

Anglia Ruskin University Research Highlights Success of Culturally-Specific Domestic Abuse Project for Asian Women

April 12, 2025



A pioneering initiative addressing domestic abuse experienced by women of Asian heritage in Peterborough has demonstrated significant success and could serve as a model for similar projects nationwide, according to research presented by Dr. Mirna Guha, a senior lecturer in sociology at Anglia Ruskin University.

Speaking at a recent London conference, Dr. Guha highlighted the impact of the Dahlia Project, an initiative run by Peterborough Women's Aid specifically for and by British Pakistani heritage women. Since its launch in July 2023, the project has received approximately 200 referrals, including women from African Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and South East Asian backgrounds, indicating a broader need for culturally sensitive support services.

The Dahlia Project was established following research by Anglia Ruskin University, which has campuses in Cambridge, Peterborough, and Chelmsford, Essex. The research identified that mainstream services, including law enforcement, were not always culturally equipped to effectively support Asian women experiencing domestic abuse, leading to feelings of isolation among victims.

Dr. Guha, who also serves as the university's deputy head of the school for humanities and social science, played a key role in securing Home Office funding for the project. The Dahlia Project is the first "by and for" provision of its kind for Asian women facing domestic abuse in Cambridgeshire and is governed by a board comprised of Asian men and women.

Dr. Guha emphasized the critical need for more such initiatives across the country, stating, "The project is

making a real difference in Cambridgeshire, but we need more projects like it across the country to end this postcode lottery of provision.” She further noted the national shortage of support services specifically tailored for women from minority backgrounds and highlighted her ongoing work to foster racially diverse leadership within organizations tackling violence against women and girls.

Dr. Guha presented her findings at the launch of the HUM Leadership Model for Emerging Leaders conference earlier this month, which also featured a speech by Supt Jasvinder Kaur, the domestic abuse lead at Suffolk Constabulary and co-founder of the National Women of Colour in Policing UK.

Dr. Guha believes that the evidence from her research will support the efforts of the domestic abuse commissioner for England and Wales to advocate for a dedicated national “by and for” funding pot. This would ensure that minoritized victims-survivors across England and Wales have access to high-quality, culturally appropriate support services, regardless of their geographical location.