



**Somali Community Needs Assessment in
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
2022**

**By H&F Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations (ASVO)
Office 4, White City Community Centre, India Way, London W12 7QT
Tel: 0800 0016282
Email: info@hfasvo.org
Website: <https://www.hfasvo.org>
Company No. 12280079**

Introduction

For the last couple of months, ASVO has been conducting a series of workshops/engagements with its users and member organizations to produce a Needs Assessment report that will be published. The report will detail key areas/ services operated by Somali organizations in the borough and make policy recommendations from a capacity level to strengthen these services long term. The objective of this report is to highlight key areas of support for member organizations and for ASVO to have the structural capacity to grow as an organization whilst increasing its service capacity through support from its local authority. The London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham incorporates large, sizable Somali residents that not only make the borough more inclusive but make the borough more diverse and richer through Somali culture and contribute enormously daily such as local business, transport, voluntary sector, teachers, carers, cleaners, service staff and it's our wish that this report does itself justice and H&F Council engage with us in implementing these recommendations. The report will set more in-depth the following key areas:

- **Funding**
- **Crime**
- **Education**
- **Young People**
- **Health**
- **Housing**

Funding



Over the last year with the pandemic still in force, ASVO and its member organizations played an important role in keeping their services intact and supporting Somali families across the borough. Somali Parents Association, Kulan Foundation, and Minaret Community Centre delivered food and aid to local Somalis across the borough who have been affected by Covid and lost employment/income. ASVO worked with its members by providing key support required, including facilitating online training that allowed our members to be digital. Member organizations attended a two-day training on media facilitated by Cream Projects which supports BAME organizations, through training, many of our members are now able to be active online, this is all due to the limited funds they received, ASVO were able to economize and find training that our members could do which would have a positive impact on their derives on the ground free of charge. We supported Good Efforts for Health in making her project workshops online, cutting costs facilitated in-person whilst also having a positive outcome due to more people accessing it online and limiting Covid infections.

ASVO signed up its s members to Sobus, attending the monthly POP meeting and forging partnerships with other like-minded organizations in the borough where our services cross paths. ASVO and its members have also been working with Katherine Hermann from the local

authority via 3SIF Grant Programme, having input on how the local funding strategy for the next five years should be spent. Lastly not least many of our members have had to make difficult decisions via operational costs. Services across the years have seen an increase in demand, yet decreases in funds and many have been struggling to meet operational costs. Members such as Minaret CC and Kulan Foundation struggled and asked for support in regards to paying for their premise facilities, and others whose projects have come to an end with no follow-up funding which had a negative impact on the members not being able to deliver key services.

Recommendations:

- H&F council to facilitate and implement core funding for Somali organizations in the Borough.
- As an umbrella organization representing 12 Somali organizations, ASVO is the main organization to disperse these fundings equally to member organizations based on areas of priority/needs for our community
- Key funders in the borough whom ASVO works very closely with need to formulate a long-term funding strategy for Somali organizations in the borough.
- As demonstrated in this report many of our members in this report still lack the capability in services that are hindered due to this, i.e., lack of trained staff, volunteers, unable to keep up with rent for their premises, these are all key issues that hinder services to the community.
- Due to demand from the Somali community in the borough for our services, there are strategic plans to widen and increase our services based on Somali needs which we require support to implement.
- A betterer support mechanism with funding applications that will allow us to make successful applications for our members, could be through advice on how to complete funding applications/ proofreading our applications.
- Local authority to communicate with ASVO on the latest rounds of funding opportunities including tailored funding for our members.
- FastTrack funding application made simpler.
- FastTrack funding process reaching organizations far too long, minimise the time so that the organization can receive funds quickly.
- More support for ASVO member organizations via bid writing capacity long-term

