

# Bengali Women's Health Project



W O R K

R E P O R T



2 0 0 4 - 2 0 0 5



© Bengali Women's Health Project - 2004-2005  
Charity Registration Number. 1101408

E: [info@bwhp.org](mailto:info@bwhp.org)  
URL: [www.bwhp.org](http://www.bwhp.org), [www.bwhp.co.uk](http://www.bwhp.co.uk)

Design & Layout by :  
Sadia Jafreen, [www.ecreators.co.uk](http://www.ecreators.co.uk)  
[jafreen@ecreators.co.uk](mailto:jafreen@ecreators.co.uk)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means mechanical, electronic, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Publisher.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

---

BWHP is a community project managed by the local voluntary organisations, with the financial support from the Camden Primary Care Trust. The project was set up in 1990 to promote health and well being of Bangladeshi women .Over the years the project expanded its activities and in 2004 the project became a registered charity.

Through providing regular health advisory sessions and health promotion activities available through leaflets, discussions, audio and video shows etc that are run in local community centres, BWHP provides a programme of support which is uniquely designed to meet the needs of women in the Bangladeshi community.

In particular, the strength of the project lies in its embeddedness within the community. This is evident in a huge network of local connections that has been created by the community development workers over the last decade, which proves an invaluable resource as each new initiatives is set up.

There are many changes happening in the health service and BWHP provides Bangladeshi women with a voice and a focal point for their concern.

This is the first annual report of BWHP which gives a flavour of the diverse nature of works which the project organises at the local community.

We would like to thank Camden PCT for their continued funding of the project. We also thank all the community workers, health professionals and volunteers who have involved themselves in our activities over the years.

We look forward to another year of success and achievement to share with you all.

Samina Dewan  
Chair



# CONTENTS



I. INTRODUCTION	7
II. MAIN AREAS OF WORKS	8-13
A. Health information sessions	
B. Swimming sessions	
C. Resource production	
I. Eating for a Healthy Life a guide on healthy Eating and Bangladeshi Eating Patterns	
II. Newsletter	
D. Mental Health	
I. Bangladeshi Mental Health Forum	
II. Mental health focus group	
E. Additional projects	
I. Gardening Project	
II. Outings and residential	
III. Community capacity building	
IV. Participation in the local events	
III. FUTURE PRIORITIES	14
IV. COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2004-05	15



# I. INTRODUCTION

---

The work programme of the Bengali Women's Health Project is centred around two of its key aims:

- I. To promote the health and well-being of the Bangladeshi women living or working in Camden
- II. To ensure that Bangladeshi women are able to exercise their right to health and social care services

which are accessible, acceptable and appropriate to meet their needs

Currently there are approximately 500 women on the BWHP register, in 6 participating organisations including Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre, Holborn Community Centre, Coram Parents Centre, KCB Chadswell Healthy Living Centre, Hopscotch Asian Women Centre and Surma Community Centre. The sessions are run for approximately 40 weeks per calendar year with a combination of one to one advice session and group information sessions. In addition there are a number of smaller projects which BWHP supports to increase its effectiveness in achieving its key aims.

In all its work programme, the project takes a partnership approach, working with local networks, health centres, schools, Public Health, Sure Start as well as regeneration initiatives. For example, the health advisory session at Coram Parents Centre has been extended to 3 local schools on sessional basis so as to provide additional support to parents with health promotion programmes.

## II. MAIN AREAS OF WORKS

---

These sessions provide an accessible, supportive and friendly environment where local women have an opportunity to talk to Bengali speaking doctors:

- i. to discuss healthy lifestyle issues as well as any current and past health concerns or to clarify medication prescribed by their GP;
- ii. to have advice and information if a woman has not found a satisfactory response elsewhere or simply to have reassurance;
- iii. to have simple health assessment i.e. blood pressure check;
- iv. to receive guidance on getting access to appropriate service.

### A. Health information sessions



These are organised to raise awareness on important health issues and provide an opportunity to have an elaborate discussion on a particular health topic. The participants are encouraged to discuss their understanding, concerns and anxieties about it. The size of the groups varies from 5/6 in small groups to 15/20 in larger group

sessions. In most sessions a crèche is provided for mothers participating in the discussion.

Light healthy refreshment is also arranged in these sessions. The main health issues that are covered in various centres include:

- Lifestyle issues - eating, mental health, exercise and smoking;
- Specific women's health issues;
- Older women issues;
- Children's issues- breastfeeding, weaning, common childhood diseases, immunisation;
- Specific diseases and symptoms- obesity, CVD, diabetes, mental health issues like stress and anxiety, depression, panic attacks etc.



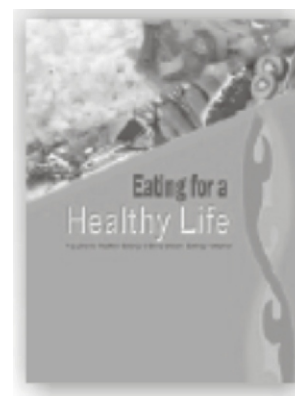
## B. Swimming sessions

Last Summer (2004) Fitzrovia centre organised a six week pilot swimming session at Kentish Town Health Centre. For some women it was their first ever swimming experience in this country. As a result of this pilot 3 women took the initiative to get leisure card and become regular swimmers. KCB Chadswell healthy living centre is organising another pilot programme starting from mid April.

## C. Resource production

### I. Eating for a Healthy Life a guide on healthy Eating and Bangladeshi Eating Patterns

BWHP has been instrumental in the production of the guide from the inception of the original idea to the final production. Whist Public Health took the lead in producing the guide, BWHP has played an important role in its production, by organising a series of focus groups through which information was gathered. BWHP provided support and assistance through out all phases of the booklets production, supporting the development of the content and layout for the final production.



