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Quetzal



Breaking the Silence Initiative EVALUATION

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Executive summary

Introduction

Quetzal was funded for the Breaking the Silence Initiative in December 2018 through Tampon Tax Fund through the co-partnership between Comic Relief and the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport.

The project aimed to mitigate the impact of sexual violence in childhood experienced by Asian women in Leicester, to improve their mental health and well-being, and to equip them with the knowledge and tools to make positive choices about their lives. This included: 1. setting up a web-based self-help package and awareness-raising strategy tailored to the needs of Asian women; 2. supporting isolated survivors of childhood sexual abuse with multiple complex needs into therapeutic counselling; 3. testing new monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches, be more reflective and to share learning in Leicester, Leicestershire and beyond.

The impetus for the project came from analysing Quetzal's data around who was using the service, and identifying that South Asian women were under-represented compared to the make-up of the local community as well as from looking at issues raised by external research around the involvement of South Asian women.

Evaluation questions

The final evaluation set out to answer the following questions:

1. Has the Breaking the Silence Initiative facilitated an effective community-based approach and awareness-raising strategy for South Asian women in Leicester?
2. What hinders and supports the delivery and replicability of the community-based approach for this client group?
3. What plans does Quetzal have to ensure continuous improvement in maintaining relationships with the South Asian communities and in reaching new communities?
4. To what extent has Quetzal strengthened its MEL systems and effectively integrated the learning into the organisation's practice?

Breaking the Silence Initiative activities

Project activities have included:

- **Delivery of counselling sessions especially for South Asian women** – since the implementation of Quetzal's new database in August 2020, 424 counselling sessions delivered to approximately 53 South Asian women have been recorded.

- **Recruitment of Community Connector volunteers** to open up opportunities for relationships and build connections with universities in particular, involving volunteers from South Asian and other communities. Volunteers have been involved in delivering training to a range of different groups about the issue.
- **Website and social media development** including promotional videos.
- **A self help guide** downloadable from Quetzal's website, <https://quetzal.org.uk/read-our-self-help-guide/> which has received 269 downloads.
- **YouTube videos** made with videographer Nikhil Mistry to animate Breaking the Silence counselling clients' words, available on Quetzal's [YouTube channel](#).
- **Community awareness raising sessions, training and workshops** where Quetzal held discussions with local communities and attended online meetings of external organisations and groups to ask what can be done to raise more awareness about the issues and to introduce Quetzal's support
- **Development of posters** with graphic designer Poonam from Thanki scribbles and mendhi artist Tayyibah Lockhatto to order, download and share, from <https://quetzal.org.uk/download-and-share-quetzal-new-leaflets-and-posters/>.
- **Increased referrals for counselling** through outreach to partners.

Findings

Question one: has Breaking the Silence facilitated an effective community-based approach and awareness-raising strategy for South Asian women in Leicester?

Working with South Asian communities

Differences in working with South Asian women than with other communities identified:

- Access to information.
- Concerns that the services are not for them or won't help them.
- Freedom of access.
- Wider cultural expectations in relation to honour and shame and what will happen if information is shared.
- Feeling disloyal to the community by talking about experience of sexual abuse.
- Lack of disclosure to family and friends compared to other communities.

Changes as a result of Breaking the Silence

The main changes for **Quetzal** have been:

- The change to an outreach model through Breaking the Silence made a significant difference, changing Quetzal to a much more outwardly focused organisation, increasing its reach, reputation and influence.

- Involving Community Connector volunteers to engage with different communities.
- Establishing 16-week counselling delivery and working with counsellors to focus this.
- Delivering wider range of services than solely one-to-one counselling, creating more of a community outside the therapy.
- Improving how services are monitored and evaluated and how stories of change are collected and told, including through using the Lamplight database for better analysis.

Changes for **beneficiaries** (clients) include:

- An 80% increase in South Asian female survivors accessing counselling since the beginning of the project¹, including more younger clients and more self-referrals.
- Following counselling, women have gone on to gain paid employment, undertaken talks about childhood sexual abuse, reduced unhelpful habits such as substance misuse, and identified changes such as an increase in self-awareness and confidence.

Individuals who were interviewed identified changes such as an increase in skills (particularly for volunteers), increase in awareness around childhood sexual abuse in South Asian communities, and more appreciation of the benefits of partnership working.

Partner organisations interviewed identified how working with Quetzal had enhanced the services that they provided for their beneficiaries. Working together for strategic purposes, influencing and leveraging funding, and mutual support were highlighted as important. Working with partners has been crucial to the success of the Breaking the Silence project, including outreach and participating in joint delivery of workshops, which then created referrals to Quetzal for counselling services.

Changes for **South Asian communities** as a whole were more difficult to quantify within the scope of this evaluation, although interviewees thought that there had been a shift in the people that they were working with South Asian women being more comfortable in talking about issues that have been taboo. The videos were identified as helpful for this.

What hinders and supports success

Question two: what hinders and supports the delivery and replicability of the community-based approach for this client group?

What factors support the delivery of a community-based approach?

- The Project Facilitator with the right skills and experience, particularly around Asset-Based Community Development.

¹ Monitoring information available on Quetzal's website <https://quetzal.org.uk/break-the-silence/>

- The Project Counsellor's commitment and developing expertise, having one person who could focus on the project and build up knowledge and expertise.
- Involvement and support of Community Connector volunteers giving greater representation across different South Asian communities.
- Taking an incremental approach with it was highlighted that lots of small changes helped, coming at the issue from different angles and involving different people.
- Telling stories about the project, using information from women outside the organisation to give them a voice.
- Having existing community groups to work with in Leicester with many organisations with a strong history of working with the South Asian community.
- Trust between stakeholders including trust between organisations as well as trust of organisations by (potential) beneficiaries.
- Enthusiasm of partners to work together, including this being easier with more online meetings and a greater desire to reach out for peer support during Covid.
- Being able to talk to South Asian women directly not through intermediaries who may censor information, with the importance of women only space identified.
- The power of women connecting with others with shared experiences.
- Working with partners to support individual clients through casework and referrals.
- Publicity targeted towards South Asian women using specific language and imagery.
- Helping women feel that services are for them so they are more likely to come forward.
- Flexibility of delivery to suit partners, enabled in part by volunteers.
- The combination of outreach and counselling and self-help guide so that there was a specific offer for beneficiaries from Quetzal rather than it just being awareness-raising.
- Clinical supervision for staff to make sense of their experiences given the nature of the work.
- Getting involved in national campaigns on social media to increase awareness of what was happening in Leicester and Leicestershire.

What hinders the community-based approach?

- Initial lack of contacts in the community, with the facilitator needing to make a lot of "cold calls" at the beginning.
- The difficulty of talking about childhood sexual abuse.
- The capacity needed for outreach work, ameliorated to some extent by the involvement of the Community Connector volunteers.
- Not delivering in community languages, one of the challenges of delivering ongoing services with volunteer counsellors who may only stay for a short time and not wanting to set up expectations that cannot be met.
- Proportion of people not attending for counselling appointments over summer, when holidays (including from university) disrupted normal attendance.

- Lack of childcare for women to be able to attend.
- The length of the project - the bigger picture around the work that needs to be done is not a three-year project, but activity that may need 5-10 years of funding to achieve.

Changes in plans

There were some plans that were changed during the delivery of the project:

- Setting up the project, particularly staff recruitment took longer than planned and in turn this affected target numbers, although funders Comic Relief were very receptive to working with Quetzal around this.
- It was initially planned that counselling would be provided within people's communities, but many women fed back that they preferred to attend Quetzal in the city centre because it was more private.
- Recruitment of volunteer Community Connectors because the need for outreach capacity was greater than envisaged.
- Covid-19 halted all of Quetzal's face to face counselling temporarily and services were delivered online or by telephone, but South Asian clients were less likely to want to undertake online or telephone counselling because of the difficulties of finding a place in their home to talk safely and confidentially, so face-to-face counselling on the Breaking the Silence project started back in person before mainstream counselling.
- Outreach moved online, which may have opened up more opportunities for women who would not have attended an event in person, but this may be at the expense of depth of connection which may be important when dealing with these issues.

The background of staff

Staff and volunteers delivering this project and evaluation were from a range of backgrounds, not solely South Asian. There were mixed views about this. Some interviewees highlighted that there were benefits to having people who were not from the South Asian community and that other factors were also important, having someone to listen and understand who would not judge them. For people who are concerned about information being shared in their community, having someone who is not part of the community is a clear barrier. Creating connections across different groups of women was also mentioned as important so as not to see this as solely something that happens in South Asian communities.

Some interviewees thought that it was important to have South Asian staff or volunteers, for example they would better understand the culture without it needing to be explained; it would help women not feel they are being disloyal to their community, including concerns about racism and discrimination, or about feeling their community is being

judged; or that women are better able to identify with other South Asian women, or having South Asian women as “role models”.

Interviewees identified that Quetzal had managed relationships across communities sensitively and regardless of ethnicity, interviewees emphasised the importance of staff and volunteers having the relevant background so that the knowledge is held by everyone that women come into contact with, not just within one element of the service.

These findings are similar to external research quoted in the report that finds a mixed picture.

Future plans for South Asian and other communities

Question three: what plans does Quetzal have to ensure continuous improvement in maintaining relationships with the South Asian communities and in reaching new communities?

Although the specific counselling provision will end with the end of the Breaking the Silence Initiative and South Asian women will join the main waiting list, there is an intention to continue to partner with organisations working with South Asian women and a desire from partners to continue to undertake this work, so it will be important to take time to mainstream the work to sustain the changes that have been made as a result of this project.

