



# Heba Women's Project

**Keeping the door open**

**HEBA**

Understanding and supporting  
women and their organisations



# Heba Women's Project

## Keeping the door open

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**Women's Resource Centre**

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# 1. Introduction

With the current shift from grant giving to commissioning, women's organisations are operating in the most intense period of competition for funding on record. As public spending contracts funding to women's organisations has decreased and, in the case of smaller specialist services, is increasingly not given at all. This has resulted in an environment of increased pressure to compete for the funding that is available, making it imperative that women's organisations can demonstrate their value.

Heba Women's Project has worked with Women's Resource Centre (WRC) and the new economics foundation (nef) as part of a two-year project to examine the costs and long term benefits associated with the work of five frontline women's organisations based in London. Findings from the research presented in this report demonstrate the far-reaching benefits of the services provided by Heba Women's Project, an organisation that supports isolated women in East London to build fuller lives through training, educational development and by offering a socially and ethnically diverse community space.

The report outlines the important role of Heba Women's Project and draws attention to the need to fund holistic services that support women into training and employment and to encourage the financial sustainability of women's organisations which provide a unique multicultural space that also has an impact on the wider community and local economy.

<http://ssba.info/heba.html>

*"Since coming to Heba my eyes are slowly starting to open."*

*Service user*

## 2. Background:

### The need for specialist support to help integration of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women into the local community

Historically, the East End of London has been a densely populated, multicultural area. Heba is based in Tower Hamlets, an ethnically diverse borough with almost half of the population comprised of Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee (BAMER) groups. The largest of these groups (33%) is from the Bangladeshi community,<sup>1</sup> which is the most concentrated and ethnically segregated Muslim community in the UK.<sup>2</sup> Many of these people are women who have moved with or joined their families and husbands. Some speak little English, are in a foreign environment, country and culture, and are heavily isolated; consequently many suffer from depression, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. Whilst in recent years certain parts of the East End, like Brick Lane, have become a hotspot for tourists and more privileged Londoners this has increased levels of isolation for many Muslim women in the area. This sudden influx has not encouraged integration, especially for women, who are particularly vulnerable to segregation as they do not have the same opportunities to socialise and gain income independence as their male counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

Racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia experienced by some groups, from the community and broader society, plays a significant role in the inequality of BAMER groups. For example, research emphasises that for many Bangladeshi women in London religion remains a fundamental aspect of their identity, forming meaning in their everyday lives. Yet from the 1990s racism in Britain came to differentiate South Asians by religion rather than country or language, the previous tools used to discriminate.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, post-9/11 the “Government’s ‘anti-terror’ laws are perceived as contributing a great deal towards the problem by fuelling Islamophobia and because these laws are seen as directly discriminatory against Muslims”.<sup>5</sup> This has led to distrust in statutory services from many people, which is often where specialist non-governmental organisations become an essential mediator.

The needs of many of Heba’s service users are multidimensional, yet there is very little existing support and outreach to cease the social exclusion of BAMER women. Tower Hamlets has the highest level of unemployment and child poverty in London,<sup>6</sup> and as these tend to affect certain demographics disproportionately it is highly likely that this will affect minority ethnic women in the borough most.<sup>7</sup>

Bangladeshis are especially vulnerable to social exclusion and living in poverty. In 2007, it was thought that in the UK 65% of Bangladeshis and 70% of Bangladeshi children were living in poverty.<sup>8</sup> The Fawcett Society also noted that only 28% of Pakistani and 16% of Bangladeshi women were in employment in 2005 in the UK. Those Pakistani and Bangladeshi women who have dependent children also have very high levels of economic inactivity (around 80%, depending on the age of their youngest child).<sup>9</sup> These levels of inequality are made palpable when compared to other ethnic groups:

*“Heba did help a lot, it helped with my computer skills, my English, I’m still practising my writing and those are keys to higher levels of education so that’s really important for me to achieve that before saying OK, I’m confident to take the step now and go to uni.”*

**Service user**

*“Forty-two per cent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women under 35 who have a partner but no dependent children are also not involved in the labour market, compared to only 2% of Black Caribbean women and 4% of White women.”<sup>10</sup>*

Despite their diversity and strengths, many of the women who use Heba’s services have barriers to education, training and employment. A common obstacle (especially for new arrivals) is English language and literacy skills, which are vital to enable job and training opportunities and integration into UK life. There is a great need for basic ESOL (English for Speaker of Other Languages), which outstrips supply. Studies note that *“English language ability is a key determinant of gaining employment”*.<sup>11</sup> Other women may need a mix of furthering their English language skills and information technology (ICT) training prior to going into further education or employment. Many of the women have complex needs that must be assessed and services tailored to suit their individual situation.<sup>12</sup>



An additional obstacle is that the Government have proposed changes in eligibility for free ESOL classes. One change is that full funding will only be available for ‘settled’, unemployed people on job-seeker’s allowance (JSA) or on employment support allowance (ESA), described as ‘active benefits’. This means those unable to work or not claiming work related benefits will no longer get free ESOL provision from colleges. It also means migrant workers on low incomes will not be eligible for any subsidy for classes. These changes will particularly disadvantage BAMER women.

Other barriers that affect employment for the women who access Heba’s services are perceived to be a lack of support, employment opportunities and training and encouragement as well as low self esteem and confidence.<sup>13</sup> The number of BAMER women born between 1960 and 1979 who have no qualifications is less than half of those born between 1940 and 1959, indicating that adult education and training programmes may be helpful in tackling differences.<sup>14</sup> Yet it is still BAMER women who are suffering disproportionately to White women in educational development. In 2005, 40% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women of working age had no qualifications, compared to 17% of White women.<sup>15</sup>



Educational attainment, feeling part of the local community and meeting other local women helps to reduce social isolation and improve social mobility. Studies have found that the more women feel at home in their community, the more likely they are to feel part of a community when they enter employment.<sup>16</sup>

Other issues that some immigrant women face that restricts their employment opportunities are that many skills or qualifications may not be transferrable from their home country to the UK. There is a lack of recognition of prior knowledge and experiential learning, or it is difficult to obtain UK work experience or references. Furthermore, professional women

who enter the UK are faced with qualification recognition barriers. This could be in the form of a bureaucratic system of recognition, having incorrect documents and/or insufficient language skills,

and/or not understanding a foreign system.<sup>17</sup>

When BAMER women are in employment, they tend to be disproportionately represented in certain areas of the labour market. For example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are particularly likely to be homeworkers, a vulnerable profession. Homeworkers receive an average of £2.53 per hour, employment law surrounding homeworkers is unclear due to their employed versus self-employed status and they have limited employment rights, paid holidays, maternity leave or redundancy notice and compensation.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, this issue is compounded by a lack of outreach services and understanding regarding women's rights and support needs.

Many of the women who access Heba's services have dependents. Caring for family members and a lack of flexible working time is also a significant factor limiting some women from participating in the community, completing courses and training, or gaining/maintaining employment. Having to care for dependents, irrespective of qualifications, drastically reduces women's economic activity.<sup>19</sup> BAMER women are less likely than White women to access childcare, be satisfied with the quality of services, or find childcare that is culturally and religiously sensitive.<sup>20</sup> However, where accessible services do exist, with an outreach policy, it has been found that BAMER women will use them.<sup>21</sup>

Where statutory support agencies exist, there is sometimes a bewildering array and much confusion over which agency provides which service. Furthermore, the needs of individuals are frequently very diverse e.g. they may need information on benefits, housing, legal status, employment and education/training.<sup>22</sup> Such organisations do exist but provision is patchy and organisations that help immigrant women specifically suffer from a lack of capacity and funding support. The following section explores the work of women-only led organisations in relation to BAMER women's service provision in further detail.

### 3. Services provided by specialist women's organisations

Specialist women's organisations act as an important point of access for information and support for many BAMER women. Many new arrivals to the UK have little information about their rights, are unable to access social services and have little source of help and support, therefore they often rely on women in their families and in their community.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, despite a traditionally strong engagement in East London, studies suggest that there is a growing reluctance for some communities to seek help and co-operate with local and central government due to a perceived failure to address socioeconomic disadvantages in the community.<sup>24</sup> The lack of ethnically diverse representatives in authority positions within society also serves to antagonise this distrust.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, specialist women's organisations become a supportive environment for people who have been neglected by or distrust statutory services.

