimal support hours and as a result are more likely to return to perpetrators and have more socio-economic vulnerabilities.⁸ The Specialist led by and for Black and minoritised women's sector have been defunded and undercut by generic services who provide minimum support over a very limited period which often leads to a revolving door of harm, risk, and costly crisis interventions. As a result, there remains a dangerously high refuge bedspace shortfall of 1,172 for Black and minoritised women and a 'revolving door of crisis' for Black and minoritised women who do not receive specialist support from our member services.⁹

For Specialist Black and minoritised ending VAWG services to continue this cost-efficient work, the increase in demand and the post-pandemic recovery ahead, they need to have

⁵ For example, some local authorities reduced Supporting People budgets that fund support services in refuges by 40%.

^{6 6} Banga, B. and Roy, S. *The Impact of the Two Pandemics: VAWG and COVID-19 on Black and Minoritised Women and Girls*

⁷ As the sector moved to hybrid working, these costs became permanent thus increasing the cost of IT equipment and services, management and supervision, telecommunications, infrastructure and training and development.

⁸ Imkaan, *From Survival to Sustainability*.

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/2f475d_9cab044d7d25404d85da289b70978237.pdf

⁹ Imkaan have both data and case studies to evidence this.

sufficient investment from the Treasury in 2022. The costs of delivering services in the Black and minoritised sector have risen in the last financial year by 33% due to an increase in demand for intensive wrap around support and mental health services. This need has more than doubled alongside service user's economic instability (food scarcity, homelessness, and unemployment) and a sector staffing shortage.¹⁰

Investing in Black and Minoritised Employees and Their Organisations

Imkaan's 41 member services are transitioning to a digital working environment to meet the increased need and demand for services and to extend their reach to greater numbers of women. With adequate funding this will result in technological innovations in the use of and adaption to IT, case management and other internal systems. This will also enhance the agility and resilience of operations, workforce skills and strategic direction leading to flexibility in the workforce, and improved systems of delegated responsibilities. Member service's overhauled staffing structures have increased organisational flexibility creating new part-time roles, increased fundraising capacity and a core team with 'added value' around it. Alongside an investment in staff wellbeing and hybrid working our member services have upskilled staff by increasing professional training that enables sector organisations to better address the key needs of Black and minoritised women.

Economic Recovery and Employment as a CSR Funding Priority

At the announcement of the 2020 Spring Budget, Black and minoritised women's employment stood at just [62.5%](#). Unemployment for Black and minoritised women remains twice as high as their white counterparts. The Specialist led by and for sector has been addressing these inequalities successfully for decades increasing both training and employability opportunities and promoting the economic independence of Black and minoritised women alongside considerable intervention and prevention services. Because of this, women who access our members services are 7 times less likely to be a re-victimised than those who access generic non-specialist services and women are more likely to be in training and employment as a result of our member services' interventions and support.¹¹

Imkaan's request for investment in the specialist VAWG sector is an investment in the UK's economic recovery.¹² This approach to economic recovery based on the above variables create multiple opportunities for sustainable pathways to not only end VAWG but to also improve women's long term economic outcomes. An increase in Black and minoritised women's employment leads to safer communities, vibrant local economies, and the full economic participation of women which in turn boosts technological innovations. For every £1 in grant income received by a specialist organisation, they invest £4 in their local economy. Our member services approach to ending VAWG leads to economic recovery for disadvantaged communities and a reduction in the cost of VAWG to public services.¹³

¹⁰ There has also been a 50% increase in need for clinical supervision by staff working under tremendous pressure to deliver services while fulfilling their own carer needs for their families and communities who have been so disproportionately affected by Covid-19 related deaths and sickness.

¹¹ According to Safe Lives national data of Imkaan member services involved in their Insights programme 2018-19.