Interviewees felt that the approach that Breaking the Silence project took would translate to other communities, those mentioned included Black British / African Caribbean communities, with one interviewee saying that they thought that there were similar taboos to South Asian communities; Eastern European people where there may be parallels in relation to religion, as many have Catholic upbringings; and traveller communities. It was suggested that starting with volunteers and partners from these communities at the project development stage rather than getting people involved just in the delivery would help.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning systems

Question four: to what extent has Quetzal strengthened its monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and effectively integrated the learning into the organisation's practice?

Quetzal staff indicated that there had been a step change in the information that is collected in tandem with the introduction of a database that is able to collect and analyse data in a more sophisticated way for strategy, influencing policy, impact reporting and marketing, or informing service delivery. This is still under development.

There has also been a lot of gathering people's stories and using these in different ways; Quetzal is still considering what happens with the data and stories to publicise the project as far as possible.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been made for further development, including in areas such as:

- **Continuing work with South Asian communities** – such as focused work considering where change might be best achieved; identifying whether developing services in community languages is feasible and considering other developments to meet the preferences of women; working with funders to identify longer term funding.
- **Maintaining and developing relationships with partners** – including meetings specifically looking at working with the South Asian and other communities for referrals, joint projects, and influencing decision-makers; identifying organisations working in the South Asian community for future joint work.
- **Collecting, analysing and using data** – for example measuring changes for partners and communities as the work progresses; reviewing CORE outcomes to provide information on access to services and outcomes for people from different communities; reviewing how data is used and whether the right things are being collected; considering how to monitor the longer-term impact of the project.
- **Continuing outreach and marketing** – including use of materials developed during the project; and how the approach of capturing women's stories can be used for other projects.
- **Mainstreaming services and learning** – ensuring that learning is shared with trustees, staff and volunteers across the organisation; utilise learning about the time taken for start-up in future projects; ensuring that there are exit plans for staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries where work is no longer continuing.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to Breaking the Silence

Quetzal was funded for the Breaking the Silence Initiative in December 2018 through Tampon Tax Fund through the co-partnership between Comic Relief and the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport.

The project aimed to mitigate the impact of sexual violence in childhood experienced by Asian women in Leicester, to improve their mental health and well-being, and to equip them with the knowledge and tools to make positive choices about their lives. There were three main objectives:

- To set up a web-based self-help package and awareness-raising strategy tailored to the needs of Asian women to help them address common issues and gain the confidence to seek further help.
- To access isolated survivors of childhood sexual abuse with multiple complex needs and support them into therapeutic counselling to address the impact of their abuse, and improve their mental health, well-being and safety.
- To test new monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approaches and be more reflective in Quetzal's work, and to share learning in Leicester, Leicestershire and beyond.

The impetus for the project came from analysing Quetzal's data around who was using the service, and identifying that South Asian women were under-represented compared to the make-up of the local community as well as from looking at issues raised by external research around the involvement of South Asian women.

1.2 Evaluation questions

The final evaluation set out to answer the following questions:

1. Has the Breaking the Silence Initiative facilitated an effective community-based approach and awareness-raising strategy for South Asian women in Leicester?
2. What hinders and supports the delivery and replicability of the community-based approach for this client group?
3. What plans does Quetzal have to ensure continuous improvement in maintaining relationships with the South Asian communities and in reaching new communities?
4. To what extent has Quetzal strengthened its MEL systems and effectively integrated the learning into the organisation's practice?

Each of these questions is addressed below in the findings section.

1.3 Breaking the Silence Initiative activities

Project activities have included:

- **Delivery of counselling sessions especially for South Asian women** – since the implementation of Quetzal’s new CRM system Lamplight in August 2020, 424 counselling sessions delivered to approximately 53 South Asian Women have been recorded.
- **Recruitment of Community Connector volunteers** that has opened up opportunities for relationships and built connections with universities in particular. This has enabled the involvement of volunteers from South Asian and other communities. One volunteer described getting an email through the university about the volunteer opportunity with Breaking the Silence and wanted to get involved because of her South Asian background,

“Knowing some of the more very specific cultural issues within that community, I thought that this was a very important cause to get involved with, because I know first-hand how issues of honour and family can be detrimental to survivors coming out about their abuse.”
(Community Connector Volunteer)

Volunteers have been involved in delivering training to a range of different groups about the issue.

- **Website and social media development** including promotional videos. Quetzal now connects to the community using social media whereas there was previously no expertise in this area,

“The written communications were really clear, so I just want to commend the team for that.” (Partner)

Volunteers played a big part in this,

“We’ve received a lot of engagement on social media, platforms, Twitter and Instagram. I help with the Twitter account and another volunteer makes Instagram posts and we’ve received a lot of engagement through there.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

- **Self help guide** that is being used for all clients, not just South Asian women – Quetzal is able to give it out immediately someone contacts them to work through it before starting counselling if they are on a waiting list. The guide is downloadable from Quetzal’s website, <https://quetzal.org.uk/read-our-self-help-guide/> and has received 269 downloads. Of these, 11% identified as South Asian, although some may be staff or volunteers who are using the guide with South Asian clients.
- **YouTube videos** made with Leicester videographer [Nikhil Mistry](#) to animate the words of clients who have accessed counselling through Breaking the Silence. These are

available on Quetzal's [YouTube channel](#) and were shown at a live session with plans to disseminate them further in the future. The aim was to make something that wasn't too long, and that people could access on a mobile phone to increase the chances of people viewing them.



Picture from animated video



Picture from video about the counselling process

Community awareness raising sessions, training and workshops where Quetzal held discussions with local communities to ask what can be done to raise more awareness about domestic and sexual abuse in BAME communities as well as to introduce Quetzal's range of support². These were mainly delivered via Zoom, from a five-minute presentation to an hour discussion through the to various communities including [H.O.P.E Training and Consultancy](#), [WOW \(Women of the World\)](#), [Dosti Leicester](#), [Trade Sexual Health](#), [Lightseekers](#) Ways to Wellbeing, and [South Asian Health Action](#). There was also an Instagram live with the [Sikh Student Society](#).

"[The Project Facilitator] did [the workshop] online. It was brilliant. What they're doing is wonderful, I hope they carry on, I just think we need more visibility." (Partner)

- **Development of posters** with graphic designer Poonam from [Thanki Scribbles](#) and mendhi artist [Tayyibah Lockhatto](#) to order, download and share, from <https://quetzal.org.uk/download-and-share-quetzal-new-leaflets-and-posters/>.
- **Increased referrals for counselling** as a result of delivering workshops and social media presence, in particular an increase in self-referrals, as well as through GPs, hospitals, police, and domestic and sexual violence charity UAVA. At the end of 2021, Quetzal identified that there has been an 80% increase in the number of South Asian female survivors since the beginning of the project³. It was identified that the differences in referral numbers each quarter may be due to website launch and changes to SEO (search engine optimisation), making information easier to find.

² Reports from these sessions are available at <https://quetzal.org.uk/learn-from-the-breaking-the-silence-initiative-community-discussion/> and <https://quetzal.org.uk/learn-from-the-breaking-the-silence-initiative-community-discussion-2/>

³ Monitoring information available on Quetzal's website <https://quetzal.org.uk/break-the-silence/>

1.4 Baseline evaluation report findings

A baseline evaluation report was produced by consultant Mary Healy in March 2020. This reports that the Breaking the Silence Initiative was instigated because Quetzal recognised that although at the time 38% of Leicester's population was Asian, only 29% of Quetzal's clients were from this community.

The project initially focused on an area with a high South Asian population: Spinney Hills, Abbey and Belgrave wards to the east of Leicester. A Project Facilitator role was created to manage the project at 10 hours per week, combined with a Development Officer role at 15 hours per week to give a 25 hour per week post.

The baseline evaluation report highlighted some factors in the initial stages:

- Quetzal under-estimated the time taken to initiate the project including hiring staff. This required renegotiating targets with Comic Relief, who were very receptive to discussions about changes.
- The self-help pack was originally intended to be produced by November 2019, but this took longer than planned and was finalised in June 2020.
- The original plan was to involve volunteer counsellors, but it was decided in the end to employ a counsellor who would undertake all of the counselling on the project.
- Discussion of needing to balance outreach with not creating a demand that can't be met by the project.
- The marketing plan outlined key audiences and levels of communication, channels, hooks and resources, but was less clear about who was going to be targeted and how this would be measured.
- There was a clear sense of targets and how the project was going to be measured with a well-documented process, although there was a lot of information about this and the timing, source and purpose are not always clear. Other changes including a new website and new database were further factors that the report was concerned would add complexity for staff implementing systems.
- There is a lack of baseline data about the current level of awareness about childhood sexual assault in the South Asian community for before and after measurements.
- The report raised questions about working with older or younger women in the community, who may have different perspectives and experiences, indicating that the importance was "passion for the issue, regardless of age".
- Lack of clarity about whether the learning had been shared with the wider team.
- The amount of time that clients are on the general Quetzal waiting list for counselling has been a deterrent in the past, and the report suggests the exploration of alternative forms of service delivery such as group therapy.
- The importance of focusing on what will work best rather than over-focusing on targets identified in funding applications.

2. Findings

2.1 Effectiveness of the approach

Question one: has Breaking the Silence facilitated an effective community-based approach and awareness-raising strategy for South Asian women in Leicester?