*"I've tried classes and I don't like colleges to be honest, it's not I don't feel confident it's kind of the environment of the college, it's age differences and for me the timing of the colleges, the timings available for me is when the children are at school."*

**Service user**

Women-led specialist organisations target women in need and proactively ascertain how they can help. They are often in a unique position to offer support as many staff have suffered discrimination and social exclusion themselves and are from a variety of different cultures and nationalities. Specialist women-only organisations are essential as many BAMER women would not access mixed services for cultural and/or safety reasons, and may also be discouraged or forbidden by their husbands. Having a service led by and for BAMER women is unique as it means women can safely explore their experiences with women who share similar cultural backgrounds and understandings, and where they can speak in their own language and be understood.<sup>26</sup>

Women often need to build up their confidence and self esteem before they can participate in learning and training opportunities. Having these initial steps in place can have dramatic and positive results.<sup>27</sup> Respected grassroots organisations that can build long term relationships with women are in the best position to tackle the barriers to BAMER women's employment, including poor English and numerical skills, a lack of affordable childcare, and low self-confidence. These organisations should receive increased support, including secure, long term funding.<sup>28</sup>



Many specialist women's organisations offer much needed educational and vocational development, additional support in the form of crèches and translators and interpreters, and access to employment opportunities and training. The outreach services that these organisations provide for marginalised women

in the community enables those suffering from discrimination and social exclusion to become valued members of society, as well as challenging and changing broader society. A report on ethnic minority women's access to the labour market states that women-led organisations *"provide a crucial empowering and representational role for the [BAME] community, enabling capacity building, civic engagement, combating social exclusion and tackling issues like discrimination and racism."*<sup>29</sup>



The study goes on to note that language difficulties, childcare and lack of confidence were ascertained as the most difficult barriers for some BAME women. When asked what the benefits were in taking part in learning activities in specialist organisations, it was clear that there were much-needed positive outcomes. Seventy per cent reported an increase in communication skills; 66% stated that they had increased confidence; 56% said that they had increased access to information and services; 36% reported that their skills and knowledge had increased; 20% said that they were able to help their children with schoolwork; and 12% reported that they had better access to employment and training.<sup>30</sup>

However, despite demand outstripping supply, many specialist women's organisations receive little and only short term funding, rely on volunteers and have to use inadequate premises.<sup>31</sup>

*“At Heba, we are all different women from different countries and we get to know each other. When we go on a trip with our kids or see them playing in the crèche, we can see them all playing together and making friends from other countries.”*

**Service user**

## 4. About Heba Women's Project

*"It feels to me like I'm coming to my sisters and one of the things that I love is when one of the women has a problem or anything she just comes here, sits down, cries everything out, feels comfortable and she's like 'sorry girls I make you feel uncomfortable but I'm stressed' and you feel like everybody is supportive and you're like, ok, even if I haven't got family here I can go to my friends in class and even strangers sometimes and just sit and cry and that's your crying done and that's it and you move on and that feeling.... That's something you wouldn't be able to find anywhere else."*

**Service user**



Since it was established around 20 years ago, Heba has aided isolated women to build fuller lives through training, educational development and by offering a socially and ethnically diverse, welcoming community space. Based in East London, the award-winning, women-led project's objectives are to improve skill-building and social inclusion.

Heba was established at a time when women wanted to find a space to practice their English and sewing skills. The demand for Heba has grown continuously since then and the organisation now has over 350 women service users from 15 different nationalities. Additionally, Heba has a sister project, 'Poetry in Wood', that provides woodwork and other craft training for people with learning difficulties.

Heba benefits women from across the world. In 2010, 64% of service users were Bangladeshi, 6% were Pakistani, 6% were Somali, 4% were

Algerian, 4% were Moroccan, 9% were from other African countries (mainly East Africa) and the remaining 7% were from various other countries around the world. Eighty-eight per cent are Tower Hamlets residents.

Heba was established at a time when women were isolated in the home and did not support each other as a community. Brick Lane was dominated by men and women did not have a space to socialise or learn, and this problem continues for many women today. Therefore, Heba is beneficiary-

led, providing training and other opportunities in response to local women's needs. Service users are heavily involved in the planning and day-to-day running of the project, which also makes it more cost-effective.

#### **4.1. Training and educational development**

Heba runs a diverse array of training and developmental courses to aid the social inclusion of isolated women. During the research there were six language classes (ESOL Pre-Entry to Level 2, which is equivalent to GCSE), five sewing classes, two computer (ICT) classes and courses subject to demand, such as a parenting course. These classes meet an imperative need for women who have had no previous education, or with family commitments that prevent them from accessing adult education, to interact and develop their skills and potential.

#### **4.2. Employment advice**

The organisation offers informal employment advice and guidance for the women who access the project. Advice is personalised, coming from a member of staff who personally knows the service user and understands her situation. Heba fills an essential void that statutory organisations may not efficiently meet by providing support that is not available elsewhere.

#### **4.3. Crèche**

Heba has a crèche for 30 children. This provides mothers who would otherwise be unable to access the project with affordable and culturally sensitive childcare. It also allows mothers and children to interact in a multicultural and diverse environment.

#### **4.4. Clubs**

Heba runs a recipe exchange club and reading club. This encourages a communal atmosphere, offers a space for women and allows important social bonds to be created. This is an important aspect of Heba's work as many of the women the organisation supports are isolated from the wider community and mainstream society.

#### **4.5. Social enterprise, volunteering and work experience**

Heba contains a social enterprise and production unit, heba@bricklane, which provides enterprise opportunities and subsidised machining rates to start-up designers. This is complemented by five subsidised workspaces and two shops, which Heba lets to women starting out in business. Heba also has a work experience programme for approximately 30 women at any one time. This allows the women to put the English, sewing and ICT skills that they have acquired through Heba's training into practice. The work experience programme draws on Heba's contacts with designers and tenants, which encourages a greater understanding of the employment world, commerce and improves interpersonal skills and tolerance with people from different cultures, professions and organisations.

*"It was something I had been dreaming about before but things happened that stopped me from achieving it but now I can still get there."*

**Service user**

*"I feel more confident, I'm looking for jobs as well...I'm happy to look for jobs, I'm searching the internet, I'm starting to mix with people."*

**Service user**

*“You say what you know and they said what they know and you feel like [it opens your] mind and you mix with different religions as well.”*

**Service user**

*“Mixing with people who have a lot of ideas ... you feel like, yeah, I like to be like them I like to learn educated language and I want to learn more you know? And you're thinking is further.”*

**Service user**

The sewing classes are often a way to make Heba accessible to the most isolated women, those who would initially be intimidated by the prospect of joining an ESOL class. Regular attendance at Heba and discussions with other service users then lead to women accessing other services, like English classes. There is also informal learning which happens through the sewing classes such as English language and learning about other support and services. This informal and peer to peer knowledge exchange is a key part of the added value that Heba generates.

The main issue that Heba as an organisation faces is a lack of funding and the impact of relying on funders. As many voluntary sector organisations find, there is little funding to cover the core costs of the organisation or the administration needed to produce the outcomes evaluation that funders require. There are also constraints associated with each funder, for example local council funding must be for Tower Hamlets residents only but women come to Heba from other boroughs. The outcomes that funders want may also restrict the services provided, for example not

measuring the qualitative impact on women but just the quantitative data which is easy to collect but does not encourage women to progress further. Therefore Heba have found that they are restricted to delivering courses in the way that the funder wants rather than in the most appropriate way for service users, and to only providing a course once rather than carrying on if it is successful.

It can also be challenging working with a service user group who need such a personal approach and often one to one support which is a capacity and time issue for staff. Heba is also understaffed in terms of being able to complete the administration needed for funders requirements and like many small organisations finds it easier to apply for larger grants as these come with fewer administrative requirements than having a number of smaller grants which would give the organisation more flexibility.

