Breaking the Silence Strategic Plan (to be made into a formal document once its deemed appropriate)

Umeedi

When Imran approached us all those years ago we were faced with a dilemma. The needs of the community served as our raison d’etre - but as women’s organisation, run by women for the benefit of women, supporting female survivors of abuse – overwhelmingly at the hands of women, how could we open our doors to men?

When this organisation formed in the 1980s, amidst the political turmoil of Thatcherite Britain dismantling working class communities, and the uprisings of ‘black’ (then designating the post colonial communities who made their way to the motherland), gender then made sense. After all who was willing to fight for the rights of women and girls from black and Asian communities in the tumult?

But things evolved. The Bradford riots of 1996 and 2001 on our very doorstep (literally) highlighted a wider community failure to maintain the political momentum of the 1980s and thus failing men and boys. We faced an onerous decision. How could we truly serve the community if we continued to leave work with men and boys to others. As a central hub in the Manningham community (perennially in the top 10% most income deprived constituencies in England), serving the needs of women and girls, we knew we were ideally situated to widen the scope of our support.

Imran helped us do this. He maintained that this work would make it priority not to detrimentally impact the important work we do with women and girls, but rather to enhance it. A healthier society is better for all. The Breaking the Silence service is a resounding success because of the bravery of those survivors who come forward. In their healing journey they heal families, and racialised communities as a whole. In a few short years, Breaking the Sielnce has gone from a Manningham based psychological therapies programme to a national behemoth known to Ministers, lauded by academics and practitioners for its abilithy to engage and retain this unique and in need sub-group. Their exposure on the national stage has helped raise the profile of Meridian Centre and it’s provisions.

We are immensely proud to host and manage this unique provision and look forward to it achieving all its ambitions

Shamim Khan CEO

Who are we?

Established in 2012 as a project within the Meridian Centre (formerly the Asian Women and Girls Centre) to support an increasing number of South Asian men reporting childhood sexual abuse. Hidden by powerful social and cultural patriarchal constructs of sharam, izzet and haya (loosely translated as shame, family honour and modesty), that sustain the very behaviour they seek to prevent. Combined these constructs become a form of social control that protects the abuser. The taboo around sex plays a role in maintaining the secrecy, fear and shame.

We set out to ‘Khamoshi ko Towrna’ – or break the silence on sexual abuse in South Asian communities. Over the years, as more survivors from other racialised communities came forward for support. Our services adapted, learned from survivors, and developed culturally appropriate responses that our users grant us legitimacy.

We have made a commitment to dismantling systems and structures of inequality that hinder male survivors from racialised communities seeking help. We recognise that sexual abuse is not all their story; that the daily pressures, challenges and the attendant humiliations that stem from being non-white in the mother country (being as many of us are, the children of the Empire) also inform how we see ourselves and how we view society (and by extension help-seeking from those outside our own communities). This trauma can no longer be ignored. One informs the other.

To counter, we engage in the wider body politic of anti-oppressive practice. Through training, workshops and performance work, and collaborating with ‘black’ organisations across sectors, we are educating and challenging the image of men from racialised communities in the public consciousness (existing as they do in a pre-criminal space), and the normalisation of xenophobia in modern Britain. We are also challenging the more harmful ‘masculinities’ that young racialised men are being socialised into online.

In the following pages we present to you our vision for the next decade.

**BTS History**

BTS was set up to ‘promote’ the needs of South Asian male victims/survivors of sexual violence and to advocate improved support for them

BTS was initially set up to…

Offer clinical, therapeutic support to South Asian male survivors of sexual abuse

champion the need for specialist support, recognising that South Asian males have different help seeking behaviours from white men

to challenge the culture of silence and denial about abuse in South Asian communities

to challenge existing hierarchies that uphold the structures that facilitate sexual abuse

Secure financial support for Asian male survivors. More resources were required to increase the capacity to support more Asian male survivors and improve the quality of support.

challenge the narrative of South Asian men as perpetrators

develop critical thinking workshops for professionals to recognise their bias

challenge front line statutory services and third sector bodies to improve their engagement and practice with South Asian men in need of help

Legislatively, get recognition from policy makers of the needs of Asian male survivors in law and create rights for them

BTS has achieved a lot over the last few years: Since our inception in 2012, we have managed to achieve and exceed all of these:

* Created a truly independent service for the welfare of racialised male survivors -designed by and accountable to said male survivors
* Gone from a local to a national service, clinically supervised by the NHS
* Established a range of services for racialised male survivors
* Become a central hub for training organisations to improve their practice and engagement with racialised men
* Started a conversation at community level, in the most auspiciously conservative spheres, about the structure we uphold that maintain the secrecy and denial about the sexual abuse of boys.
* Established working partnerships across the UK with organisations run by and for the benefit of racialised communities
* Raised the spectre of the black and Asian male survivor, the criminalisation and the consequences of securitisation, before ministers and senior civil servants at the Ministry of Justice, through our position on the board of the Male Survivor Partnership
* Joined the board of the Male Survivor Partnership, a collaboration of organisations supporting male survivors, to further the cause. Having joined the MSP we have taken a lead role in revamping the partnership and redesigning its aims, vision and philosophy.
* Consequently the MoJ has released the funds to finance work with racialized male survivors – our service is now funded by central government via our local Combined Authority, making us less dependent on grant making trusts
* Become associates for Safelives, Diverse Matters, Oxford against Cutting and HOPE
* Delivered recovery programmes to male survivors who are also victims of domestic abuse
* Researched and delivered a Workforce Development programme for racialised workforce, with competencies and skills to ensure greater representation where services are delivered to racialised communities
* Training Police, social workers, NHS staff and third sector bodies on improving engagement with Racialised men
* Brought in as consultant to investigate and recommend remedial action on issues of racism and inequality in helping professions (Changing Pathways, Fresh Start etc)
* Appeared on numerous radio and social media broadcasts to raise the consciousness on issues related to racialised male survivors
* Won numerous awards – never an objective but grateful nonetheless
* Resisted the overtures and lure of mass funding at the behest of the UAG and community and maintained a commitment to fund the programme ethically and without detriment to survivors or the community

**Who we engage and how (engagement strategy)**

The project targets male survivors from racialised communities. These men have protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010, and are considered disadvantaged and marginalised. They are overwhelmingly Pakistani, Indian, and Nigerian in ethnicity. We are the only programme nationally supporting this in need group of male survivors.

Almost 95% of victims/survivors have never reported their abuse before engaging our service. We support GBT men from racialised communities including Hijri (loosely translated as trans). We are the only ‘black’ led provision offering this support.

We originally targeted these men through a poster campaign using those venues that we believed (and understood as racialised men ourselves) as the most likely to reach the attention of our target audience. We used shisha lounges, snooker halls, gyms, take aways. We also utilised social media avenues using subjects and hashtags that we were relevant to the social spheres of many men from these communities. Featuring on podcasts, radio and print media articles, was also key.

We have built our reputation from the ground up – with the community on side. Users tell us this grants us ‘legitimacy’ – that they feel the service is ‘for them’ and will understand their idiosyncratic issues as they are informed by culture and religion. Never having to explain cultural concepts, or being judged for their adherence to them (and therefore alleviating feelings of shame) has been critical to our success.

Over the years we have developed a good reputation and thus, relationships with statutory agencies and ministers. Being part of the Male Survivor Partnership brought us to the attention of ministers and civil servants and provided us a national profile. Almost 40% of our referrals now come via service providers: IAPT’s, Probation, GP Social Prescribers, Victim Support, to name a few.

We recognised the need to maintain a secular humanist stance, as much of the existing provision appeared to speak to them based on their religious identities. We knew that this is but one part of their identity, and not always particularly prominent. Some were angry at ‘God’ for their suffering. Our literature made clear we employed an evidence based, secular humanist approach, that was cognisant and respectful of faith, without being tied to it.

We continue to employ this approach, making clear in our literature that we are of the community we seek to serve.

**Going forward**

Whilst we have achieved so much, the service falls short on many fronts. This strategy aims to develop the service to be fully equipped to face the challenges the next decade will bring.

BTS needs to redefine its strategy and activities to address these challenges

**Our values**

Taraqi (Develop): to encourage a wider community response from within racialised communities, developing our own institutions, organisations, bodies; developing our own work force from within; writing ethical codes, quality standards, policy and procedure

Maharat (expertise): to draw upon and magnify the skills and qualities of existing professionals, academics, managers and front line workers within our communities, and to work with funders to ensure we can provide opportunities that serve our people

Shafafiyyat (transparent): Abuse is hidden. We must not be. We must continue to speak out, even in the most conservative of cultural settings.

Saalimeeyat (veracity): To work with respect for tradition and within acceptable parameters without being subject to it

Samanj : To believe survivors and to understand that they are the best experts on their lives and their communities

Zimadaar (to respond): to educate our communities to eradicate sexual abuse

**Our Aims**

Our aspirational aim is to prevent the sexual abuse of men and boys within racialised communities.