¹² We have done this by taking the following variables into consideration: current FTE staffing which is comprised of Black and minoritised women in employment investing specialist skills and experience in local economies, current user numbers for six months mapped against rising demand over 12 and 18 months, estimated real demand for six months and beyond, current refuge beds ('units') providing women with emergency accommodation and estimated real demand for bed spaces.

¹³ According to Home Office figures estimated economic and social cost of domestic abuse alone at £66bn every year, with direct costs to the Exchequer totalling over £5 billion annually including £14bn in lost working days.

As a result of Treasury investment in 2022 and in line with Imkaan's evidenced research and data we predict the following outcomes:

- A reduction in the [domestic homicide](#) and murder of Black and minoritised which remains disproportionately high.
- A reduction in VAWG and repeat and secondary victimisation which relieves pressure on statutory services and ends the revolving door of crisis interventions. This also reduces the cost to public services, the NHS, and policing due to the appropriate interventions that women receive from community-based specialist services.
- Black and minoritised women become suitably and sustainably employed by the local economy sustaining households and supporting families and communities to thrive.
- Increase in new employment opportunities in the VAWG sector upskilling and employing more Black and minoritised women and developing further innovative economic and social recovery based projects.
- Continuity of support during times of crisis or should another pandemic occur which provides an essential safety net with immediate-term outcomes to reduce VAWG and sustain the wellbeing of communities.

Our cost considerations are in line with Government priorities for the comprehensive spending review. The estimates outlined are consistent with priorities to strengthen the UK economy and improve outcomes for public services. Imkaan's members services are asking for an investment to end VAWG and to increase economic opportunities for Black and minoritised communities.

We write this on behalf of our member services from across England and Wales who also act as signatories to this letter. Should you require any further information or a further briefing on the information provided, do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Baljit Banga

Baljit Banga, Executive Director of Imkaan

Signatory Support from Imkaan's Member Services:

1. Jane Lanyero, Coordinator, **African Women's Care**
2. Fezeka Klaas, Chair, **African Women's Voices**
3. Jacqui Fray, Manager, **Amadudu Women's Refuge**
4. Joyce Simon, Manager, **Anah Project**
5. Umme Imam, Executive Director, **Angelou Centre**
6. Dr Shobha Srivastava, Chairperson, **Apna Ghar Minority Ethnic Women's Centre**
7. Zlakha Ahmed, CEO, **Apna Haq**
8. Ila Patel, Director, **Asha Projects**
9. Shaminder Ubhi, Director, **Ashiana Network**

10. Sarbjit Ganger, Director, **Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC)**
11. Mutale Merrill OBE, Chief Executive, **BAWSO**
12. Lorraine Marke, Service Manager, **Claudia Jones Organisation**
13. Dr Ibtisam Al-Farah, Development Director, **DEWA Project**
14. Sevgi Miller, Interim Director, **Diverse Women's Network**
15. Benaifer Bhandari, CEO, **Hopscotch Women's Centre**
16. Firoza Mohmed, CEO, **Humraaz**
17. Senay Dur, Director, **IMECE Women's Centre**
18. Diana Nammi, Executive Director, **Iranian & Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO)**
19. Amtal Rana, CEO, **Kiran Support Services**
20. Sawsan Salim, Director, **Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO)**
21. Yenny Tovar, Executive Director, **Latin American Women's Aid**
22. Gisela Valle, Director, **Latin American Women's Rights Service**
23. Meril Eshun Parker, Director, **London Black Women's Project**
24. Sandra Manak, Interim CEO, **Panahghar**
25. Mollin Delve, Director, **Phoebe Centre**
26. Khaldha Manzoor, Manager, **Rochdale Women's Welfare Association**
27. Surwat Sohail, CEO, **Roshni**
28. Priya Chopra, Chief Executive, **Saheli**
29. Kathleen Boodhai, Vice Chair, **Sangini**
30. Girijamba Polubothu, Manager, **Shakti Women's Aid Edinburgh**
31. Dania Thomas, Director, **Ubuntu Women's Shelter**
32. Locardia Chidanyika, Director, **Women Today**