Housing



As overcrowding and waiting time to be housed in H&F grows, over the last year we have been supporting Somali families by assisting them in liaising with their local elected representatives on their behalf on this matter. Key issues that we tried to shed light on and focus on have been the miscommunication between Somali residents and the local authority by actively engaging with both parties. One example has been a family who has five children in a two-bed flat, with the father on the priority list due to having MS yet has been waiting for two years to be rehoused. We were able to take up his case and support him through communication levels by writing up letters, Emails, and calls on his behalf whilst having regular follow-ups on the case. ASVO members such as the Lido Foundation have also been offering advice sessions/ support for families with housing needs. Lido has built a strong foundation with our local authority, and through their many years working in this industry, have been supporting families during these difficult times. As living costs increase across the UK many of our service users have been hugely affected via their household, with energy/ food prices increasing the lead to having an adverse effect not being able to pay their rents on time, going into arrears. Due to this demand, Somali Parents Association (SP) volunteers enrolled in an intense two-week course: **Money and Debt** facilitated by the Council of Somali Organisation with other Somali organizations across the UK run by Advice UK. Having completed the training, SP volunteers are now better able to assist their service users, and money and debt, and housing are very much linked. We have noticed as more Somali families in the borough are struggling with debt and low income, and high rent, many struggles to keep up with rental payments and are seeking/ needing continuous support as this situation is at a breaking point. ASO also has been the driving factor bridging the communication/ participation between local Somali residents at White City and White City Central project to redevelop White City. Our chairman is a member of the White City Resident's Advisory Panel. Due to a high portion of the residents in White City being of Somali origin, ASVO has been taking the lead by asking key questions to the developers in the meeting, offering translation services to the Somali residents, and most importantly making sure all parties concerned are in communication with one another.

Recommendations

- Local authority to engage with ASVO as a communication link on key issues affecting Somali residents in the borough.
- Language, culture, and miscommunication are all some of the key areas that create a void between both parties, and ASVO is best placed to mediate and work as a liaison.
- Establish a relationship with the key hierarchy' in the local authority to build a strategic relationship in working together on Somali tenant's needs, this will reaffirm the community local authority is taking key steps to tackle the housing crisis in the borough.

- Implement user-friendly Somali language materials when liaising with Somali tenants to tackle miscommunication in the community.
- The local authority tries to employ more BAME employees in the borough, recruiting employees from Somali backgrounds would be an advantage to the local council, they would bring in new skills and the council would be tackling unemployment in the borough.
- Create Housing internship roles that young Somalis in the borough could apply for, this will allow them to gain valuable skills and experience with the hope of securing a permanent role near future.
- Assess Somali families' financial capabilities/ offer financial support that they may be entitled to.
- Create subsidies for low rental properties for those that are high-risk low-income families depended on benefits.
- Local authority to work with local Somali organizations on how they are tackling the increase in living and energy costs in the borough.
- Creation of a Crisis Fund.
- Improve access to homeownership by removing barriers to reduce inequality by for example enabling Islamic mortgages as money Somalis and other BAME Muslim communities cannot access a mortgage with interest due to cultural barrier.

Crime



Through our relationship with the local authority, ASVO has been in dialogue with the council GVEU Unit which deals with crime in the borough, as crime and its after effect has a devastating impact on Somali families We Have been continuing to work with in trying to organize informative workshops on key issues such as Stop and Search and know your rights so that Somali families understand the process and legal avenues available for them. Our members such as Minaret CC have also been working closely with affected Somali families whose children have been murdered/ in custody by providing tailored services including as a liaison between both the police and families. They have seen an increase in Somali families that require support and through their experience and trust in the community have been playing a pivotal role with the fewer resources at their disposal. On our side ASVO has been fostering and acting as a link with Police Safer hood Neighbourhoods by going to their events, establishing relations, and bridging them with our members so that they are able to liaise with them when required. ASVO has also been a driving force in trying to get more Somali professionals to join the Police force by promoting and creating awareness of current vacancies that are available including supporting those that may require assistance with their applications. Lastly, as there is no current data on Somali individuals in prison, ASVO through several of its members has been working on a strategy in looking at ways of supporting those individuals that are serving time in prison. It's often the case that many Somali families in the community that our members have worked with do not come forward for support that their

loved ones are locked up due to being ostracized/ highlighted in the community and those are the families we have been trying to engage with and offering support to them. Future projects include working with local prisons and training Somali offenders so that once they are released, they could be able to contribute positively to society. Looking at areas of prevention, ASVO members continue to provide youth club sessions for young teens as a way of deterring them from antisocial behaviour and gaining them valuable skills. An upcoming event such as knife crime and other workshops in partnership with the local police force is a key factor behind ASVO's community prevention plan, using face-to-face and online workshops as a way to deter young Somali teens from criminal activities. Member organizations have also been working with Somali parents to educate them on their children's behaviour and take a more productive role for their children. An example of this is SPA working with local families via its supplementary school, using that as a platform to engage with Somali parents on key concerns they may have and advise them accordingly.