Heba have also had to counteract negative reactions to them being a women-only service and have attempted to set up a men's project, however this was not accessed as there is not the same need among men; women are often isolated while their husbands are at work and so benefit from all the services that Heba offers. The organisation has also had to deal with the negative attitudes and associations around working with immigrants.

# 5. Methodology

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach was used to determine the contributions of and the social value created by Heba. The SROI approach is a form of cost-benefit analysis that seeks to measure and value the key changes, or outcomes, created by a programme or activity. It not only looks at the economic or financial value created, but also includes social and environmental value, offering a truer reflection of the total value created.

This research used the standardised methodology developed by nef and the Office for Civil Society (then the Office for the Third Sector).<sup>32</sup> This involved following specific processes used in SROI evaluation, including creating an impact map to show positive and negative effects, collecting data to show the investment in activities and their outcomes, and the calculation of outcomes in monetary terms.

For this research Heba Women's Project as a whole and all the services they provide were evaluated.

## 5.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were set up with current service users, staff and also various external stakeholders to provide evidence and explore the outcomes of the services that Heba provides.

External stakeholders were individuals who had worked closely with Heba and had a good understanding of their work and the outcomes achieved for service users. Telephone interviews were conducted with previous and current funders, including the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. An interview was also undertaken with a contact at Account3, a training and enterprise organisation that provides cover for the Heba crèche and Heba provide crèche work placements for their trainees. The author Rachel Lichtenstein was interviewed regarding her book *On Brick Lane* which included a chapter on Heba. There were also interviews with tenants and designers who were using the production unit.

Focus groups and one-to-one interviews, including one with a translator, were conducted with seven service users and ex-service users. The women who took part represented women who had been coming to Heba for a long time and had undertaken various types of training and services, those who were new to Heba and one-off users of the project. These women had come to Heba for a range of reasons and were facing various issues such as depression and isolation as well as issues of poor English language and lack of other skills. Some of the children of service users were also interviewed to ask them about the impact on them and their mothers from their engagement with Heba. A focus group was also carried out with staff and volunteers as well as individual interviews with some teachers and women who worked in the crèche. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The stakeholder interviews were used to create the impact maps (see figures 1, 2 and 3) and to ensure that the right outcomes were measured by the data collection methods. Quotes from the stakeholder interviews have been used to illustrate the report and to develop the key messages.

## 5.2 Impact maps

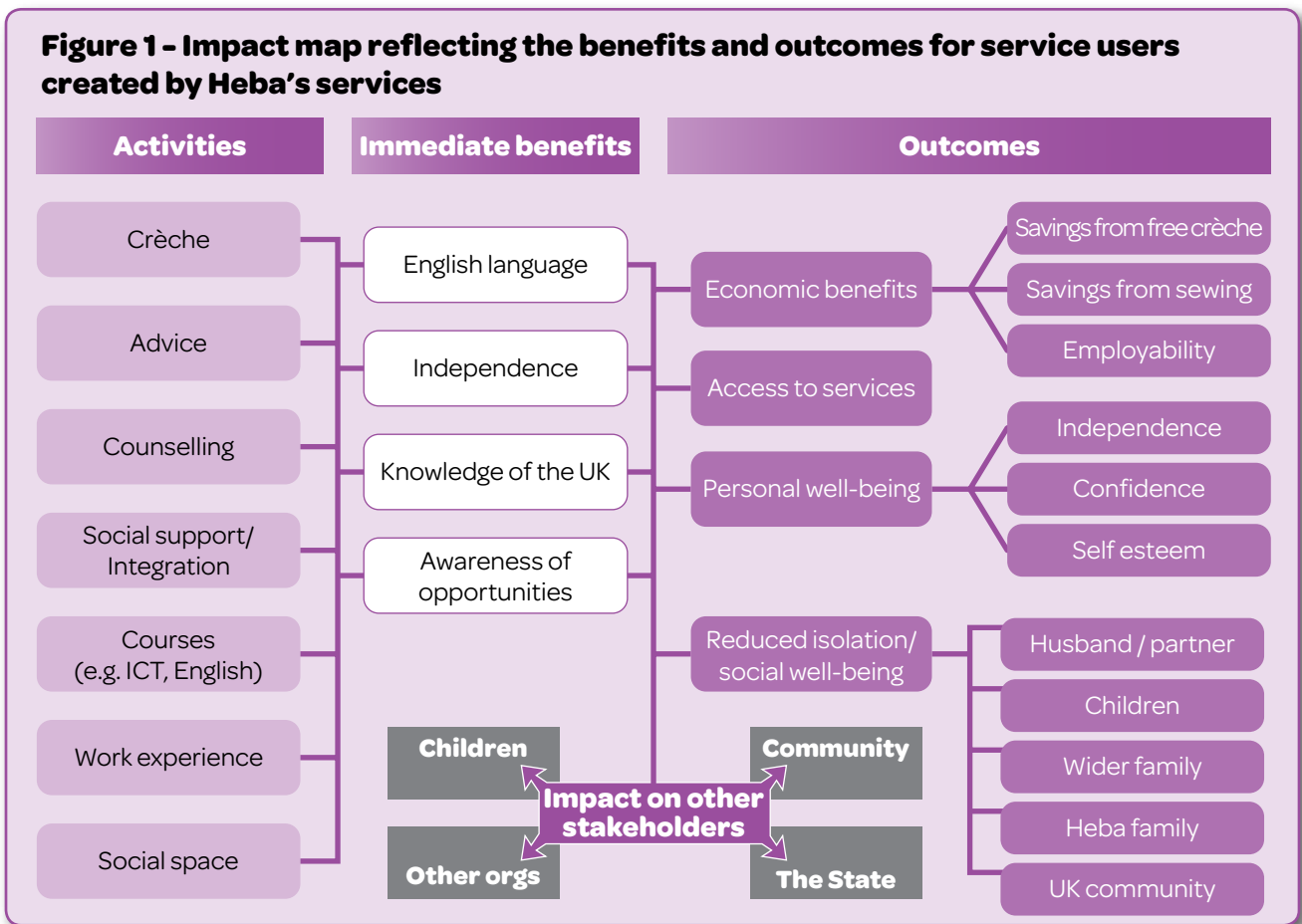
An impact map was developed for three main stakeholder groups describing the flow of change for:

- the individual service users
- the children of service users
- wider society, including tenants and designers who use Heba, the local community, other organisations who have a relationship with Heba and the State.

Heba’s activities and the benefits of these were linked to the key outcomes which came out of the stakeholder interviews to show the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes. Therefore the impact maps illustrate the relationship between what matters to the stakeholders and the indicators of this that were chosen to represent added social value.

Although presented in a linear fashion the impact map is not meant to read as a simple cause-and-effect model. It is not easy, for example, to express outcomes separately of the various aspects of women’s lives, such as health, family and education as all these are inter-related. Outputs that relate to government departmental categorisation have traditionally been used to measure outcomes. But because outcomes in this case are centred on the person and their individual stories of change traditional output measurement fails to capture the complexity of what is going on in women’s lives. Given that the outcomes are inter-related, the indicators also overlap with each other and across outcomes.

The main inputs to Heba’s services are both financial (direct costs, staff costs, overheads and expenses) and non-financial (opportunity cost of volunteers’ time and unclaimed expenses, as well as the time and energy that service users themselves give).



