

**Southall Black Sisters**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024**



Exempted by the Office of the Immigration Services  
Commissioner, Reference no. N200100577  
Funded by London Borough of Ealing • A company limited by  
guarantee • Registered in England no. 3037955  
Charity registration no. 1204937

## Contents

Message from our Executive Director .....	3
SBS activities and achievements over the course of the preceding 12 months .....	4
Improved state responses to the needs of migrant women and girls.....	5
Reform in law, policy or practice on harmful marriage practices .....	6
Reform in law, policy or practice to reduce disproportionality on VAWG in BME communities .....	7
Forward assessment of the organisation's priorities and expected activities for the coming year .....	8
Organisation's Priorities.....	8
Develop a trauma-informed, holistic and intersectional model of best practice for working with BMM survivors of VAWG including:.....	8
To strengthen profile and strategic influence around the issues and needs of Black, minoritised and migrant women fleeing VAWG within an intersectional and human rights framework .....	8
To achieve organisational stability and financial sustainability.....	9
Expected activities for the coming year.....	10
Assessment of any risks pertaining to the organisation, its activities and its financial stability.....	10
Financial Performance to 31 Mar 2024 .....	11
SBS Management Draft Accounts as of 31 March 2024 .....	12



## Message from our Executive Director

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present this summary of Southall Black Sisters' activities for the year 2023-2024. This period has been one of significant challenges and profound achievements, as we continued our mission to support and empower Black, minoritised and migrant women facing gender-based abuse.

The socio-political climate in which we operate has been marked by increasing economic pressures, ongoing debates around immigration, and the pervasive impacts of systemic racism. These factors have intensified the vulnerabilities of the women we serve, necessitating a robust and dynamic response from our organisation.

Throughout the year, Southall Black Sisters has expanded its support services, providing critical support to **5,472** callers through our national helpline and over **800** women through direct funded projects. Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to offer legal advice, counselling, and emergency accommodation, ensuring that each woman receives the holistic wraparound support she needs to rebuild her life.

In response to the heightened demand for our services, we have also launched several new initiatives. Our community outreach programs have been particularly successful, engaging with local groups to raise awareness about domestic abuse and the resources available. Additionally, we have strengthened our partnerships with other organisations, amplifying our advocacy efforts to challenge discriminatory policies and practices.

Despite the adversities, our resilience has shone through. We have continued to advocate for policy changes at both local and national levels, ensuring that the voices of marginalised women are heard in the corridors of power. Our campaigns have focused on securing better protection for victims-survivors of domestic abuse and addressing the unique challenges faced by migrant women.

As we reflect on the past year, it is clear that our work is more crucial than ever. The unwavering support from our donors, volunteers, and partners has been instrumental in enabling us to carry out our mission. Together, we have navigated through turbulent times, emerging stronger and more determined to create a just and equitable society.

Looking ahead, Southall Black Sisters remains steadfast in our commitment to justice, equality, and empowerment. We will continue to adapt and innovate, ensuring that we provide the highest level of support to the women who rely on us.

Thank you for supporting us on this vital journey.

With solidarity and hope,

Selma Taha  
Executive Director  
Southall Black Sisters

## SBS activities and achievements over the course of the preceding 12 months

Southall Black Sister's principal activity during the year ending March 2024 continued to be the provision of frontline services for women and children escaping violence and abuse.

From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, SBS received **5,472** queries from service users and professionals across the UK through our helpline. Callers to the helpline receive advice and information, as well as signposting and referrals to local services that are appropriate for their needs if their needs do not fall within the scope of SBS services. During the same period, **706** black, minoritised and migrant women received support with gender-based violence (domestic abuse and other forms of cultural harm, such as forced marriage). In addition, counselling sessions were given to **100** women. The majority of these cases had interconnected issues such as immigration with 'no recourse to public funding' (NRPF), mental health, homelessness, suicide, and self-harm.