Recommendations:

- Creation of monthly forum meetings where Somali organizations could engage with the police in the borough to create community cohesion and up-to-date issues the police are driving in the borough.
- Work with local Somali organizations in the borough to establish a working framework for a police-community forum to meet once a month to tackle anti-social behavior in the community that is affecting the Somali community.
- Establish a point of contact with ASVO in case of emergency situations due to its far-reach capabilities in the borough.
- Work with ASVO on compiling important data of Somalis in police custody in the borough to assess and compile reports.
- Partner with ASVO and its member organizations in planning workshops on key themes for the Somali community to better grasp a greater understanding of individual rights in case of an arrest.
- Being part of HUB will link Police, Schools, LA, and Somali organizations in the borough to work closely together on various issues affecting the community.
- Engage with us on what important steps are the police taking on Islamophobia in the borough and how we can assist going forward.
- Collaborate and engage strategically on talking key issues such as knife crime in the borough.
- Explore new ways to engage with the Somali community.
- Work with Somali organizations to tackle misinformation about local police forces in the borough.

Education



AS we recognize education is one of the main pillars that will open the doors for our Somali youth, ASVO and its member organization Good Efforts have formed a strategic relationship with William Morris Sixth form. We facilitated a series of workshops where we spoke and engaged with young people and signposted them to key facilities in the borough. Working alongside the Deputy Principle of Behaviour, and their careers department, we were able to plan and organize monthly advice drop-in sessions to engage with students and signpost them to relevant departments including Work Zone. Apart from Sixth Form students, we also provided Somali Supplementary schools with back-office support that allowed them to facilitate their services towards Somali Year 10 and 11 students, through resources such as outreach, online materials, awareness, and communication facilities with Somali parents in the borough. ASVO in partnership with our local authority and Cllr Sue Fenimore and Cllr Ben Coleman and H&F director Linda Jackson have been working together over the last year through a series of online meetings that culminated in various other local authorities coming on board including offering free ESOL and computer classes for Somali residents in the borough that will give them necessary skills to seek employment after completion. Through feedback and English not being the first language, these small initiatives allowed ASVO to promote community cohesion in the borough that will give our community and good advantage long term. ASVO is planning to expand our existing relationships with Nomad Radio long-term and is in the early stage to plan an educational podcast, digitalizing education so that it's more easily accessible for the users of our services, including engaging with Somali parents and students online. With cross-party collaboration with our external partners on this. Our priorities have always been providing the best services for our community, and through this, we are constantly developing new ideas that will facilities this. Lastly from experience, we learned that our community is an oral and visual society, and through that we implemented a strategy where we created creative monthly Newsletter and posters via Mailchimp and Canva to reach those that are unable to come to ASVO or member organization facilities for various reasons, targeting hard to reach families and supporting their children via education means.

Recommendations:

- Establish a yearly Somali Annual Education Achievement award in the borough to recognize Somali students' attainment success
- Build strategic links with local schools, and colleges as a mediator between them and Somali parents, including tackling miss-communication
- Work with local educational establishments to assess Somali attainment levels in schools without breaching GDPR regulations so that ASVO can publish reports.

- Work with local schools on early intervention to tackle school exclusions.
- Work with the local authority on new ideas that will make learning more assessable for young people.
- Encourage and support more Somali professionals to get into this sector and make a difference for our youth.
- Work with Universities to create opportunities for young people
- Increased funding in this sector.
- ASVO to establish a digital Education hub that will link, employment, training, course opportunities.