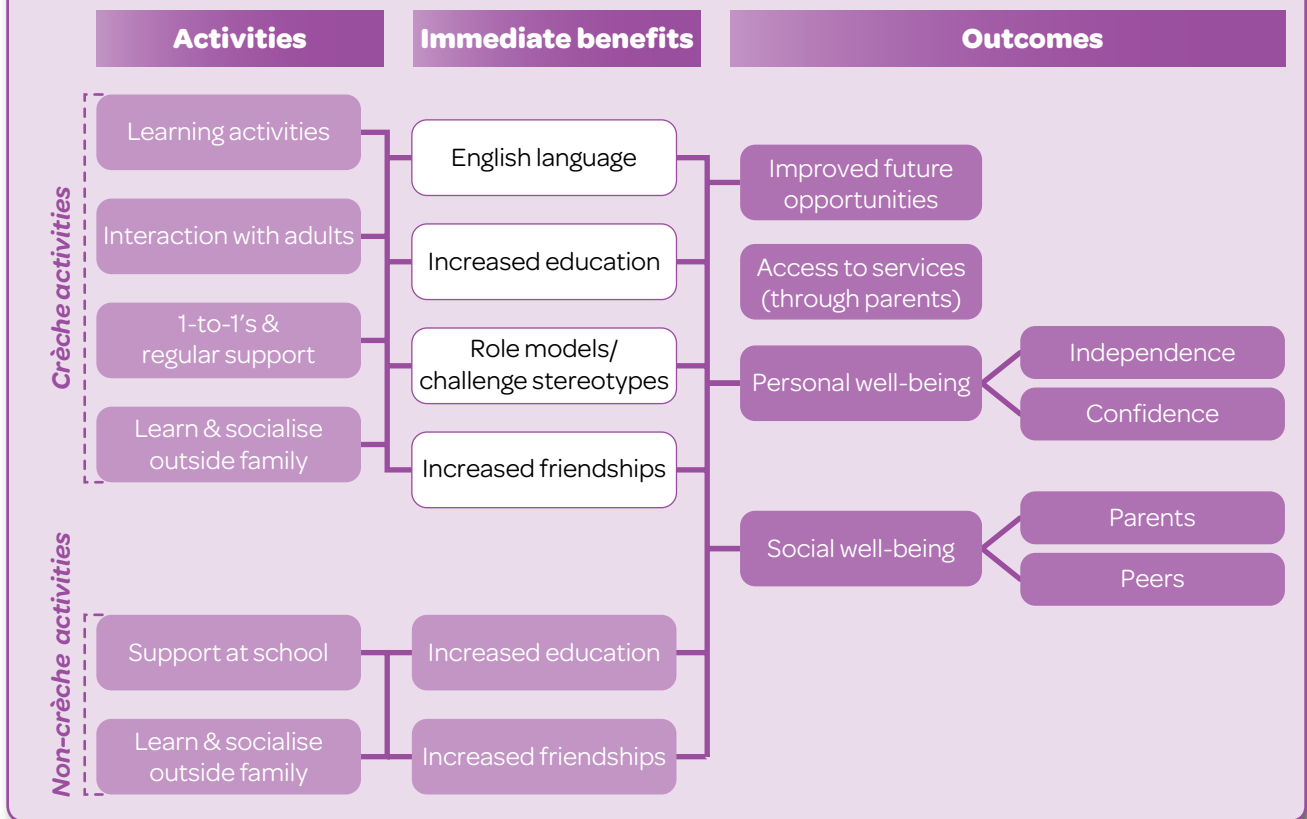
### Service users (figure 1)

The main outputs are the activities that Heba offers - courses (e.g. English, sewing, ICT), the crèche, advice/counselling, work experience, social support, and interaction and a social space - and the number of service users.

Immediate benefits for women are learning and improving skills such as English language, independence, awareness of opportunities and life skills for living in the UK. These immediate benefits then lead to ones for other groups (children, the wider community, other organisations and the State).

The main outcomes for individual women are economic benefits (savings from the free crèche, savings from sewing and increased employability), increased access to other services, personal well-being (increased independence, confidence and self esteem) and reduced social isolation or increased social well-being. This then also has a wider effect on the other stakeholders and contributes to an improved relationship with husbands, children, wider family members, other Heba service users and the wider community.

**Figure 2 - Impact map reflecting the benefits and outcomes for the children of service users created by Heba's services**



## Children of service users (figure 2)

Activities which benefit the children of Heba's service users are those provided by the crèche, including learning activities, interaction with other adults, regular support and learning to socialise outside of the family. Older children also benefit from support at school, as well as friendships and socialisation outside the family through Heba.

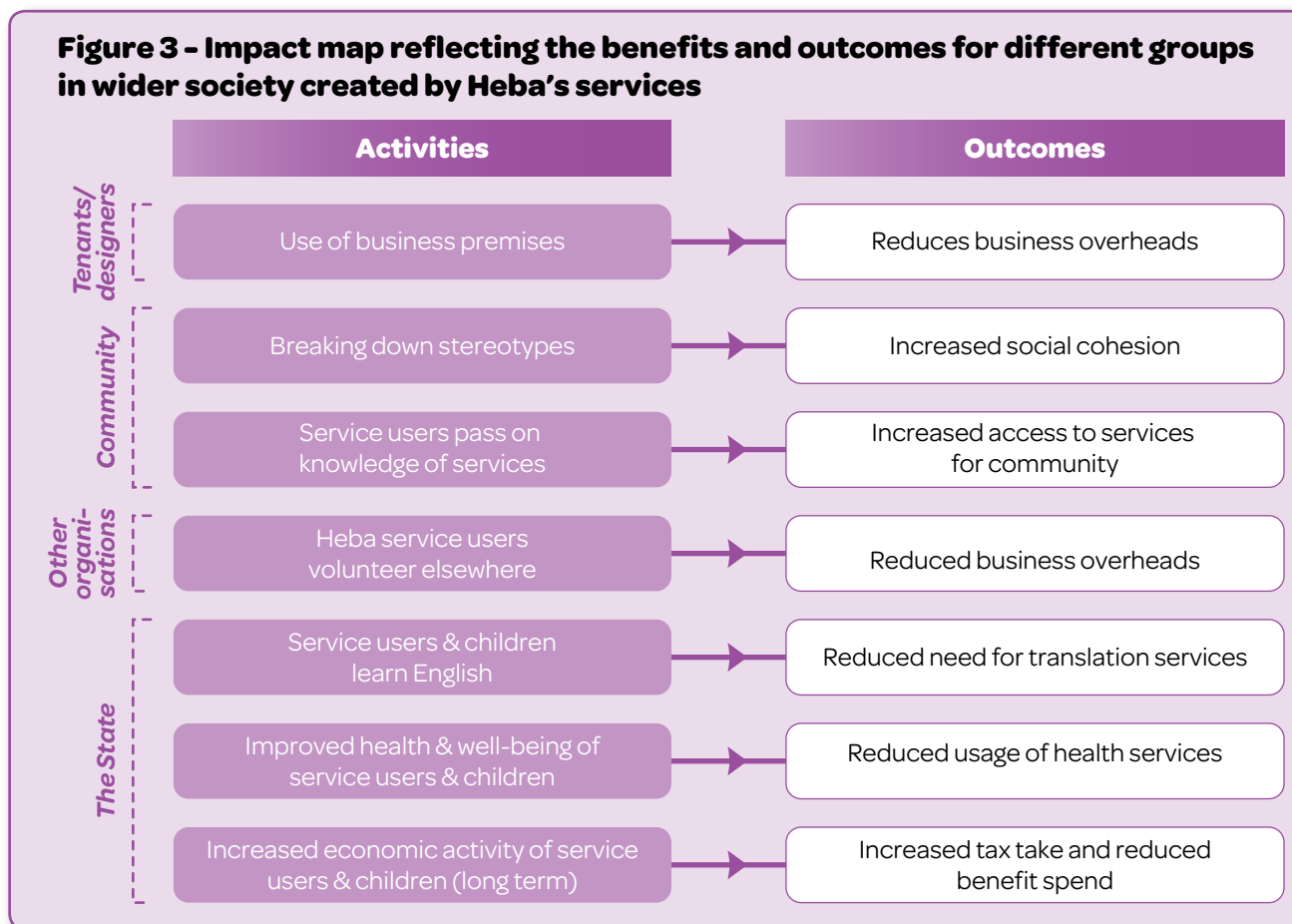
The immediate benefits of these activities are around language, education and increased friendships. The main outcomes in the long term are improved future educational and employment opportunities as well as the benefit of access to services through their parents such as healthcare. Personal well-being (increased independence and confidence) and social well-being (improved relationships with parents and peers) are also key outcomes.