2.1.1 What is different about work with South Asian communities?

The main differences that interviewees identified in working with South Asian women as opposed to other communities were:

- **Access to information** that the services exist in the first place.
- **Concerns that the services are not for them or won't help them** if women don't see themselves represented in promotional materials.
- **Freedom of access** for women who may find it more difficult to get out of the house or find safe space to talk.
- **Wider cultural expectations** in relation to honour and shame, and greater concerns about what will happen to them and their wider families if information is shared,

"It often falls on women to safeguard family honour, and something like sexual abuse, when they do tell somebody in the family that this has been done, especially if it's by a relative, then they are encouraged to push it under the carpet to not talk about it. Otherwise, it would bring shame upon the family, that they might become socially isolated from the community."
(Community Connector Volunteer)

"The level of shame and the guilt and the self-blame and self-worth is not hugely different clinically [between South Asian clients and those from other communities], it doesn't usually differ when it comes to their individual processes. But then you've got the culture around it, and that increases whatever feeling that is going on with them." (Quetzal staff)

"It's a taboo subject, the community will suppress it, women are told 'No one's going to marry you' if they speak out." (Partner)

However, levels of involvement of individuals in the wider South Asian community vary, having an impact on how they are reached, particularly for younger women for whom one interviewee commented that,

"Being South Asian is only one small part of their wider identity rather than being the overriding element of it." (Quetzal staff)

- **Feeling disloyal** to the community by talking about experience of sexual abuse.

- **Lack of disclosure to family and friends** and a difference in the number of women from South Asian communities who haven't disclosed their experience of abuse compared to other communities,

"I've been quite surprised how many clients haven't disclosed [about their abuse] to husbands, partners and families, I think that was quite a bit of a realisation for me how deep a lot of these clients the shame and honour really goes back." (Quetzal staff)

Many still hadn't disclosed as a result of their counselling but that this was their considered decision,

"I think for a lot of clients they just had enough peace within themselves that they didn't feel [they wanted to disclose], because obviously, it's it is a life changer. How you can change the whole complexities of families." (Quetzal staff)

Research and reports from elsewhere

A report from Sikh Women's Aid⁴ highlighted similar issues to Quetzal interviewees. This included identifying that lack of belief in the system was a common response from victims, including being let down by both statutory and voluntary services. It also identified that, "A strict honour-based code has been successful in silencing the victims from reporting or discussing any incidents. This is due to the belief that people finding out about incidents of childhood sexual exploitation or childhood sexual abuse will bring 'shame' on the family and damage the prospects of marriage for the victim and potentially their siblings".

A toolkit, *Asian Women, Domestic Violence and Mental Health*⁵, identifies additional issues that some Asian women may experience, these may also be relevant to childhood sexual abuse survivors such as: threats of rejection including divorce and sending people back to country of origin; rigid gender roles and patriarchal family systems including seeing women and children as possessions; language and cultural barriers to seeking help; a broader range of homicides linked to honour; exploitation of household labour; threats related to sexual activity; and kept in ignorance about sex and sexual health.

Evidence from interviewees indicates that these issues are not universal as communities are very diverse, and some interviewees thought that particularly younger generations were more challenging to the previous ways of doing things. An interviewee not working in the women's sector said,

⁴ Report as above, page 20

⁵ Government Office for London and EACH (2009) *Asian Women, Domestic Violence and Mental Health: A Toolkit for Health Professionals*, available from <https://equation.org.uk/product/asian-women-domestic-violence-and-mental-health/>

“I was aware that it was common back in India or Pakistan in the generation behind me it’s a normalised thing that’s starting to break. In my generation. It’s a thing that men and women don’t really tolerate. But I didn’t realize how big it is, in the UK, I thought people coming here would solve that issue or start to make it a bit less of an issue”. (Partner)

The avoidance of shame is something that is not only done to women; it also becomes part of how they censor themselves, researchers report, *“The construction of shame exerts extreme psychological, mental and physical control over women and girls. It becomes internalised, resulting in difficulty imagining life outside of this construct, as it functions as a guiding principle for an individual’s actions and identities⁶”*.

This can prevent women and girls seeking support for mental health conditions, including those as a result of childhood sexual abuse. However, there is a danger that the failure to seek support could be characterised as an issue within communities or the women themselves rather than there being a range of structural barriers to services. This may intersect with the perception that is quoted in research about race and clinical psychology⁷ that, *“Therapy is a white idea based on white peoples’ experiences,”* one of the beliefs that the Breaking the Silence Initiative has aimed to overcome.

➔ **Recommendation:** it would be interesting to know to what extent cultural expectations are a factor in second and subsequent generations, and where these are changing, what has influenced this. Knowing this information might help Quetzal to target future work on particular sections of communities where it is likely to have most impact.

What is the South Asian community?

The definition of the South Asian community and who falls within it has been a consideration. The Encyclopedia Britannica identifies that Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka; Afghanistan and the Maldives can be considered as South Asia⁸. However, this classification is not straightforward as one partner described,

“Especially within my generation, South Asian could be mixed, or you could be purely South Asian. So what do you class as South Asian?” (Partner)

⁶ Sangar & Julia Howe (2021) How discourses of sharam (shame) and mental health influence the help-seeking behaviours of British born girls of South Asian heritage, *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 37:4, 343-361, available from [www.doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2021.1951676](https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2021.1951676)

⁷ Ahsan, S. (2020) ‘Holding Up The Mirror: Deconstructing Whiteness In Clinical Psychology’ in *Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 45-55, available from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sanah-Ahsan-2/publication/345242611_Holding_Up_The_Mirror_Deconstructing_Whiteness_In_Clinical_Psychology_Ahsan_2020/links/5fa14c0aa6fdccfd7b97ab18/Holding-Up-The-Mirror-Deconstructing-Whiteness-In-Clinical-Psychology-Ahsan-2020.pdf

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Asia>

Consequently, Quetzal decided to take the Asset-Based Community Development approach that is inclusive in its definition of a community,

“People who are part of the South Asian community are anyone, people, institutions, places in Leicester, the artistic community, etc. etc. And they can be white, Asian, or Black, as long as they've got something to offer to people who may identify as South Asian.” (Quetzal staff)

2.1.2 Changes as a result of Breaking the Silence

This section looks at A. changes for Quetzal; B. changes for beneficiaries; C. changes for individuals; D. changes for partner organisations; E. changes for South Asian communities.

A. Changes for Quetzal

The main changes for Quetzal have been in initiating a way of working that is more open; establishing 16-week counselling delivery; delivering wider range of services than solely one-to-one counselling; and improving how services are monitored and evaluated and how stories of change are collected and told including thinking about how art can be used.

The Breaking the Silence Initiative happened at a time of more general transition for Quetzal. Concurrently there was a big organisational development project funded through the Lloyds Foundation. Before this, Quetzal had provided counselling but was not widely working in partnership. Staff said that the website was old-fashioned and there wasn't any significant outreach to tell people about Quetzal,

“They did what they did, and they did it well, but it was within a very kind of closeted area, it needed to break out of that little niche that been carved out for itself”. (Quetzal staff)

The change to an outreach model through Breaking the Silence made a significant difference,

“It's changed the ethos of the organisation; we've gone from being an inward organisation to having a view which is more external. We're more partner, more community focused.” (Quetzal trustee)

At the same time, the Lloyds Foundation funding provided **support for governance and management development**, as well as implementing a **new database**. This included broadening the diversity, skills and experience of the board, as previously it had been composed mainly of counsellors, and funding a chief executive post,

“The organisation that I joined was very different to the organisation that we've got now. And I think it was kick started by the [Breaking the Silence] project.” (Quetzal staff)

Delivering a **shorter-term counselling** project was also different for Quetzal,

“This was one of our shorter-term projects, we're doing a lot more now, but this was one of the first ones, so it was really looking at how that would be delivered to our clients, how it would be received, and training the counsellors, to go through how to be able to work in a 16-session timeframe.” (Quetzal staff)

It was important to recognise that the counsellor would need to work with the client to be more focused, to maintain communication and to identify goals and manage expectations around the 16 weeks rather than dealing with the entirety of the client's trauma.

Delivering services in different ways and providing activities other than counselling is now also on the agenda for Quetzal, either pre- or post-counselling or instead of counselling,

“We've realised that we can still engage in our clients in a safe way, and not necessarily have it all about therapy. We are looking at introducing post therapy groups so people can come back and connect to Quetzal. It's about creating that community outside of therapy. It's opened up the organisation to something that is much more community based. Clients feedback that they are quite isolated and lonely after finishing therapy and it gives them that connection to people who they do feel safe with so rather than going back into isolation, they're able to connect people that they know, can understand them.” (Quetzal staff)

Changes in the organisation that individuals documented that were because of or had an impact on Breaking the Silence included:

- Implementing the Lamplight **database**, meaning that Quetzal is now able to analyse data to see where gaps are, for reporting, and for informing developments to the service.
- Improving Quetzal's **reputation** as an organisation as people locally and from different parts of the country have heard about the Breaking the Silence work with the South Asian community.
- As a result of increased reputation, this has meant **organisations approaching Quetzal** for advice, but also to share experiences, increasing learning in the sector as a whole and opening up opportunities to work together.
- Involving **volunteer Community Connectors** to undertake outreach. As well as expanding capacity in relation to time, this has brought diversity into the project, including South Asian women, to provide a range of different people for potential clients, community members and other partners to identify with to draw them into the project.
- Being **better able to identify safeguarding issues** – in particular with one client where there was concern about her father taking her abroad. More awareness about issues for South Asian women and girls had led to a greater awareness of some of the risks that they face and how to spot them. A further issue, particularly working with younger women, was that they may have younger siblings who were still in an abusive