Health



Over the last Year, ASVO has been working with a consortium of Somali organizations across the UK via Diabetes UK Dr. Joan and Abdi a health worker to highlight Diabetes in the Somali community. Through a series of workshops, cross engagement ideas we were able to formulate an awareness plan that culminated in a series of Somali videos that will create awareness on this important issue, it is estimated that the BAME community is at most risk in the lifetime, and through planning these videos and taking will be distributed across London. ASVO also facilitated its member organization's Good Efforts to secure a podcast spot via Nomad Radio, the main Somali radio station in the UK, to discuss women's health issues such as FGM, Sexual Health, and Healthy Eating to name a few. We created a creative simple online questionnaire via Survey Monkey, invite qualified professionals and promote the podcast across the borough. ASVO also supported two of its member organizations Kulan Foundation, and Minaret CC to roll out their Mental Health projects starting April 2022, we were able to provide the capacity level requested by both organizations including ideas, promotion materials, and trying to link them with other organizations who facilitated similar projects. Through our hard work over the last year, we were contacted by Dr. Rahma from Wipps Hospital, and Dr Jonathan to support them on Mental Health project they are leading on through online meetings, and workshops with the aim of publishing report findings. Also, through cross collaborations and several of our member organizations, we are actively working with Dr Allaa and his team from NHS West London through community engagement events/ initiatives in the borough. ASVO works with Allaa and his team via Sobus Forum for local organizations and is currently planning a Business Enterprise Event where we will link NHS

West London with the Somali community, including discussions on key initiatives and ideas that NHS takes to make it easier for Somali residents in the borough to access key health facilities/ services they require via ASVO. During and post-Covid pandemic, ASVO worked very closely with our local NHS/ local authority in containing the virus. We set up an online meeting with key health professionals that allowed ASVO to convey Covid guidelines to the Somali community through workshops/ online meetings and engaging with our member organizations working collectively. ASVO ALSO promoted Covid vaccines and the importance of getting jabbed, promoting NHS material in the Somali language to our community to brighten the language gap in the community. Lastly, ASVO promoted key vaccine centers in the borough via our Monthly newsletter so that the Somali community is aware of where to get their vaccines.

Recommendations:

- ASVO to be the main Somali organization in West London to coordinate and liaise with NHS West London on Somali community wellbeing
- Work with local GPs, and other health services in the borough and be the main face of contact for our community
- Recruit qualified staff to tackle an increase in Mental Health, Diabetes, obesity, and other health-related issues affecting our community
- Organize and promote regular health events with qualified professionals culminating in a health plan going forward for Somali residents
- ASVO to tackle and support Disabled Somali residents who need representation and support.
- ASVO to translate health materials to Somali so that local residents can have accessibility and understand them
- Empower young Somali boys and girls from an early age to become health professionals.
- Work with Somali organizations across the borough to culminate new health ideas.
- ASVO to assess what health provisions are most at the need for our residents and work with local health services to implement them.
- Assess the affordability of medication at a time of high living costs and see what practical steps can be taken to make them more affordable.

Young People:

In partnership with H&F job centre/ Workzone, ASVO participated in Kickstart Scheme and successfully employed a young person to support Minaret CC as an admin officer. Since then, Hanae has been able to build up the following skills, communication, organization events, and public speaking through the capacity level from ASVO. One of the main strategic priorities of ASVO and its members has been to be able to give a foundation of support for our youth to grow and blossom in the borough. During school holidays our members also facilitated activities week via a partnership with external partners including our local authority to organize local activities such as football, outdoor and indoor activities with more than two hundred Somali children attending from the borough, this was facilitated by Kulan Foundation, Minaret CC, Al Ansar FC. Our member M&C foundation is currently training young people via Taekwondo with selected individuals soon to be traveling abroad and competing in international competitions representing the UK. Through capacity level, we have worked with

M&C Foundation in promoting their GoFundMe page to raise costs for the tournament by working with our partnerships to assess current funds that they may be able to eligible to apply. Post-Covid saw a demand for sports activities due to the adverse effects of UK-wide lockdowns, so it was inspiring to see Leaf Education facilities and run Somali girls football sessions for the first time in the borough, since then they have seen an uptake in enrolment, breaking barriers that Somali women should not be competing for such sport. Working with them, we were able to not only create an awareness strategy for the project, but also create marketing materials, and work with the wider Somali community as a link to promote the football sessions. Lastly has been working with local Somali health professionals/ member organizations on young Somalis in the borough becoming paralyzed/ life-changing systems on a new drug craze involving balloons. Through various consultations and strategies, we are working on highlighting this issue putting all our combined resources together without external partners.