*"Before I found [it] difficult to share with my son about his homework, maths, English and science, now I'm more free, I can explain [to]him in English."*

**Service user**

**Figure 3 - Impact map reflecting the benefits and outcomes for different groups in wider society created by Heba's services**



### Wider society (figure 3)

The impact of Heba on other stakeholders is dependent on the types of activities they undertake with them. For tenants and designers who use Heba's premises for their business and employ service users, the outcome is a reduction in business overheads from the subsidised rent and a relationship to Heba.

In the local community of Tower Hamlets, Heba service users pass on knowledge about Heba and other services, and the impact of seeing women from different cultures and faiths socialising together can also be a way to break down stereotypes. This leads to increased social cohesion and an increased access to services for the community which has far reaching consequences.

*“Heba is well networked with other organisations and in touch with the community. It targets women from hard to reach communities and who are socially excluded.”*

**Funder**

Other organisations benefit from Heba service users volunteering with them and vice versa, working together to increase opportunities for women. This leads to reduced business overheads as well as increasing the profile of other organisations locally.

For the State, Heba's activities (service users and their children learning English, the improved health and well-being of service users and their children and the increased economic activity of service users and their children in the long term) lead to economic outcomes in terms

of a reduced need for translation services, reduced spend on benefits and other services such as healthcare and an increased tax take from increased income.



## 5.3 Measuring outcomes and indicators

Registration details and any qualifications achieved was the only data originally being collected by Heba, therefore during the project various data collection methods were used to measure the outcomes for service users.

On average 350 women come to Heba every year with approximately 150 women attending every week. In depth interviews were conducted with 20 women in September 2009 and seven of these women were interviewed again in September 2010 to show the 'distance travelled'.

In addition a survey was carried out with 32 women with all data collected by March 2011. The survey looked at key changes and 'distance travelled' as well as to what extent these changes could be attributed to Heba. Exam results and qualifications achieved were also used as quantitative data.

There were various challenges with collecting this data and the data collection methods - interviews and questionnaires - were very time consuming. Although Heba understand that data collection is hugely important, the way they are operating now with funding restraints and little staff capacity means it is considered extra work and is hard to embed. Funders also still tend to ask for more quantitative data so there is less of an incentive to collect different types of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data.

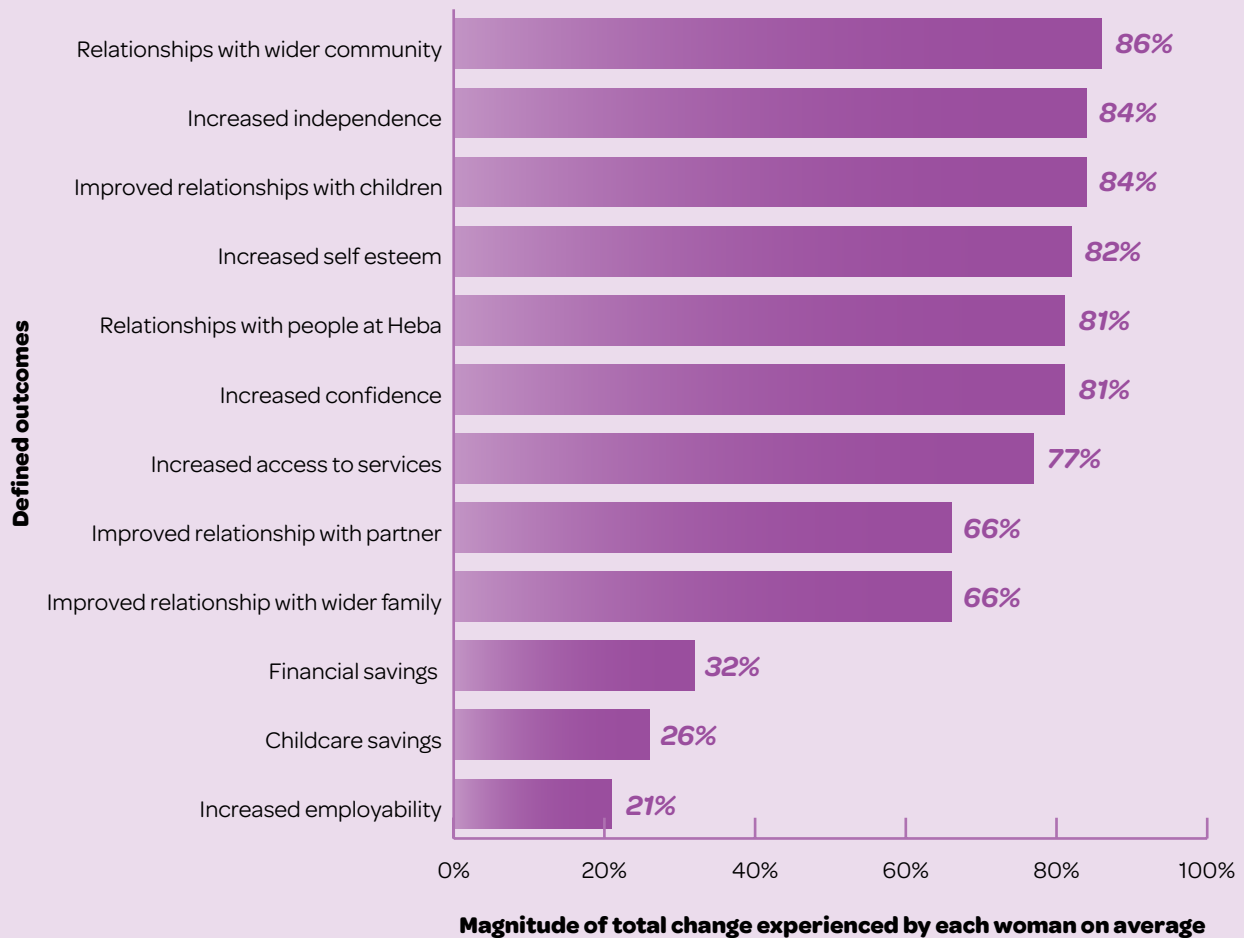
However, Heba hope to conduct entry interviews with new service users and then follow these up six months later to collect data on change and 'distance travelled'. They would like to involve volunteers in this to enable long term data collection following the model created during the SROI project as this will be valuable to the organisation in the future.

*"If you want to do something more than Heba [e.g. further education and training] then there's an open world there that you can access."*

**Service user**

# 6. Outcomes

**Graph 1: Magnitude of total change experienced by women at Heba**



**Graph 1** shows the outcomes created for women as a result of accessing Heba’s services and becoming part of the ‘Heba family’. Calculated using data collected from in depth interviews with service users as well as a survey; the research findings show that Heba creates a broad range of positive outcomes for women.

*“My husband noticed that I’m more confident now, that I don’t ask him that much anymore.”*  
**Service user**

*“Now I can do the shopping, I can do the money, I can manage the house to be honest, I feel like now I’m a mum, I’m a woman.”*  
**Service user**