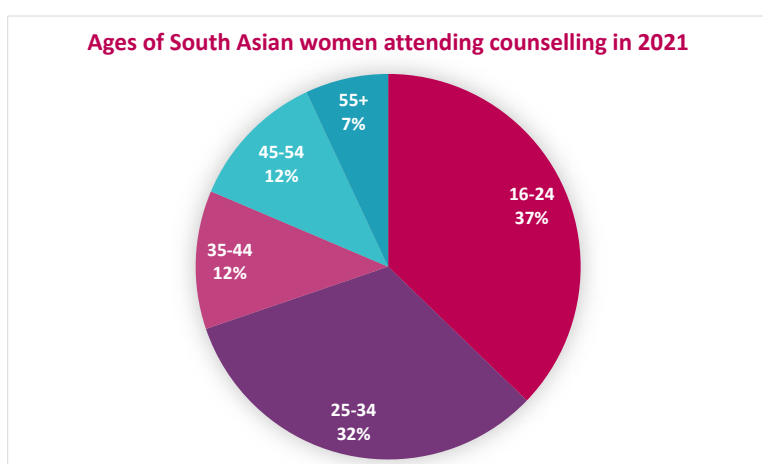
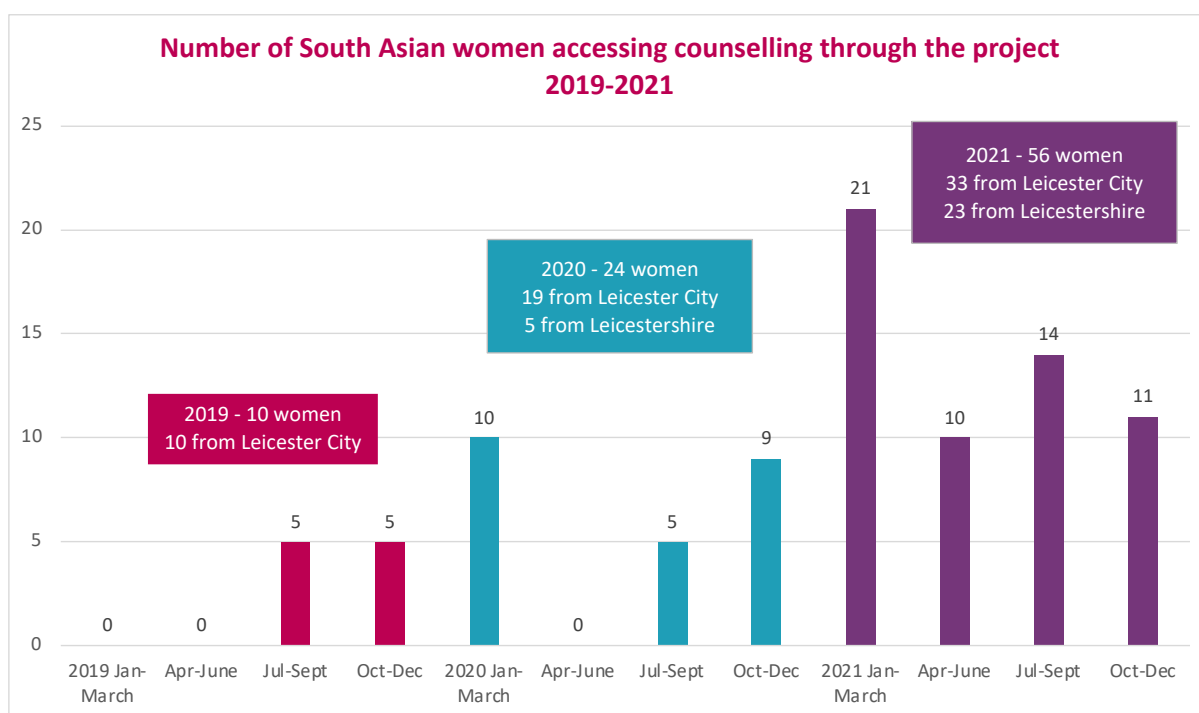
situation, so it was important especially for Community Connector volunteers to be trained to be aware of this issue and to refer any potential safeguarding issues to staff.

B. Changes for beneficiaries (clients)

Quetzal’s monitoring shows that there has been an 80% increase in South Asian female survivors accessing counselling since the beginning of the project. The chart below shows the increase from 2019 to 2021.

Interviewees identified that as a result of the project there have been more younger women and a higher number of clients self-referring – this could be down to increased use of social media,

*“Now people know [about Quetzal] they are more likely to refer people to the service.”
(Partner)*



Of the women receiving counselling in 2021, the chart above shows the age range. The project has enabled Quetzal to reach a greater number of younger women, although women of different ages have accessed the project.

As well as the change in demographics, opening up Quetzal to a more diverse range of people, there have also been changes for women who have received services as part of the project. Partner organisations and Quetzal staff described some changes in women that had happened as a result of Breaking the Silence:

- One woman referred from a group had counselling and went from being a volunteer at a school to getting paid employment, it was identified that support from the partner organisation as well as counselling from Quetzal supported this.
- Another woman who was involved in a Breaking the Silence workshop downloaded the self-help book from Quetzal and with the support of the partner agency did a talk to Leicestershire Police about what they can do to better help South Asian women.
- Clients have reduced unhelpful habits, such as use of alcohol, for example getting support from substance misuse service Turning Point.
- At the end of their sessions changes that clients have identified include an increase in self-awareness and growth in confidence.

Quetzal is using CORE⁹ to measure the outcomes of counselling, which includes positive and negative statements to measure change such as:

- I have felt tense, anxious or nervous
- I have felt I have someone to turn to for support when needed
- I have had difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep
- I have felt O.K. about myself
- I have been able to do most things I needed to
- I have felt optimistic about my future

🔄 **Recommendation:** although CORE measures have been used for some time, being able to analyse them through the Lamplight database started in August 2021, so it is still early days. Quetzal will need to continue to review how this data is collected and used to ensure that it is relevant and informs service delivery.

C. Changes for individuals

Changes that individuals involved in the project described included an increase of awareness of the issue of childhood sexual abuse in South Asian communities as well as increasing their own skills.

⁹ See <https://www.coreims.co.uk/index.html> for more information.

“I’ve learned more, it’s opened my eyes to the forms of abuse that people have gone through.” (Partner)

“I’ve gained so much more confidence in talking to people in delivering presentations on my own, being there with others and learning about how they are talking to women and dealing with these really sensitive issues, has helped me to also develop my own communication skills, and just become better at working more remotely and digitally.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

Staff at Quetzal talked about their changes in perceptions around the importance of working in partnership and having greater connections, as well as it highlighting the greater range of ways that services could be provided.

D. Changes for partner organisations

Partner organisations interviewed who work in a similar field identified how working with Quetzal had enhanced the services that they provided,

“I’ve had Marie come into [my services], either been her or volunteers from the project. They’ve spoken to women about the projects that Quetzal has been running. And she’s had referrals from my project to their project. She’s talked about the publication that’s free on Quetzal’s website that women can access.” (Partner)

“Marie was brilliant. She actually set up a session where we could and ask questions and things. So that was good for signposting people.” (Partner)

Interviewees were also keen on working together to create a community to work together towards common aims.

“It’s not just you walk in you get your help, you’re cured, you’re back out the door again. It’s saying actually, why don’t we do something with you? Why don’t we try and have a community group together?” (Partner)

Involvement for strategic purposes, influencing and leveraging funding was also mentioned, although in a general sense because it might create future opportunities rather than anything specific having come out of it yet.

- **Recommendation:** Accessing partners and identifying the changes for them was not easy to undertake retrospectively, so developing a way to collect and evaluate the impact on partners as the work is undertaken would better help to identify this for learning and promotion purposes.
- **Recommendation:** Quetzal and/or partners could consider holding a periodic meeting / workshop / networking session to discuss work with the South Asian community, including keeping up contacts for referrals and signposting, identifying joint projects including seeking funding, and providing a shared voice for influencing policy development.

E. Changes for South Asian communities

The Sikh Women's Aid report¹⁰ highlights the need for greater awareness about abuse, citing that lack of awareness, "Led to respondents accepting the abuse or the abuse becoming normalised. Victims stated there is a desperate need for the community to be educated about how harmful abuse is and its long-lasting impact".

Although it is difficult to quantify, interviewees thought that there had been a shift in the people that they were working with,

"We are noticing that people, women, South Asian, specifically, are beginning to be more comfortable in talking about things that were a little bit more taboo. There is a willingness in the South Asian community to be able to talk about that and to address these issues, rather than hide away and not and not discuss it, so there is there is a culture shift happening. We've noticed that in the last three years that we've been doing this project. we are having South Asian women coming forward wanting to tell their stories and wanting to be recognized as survivors and to be able to bring that into their communities as well."
(Quetzal staff)

There has been an increase in awareness of sexual abuse more generally because of media coverage, so it's difficult to tease out Quetzal's contribution, but the communications are being read, the self-help pack downloaded, and social media reach is much bigger than it was. The approach that Quetzal took was praised,

"That's why the project that Marie did was so useful because she wasn't blaming the community for not coming out and speaking out about it or not speaking out about it. It was about giving people that individual choice." (Partner)

The films made were focused around positive stories of women who had received counselling from Quetzal, which might encourage more people to approach for support. One interviewee raised possibilities of making a different type of film, one that is more about raising awareness and challenging the community that childhood sexual abuse is something that is happening that needs to be addressed at a community (or communities) level,

"It's a very good talking point if someone's been through it, and they're happy to be on camera and other people see that, then they're more likely want to be part of this community and join in, and then you have this cycle that starts to happen." (Partner)

➡ **Recommendation:** further develop the marketing strategy to identify how the work that has been done, including the animations, will be used in the future, including clarity of outcome, for example is this specifically targeted at survivors to encourage

¹⁰ As before, page 43

them to attend counselling, or is it more generally for raising awareness in the community.