In addition to the direct caseworker's work with women, our support group has organised services and activities for up to 182 women and their children. Women and children have participated in a variety of workshops, including a film-making workshop hosted by the University of East Anglia, a 12-week art and horticultural course at Kew Gardens, a 12-week art workshop open to both children and adults, and a creative long-term (9-month) dance project for adults. Women and their children in the support group also visited the London Zoo, the theatre, and the cinema several times, as well as trips to Brighton, Bournemouth, and Glasgow. We also provide weekly ESOL classes.

SBS's work continues to take place within the context of the hostile environment, institutional racism and the cost-of-living crisis. Attacks on the migrant's rights continue to take place almost daily, with anti-migrant rhetoric growing in the lead up to a General Election. Our service users in the asylum system have been greatly distressed by plans to deport asylum seekers who have entered the UK "illegally" to Rwanda, making it necessary for us to campaign.

There continues to be a lack of accountability and acceptance of the findings of the Casey Report (see [met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023](https://met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023)) which found the Metropolitan police to be institutionally sexist, misogynistic, racist and homophobic. There is a significant demand for SBS's input into policing reform, with our attendance and input consistently requested at VAWG stakeholder groups organised by policing forums, including those organised by the Met Police, NPCC, IOPC and others.

We are having to strike a careful balance between collaborating with the government and challenging official policies through campaigning and legal action. The government's failure to implement a full firewall to prevent data sharing between the police and Immigration Enforcement continues to pose challenges for vulnerable victim-survivors, as does their resistance to reforming policies around the No Recourse to Public Funds condition.

SBS' work continues to be highly regarded, with prominent parliamentarians, including Sarah Champion MP, Baroness Lister and the then Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice Edward Argar commending SBS's decades of work supporting migrant victim-survivors.

### Improved state responses to the needs of migrant women and girls

This year's legislative campaign has concentrated on the Victims and Prisoners. In June 2023, we presented oral evidence on NRPF and the firewall to the Public Bill Committee, which was reviewing the Bill. During the bill's House of Commons Committee stage, Sarah Champion MP and Minister for Justice Ed Argar MP praised SBS for its 30-year campaign on this issue. We also introduced a probing amendment on NRPF in January 2024, which was tabled by Sarah Champion MP in the House of Commons, Labour's Baroness Thornton in the Committee stage, and Baroness Lister in the Report stage. This campaign gained great attention on social media and played an important role in the bill's parliamentary debate.

The Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) pilot fund was set to end in March 2023, leaving victim-survivors in a precarious position. SBS campaigned for an extension, and the pilot was extended until March 2025 pending a permanent solution. The Home Office produced an evaluation report on the SMV pilot in August 2023 (see [gov.uk/government/publications/evaluating-the-support-for-migrant-victims-smv-pilot](https://gov.uk/government/publications/evaluating-the-support-for-migrant-victims-smv-pilot)). SBS commissioned an independent evaluation of the pilot ([southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/08/final-cwasu-evaluation-of-the-programme-12th-june-2023](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/08/final-cwasu-evaluation-of-the-programme-12th-june-2023)), carried out by London Metropolitan University's Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit. Both reports highlighted the fundamental importance of the SMV pilot. However, the government's evaluation refrained from recommending long-term policy solutions.

Throughout the year, we continued discussions with Home Office officials about a long-term solution, learning that the Home Office intended to extend the DDVC to include partners of student visa and work permit holders for the present three-month period, as well as renaming the entire scheme Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC). SBS spearheaded the resistance to this change arguing that separating the Concession granting access to funds from the right to settlement under the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain would prevent many victims-survivors from coming forward for fear of deportation, and it would leave victim-survivors on a cliff-edge after three months, putting them at risk of falling out of status. Furthermore, this so-called 'extension' would be ineffective overall because it will exclude many victims-survivors of domestic abuse, namely those on non-spousal visas and undocumented women. In February 2024, when this change was announced, we issued a press release and submitted an open letter (signed by 58 other organisations) to the Home Secretary protesting these changes. (see [southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/harmful-changes-to-support-provisions-for-migrant-victims-of-domestic-abuse](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/harmful-changes-to-support-provisions-for-migrant-victims-of-domestic-abuse)).