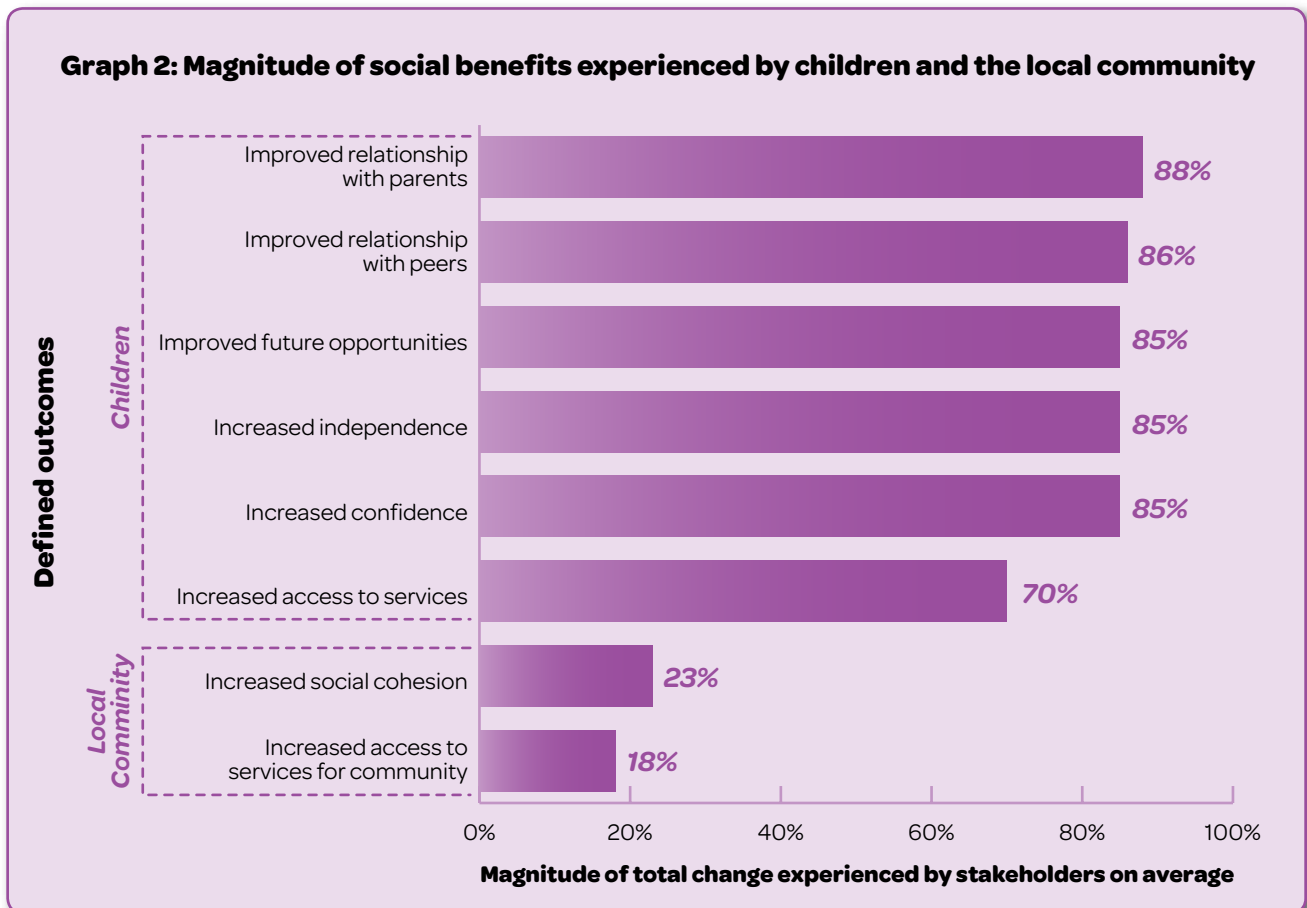
Women experienced most changes on a personal level, for example they reported feeling increased independence which was demonstrated in various ways such as being able to access services without a translator, being able to go out alone and being able to access further educational opportunities and employment.

Two thirds of changes related to relationships, with women feeling that their relationships in the wider community had improved helping to reduce isolation and meaning that women

felt more able to participate in society. For example, they were able to talk to neighbours, make new friends and share information and advice with others.

Women also reported being able to make personal financial savings, such as 32% saving money on clothing for themselves and their family after learning how to make their own clothes through the sewing courses. The childcare savings created by the free crèche at Heba are also significant for service users and have a huge impact on whether women are able to access Heba’s services at all.

These findings reflect improved personal relationships with family members as well as the wider community as an outcome of accessing Heba and an increased sense of confidence and financial control.



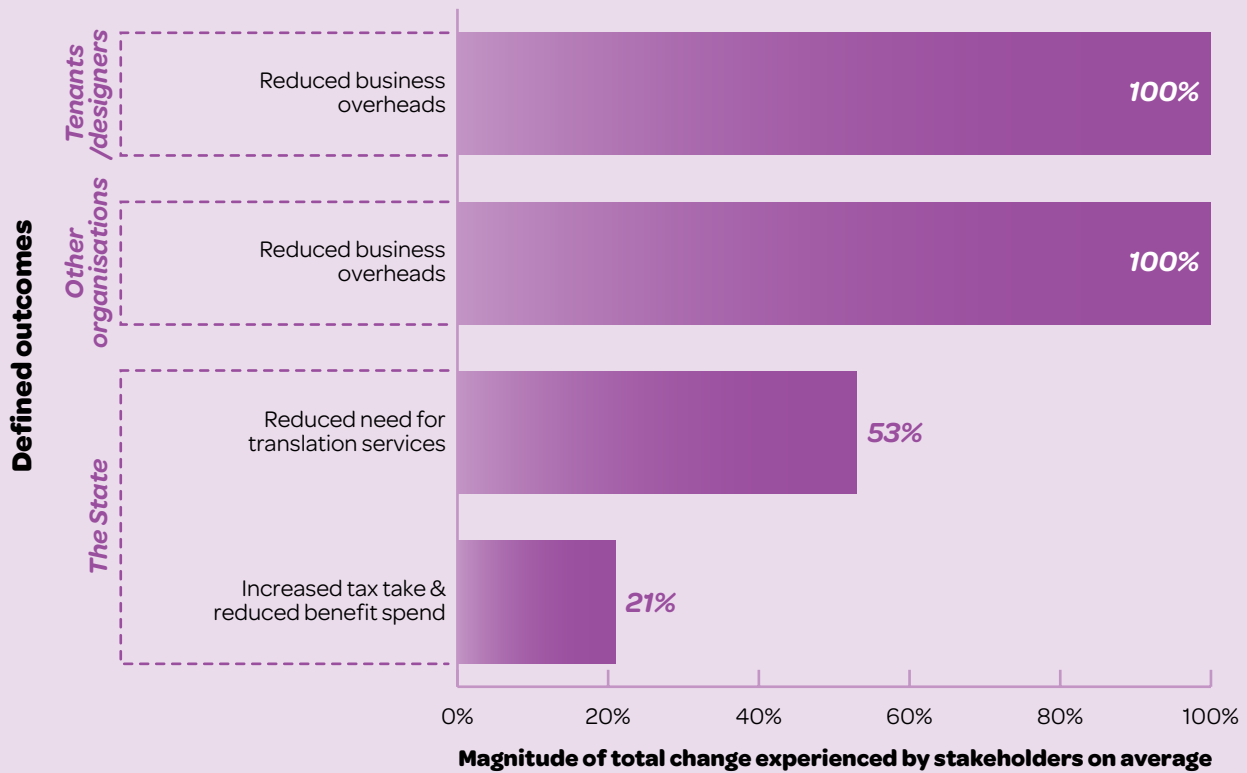
**Graph 2** shows the outcomes created by Heba for other main stakeholders – the children of service users and the wider local community. As a community organisation, Heba’s social benefits go far beyond the service users and have an impact locally.

The outcomes and social benefits for these groups vary. For service users’ children the outcomes are similar to their mothers, with an average 85% increase in confidence as well as an 88% improvement



*“When my mum started to learn English she was the one who taught me how to use stuff on the computer.”*  
**Child of service user**

**Graph 3: Magnitude of economic benefits experienced by other stakeholders**



*“It’s unlike anything else I’ve heard about. It’s a charitable organisation that helps a wide spectrum of people.”*

**Tenant**

in relationships with their parents and peers (86%). A mother’s relationship to Heba also has an important affect on their children’s future in terms of education and employment and access to services which will provide increased opportunities.