2.1.3 The contribution of partners

Working with partners has been crucial to the success of the Breaking the Silence project, including outreach and participating in joint delivery of workshops, which then created referrals to Quetzal for counselling services. Partners described involving Quetzal in delivering workshops to their groups to raise awareness and that also resulted in referrals.

The project drew in expertise from other professionals where necessary. Working with Nikhil Mistry, the videographer, enabled more eye-catching publicity using words and animations using his design experience. Dr Rob Watson from [Decentred Media](#) brought community media expertise to the project, and Kajal Nisha Patel of Lightseekers and previously Trade Sexual Health collaborated around using art. Meena Kumari from H.O.P.E Training and Consultancy, and Nirmala Bojani of WOW Be The Change invited Quetzal to their activities. Kirit Mistry, formerly of the Adhar Project was also involved in linking in H.O.P.E Training and Consultancy and inviting Breaking the Silence to [deliver a session](#) on the trauma of childhood sexual abuse to South Asian Health Action. In doing this, Quetzal has been successful in harnessing a wider range of expertise than might traditionally be seen in the voluntary sector, considering different and creative ways to reach people.

Kitty Party

One example of a shared project was working with Trade Sexual Health to put on a “Kitty Party”. Trade was funded through Public Health England to work with South Asian women to break down the stigma of HIV and AIDS, so there was crossover between that and Breaking the Silence. The Kitty Party was described as,

“A concept that was born out of India, a monthly gathering of women who essentially get together have fun, and they put together and they donate money towards kitty. A good cause.... We were using popular ideas in Indian culture that South Asian women are familiar with, such as Indian serial drama, to gather interest in and to pick up difficult conversations.”
(Partner)

The idea was to put on a party / training event to deliver within the community, although attendance had not been what was hoped,

“We didn't really have many South Asian women that attended. And there are a lot of issues around getting people interested and involved, because Quetzal is a counselling organization, and Quetzal may not have been the right organization to have approached for that particular initiative.” (Partner)

Involvement with Shama Women’s Centre had been more successful for Trade because Shama already had a group of women using the centre. It was suggested that opening up the Kitty Party that Quetzal were involved in to more organisations might have proved more successful. Having a contact list of organisations was identified as necessary for this.

There was also possibly a mismatch between the aims of the Trade project – for people to come to a Kitty Party and then arrange their own, and the situations of the women who were involved with Quetzal,

“One of our main outcomes would have been for people who came to the events to host their own Kitty Party. But it doesn't actually make any sense for people who would come to counselling to want to host their own party, they need counselling, they're not in that space.”
(Partner)

However, if Quetzal is to expand services and keep clients involved in different capacities in the future, including outreach and promotion, the Kitty Party concept may be something that women are interested in, so it perhaps needs some further thinking about at what stage women or their supporters might want to become involved in an initiative such as this.

Trade had also planned to have a stall at the event that Quetzal had organised for September 2021, and screen a film about the project, which would have brought the concept to a wider audience including a handbook so that other people could apply the concept to their work, but as that was cancelled it didn’t go ahead. This film is set to be showcased shortly.

🔄 **Recommendation:** consider whether the Kitty Party concept, or something similar can be adapted to fit better with Quetzal’s aims in raising awareness around childhood sexual abuse.

2.1.4 Which women has the project has reached?

One of the advantages of the pandemic and delivering services online was that people who were unable to travel to access presentations could still do so, but this might have excluded others,

“The youngest client I've had is 17. I think the oldest has been about 70. So across the board there is quite a wide spectrum.” (Quetzal staff)

There were questions raised about whether the project had been accessible to all,

“Maybe some older South Asian women who might not be as digitally literate, may have had more difficulties in attending our talks and our presentation. And perhaps it would have

been nice to ensure that older generations, were able to access our services or had more awareness about what we do.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

Talking to faith leaders in the community has been discussed in the project, on the basis that if women felt that faith leaders were encouraging them to talk, and the topic was becoming less taboo in religious circles then women may feel more empowered and less ashamed to talk about it. This may apply more to older women who are more engaged in communities, or newer arrivals to the area. On the other hand, working initially with younger women who are harder to reach may be a specific strategy to build support from within the community first for the effects to ripple out to others.

2.2 What hinders and supports success

Question two: what hinders and supports the delivery and replicability of the community-based approach for this client group?

2.2.1 What factors support the delivery of a community-based approach?

A. The Project Facilitator with the right skills and experience

Many interviewees emphasised the skills and knowledge of the Project Facilitator, Marie, as being crucial to the success of the project. Marie has a background in community development and completed a training in Asset Based Community Development delivered by Nurture Development and ABCD leader Cormac Russell. Interviewees emphasised that in addition, her interpersonal skills were also crucial to the success of the project,

“[The Project Facilitator] has got a wealth of knowledge about the community-based approach, but she's also very friendly, and approachable, she can go out and make those links and easily talk to people.” (Quetzal staff)

“As an organization, we certainly didn't have knowledge of how to make links with the community.” (Quetzal trustee)

“It was nice to see Marie leading on it, because of her academic background, as well as her practice background.” (Partner)

B. The Project Counsellor's commitment and developing expertise

Having one person who could focus on the project and build up knowledge and expertise,

“The dedication of the counsellor who delivered it. She's really been able to connect with those clients. She's been very diligent and has had tenacity, working with the clients, she just kept at it.” (Quetzal trustee).

➔ **Recommendation:** ensure that the learning from the Breaking the Silence facilitator and counsellor is shared across the organisation.

C. Involvement and support of Community Connector volunteers

Giving greater representation across different South Asian communities and giving a range of different experiences, one partner talking about volunteers coming to the group she coordinated and that they showed,

“Levels of empathy, knowledge, and being able to show the women that you have got a second generation coming out and talking about it. They're very respectful towards the women, which I thought was really good.” (Partner)

Volunteers felt well supported by the project, they confirmed that they had online training on a range of issues before starting, including childhood sexual abuse, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation and adult safeguarding. They were also paired with more experienced volunteers,

“Having regular Zoom meetings and just making sure that we're constantly in touch with each other, even though we're all doing different things. And making sure we're on the same page was very important. I think that's something that we've managed to do really well.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

D. Taking an incremental approach

It was highlighted that lots of small changes helped, coming at the issue from different angles and involving different people,

“There's a lot going on, and lots of small wins in order to get people to connect.” (Quetzal trustee)

E. Telling stories about the project

This was a progression over time from Quetzal's traditional approach from collecting information, to sharing it inside the organisation, to using it outside the organisation. Stories on the website, a repository of the work that Quetzal was doing, could then be disseminated by volunteers using social media.

“Dr Rob Watson helped us around the role of community media in supporting community transformation.” (Quetzal staff)

This included the work that was done with the letters of female survivors, working with videographer Nikhil Mistry using his creativity and going through a process of reflection to produce the final stories available on the [YouTube channel](#).

It was felt that there was still the opportunity to do more along these lines,

“There's a need for us to do more with lived experience into the work.” (Quetzal staff)

One interviewee identified some concern before the project started about the process of recording stories and the impact on the clients,

“The culture of Quetzal at that moment in time was still looking at protecting clients, and giving them that safe, confidential private space.” (Quetzal staff)

This meant that thinking needed to be done about how to protect clients, for example making sure that they have support when involved in developing publicity and working with clients who have had enough time to process what they have covered in therapy.

Creating clients’ stories has allowed them another way to have a voice about what has happened to them rather than coming for counselling and then there being no feedback mechanism for women to talk about it. Staff identified that this had happened specifically because of the Breaking the Silence project,

“Rather than this closed therapy provider, it's become an organisation that people can talk through about their experiences after processing it. It was down to those clauses that were put in the project in the first place. I don't think that we would have looked at it in the way we looked at it had it not been one of those things that we needed to fulfil as an outcome.” (Quetzal staff)

F. Having existing community groups to work with

In Leicester there are already organisations with a strong history of working with the South Asian community, which helped with making connections,

“If we can build a relationship with them, it gives you a step over the front door which might be more difficult if you're working with another, another group of people that maybe didn't have that network already within Leicester.” (Quetzal staff)

There are still further opportunities to build and strengthen these relationships, one interviewee suggested that there was a need for a directory of groups to make it easier for everyone to link up¹¹.

➔ **Recommendation:** whilst putting together a comprehensive directory can be a substantial undertaking, the various partners that Quetzal are already in touch with could probably compile a substantial list of organisations working with South Asian people across the city and county.

G. Trust between stakeholders

The importance of trust was highlighted. This includes trust between organisations as well as trust of organisations by (potential) beneficiaries.

¹¹ Voluntary Action LeicesterShire did previously have a directory of groups in the area, but updating this regularly is a substantial undertaking at the same time as there have been cuts in VCS infrastructure funding, however VAL does advertise that it can help to find groups working in the local area - <https://valonline.org.uk/find-voluntary-organisations/>

“The other thing about the project that I noticed, was the level of trust. So the biggest thing around disclosures, there's got to be trust, especially from communities where they feel marginalised, and shunned from society for a number of reasons.” (Partners)

The importance of relationships with community partners to in turn broker relationships with community members was mentioned, as was the need to be working together over a period of time so that people can gain confidence and understanding about the work of each partner. There was a recognition that it was important to put time into these relationships even if there was no specific goal in mind because this put Quetzal in a position to take advantage of opportunities when they arose as well as to enhance their opportunity to influence others.