We also convened an online public meeting to which over 140 people attended. Sarah Champion MP spoke among others and a message of support from Domestic Abuse Commissioner Nicole Jacobs was read out.

Together with Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), we also had an introductory meeting in January 2024 with Alex Davies-Jones MP, the Shadow Minister for DA and Safeguarding. We discussed the need of more protection for migrant victim-survivors with NRPF, Victims and Prisoners Bill, and Criminal Justice Bill campaigns as well as the need of clarity on Labour party policies regarding Black, minoritised, and migrant victim-survivors.

### Reform in law, policy or practice on harmful marriage practices

Forced marriage and honour-based abuse (HBA) are two key issues we have addressed this year. We provided oral and written testimony to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, which was fed into the So-Called Honour-Based Abuse Report. This report supports our call for Banaz's Law (as well as NRPF and the firewall) (see [committees.parliament.uk/publications/40929](https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/40929)). The government response to the report ignored these points prompting us to write a critique of the government response (see [southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/governments-response-to-wec-honour-base-abuse-report-another-missed-opportunity](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/governments-response-to-wec-honour-base-abuse-report-another-missed-opportunity)). We also responded to the Sentencing Council's consultation on domestic homicide in 2024 where we supported proposals to treat coercive and controlling behaviour (CCB) as an aggravating factor in manslaughter cases and a mitigating factor where the 'perpetrator' is a victim-survivors of CCB. We argued that the same principles should apply in cases of HBA.

We advocated for Banaz's Law in the Criminal Justice Bill, offering an amendment through Jess Phillips MP. This led to a debate in the House of Commons during the bill's Committee stage, as well as a disappointing response from the government. After the General Election was announced, this bill fell through.

Ministerial engagement remained high this year. In Jan 2024, we attended a Ministerial roundtable with Gareth Bacon MP, Minister for Sentencing, to discuss increased sentencing proposals. We also attended a roundtable on support for domestic violence victims organised by Minister Hollinrake, Department of Trade and fed back the need for greater support for Black, minoritised and migrant victim-survivors.

Among our significant speaking engagements was the Women's Aid Federation of England's national conference in Birmingham, where we took part in a panel discussion about the impact of the hostile environment. We also delivered HBA training to the Domestic Abuse Response Alliance at Travers Smith Law Firm, which was attended by 160 professionals. In addition, we have participated in 23 different working groups, including the Forced Marriage Unit's (FMU) Partnership Board, the National Police Chief Council's (NPCC) Forced Marriage and HBA Working Group, and the London Harmful Practices Working Group. We have also participated in discussions within the sector regarding drafting a statutory definition and guidance for HBA, in which we advocated for wider consultation on this issue before it becomes law, as it will have a significant impact on how the definition is used and implemented by agencies. We also spoke at the Faith and VAWG conference in Birmingham about the need for improved statutory responses.

In January 2024, we also participated in the GREVIO roundtable on the UK's implementation of the Istanbul Convention and contributed to the VAWG sector's shadow report on the implementation of the Convention to GREVIO (see [endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/58-vawg-organisations-submit-shadow-report-to-grevio](https://endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/58-vawg-organisations-submit-shadow-report-to-grevio)). On both occasions, we discussed the need for UK government to ratify the Istanbul Convention in full, given that lifting the reservation on Article 59 which would give residency rights to migrant victim-survivors.