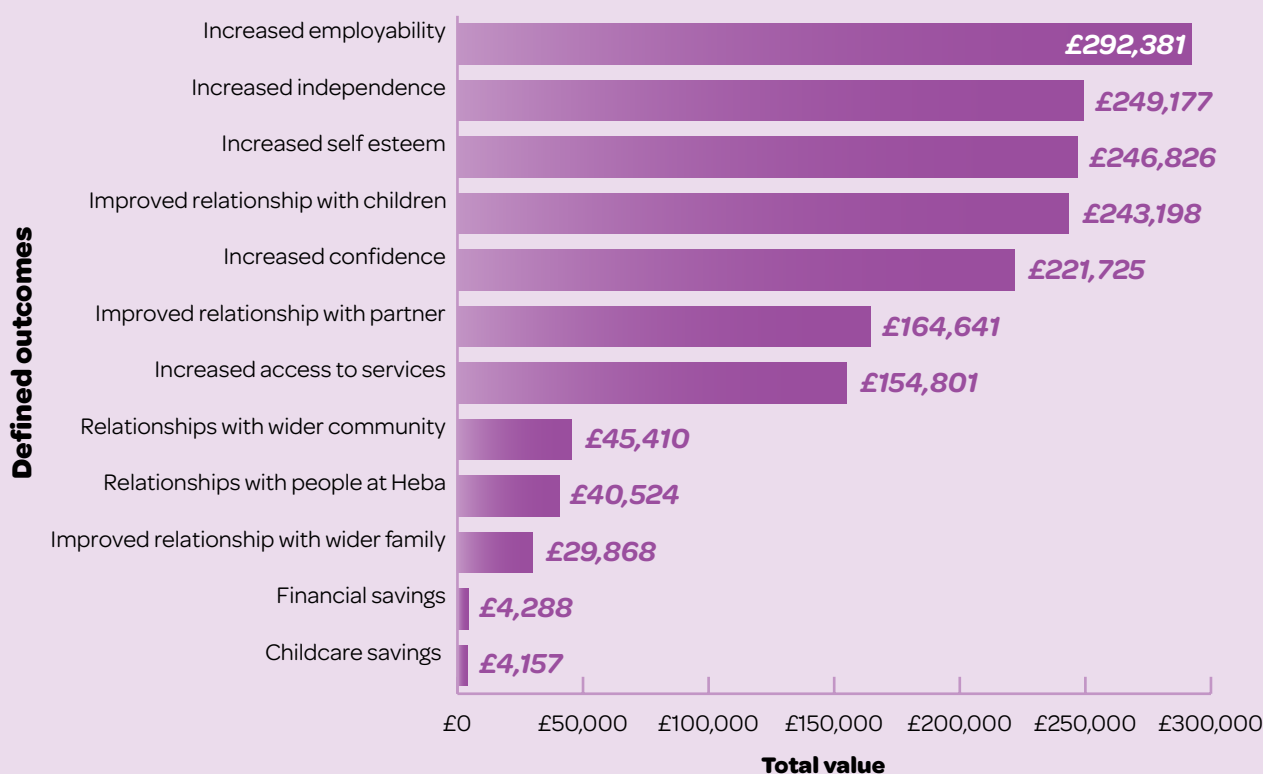
**Graph 3** shows the outcomes created by Heba for other main stakeholders –the local business tenants and fashion designers who use Heba’s

subsidised space and work with service users to produce their garments, other organisations that work with Heba, and the State.

The outcomes and economic benefits for these groups vary. With the tenants, designers and other organisations, the reduction in business overheads is the key outcome which enables them to survive as a local business.

Impacts on the State include reduced need for translation services for women who have accessed Heba – overall costs of translation services for immigrants in the UK were reported to be £140 million in 2010.<sup>33</sup> The State also benefit from an increase in tax take and reduced benefit spend for women who go into employment.

**Graph 4: Total value created for Heba service users**



**Graph 4** demonstrates the total present value of the outcomes to Heba’s service users created by Heba’s range of services. The graph shows the present value to service users to give an accurate account of the value of the benefits in terms of current costs without inflation and a discount rate has been applied so that it demonstrates the current or present value of benefits that accrue in the future.

These calculations were made using a range of financial proxies for the different outcomes which were then divided across specific outcomes for service users and multiplied by attribution levels over a five year period. The proxies value what is important to the service users in terms of the outcomes and then use economic valuation techniques to put a financial value on them.

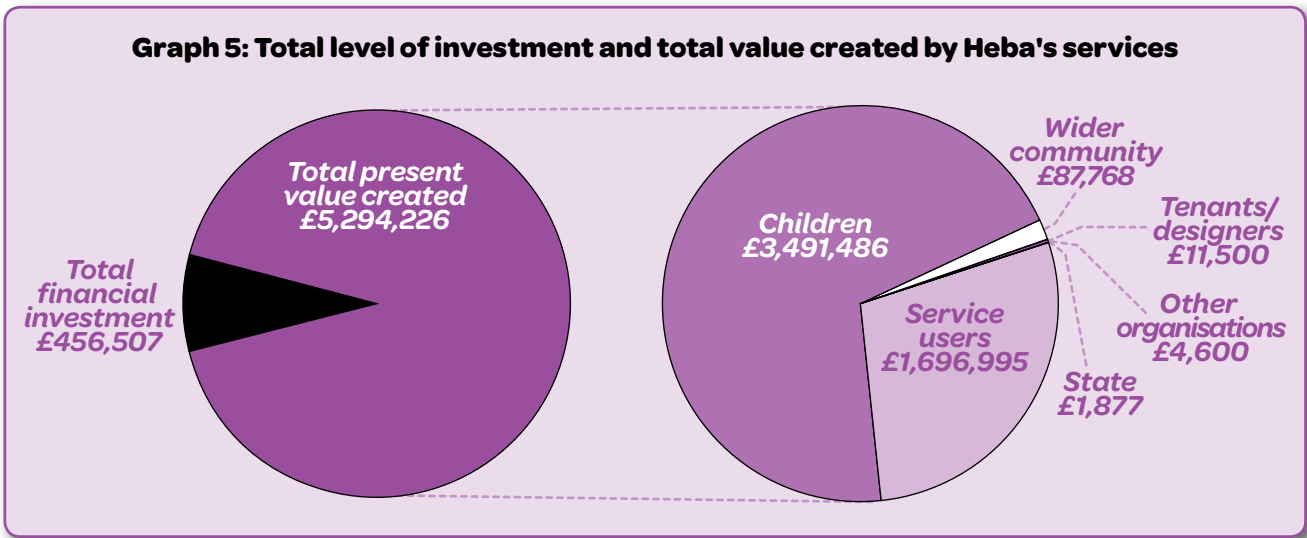
The graph shows the increase in employability and financial savings from engagement with Heba but also places financial value upon improvements in women’s social relationships and self esteem which are also key to their progression.

The ‘increased employability’ outcome can be seen to have the largest value even though the actual change is one of the smallest (see graph 1). This is because the impact on individual women of being employed is very significant. Not all service users will go in to education and employment directly from Heba and this may be more of a long term outcome for many of the women. However, the increase in opportunities that Heba creates is of great value.

*“I learned a lot, I gained experience, I have many opportunities from Heba, I have to give back now. This is my chance to give it back.”*

**Service user**

**Graph 5: Total level of investment and total value created by Heba's services**



**Graph 5** illustrates the high social return on investment ratio created by Heba’s services. The data shows that the benefit to children is both significant and long term as Heba’s service users have large families (each woman has an average of three children) therefore a larger number of children than women are impacted and the benefit is even greater.

For every pound invested in Heba Women’s Project, 11 pounds worth of social value is created for service users, their families and other groups using Heba, as well as for the wider community and the State. As indicated by the graph above, a comparatively small level of investment yields significant results. Funding Heba creates significant benefits not only for the women who use their services, but their children and the wider community. Their services enable women to access a range of educational and employment opportunities which would otherwise be out of reach.

*“I’ve done something that’s good for me now and it’s good for them [children] in the future”*  
**Service user**

## 7. Conclusion

The total value created by Heba has been calculated as £5,294,226. The total investment into these services has been calculated as £456,507. Therefore the final SROI ratio shows that for every £1 invested into Heba £11 of social value is generated to service users, their families, wider society and the State over five years.

### Key outcomes include:

- Economic savings and increased employability
- Reduced isolation and social well-being
- Improved future opportunities for service users' children
- Reduced business spend for other organisations and stakeholders
- Reduced long term usage of state services.