Early last year (2004) Fitzrovia Centre organised a six weeks Healthy Eating workshop and the evaluation of this programme revealed the need for culturally appropriate information that are relevant to community's eating patterns. It is these findings that were used to develop the content of the guide.

The project also assisted in developing the 'Train the trainer' programme, to assist community workers and primary care health professionals to promote the healthy eating guide in the Bangladeshi community. Currently BWHP is supporting two programmes at Holborn community Centre and Fitzrovia Centre in promoting the guide. In these programmes, a very new approach was taken by initiating and elaborating discussion around healthy eating through case study. After evaluation this will be rolled out to all the participant organisations.

## II. Newsletter

BWHP supported the production of the bilingual newsletter HEAL. This news letter has been very well received by both professionals working with Bangladeshi community and the community members. It is also used as a catalyst for discussion at group health advisory session. There was a period of time where the newsletter was not produced (summer 2004 to spring 2005), production resumed in April 2005 with the focus on promoting mental health.

## D. Mental Health

### I. Bangladeshi Mental Health Forum



BWHP took the initiative in developing the Bangladeshi Mental Health Forum in 2000 as a result of the evaluation of the mental health training programme organised for front line workers. There are 30 people on the mailing list and the forum provides an opportunity to discuss

and debate on key mental health issues with the invited specialist speakers i.e. domestic violence, Asian women and self harm, Islam and mental health. It also organised training for the workers on issues like stress management and assertiveness.

Currently the forum is working closely with the primary care mental health team in developing mental health promotion leaflets for the Bangladeshi community.

### II . Mental health focus group

An outreach mental health support group was organised at Drayton Women's Mental Health Centre by KCB Chadswell Healthy Living centre in last summer. This six weeks programme allowed women to talk about their feeling and emotions in a safe and supportive environment, away from their usual environment. The group work has helped them to reflect and identify their own mental health needs and to have confidence to talk about them.



## E. Additional projects

The majority of BWHP users are women from the first generation of the Bangladeshi community, they have little or no English. When combined with traditional concepts of health (where self help and preventative measures are still emerging concepts), the project is faced with the challenge of looking for more innovative and holistic approach to involve them in health activities.

### I. Gardening Project



In the last summer BWHP, in partnership with Coram Parents centre, initiated a gardening project which gave local women an opportunity to grow their own vegetables in a plot adjacent to the centre. As well as expanding the activities on healthy eating, the project gave them an opportunity for physical activity and social contact. In particular discussion around

cooking and food preparation provided examples of how healthy eating can be incorporated in daily food habit.

### II. Outings and residential

Last summer, in partnership with participating organisations, BWHP supported occasional outings which allowed women to move out of their usual environment and gave them the opportunity to reflect on the issues that affect their mental and physical health.

BWHP also supported the developmental programme devised by Coram Parents Centre for a section of the Bangladeshi community who are identified as socially isolated, vulnerable and not accessing the statutory and voluntary sector. The programme includes a one week residential stay for children and their mother at the British Coast. One aim of this programme is to assist in the building of the women's self esteem and confidence, enabling them to identify their health needs and consequently access appropriate local health activities.

The project also supported another residential programme organised by KCB Chadswell centre at Euro-Disney.

### III. Community capacity building

BWHP emphasise the need to develop more work programmes with the younger adults along with provision of support to older people in the community.



The aims of this approach are:

- to help them (particularly second generation young parents) to take more interest in key health issues affecting the community;
- to encourage them to get involved in organising BWHP activities. As well as providing informal support in confidence building a more formal approach was also taken.

Example :Outreach Workers Course



BWHP supported Coram Parents Centre to organise an Outreach workers course where 8 women were recruited and trained on a six week programme to provide practical and social support to families in their own homes and on appointments to

hospital etc.

The project has been so successful that Sure Start Kings Cross and Holborn have now commissioned approximately 220 hours of outreach support for the period Oct 20 04 April 2005.

#### IV. Participation in the local events



The project members, through their long standing work experience with the community members, have developed informal, flexible and supportive relationship with the community members.

And the report that has been developed helps them to motivate local women to taking part in a wide variety of project activities, as well as in the local events.

This was evident in the assistance given by BWHP in ensuring active participation of local community members at a very successful health event at Surma Centre last autumn, and at the launch of Female swimming guard training programme organised by Women's Health Forum.



### III. FUTURE PRIORITIES

---



1. Raising the profile of healthy eating message in the community. Promoting the guide 'Eating for a Healthy Life' will be a key theme of the project this year, with the target of at least 60 women to go through a six week training programme.
2. To work on specific issues affecting community's health pan chewing practice.
3. To work closely with Primary Care Mental Health team to produce bilingual resources on mental health promotion, and to disseminate these resource to the community through BWHP activities.
4. To work with the sure Start Programme to develop a child health promotion programme, with a strong emphasis around breastfeeding, weaning, immunisation and dental health.



## IV. COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2004-05

---

### **Chair**

Samina Dewan

### **Secretary**

Kawser Zannath

### **Treasurer**

Tasneem Khan

### **Steering committee members**

Sofina Razzaque

Rezina Khaleque

Razia Choudhury

Razna Miah

Hena Rahman

Maureen Brewster

Nadia Islam-Jolil

Rina Khan

Marti Biswas

Mozeza Hoque

Sandra van der Feen

### **Project Doctors**

Dr. Maksuda Kadir

Dr Monowara Rahman

Dr. Halima Begum Alam

### **Sessional Workers**

Shamsia Khanom

Syeda Lutfunnessa Begum

Ruchia Begum

Sahreen Ahmed

Zarana Ahmed

### **Representative from Hopscotch Asian Women Centre**



Bengali Women's Health Project  
[www.bwhp.org](http://www.bwhp.org)