## Reform in law, policy or practice to reduce disproportionality on VAWG in BME communities

A key part of our work this year was the Covid Inquiry. SBS was given a core participant status on Module 2 of the Inquiry examining the impact of the pandemic. We also made submissions to Module 1 examining government preparedness for the pandemic. As part of our detailed witness statement for Module 2, we compiled and submitted evidence from SBS, and 12 other VAWG organisations. Liz Davies KC, our representative, questioned Boris Johnson, Priti Patel, and other ministers on how the government had addressed the pandemic concerning the impact on Black, minoritised and migrant women.

This year, the Illegal Migration Act passed. We supported campaigns led by the migration sector by signing petitions, joint statements and amplifying on social media the negative impact this Act will have on migrant victim-survivors with insecure immigration status.

In December 2023, we drafted and co-ordinated an open letter to Home Secretary James Cleverley on the proposed changes to visas, including the hike in visa fees. This was signed by 70 organisations in the VAWG sector (see [southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/open-letter-on-immigration-changes](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/open-letter-on-immigration-changes)).

In March 2024, SBS co-signed a letter boycotting the Home Secretary's International Women's Day (IWD) event, as the event left out key organisations including SBS. In response, we were invited to a roundtable event discussing VAWG with the Home Secretary in May 2024, where we questioned the Home Secretary on government plans for migrant victim-survivors including the future of the SMV fund which is due to expire at the end of March 2025.

We were invited to participate in several forums aimed at tackling institutional racism. One of these was Operation Soteria, a landmark project aimed at making police investigations suspect focused and victim-survivor led. We fed

back on over 70 documents as part of development of the guidance for the National Operating Model for police forces. SBS is also a key member of the Operation Onyx scrutiny panel which reviews sexual offences and domestic violence cases from the last 10 years involving serving officers or staff where the allegation did not result in a dismissal at the time.

We also undertook social-media work on introduction of increased income thresholds for legal migrants and a blog on illegal migration (see [filia.org.uk/latest-news/2023/10/26/some-good-news-migrant-womens-fight-back-against-the-hostile-environment](https://filia.org.uk/latest-news/2023/10/26/some-good-news-migrant-womens-fight-back-against-the-hostile-environment)).

In the aftermath of the violent, racist attack on SBS Executive Director Selma Taha, we wrote to high-level Metropolitan police representatives alerting them to the event and asking them to escalate the matter. SBS's press release on this was covered by 64 publications. SBS also posted a statement titled 'Who does the police work for?' about the attack (see <https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/who-does-the-police-work-for-a-statement-by-southall-black-sisters/>). We have been providing updates on this case because the VAWG sector and civic society have expressed a strong interest.

SBS attended a sector meeting with Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on VAWG. We presented on the inequality and discrimination experienced by Black, minoritised and migrant women and submitted written input to the UN Special Rapporteur. The special Rapporteur's initial findings following her UK visit accepted several SBS recommendations including our calls for NRPF reform. (see [ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/statements/20240221-eom-statement-uk-sr-vawg](https://ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/statements/20240221-eom-statement-uk-sr-vawg)).



## Forward assessment of the organisation's priorities and expected activities for the coming year

### Organisation's Priorities

The overall aim of the charity is to highlight and challenge all forms of gender-related violence against women and girls, to empower them to gain more control over their lives, to live without fear of violence and assert their human rights to justice, equality and freedom.

### Develop a trauma-informed, holistic and intersectional model of best practice for working with BMM survivors of VAWG including:

- self-advocacy skills with service users empowered to navigate systems and move forward to independence; enabling survivors to co-create and shape VAWG responses/services.
- an intersectional approach and work to understand and meet the needs of the multiple communities
- recognising that BMM women face intersecting forms of discrimination, such as racism and sexism and address these challenges
- recognising that recovery is not always linear and therefore support needs to be tailored to individual needs

1.2 Work collaboratively with local organisations, to ensure a coordinated response to supporting BMM women survivors. Work closely with survivors to develop and enhance learning and practice. Collaborate with survivors to create safe exit strategies from abusive situations.