H. Enthusiasm of partners to work together

Interviewees described the desire to work more closely from the other organisations as being crucial,

“You can want to build a relationship as much as you like, but if the other person doesn't, then it's not going to work.” (Quetzal staff)

The motivation of other organisations to work in partnership was thought to be similar to Quetzal's:

- Increased influence speaking with a common voice
- The possibility of delivering services together to improve things for clients
- To open up more funding opportunities.

The effects of Covid on being able to much more easily have quick online meetings involving more people was mentioned as contributing to easier partnership work.

Covid was also mentioned as a factor in reaching out to find out how other people were handling things through the crisis,

“Because we've all been through Covid and the challenges it's been quite good to just lean on other people in a similar position and say, what are you doing about this?” (Quetzal staff)

I. Being able to talk to South Asian women directly not through intermediaries

The direct contact was highlighted as important, ensuring that any publicity is shared with women and not,

“Edited or banned or stopped from being shared. [The Project Facilitator] going into a class where the women are and talking about what we do is a very potent message delivery service.” (Quetzal trustee).

Presentations were given to women-only groups and to mixed groups and the importance of women only space was highlighted,

“When we were talking to women because it was a female only space, I think they found it more comfortable to engage with us, to ask questions, and they did seem more interested in getting in touch with us. Some of them even disclosed the stories about their own abuse. Whereas where there were both men and women, we didn't really receive as much discussion, and perhaps people just didn't feel as comfortable.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

J. The power of women connecting with others

“What stood out to me was that women were very interested in other women and that united the group, it was so beautiful” (Community Connector Volunteer)

There were suggestions from people involved in the project that Quetzal could do more group work such as meditation, self-defence classes, education sessions, or yoga, things that bring women together. This included bringing together women from different backgrounds so that women from different communities can see what is shared as well as different approaches to issues.

K. Working with partners to support individual clients

Examples given include Turning Point substance misuse services, the Zinthyia Trust, which provides a range of services for women, Karma Nirvana who work around honour-based abuse, and GamCare where a women's partner had problem gambling,

“It is like a triangle, they'd gain some advice, and then they bring it and I'd ask what do you think, how would this work for you? Because obviously, it's their lives. But for the clients, it was nice to explore avenues within the room before actually making any decision.” (Quetzal staff)

L. Publicity targeted towards South Asian women

The videos made about the project were tailor-made for the South Asian community, using colours and images that might appeal and thinking about the people who were represented in pictures. The combination of the animations and the words can help people who speak limited English,

“[People] might not understand what's happening words wise, but visually, they can get the grasp of it.” (Partner)

M. Helping women feel that services are for them

A volunteer described how it was helpful to have outside agencies talking to South Asian women,

“There was an NHS representative and told us that was available to us, and women think, ‘The Government is thinking about me,’ or ‘I'm not the only one going through this.’” (Community Connector Volunteer)

This was identified by an interviewee as one of the factors in younger women being more likely to come forward,

“Women from South Asian backgrounds who have grown up in the UK, who are British citizens, I think, feel more empowered to speak up for themselves, primarily because they're aware of the different kinds of support that are available to them.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

It was hypothesised by one of the interviewees that perhaps because those services weren't available in other countries to women who had lived outside of the UK, or the services were available in a different way, there is a lack of awareness that they exist in the UK.

N. Flexibility of delivery

This was mentioned by partners who liked the flexibility that Quetzal offered to suit different needs,

“I think the flexibility, so every time I messaged her; they were able to come in.” (Partner)

This was partly down to the increase in capacity and approach that the Community Connector volunteers offered.

O. The combination of outreach and counselling and self-help guide

One interviewee commented that it was helpful to have a specific offer for people, the counselling and self-help guide, when Quetzal staff and volunteers reached out rather than it being purely an awareness raising project,

“We're asking them questions; we're asking them to engage with us. And the good thing about when Marie came into the sessions was that she was able to say our offer is the counselling and the download of the booklet.” (Partner)

“The self-help guide is an introduction to our organisation. Within that it's got information about how perpetrators manipulate, it's got a breakdown of what trauma is how can affect your body, it covers all the coping mechanisms and defence mechanisms that people can present with. What I really wanted to do was normalise for them what they were feeling and their behaviours and patterns, just so that they don't feel so isolated.” (Quetzal staff)

P. Clinical supervision for staff

Given the nature of the type of work providing clinical supervision for staff to be able to make a deeper sense of their experience was highlighted as important,

“I'm very lucky, that Quetzal was trauma informed to make me understand that at some times, I was experiencing the projection of other people. So I think like anyone wants to really engage with this type of work, I think clinical support is really important.” (Quetzal staff)

Q. Getting involved in national campaigns

A Community Connector volunteer identified that getting involved on Twitter with national events, such as those that raise awareness about domestic or sexual violence gained a lot of engagement,

“Because everyone in the country was talking about that it wasn't just something that was very specific to Leicester.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

2.2.2 What hinders the community-based approach?

A. Initial lack of contacts in the community

The project facilitator described needing to make a lot of cold calls at the beginning to get engaged with the community, although looking back she identified that there were perhaps other routes that could have been taken, for example links with environmental work,

“I did do a small experiment where I was going to the yoga sessions and talking to different people, it's there I met the videographer. I met some psychiatrists, a female survivor, as well. So there was some effectiveness. But I feel it will take a long, long, long time.” (Quetzal staff)

The lack of contacts in community organisations was an issue mentioned by one of the partners as well.

B. The difficulty of talking about childhood sexual abuse

As a subject that people may not have thought much about, or that may be a difficult part of their own experience,

“People don't want to hear about it, people do get very uncomfortable, because it is taboo. It's difficult for people to hear, but it happens.” (Quetzal trustee)

C. The capacity needed for outreach work

Being able to reach women with the capacity within Quetzal was an issue, ameliorated to some extent by the involvement of the Community Connector volunteers. There were suggestions to go beyond the “normal” services to promote the project, so instead of working with voluntary organisations to go to hairdressers, beauty salons or the gym,

“It was such a good project, the only thing I would say is just promote it more get more people to buy into it. There's a lot of places that would have been happy to put up the poster.” (Partner)

D. Not delivering in community languages

Meaning that the service could only reach some sections of the South Asian population. A member of staff identified that there were around five or six commonly spoken languages,

with around 20 less common. There was some discussion about whether to translate written resources, but the conclusion was that unless they could offer counselling then it may be misrepresenting what Quetzal can do. One of the partners identified that she had worked with women who were able to read in English even if they weren't able to hold a high level of conversation, so the booklet may still be useful to them.

This can be a challenge for counselling services that are predominantly run by volunteers, many of whom will be doing a placement as part of their training. Quetzal are asking clients who are receiving counselling in English whether there is another language they would prefer if it were available.

➡ **Recommendation:** continue discussions about how to deliver services in community languages, for example starting with the most common and work with other services (if available) who do have language provision to ensure referral routes.

E. Proportion of people not attending for counselling appointments

There has been an issue with people not attending counselling sessions, with a staff member saying that it seems that there is better attendance online. This could raise questions about how much people are getting out of the process. However, although it may have felt at times that there was a higher level of do not attends than for other services, this is possibly because they were concentrated in a particular period, analysis of monitoring shows around 16% of sessions missed, around two thirds cancelled, and the rest not attended with no prior cancellation. This is in line with mainstream Quetzal services.

Further factors mentioned in relation to lack of attendance were that there are a higher proportion of students in the Breaking the Silence Initiative who may not be able to be as structured about their time or may be away over summer, and also that women in the Breaking the Silence project were receiving counselling quite soon after approaching Quetzal, rather than needing to be on the waiting list, so staff questioned whether proceeding so quickly might have been an influence. Third party referrals, for example from social workers, may also be an issue.

For some clients whose attendance is erratic there has been the option of stopping counselling for a while, but leaving the door open for them to come back at a later date when they are ready.

➡ **Recommendation:** undertake further analysis of the reasons that people do not attend appointments and identify any action that can be taken to increase attendance.

F. Lack of childcare for women to be able to attend

Particularly as many women were not telling anyone where they were going, the lack of childcare or finances to get childcare was highlighted as being prohibitive for some women.

G. The length of the project

The bigger picture around the work that needs to be done is not a three-year project,

“It’s a shame that that actually the project is ending when it is a because it has gathered momentum.” (Quetzal staff)

“The work is ongoing, the need is ongoing. And the staff and the volunteers that are doing this work, we need to have job security, we don't want to be burnt out while we're doing the work that we actually know is important and that feels makes us feel valued.” (Partner)

There are elements that will be sustainable such as the relationships that Quetzal has built with partners to increase the diversity of referrals and the existence of resources that communities can be signposted to, but the wider awareness raising and how this percolates through communities is a longer-term activity that may need 5-10 years of funding to achieve.

➡ **Recommendation:** Quetzal works with funders to identify longer term funding for this work.

2.2.3 What plans were changed in the delivery of the project?

A Time taken to start up the project

There was a delay in recruiting the Project Facilitator, with Quetzal needing to go through the process twice, and the member of staff starting six months in. A trustee identified that they needed to review the job specification as they were initially expecting too much, but it was important get the right person in and to do things properly. This issue is common in voluntary sector projects and not specific to Quetzal.

Writing the self-help guide, which was done by the Clinical Lead, and developing the website were also activities that took time.

B. Initial target figures

These were unrealistic given the time taken to start up the project in particular, but staff identified that they were probably unrealistic even without this issue,

“A community-based approach takes time to embed; you can tell someone about the service, but they're not going to be instantly ready to access it.” (Quetzal staff)

Organisations can feel pressure to demonstrate outcomes to funders, but the *planning fallacy* is a well-known psychological phenomenon in which people are over-optimistic about the amount of time it will take to do something, even if it's an activity that they have completed before¹².

