

British Somali Community

Background

British Somali Community (BSC) is a women-led refugee community organisation run by and for Somali families in Camden; it was established in May 1995 in Camden Town.

Our aim is the integration of the Somali community into UK society while preserving the community's cultural heritage. Our mission is to make significant improvements in the lives of Somali families by addressing the educational and recreational needs of Somali children and young people and the educational, employment and health needs of Somali women including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

We pursue our aims through the culturally sensitive provision of a wide range of projects and activities in consultation and partnership with other statutory, voluntary and local community organizations.

Key Activities

A Weekend supplementary school at Parliament Hill School, attended by an average of 80 young people each week, which aims to improve the educational attainment of young Somalis and members of other refugee communities.

FGM Project which aims to raise awareness of FGM and to strengthen the voice of women and communities speaking out against the practice. This project has been unique in Camden and BSC had been running on voluntary basis for so many years.

A Parents' Support Project providing learning opportunities for adults, primarily the parents of children who attend the Supplementary School, including ESOL classes, parenting program parents' conferences and inter-generational projects

A Family Support Project providing advice and guidance to young people and their families where the young person is at risk of involvement with social services and/or the criminal justice system.

Elder Women and Careers Project providing activities and social interaction for elderly Somali women, including health exercises and seminars at Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre .

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Structure & Leadership

The charity is managed by 9 elected female trustee members, and is staffed by 2 full-time & 8 part-time employee as well as 25 volunteers. The office is open from Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 5.00pm, however, the charity's work may extends to weekends for

the Supplementary school and Parents training which takes place at school premises (Parliament Hill School).

Success, Challenges & Crises

Our most successful project is our weekly Somali Supplementary School for up to 100-over children and young people aged from 6- 17. We had received a Gold Award for outstanding performance in the Pan-London Supplementary School Quality Framework, presented to us by Lord Adonis, Under-Secretary of State for Schools on November 30th 2006; our Gold Award was re -invalidated in 2012.

Key challenges BSC faces is as its leaders being women without voice due to the absence of Somali woman in the decision making that caused our issue to be overlooked. Working for the community on the grassroots level for nearly 20 years, our services are being scattered at different locations in Camden which caused high demand for premises hire and limited bookings as well as unaffordable resources is needed. Indeed we have been claiming the need for premises since 2002 following the unexpected termination of our use from San Martin Community Centre's offices. More indeed, we are currently facing a more serious premises issue which is to vacate our current co-shared private space by June 23rd June 2014.

Conclusion

We believe if we win the offer of the property at 7-8 Crowndale Street NW1 that it will enable us to continue serving the community in a more effective and efficient way and would restore the confidence of families users to feel a sense of belonging and being part of the society.