1.3 Develop a child-centred approach to working holistically with survivors and their children to maximise child safety and well-being.

1.4 Work with survivors to promote positive physical and mental health and well-being, and advocate for change in approaches and attitudes to BMM women's health, including physical and environmental impacts.

### To strengthen profile and strategic influence around the issues and needs of Black, minoritised and migrant women fleeing VAWG within an intersectional and human rights framework

2.1 Be a leading voice on Black, minoritised and migrant women and VAWG

2.2 Be a leading voice on No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and NRPF Fund for survivors of VAWG

2.3 Develop and launch targeted, culturally relevant public awareness training and campaigns to affect change and to educate communities and stakeholders about BMM/VAWG/NRPF/Harmful practices with focus on human rights and equality



- 2.4 Work strategically with stakeholders, including politicians to ensure all BMM survivors have access to safety, protection, rights, subsistence and support regardless of their status and that this is embedded legislatively, in practice and policy
- 2.5 Maintain, develop and strengthen partnership work to maximise impact and use strategic influence, including strategic litigation, to shape and create specialist services that work for BMM survivors
- 2.6 Work with survivors to maximise their influence and political engagement: encourage participation in black feminist activism and advocacy to address systemic issues and support BMM women in becoming ambassadors for change
- 2.7 Develop theory of change to evidence impact of work and use evidence-based approach to influence policy makers, funders and commissioners. Challenge structural racism and misogyny within an intersectional and human rights framework
- 2.8 Develop a shared mission and strategy for the legal services and community engagement team to maximise the empowerment and protection of BMM women facing abuse.

#### To achieve organisational stability and financial sustainability

- 3.1 Ensure financial stability and sustainability via a cross-cutting fundraising strategy for the organisation using targeted fundraising
- 3.2 Develop excellent communication strategies to enhance internal and external communication, including expansion of use of social media, podcasts, interviews, publicity and survivor voice.
- 3.3 Maximise upskilling and retention of workforce by developing and implementing training and development plans for all staff
- 3.4 Influence external policy and practice by developing and rolling out external training packages to key stakeholders
- 3.5 Improve financial systems and procedures including functionality of QuickBooks for maximum impact
- 3.6 Ensure safe and sustainable working practices are developed and effectively implemented: carry out rolling review and development of organisational policies and procedures
- 3.7 Review physical environment to ensure a suitable and sustainable workplace
- 3.8 Help evidence SBS's work and impact by developing and monitoring organisational systems.

## Expected activities for the coming year

- SBS's principal activity in the coming year will continue to be the provision of frontline services for women and children escaping violence and abuse
- We will continue to play an outward-facing role in terms of making representations to government and leading the charge to keep the pressure on for reform
- Developing/maintaining and sharing our expertise, competence, especially on immigration, and legacy, with partnerships and other organisations in the sector
- Organising grass roots events within the community
- Exploring new directions (femicide, immigration, human rights) and partners
- Expanding staff to meet service demands, improve capacity, and improve work-life balance. Providing training and supervision to ensure staff have a comprehensive understanding of critical areas
- Optimize social media, podcasts, and interviews, including frequent slots on local radio

## Assessment of any risks pertaining to the organisation, its activities and its financial stability

The principal objects of Southall Black Sisters charity as set out in the memorandum of association are to relieve women and their children and families, particularly those of Asian, African and Caribbean origin who are in conditions of need, hardship, danger or distress and to preserve and protect the health and advance the education of such persons.

The overall aim of the charity is to help women and children escape gender related violence and abuse.

Southall Black Sisters achieves this by providing advice, information, advocacy, casework, counselling, and similar one-to-one support and by campaigning and providing expert advice and reports to influence policy and practice at local and national level.

In order to undertake these activities Southall Black Sisters (SBS) raised income of £3.7M to 31 March 2024. SBS has diversified revenue streams, with a well-balanced funding portfolio to continue a stable financial future. Sources of funding including grant funding, corporate sponsorships, individual donations and earned income by our specialised staff.