**Our principle aims and objectives derived from these core outcomes**:

**Aim** To provide a dedicated counselling service for men and boys from racialised communities affected by sexual abuse including its related problems.

**Objectives**

• To promote the human rights of men from racialised communities

• To provide our services without discrimination and to challenge existing hierarchies that uphold the structures that facilitate sexual abuse

• To protect our service users, staff and volunteers

• To develop the project in accordance with our values

• To promote the project's support for men from racialised communities affected by sexual abuse

• To work for a greater understanding of the problems caused by abuse

• To act as a training agency for professionals and agencies to develop their practice to better serve the needs of male survivors from racialised communities

• To provide therapy services free of charge to survivors from racialised communities, which we are able to do due to the significant support from funders

Core Outcomes:

• Survivors are more in control of their lives

• Survivors have better health and well-being

• Survivors are more able to access further support

• Survivors are more able to maintain positive relationships with those who matter to them

• Survivors are more able to assert their rights

**Who we support – Equitable access**

Psychological therapies with Breaking the Silence are free of charge. Whilst we specially aim to support male survivors from racialised communities, we would never turn away a male survivor. A number of the men accessing our service are white British. We support survivors aged 16 and upwards. Clients in their 70’s are accessing our support.

We aim to provide an equitable service, offering support in English, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Pushto and Henko.

We are proud to support members of GBT communities and currently operate a bi-weekly support group for GBT Muslims in Bradford.

We know there is so much more we can do to improve our practice, in particular for Tamil, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Berber, Kurmanji and Sorani Kurdish speakers. We must improve services for refugees and asylum seekers, creating a more holistic range of support; and in particular for Hijri (trans) individuals who are increasingly accessing our support. We must also do more to support family members wishing to engage in helping the Survivor

Context

Abuse of boys and men occurs across all social institutions and cultural contexts in the UK

According to a Mankind UK research (2), about 50% of males interviewed had some form of unwanted or non-consensual sexual experience.

Whilst it is generally understood that most sexual violence occurs within the family, research has indicated that sexual violence against males is more likely in extra-familial contexts. Whilst this does not tally with the experiences of our users, we have clients who experienced all of the following

* Family & Community
  + Within families and in day-to-day life and activities
  + Within Biraderis
* Education
  + At school and university
  + In seminaries
* Faith settings
  + After school religious schools
  + Missionary settings

***“Although girls are reported by most studies to be more frequently victimized than boys, the data clearly indicates boys’ experience of CSA is substantial. In addition, boys appear to be more frequently victimized than girls in some specific contexts, such as some religious institutions and sporting organisations” (1)***

Notes (1) Mathews, B. et al. (2017) “Reports of Child Sexual Abuse of Boys and Girls: Longitudinal Trends Over a 20-Year Period in Victoria, Australia,” Child abuse & neglect, 66, pp. 9–22. The data referred to is: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004; Parent & Bannon, 2012; Parkinson, Oates, & Jayakody, 2010.”

Notes (2) https://comresglobal.com/polls/mankind-sexual-consent-poll-february-2021/ published 22/02/21

There are no national statistics on the prevalence of men from racialised communities and sexual abuse. From our own findings from our users:

* 94.9% never told anyone before
* 69.3% UNKNOWN to ANY services
* Of the 30% known to other services
* Majority have never disclosed

Sharam, izzet and haya key to silence. Fear of being disowned – the biraderi is the location of socialisation and ritual life. The biraderis are deeply bound through endogamy – they are the unit of production, of consumption – collective social and economic structure.

94.4% of perpetrators known to victim - immediate or extended family (biraderi)

44% (of those who disclose to family) told to stay silent - psychological damage to one better than abasement before the community

Respect for tradition: biraderi, khandaan and quom matter. The notion that e.g. a gay man wants to ‘fly the coop’ is based on liberal racial fantasy.

Almost 80% experienced the abuse before the age of 10.

Almost 60% of our survivors disclosed in between the ages of 25 and 64. The point at which their disclosure could not harm others (biraderis, quom, zaat).

Taboo; not a single client reported ever having sex education conversations with their parents.

86.8% identified ‘haya’ as a barrier to disclosure

Sex before marriage is highly risky; having a girlfriend is forbidden so relationships take place in secret – so disclosing sexual abuse is challenging - maintaining the secrecy, fear and shame.

Boys abused are suspected of being gay – have been sent abroad for ‘re-education – perceived as a ‘western liberal excess’; Forced marriage – punished into heterosexuality; Arranged marriage as a ‘cure’ from the perceived ‘illness’.