Recommendation

- Creation of more youth provisions for young people
- Work with local security on new initiatives that will benefit young people.
- Promote young Somali role models in the community.
- Promote employment opportunities via Warzone across to tackle youth unemployment.
- Organize Youth workshops that will address their concerns and create a plan on how to tackle those issues.
- Empower young people to take up decision-making process roles in the borough.
- Support further education application, and funding application process by providing advice sessions.
- Create opportunities for young people to gain valuable skills via Kickstart.
- Create a Somali day event every year where young people take the lead in organisation it with ASVO.
- More investment opportunities for young people to take up mentoring positions.

Additional Priorities Areas:

Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion has been another key area where ASVO has been assessing, looking at ways member organizations are the best place to deliver their services digitally. Regarding this section, ASO has been working with Aklima, the community engagement officer from the GLA, Aklima and her work colleagues to gain access to training and digital events for ASVO and its members, including access to upcoming events and projects for local organizations including creating video content for our members. The GLA and the Mayor of London have prioritized the voluntary sector for its important work, and through that ASVO prioritized being constantly aware of new digital projects that our members can apply and take part in with the great relationship we have formed with it community engagement department.

Environment and climate change:

To tackle Climate change, ASVO has been working with Emily from Hammersmith and Fulham Council's Climate team, forming a relationship based on promoting key initiatives from the

council to make the borough greener. ASVO has introduced Emily and the team to ASVO members, including looking advising climate material via the Somali language to distribute to the community. The Climate team also promoted their services via a Community Event organized by Health and Wellbeing for all alongside 30 other local businesses and stall holders in White to promote community cohesion in the borough. Going forward ASVO is exploring ways to make our local Somali community more eco-friendly, including sustainability.

Cost of Living

ASVO and its member organizations have been working in partnership with Hammersmith and Fulham Council to address the needs of the Somali Community whose current financial and cost needs are monumental. Working alongside H&F Community Outreach Officer Sagal Ahmed, ASVO has been signposting Somali families to key facilities in the borough that are able to provide and support these families. ASVO has also been taking the lead in engaging with our local authority, including being invited to take part in decision-making sessions where ASVO has been able to input its ideas such as financial support/ Energy coupons/ Food Banks, and free food deliveries to local Somali families in the borough. ASVO members also working with Hammersmith United to help struggling families with high bills and prices. The local council should increase support for low-income struggling families especially as winter is approaching and find ways to raise additional resources. ASVO and LBHF continue working together to support vulnerable community members.

Conclusion:

Throughout this report, ASVO and its member organizations have highlighted important work undertaken over the last year. Whilst the Covid pandemic has created the greatest challenge our community has seen, via capacity level with minimum resources we were able to meet the demands and huge responsibility on our shoulders. Whilst it's important to note the vast Somali member organizations that fall under the ASVO umbrella are small organizations via resource, funding, and capacity level, they are still able to provide important services daily those local Somali residents require support with, in many cases demand exceeding capacity levels. For ASVO to fully reach its potential, the local authority must strategically support the organization and its member by providing additional **(Support-Funding-Training; Development)** that will make a huge impact on the lives of residents. Hammersmith and Fulham have a duty to support the aspirations of Somali residents in the bough due it its large population, including more face-to-face engagement with our member organizations on the excellent community-led projects they are leading on. Lastly, the local authority should engage with ASVO to create a strategic plan that details a blueprint on way for all the key issues highlighted in this report. ASVO was created as a pillar of voice for the Somali community due it its under-representation in many key areas in the borough and through this report, it is paramount that key changes are required on assessing how best to implement these recommendations to reduce inequalities and going forward.

End of Report