SBS held unrestricted funds of £1.1M as of 31 March 2024. The Management Committee (Trustees) is committed to maintaining an adequate, justified, and reasonable level of reserves in line with guidance from the Charity Commission. Reserves are designated by the Trustees to ensure that the charity's finances are being properly managed and to provide an indicator of future funding needs.

SBS has invested time to develop effective financial management with accurate budgeting, financial reporting and internal controls to ensure that funding is managed in accordance with our funding agreements.

As a small Charity, risks to the organisation are competition from larger organisations. SBS offsets this risk as a Partner of London Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Consortium (formed in 2011), which are women's organisations which came together to design a co-ordinated response to the delivery of specialist VAWG services across London. This has given SBS funding opportunities as the Lead Partner in the Consortium for No Resource to Public Funds (NRPF) Programs and as a Partner in other VAWG Programs.

Other risks are compliance with legislation and regulations appropriate to the activities, size and structure of the organisation or loss of key staff.

With an increasing demand for services and the increase of cost of living, we are continually reviewing the timelines of our current funding streams and seeking opportunities to obtain new funding to adapt to this environment. Our recognised expertise in supporting black minoritised and migrant women, and years of campaigning to abolish the NRPF condition, has been key to our ability to secure funding and remain financially stable.

## Financial Performance from 1 Apr 2023 to 31 Mar 2024

Throughout the reporting period from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, Southall Black Sisters received a total of **£3,684,363** in actual annual income (draft accounts April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024). The total actual expenditure for the same period was **£3,661,999** (draft accounts April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024).

The financial result for SBS is a surplus of £22,000 which is a positive variance of £21,000 to the budgeted surplus of £1,000. The position is drafted and awaiting receipt of year end expenditure invoices.

The Charity received donations of £33,000 which was a negative variance to budget (£72,000) of £39,000. Of the £33,000 received, £14,000 was from individuals and £19,000 from corporations. SBS has now gained Charitable status and a PayPal Giving Fund account for donations will be implemented in 24/25.

Funding for projects was managed accordingly and spent as required by the funding agreements within the agreed allocations for salaries, direct costs and overheads, to ensure that resources were efficiently allocated towards the organisation's mission and projects. All project budgets allocated in 23/24 have been spent in full. SBS has continued as lead Partner in the Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Consortium for three Projects (Home Office SMV, MOPAC and Changemakers). Overall, the Partners of these Projects have also managed their allocated budgets efficiently.

SBS Management Draft Accounts as of 31 March 2024

		<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
		<u>@ 31/03/24</u>	<u>@ 31/03/24</u>	
		£	£	£
<i>UR</i>	Grants - Unrestricted	383,332	387,231	(3,899)
<i>NR</i>	Grants- No Recourse to Public Funds	2,933,820	2,607,034	326,786
<i>MH</i>	Grants - Mental Health	31,902	31,902	0
<i>HP</i>	Grants - Harmful Practices	75,882	75,882	0
<i>VAW</i>	Grants - Violence against women & girls	185,293	185,293	0
	Donations	32,897	72,000	(39,103)
	Other Income	41,237	35,500	5,737
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>3,684,363</b>	<b>3,394,842</b>	<b>289,521</b>
	Staff & Other Costs	962,633	918,193	(44,440)
	Direct Delivery	675,235	406,609	(268,626)
	Consortia Partners	1,478,715	1,481,129	2,414
	General Overhead Costs incl IT	205,806	247,932	42,126
	Central Pot - Salaries (P/T IDVA)	41,560	41,560	0
	Central Pot -Accommodation/Subsistence	298,050	298,050	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>3,661,999</b>	<b>3,393,473</b>	<b>(268,526)</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		<b>22,364</b>	<b>1,369</b>	<b>20,995</b>