Comic Relief were “amazing” in their approach to Quetzal, talking through the situation and being receptive to adjusting the figures based on actual experience. Funders being more aware of the need to reschedule timescale and outcomes because of Covid may have supported this approach.

- **Recommendation:** funders ensure that they set realistic expectations in their literature and are challenging where required in discussions with applicants in relation to how long it might take to start up a project, particularly where the work is innovative and developmental.
- **Recommendation:** Quetzal and other VCS organisations are realistic in developing and timelining proposals for funding to ensure there is the time to undertake the groundwork to get things right at the beginning rather than starting behind targets in the first months.

C. Location of services

Quetzal interviewees mentioned that there was an assumption that in order to reach the South Asian community that there would be a need to go and deliver services in the geographical location where the community was but that,

“It didn't really apply, people have been happy to come in to the office. Also, we've had a couple of people give feedback that actually they preferred not to be within local community because it felt more private.” (Quetzal staff)

The location of Quetzal, in the city centre but tucked away down a side street possibly helped as well,

“It very quickly became apparent that, that the clients did not want to be visible within their communities to be seen to be going to counselling.” (Quetzal trustee)

D. Volunteer Community Connectors

The recruitment of volunteer Community Connectors happened part way into the project when it was established that the community outreach was too time consuming for the Project Facilitator on part time hours to do on her own. The volunteers could,

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planning_fallacy

“Play to their strengths and networks and go out into different parts of the community and spend that time.” (Quetzal staff).

E. Stories of Change exhibition

This event was planned but cancelled due to staff absence. It was intended to explore the role of arts in supporting survivors of abuse and to include a range of artworks from individual women and organisations working with them. An event with Trade Sexual Health, *Bhensexplaining Kitty Party*, had also been planned,

“The way in which art can actually attract audiences was probably one of the main things that were attracting us to work together on a longer term.” (Partner)

The Stories of Change exhibition is now due to go ahead in February 2022.

2.2.4 How did Covid-19 affect delivery?

A. Counselling provision

The waiting list for clients reduced during Covid from a six to eight month to two to three months. Access was easier, and counsellors were able to take on more clients because they were not spending the time travelling,

“The provision of online services takes away some of the pressure for some women it's too difficult for them to sit in a room with someone and tell their story, often online or over the phone it feels safer for them.” (Quetzal trustee)

However, staff reported that South Asian clients were less likely to want to undertake online or telephone counselling because of the difficulties of finding a place in their home to talk safely and confidentially, so face-to-face counselling on the Breaking the Silence project started back in person before mainstream counselling.

B. Normalisation of mental health issues

Interviewees suggested that there was more discussion of mental health issues during the pandemic across media, so more people, including young people, were talking about their mental health and the stigma was reduced.

There was also a greater awareness around domestic violence, although not so much about sexual violence, and clients may not have made links between the two.

C. Outreach

It was not possible to attend face-to-face events and activities that had been originally intended,

“I would like to get more out there in the community physically, organising events where we can actually meet people face-to-face and talk to women, I think would be really beneficial. I

think that South Asian women specifically like to talk face-to-face rather than online, because it just feels obviously more personal.” (Community Connector Volunteer)

In some ways connection online may have opened up more opportunities for women who would not have attended an event in person, but as the volunteer above identifies, this may be at the expense of depth of connection which may be important when dealing with these issues.

2.2.5 The background of staff

Staff and volunteers delivering this project and evaluation were from a range of backgrounds, not solely South Asian, so may have an effect on participation, both physical and in what people felt able to share. The initial intention was to have a South Asian facilitator and counsellor delivering the project, but Quetzal had been unable to recruit.

There were mixed views about this, some interviewees highlighted that there were benefits to having people who were not from the South Asian community,

- The ethnic background is less important than having someone to listen and, if necessary, to act on the information that they've been given.

“The important thing was that we were listening to them and acknowledging what they experienced, what that they needed.” (Quetzal trustee).

- Some clients felt more comfortable because they didn't feel as though there was judgement based on cultural expectations where staff were not South Asian, whilst staff could still understand cultural issues.

“Where people say I prefer a counsellor from my community, what they're saying is, I want somebody who understands my culture. So that education needs to be there with the counsellors to be able to understand the culture, and then the relationship takes over.” (Quetzal staff)

- For people who are concerned about information being shared in their community, having someone who is not part of the community is a clear barrier,

“In the community, the extended family, everybody knows everybody in some way there's lots of connections there.” (Quetzal staff)

“In their subjective reality it's been compounded with, I can't tell anyone, and it's going to bring shame, and I can't do this. Then the way they see it is that could this person be part of the community? Could I run into this person at an event? Or could I see this person at an event? So I think it really does depend on the clients.” (Quetzal staff)

Although one interviewee felt that clients want someone who doesn't know family members or people close to them in the community rather than people not being from South Asia as there are very different communities, for example different faith groups, without necessarily having connections between them.

- Talking to women from different ethnic backgrounds about the issue was also highlighted by one interviewee as helping South Asian women to feel a connection with others and that it was not just something that happened within the South Asian community.

Some interviewees had a view that it was important to have South Asian staff or volunteers. Reasons included,

- South Asian staff and volunteers would better understand the culture without it needing to be explained,

"It'd be nice to speak to somebody from the same culture because they understood the nuances. And they understood where I was coming from, rather than having to go into a little bit more detail as to why something would be a taboo, or why would shame be such a such a big thing." (Quetzal staff)

"In terms of long-term work there's massive merit in actually having somebody inside there just understanding the cultural issues that exist, there's just things that are unspoken, unsaid." (Partner)

- Concern that clients might not want to be disloyal to their community, for example because of experiences of racism and discrimination, or about feeling their community is being judged,

"People don't want to be dishing the dirt." (Partner)

I do think that it's advantageous for somebody of South Asian descent to be involved in the project, because we know personally some of the cultural issues that might be hard to put into words. And maybe some women might feel more comfortable about talking to somebody of the same ethnic background because they feel like this person might understand them more and maybe less judgmental." (Community Connector Volunteer)

- Clients being better able to identify with other South Asian women, or having South Asian women as "role models",

"I think it's quite powerful stuff for the women, especially when they're going through recovery, to hear those that I've got that lived experience rather than the same old frontline faces. From CEOs or managers or even frontline staff when you actually speak to them, they don't really understand that that community or where they're coming from." (Partner)

There was sometimes an impact on staff members of feeling that they were an outsider in the community, but the importance of support from Quetzal, including clinical supervision, was emphasised as important. However, interviewees identified that Quetzal had managed relationships sensitively,

“What Marie was able to do, which is what services can learn from her, was to identify the right people in the community to engage with so she didn't infringe, she came to us and said, ‘This is what we're looking to do, but I want to work alongside you’. She was very respectful in her approach.” (Partner)

Regardless of ethnicity, interviewees emphasised the importance of staff and volunteers having the relevant background so that the knowledge is held by everyone that women come into contact with, not just within one element of the service,

“All staff should have those levels of training and levels of cultural competency, to understand what's going on in the community. All organisations in our sector, should be thinking about who they are recruiting and who they are retaining as well.” (Partner)

“It's about people's competencies to work with these communities. The biggest issue is understanding the community before you work with them, getting them to understand and trust the state and services and being able to engage rather than calling them hard to reach and not engaging.” (Partner)

External research about the background of staff and volunteers

Just because workers and beneficiaries are matched on ethnic background it doesn't mean that they are matched on other factors, and indeed there is a question about whether this would be desirable anyway. One journal article states that, *“Perfect similarity of client and therapist is not only impossible but also undesirable; differences in perspectives promote insight, facilitate reframing, and so forth¹³.”*

External research also shows a mixed picture around whether ethnic background is important to women seeking counselling. One meta-analysis of research indicates a moderately strong preference for a therapist that matches the clients' race/ethnicity and a more positive perception where these were matched. However, the outcomes of therapy showed almost no benefit to outcomes from racial/ethnic matching in Asian Americans although more pronounced results for African Americans¹⁴. Another study highlights that therapist preferences are often, *“Based on demographics; however, research has indicated that clients frequently report even stronger preferences for a therapist's personality*

¹³ Cabral, R and Smith, T. (2011): 'Racial/Ethnic Matching of Clients and Therapists in Mental Health Services: A Meta-Analytic Review of Preferences, Perceptions, and Outcomes' in Journal of Counseling Psychology Vol. 58, No. 4, 537–554 available from <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fa0025266>

¹⁴ Cabral and Smith as above.

*characteristics*¹⁵". This found that clients were more likely to drop out if their preferences were not matched and that there was a small increase in outcomes where preferences were matched, but this was not specific to the type of therapist, it also included the method of therapy and the activities undertaken, and no difference was found between different ethnic groups. A third meta-analysis reported that, "*Client-rated measures of therapist cultural competence correlated strongly ... with treatment outcomes but therapists' self-rated competency did not*"¹⁶. This study also has a list of recommendations about how to incorporate cultural competencies into therapists' work.

➔ **Recommendation:** this evaluation and external research demonstrates that matching clients' preferences for therapists may be important to some but not all clients, and so Quetzal should continue its work in considering how it can meet the preferences of South Asian clients as well as other groups of people.

2.3 Quetzal's future plans for South Asian and other communities

Question three: what plans does Quetzal have to ensure continuous improvement in maintaining relationships with the South Asian communities and in reaching new communities?

2.3.1 How does Quetzal plan to continue to support South Asian women?

Although targeted counselling provision will end with the end of the Breaking the Silence Initiative and South Asian women will join the main waiting list, there is an intention to continue to partner with organisations working with South Asian women and a desire from partners to continue this work. There were suggestions from some partners about involving faith groups, plus reaching out to businesses that South Asian women frequent. This will need planning and resources allocated, otherwise it can be easy for work to slip.