The protection of mother, often a trans national spouse is key to silence. 63% witnessed DV

Suicidality is very low. Religious teaching acts as a powerful barrier and tool of resilience

**People First**

We endeavour to be a people first organisation. However we recognise the difficulties this entails for men from racialised communities. We respect the need for upmost privacy and confidentiality, and we understand the impact of exposure might have for the biraderi.

Nonetheless we aspire to be a survivor-led/survivor-centric organisation, and whilst we have always trusted the expertise of survivors to guide us, the Umeed Advisory Group is a safe, secure and anonymised method for male survivors to ‘own’ the means.

The group provides us with feedback on the opportunities for improvement or what we don’t do well, giving us the foundations for change.

The Managers and Trustees have reviewed, reflected on and recorded learning, confirming workforce development and set actions to make BtS the right place for survivors from racialised communities to be!

Topics

Examples of themes concomitant to abuse that we can offer support with:

1. Honour Based abuse and Forced marriage (collaboration with Home Office Forced Marriage Unit)
2. Access – our premises are all designed for accessibility
3. Sexual Health (partnership with Bradford Black and Asian GP network)
4. Domestic Abuse Prevention (in partnership with Safelives)
5. Spiritual abuse, possession and DiD
6. Workplace issues
7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
8. Refugee & Asylum Seeker support
9. Neurodiversity
10. Sexually Harmful Behaviour

Umeedi

Through our membership on the board of the MSP and our on-going relationships with the Universities of Bath, Nottingham and Brighton, we are committed to developing in line with research and development.

Trauma destroys the social systems of care, protection, and meaning that support human life. The recovery process requires the reconstruction of these systems. The essential features of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. The recovery process therefore is based upon empowerment of the survivor and restoration of relationships.

In so doing, male survivors from racialised communities can heal from the pain of sexual abuse and trauma, towards umeedi – hope, in a better tomorrow, where he reclaims his life, his history.

Where he desires to engage more actively in the world; where he recovers his aspirations from before the trauma, or discovers for the first time his ambitions. He is ready to engage more actively in the world and wants new experiences. He recognises and prioritises his needs for recovery to help him move on. When he begins to belive he can handle his hurdles his recovery journey becomes less scary.

To do this we bring together the knowledge, experience and voice of racialised men – in contrast to the bedrock of racial abuse and inequalities. We combine this with academic research, working with black and Asian experts around the world to find a truth that works for our survivors. In so doing we collectively develop a rationale for our understanding and subsequent delivery.

We must ensure that any support and intervention offered is meeting the individuals need, and that it is effective for them.

Quality assurance

As we move towards greater Shafafiyyat (transparency), maharat and taraqi, we must develop the service in accordance with a nationally recognised set of Quality Standards. In this endeavour we have commenced the process of becoming independently accredited.

The future

As we emerge from the impact of the Prevent agenda, the Arab Spring, the global pandemic of 2020/2021, and the double standards of the Ukranian refugee programme, BTS is committed to challenging all and any inequality that impacts survivors from our community. To do this we will learn from our errors towards a better tomorrow

With the help of the Umeed Advisory Group, our partners, trustees, black and Asian sector leaders, commissioners and other stakeholders we will aim to improve the following:

1. Improving the quality and integrity of our service. To this end:
   1. Our administrative practices, how we process information, how we share information and how we use this information.
   2. Our service delivery model, how we record information and make use of learning.
2. Develop research to evidence:
   1. Our efficacy – and areas for development
   2. Issues and trends for male survivors from racialised communities
   3. Ways that services run for and by white men can better support male survivors from racialised communities
   4. Concomitant issues: honour-based violence and forced marriage; issues for GBT racialised survivors
3. Expanding the service: training new counsellors and developing services for black and Asian people across out networks to offer support in house to racialised male survivors
4. To fund the service from within the communities using the Zaka’at system of charitable donations
5. Increasing our visibility in the community, even in the most conservative of circles, to increase awareness, to educate, and to prevent.
6. Equity: making the service more equitable for the increasing numbers of new communities reaching out for help – refugees and asylim seekers; Arabic and Kurdish speakers; non Urdu/Hindi speaking Afghans and Indians; GBT, in particular Hijri individuals; and for family members wishing to engage in helping the Survivor
7. We are proud to support members of GBT communities and currently operate a bi-weekly support group for GBT Muslims in Bradford.
8. Improving engagement with Policy makers: we have developed a strong relationship with commissioners and the Ministry of Justice. We want to build this alliance to further the cause of racialized male survivors and to challenge the racialised assumptions all too prevalent in current policy making

The accreditation process is just the first step in this direction.

Ultimately this helps us serve more racialised male survivors, better, more professionally and quality assured.