Therefore this report has clearly highlighted the immense benefit of Heba Women's Project to the women who access the services as well as to a much wider group of stakeholders. Funding services such as Heba is cost-effective, creates long term outcomes and has wide reaching impacts.

### Key messages:

1. Heba is a unique multi-cultural and multi-faith space which benefits from being holistic and specialist, providing a range of support which is needs-based and accessible by being women-only and culturally appropriate.
2. Heba's support with English language and cultural understanding has far reaching consequences for the most isolated immigrant women who would not access other services, from reducing isolation and increasing confidence to supporting them to live in the UK and progress into education and employment.
3. The impact of Heba on the wider community is also marked by providing community understanding and having a profound effect on children and families as well as the local economy.
4. Heba is value for money, facilitating a space for invaluable peer support and practical knowledge which builds trust and confidence, enabling women who have benefited from Heba's services to 'reinvest' their skills and knowledge for others' benefit.

## 8. Looking ahead

As a result of this research project, and the insight it has brought, Heba plans to start conducting entry interviews with all new service users and then follow these up six months later to collect data on change and 'distance travelled', following the model created during the SROI. They also plan to issue short questionnaires to existing service users on an annual basis to more formally track progress and change. As with all of Heba's activities, committed volunteers will play a large part in this long term data collection, providing meaningful work experience opportunities as well as data which will be valuable to the organisation in the future.

Heba will also use this report to raise their profile and highlight and explain the nature of their work as well as to enable them to raise awareness about the services they provide and why these are needed to potential funders and other stakeholders.

## Heba Women's Project case study

*"I came to the UK because of my husband. I had been a teacher in my country and I wanted to restart my teaching career here. I just wanted to be useful in this country and not let my skills go to waste but first I needed to learn English. I looked for English classes everywhere but there are so many restrictions on who can have free classes and I didn't have any money. Finally, I enrolled in a beginner class. It was much too easy, but I was desperate to do something with my time.*

*Luckily, a woman in the class told me about Heba, that there was a wider range of classes there, for everyone. I went along and was put in a class at my level and given help with my computer skills too. But it didn't stop there. Through my teachers, I found out about so many other courses that I had access to and was able to start three volunteer placements in the local area. This gave me valuable experience, motivation, and the feeling that I was finally able to contribute something to the community. Best of all, one of the placements was as a teaching assistant in a primary school. Through this placement, I gained my Level 2 childcare NVQ and was taken on in an official capacity. I am now working as a full time teaching assistant and I love the job.*

*If it hadn't been for Heba, there is no way I would be in this position today."*

## Glossary

### Attribution

When a benefit is assigned to a particular cause or source.

### BAME

The term refers to Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and communities. Both this term and BAMER have been used throughout the report as sometimes this group does not include refugee women.

### BAMER

The term refers to Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups and communities.

### Cost-benefit analysis

A method of reaching economic decisions by comparing the cost of doing something with its benefits. The concept is relatively simple, but difficulty often arises in decisions about which costs and which benefits to include in the analysis. This is especially so when relevant costs and benefits do not have a price. Cost-benefit analysis usually looks at returns to one stakeholder – the State.

### Discount rate

As part of the SROI calculations, a discount rate was applied to each group to reflect changes to costs and benefits that have happened since the relevant activities had taken place.

### 'Distance travelled'

'Distance travelled' is a measurement term that refers to the progress that a person makes towards harder outcomes like employment or ceasing reoffending. This can include differences in feelings, attitudes, perceptions or skills over time, using self-reporting and observation methods.

### English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

English for Speakers of Other Languages is an educational programme used to teach English to people whose first language is not English.

### Focus groups

A qualitative research method where a group of identified participants are encouraged by a researcher to present their views on a certain issue. These views are then analysed as research data.

### ICT

Information and communication technology including skills with computers and the internet.

### Immigrant

A person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another.

### Impact map

A tool that can be used to illustrate the work that a person or organisation does and help them to think about how these activities bring about social, economic or environmental change.

### Indicators

An indicator is a piece of information that helps to determine whether or not change has taken place. Indicators matter because they are a way of knowing if an outcome has taken place. There can be indicators of outcomes and outputs but only outcomes indicators are appropriate to measure change.

### Inputs

The resources that an intervention uses to carry out its activities and operations. These include: funding, premises, goods-in-kind and time donated by volunteers.

### Islamophobia

The Runnymede Trust<sup>34</sup> defines Islamophobia as having eight characteristics:

1. Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change
2. Islam is seen as separate and 'other'. It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them
3. Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist
4. Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a 'clash of civilisations'



5. Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage
6. Criticisms made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand
7. Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society
8. Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal.

### Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

A process of systematically collecting data that is relevant to a project or activity, then analysing this data to make judgements on the success of the project and make changes or improvements.

### Outcomes

The change that results from an organisation's activity – for people, communities, the economy, or aspects of the natural or built environment. They come either wholly or in part as a result of the organisation's actions. Outcomes can be negative as well as positive and measuring them is the only way that you can be certain that the change has taken place.

### Outputs

A policy intervention that usually results in something demonstrable or countable right afterwards. Outputs are usually finite; items created (such as jobs) or people trained. While outputs are often the first step in creating the longer term change at which policy is aimed, they are not enough by themselves to create that change.

### Outreach service

A service that provides support to women who are not resident at the service, for example, providing support for abused women who have chosen to stay at home or have moved to new accommodation rather than staying at a refuge. Outreach services also provide support within their local community, such as through training for statutory services or awareness raising activities in schools.

### Proxies

In selecting indicators there is a trade-off between data availability and accuracy. When data is unavailable or difficult to obtain, proxies can be used. A proxy is a value that is deemed to be close to the desired indicator. For example, the overall regional unemployment rate may be used as a proxy for the local unemployment rate if the required data is unavailable.

### Public body

An organisation that carries out an area of Government policy. Public bodies can include local authorities and primary care trusts in the NHS.

### Racism

Hatred or intolerance of another race or other races.

### Social Return on Investment (SROI)

A method which measures the social, environmental and economic value created by an activity or intervention. This measurement is made in relation to the resources invested into the activity or organisation.

### Stakeholders

Those people or groups who are either affected by or who can affect policy. This can include customers, service users, trustees, community groups, employees, funders/ investors, statutory bodies, suppliers, staff, or volunteers.

### Statutory provision

Support services provided by public bodies, such as counsellors provided by the NHS.

### 'Theory of change'

Defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long term goal. This set of connected building blocks interchangeably referred to as outcomes, results, accomplishments, or preconditions – is depicted on a map sometimes referred to as an impact map. This is a graphic representation of the journey of change, and the model has been developed by the Aspen Institute.<sup>35</sup>

### Voluntary and community organisation (VCOs)

A voluntary and community organisation is one whose main focus is to deliver social benefit in a variety of forms to the community, rather than to generate profit for distribution to its members. It will usually be independent of Government.

### Well-being

A positive state of existence characterised by happiness, satisfaction, personal development, fulfilment and engagement with the 'community'.<sup>36</sup>

### Women with no recourse to public funds/insecure immigration status

If a woman comes to the UK on a Spousal Visa, she becomes dependent on her husband for her right to remain in the UK. She is also reliant on her husband as her 'sponsor' to apply within two years for her own right to remain. At this time she has 'no recourse to public funds' and she is completely financially dependent on him. Women who enter the UK on student and work visas, or those who have become over-stayers, also have no recourse to public funds and so are vulnerable if they experience violence but are not yet covered by the Home Office funded Sojourner Project scheme.<sup>37</sup>

### Xenophobia

Intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.

# Notes

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**The Women's Resource Centre (WRC)** is a charity which supports women's organisations to be more effective and sustainable. We provide training, information, resources and one-to-one support on a range of organisational development issues. We also lobby decision-makers on behalf of the women's not-for-profit sector for improved representation and funding.

Our members work in a wide range of fields including violence against women, employment, education, rights and equality, the criminal justice system and the environment. They deliver services to and campaign on behalf of some of the most marginalised communities of women.

There are over ten thousand people working or volunteering for our members who support almost half a million individuals each year

**This project was supported by Trust for London**



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