➔ **Recommendation:** Quetzal will need to consider how work with South Asian communities will continue and the methods by which this will be delivered, this may include seeking continuation funding for the project from existing or new funders. The continuation of work with volunteers or exit plans for volunteers will need to be part of this consideration.

¹⁵ Swift JK, Callahan JL, Cooper M, Parkin SR. (2018) 'The impact of accommodating client preference in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis'. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 74:1924–1937.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22680>

¹⁶ Soto A, Smith TB, Griner D, Domenech Rodríguez M, Bernal G. (2018) 'Cultural adaptations and therapist multicultural competence: Two meta-analytic reviews'. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 74:1907–1923.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22679>

2.3.2 How has this project affected Quetzal's ongoing work?

The changes to Quetzal's work are also highlighted in section 2.1.2. The main aspects of this project that are influencing Quetzal's future work include:

A. The importance of making time for partnership work

This project has changed Quetzal's whole approach to working in partnerships with other organisations, and they are now keen to build as many links as they can.

“Although it can be quite time consuming, and when you're really busy, and you've got a thousand things to do, having a meeting with someone, when it hasn't really got a focus can feel like, not a priority but I think we've learned through the [Breaking the Silence] project that actually building those friendships has a real benefit, and to the clients as well, because you can have that joined up delivery.” (Quetzal staff).

B. Undertaking active outreach to Leicester's communities

The increase in younger and South Asian clients has demonstrated that active outreach, utilising networks that are already there and working sensitively alongside target communities is successful. Continuing this approach can help to increase knowledge of Quetzal and its services more generally.

C. Influencing Quetzal's “mainstream” counselling practice

This is an area for further development, but the intention is to end the project with an event to share learning and for everyone who's contributed to come together. There are also opportunities to share the learning specifically around working with South Asian women across all counsellors,

“We haven't run a course on it, but it does get filtered down in supervision. It hasn't been fed through yet in a specific CPD around shame, but that is something that I am looking to do next year.” (Quetzal staff)

D. Undertaking awareness raising and influencing

Undertaking awareness raising and “campaigning” as an activity that links into counselling but can also stand separately is another aspect of this project that Quetzal will need to consider how it takes forward. This could include work with the South Asian community, or consideration of other communities that are under-represented amongst Quetzal's clients (see section 2.3.4 below). This will need careful consideration to ensure that staff and volunteers are not overstretched.

E. Improving information collection, monitoring and evaluation

Telling women's stories is an aspect of Breaking the Silence that can be carried forward. The media that has been produced is high quality; Quetzal can consider how this will

continue to be used and promoted, and how similar future approaches may work in the future.

There is also the opportunity to undertake further analysis of the demographic and service monitoring data to gain greater insight, this could also include follow up of clients after their counselling ends to find out the longer-term impact on them but also whether there has been an impact on the wider community because of their involvement with Quetzal.

⇒ **Recommendation:** Quetzal should consider how women's stories that have been produced will be used and promoted, and how this approach might work with other clients and projects. Sharing learning locally and nationally with similar organisations is another opportunity to increase Quetzal's influence and reputation.

2.3.4 How well would this approach replicate to other communities?

Interviewees felt that the approach that Breaking the Silence project took would translate to other communities, those mentioned included Black British / African Caribbean communities, with one interviewee saying that they thought that there were similar taboos to South Asian communities; Eastern European people where there may be parallels in relation to religion, as many have Catholic upbringings; and traveller communities.

There are a lot of organisations working with the South Asian community, which may have made the outreach easier, and this may not be the case for other communities. It was suggested that starting with volunteers and partners from these communities at the project development stage rather than getting people involved just in the delivery would be a good approach,

“It's getting out into the community first with the community connectors then writing the framework with them on what would work with them. I think it's got to come from the community.” (Quetzal trustee)

⇒ **Recommendation:** so as not to spread itself too thinly, Quetzal should decide how to balance continuing work with the South Asian community with undertaking similar work with other communities.

2.4 Monitoring, evaluation and learning systems

Question four: to what extent has Quetzal strengthened its monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and effectively integrated the learning into the organisation's practice?

2.4.1 What changes to learning systems have been made?

Quetzal staff indicated that there had been a step change in the information that is collected in tandem with the introduction of a database that is able to collect and analyse data in a more sophisticated way. This includes outcome measures for clients using the CORE outcome measures for counselling services¹⁷.

Keeping robust data has meant that it is possible to look back retrospectively and analyse it in different ways, highlighting the value of collecting data that may not immediately be used, but may be useful in the future for strategy, influencing policy, impact reporting and marketing, or informing service delivery.

There has also been a lot of gathering people's stories and using these in different ways (see section 2.2.1).

In individual counselling at the end of the 16-week session there is a review of the clients' journey,

"We do it as a book. So pre-counselling you have the front cover, which could say anything about before therapy, so words, pictures. The middle pages are about your journey. And then the back cover, that's the future, what you've gained so far." (Quetzal staff)

However, it was also identified that the information is being collected but not necessarily being utilised to the best effect within the organisation as a whole as this is still a developing area of work,

"I think we haven't, we haven't fully embedded learning from the project at this point. But we are definitely keen to do that and making plans of how best to roll that out." (Quetzal staff)

Quetzal is still considering what happens with the data and stories to publicise the project as far as possible.

➡ **Recommendation:** there is a need to review how data has been collected and analysed, and consider what purposes it will be used for, for example influencing policy, improving services, evidence for funding applications, attracting clients and

¹⁷ Information about CORE is available from <https://www.coreims.co.uk/index.html>

volunteers, and how monitoring learning and evaluation will be undertaken in the future.

- ➔ **Recommendation:** identify whether further analysis could be undertaken on the data collected, for examples differences in service use or outcomes for Breaking the Silence clients versus other clients, and whether the outcomes vary by factors such as demographics or number or type of sessions.
- ➔ **Recommendation:** monitoring on the impact of the project on longer-term service use and outcomes amongst South Asian women should be continued and reported to identify whether there has been a longer-term effect of the project.

3. Summary of recommendations

1. It would be interesting to know to what extent cultural expectations are a factor in second and subsequent generations, and where these are changing, what has influenced this. Knowing this information might help Quetzal to target future work on particular sections of communities where it is likely to have the most impact.
2. Although CORE measures have been used for some time, being able to analyse them through the Lamplight database started in August 2021, so it is still early days. Quetzal will need to continue to review how this data is collected and used to ensure that it is relevant and informs service delivery.
3. Accessing partners and identifying the changes for them was not easy to undertake retrospectively, so developing a way to collect and evaluate the impact on partners as the work is undertaken would better help to identify this for learning and promotion purposes.
4. Quetzal and/or partners could consider holding a periodic meeting / workshop / networking session to discuss work with the South Asian community, including keeping up contacts for referrals and signposting, identifying joint projects including seeking funding, and providing a shared voice for influencing policy development.
5. Further develop the marketing strategy to identify how the work that has been done, including the animations, will be used in the future, including clarity of outcome, for example is this specifically targeted at survivors to encourage them to attend counselling, or is it more generally for raising awareness in the community.
6. Consider whether the Kitty Party concept, or something similar can be adapted to fit better with Quetzal's aims in raising awareness around childhood sexual abuse.
7. Ensure that the learning from the Breaking the Silence facilitator and counsellor is shared across the organisation.
8. Whilst putting together a comprehensive directory can be a substantial undertaking, the various partners that Quetzal are already in touch with could probably compile a substantial list of organisations working with South Asian people across the city and county.
9. Continue discussions about how to deliver services in community languages, for example starting with the most common and work with other services (if available) who do have language provision to ensure referral routes.
10. Undertake further analysis of the reasons that people do not attend appointments and identify any action that can be taken to increase attendance.
11. Quetzal works with funders to identify longer term funding for this work.

12. Funders ensure that they set realistic expectations in their literature and are challenging where required in discussions with applicants in relation to how long it might take to start up a project, particularly where the work is innovative and developmental.
13. Quetzal and other VCS organisations are realistic in developing and timelining proposals for funding to ensure there is the time to undertake the groundwork to get things right at the beginning rather than starting behind targets in the first months.
14. This evaluation and external research demonstrate that matching clients' preferences for therapists may be important to some but not all clients, and so Quetzal should continue its work in considering how it can meet the preferences of South Asian clients as well as other groups of people.
15. Quetzal will need to consider how work with South Asian communities will continue and the methods by which this will be delivered, this may include seeking continuation funding for the project from existing or new funders. The continuation of work with volunteers or exit plans for volunteers will need to be part of this consideration.
16. Quetzal should consider how women's stories that have been produced will be used and promoted, and how this approach might work with other clients and projects. Sharing learning locally and nationally with similar organisations is another opportunity to increase Quetzal's influence and reputation.
17. So as not to spread itself too thinly, Quetzal should decide how to balance continuing work with the South Asian community with undertaking similar work with other communities.
18. There is a need to review how data has been collected and analysed, and consider what purposes it will be used for, for example influencing policy, improving services, evidence for funding applications, attracting clients and volunteers, and how monitoring learning and evaluation will be undertaken in the future.
19. Identify whether further analysis could be undertaken on the data collected, for examples differences in service use or outcomes for Breaking the Silence clients versus other clients, and whether the outcomes vary by factors such as demographics or number or type of sessions.
20. Monitoring on the impact of the project on longer-term service use and outcomes amongst South Asian women should be continued and reported to identify whether there has been a longer-term effect of the project.

4. Acknowledgements

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