

# bright CHOICES

SUMMARY REPORT 2015/2016



 sacro

 MC  
FR multi-cultural  
family base



LOTTERY FUNDED



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## Bright Choices

Bright Choices is a partnership between Sacro, the Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council, and the Multi-Cultural Family Base. It is designed specifically to help women, men, children, families & communities who are experiencing difficult relationships stemming from disagreements about what behaviour is acceptable. We can help you if:

- > You do not want to grow up or raise your family in the tradition of your community
- > You or someone you know is accused of 'dishonouring' his/her family, community or religion
- > You know that someone else is suffering because they are 'dishonouring' their family
- > You are abused in your marriage but you cannot leave your husband/wife
- > You want help to discuss issues of honour with your family or community or with a trained professional in confidence
- > You or someone you know needs help to stay safe in their family home or in their community.

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## How We Can Help

Bright Choices offers free, confidential support to deal with such issues by:

- > Helping you to stay safe and well
- > Helping you find out about your rights, responsibilities and choices
- > Supporting you to make informed decisions
- > Providing practical and emotional support to help build your confidence
- > Seeing you at home, in the community or in our offices
- > Facilitating a conversation between you and someone who has hurt you to help you decide how to move forward, if that is what you wish to do.

The following stories are not real, but represent examples of the type of situation that Bright Choices can help you, or someone you know, with.

...Farah and Umar married by arrangement. They are happy and have three children together. Farah and Umar's parents and their community disagree with how they are raising their three children: allowing them to wear Western clothes, to go to college and not arranging marriages for them. Farah and Umar find it really upsetting that their families and community are calling them 'shameful'.

... Farzana came to the UK after she accepted a marriage proposal. She and her husband have a great relationship and two children. Farzana was happy until her mother-in-law moved close to her family. Her mother-in-law has been criticising everything Farzana is doing - telling her that she is a bad wife, and if she talks back her mother in law slaps her. Farzana told her husband but he keeps telling her to be patient. She feels very lonely, unhappy and like nobody cares.

... Jatinder just got accepted at University. Over the summer before her first year, her mum showed her the photos of men who had made proposals to marry Jatinder. Jatinder knew that her mum and dad really wanted her to get married, but she wanted to finish her studies first. She felt confused, scared and unhappy, but she did not know how to say that to her parents.

... Anand is about to finish college. He wants to spend the next year traveling. A month before his graduation, his dad explained to him that when Anand was 13, his parents promised a couple from their community that, when Anand finishes college, he will marry their daughter. Anand was extremely upset about this. He did not know about the arrangement and he does not want to be married. He felt betrayed by his own family and was confused about what to do.

...Asanbe is 12 years old and she will be starting high school in three months' time. Her parents have arranged a holiday to their home country over the summer for nine weeks. Asanbe couldn't wait to go on the trip until, one day, her mum said to her that on this holiday she will "become a woman". Asanbe is scared because she has heard that other girls from her country got cut when they were 12. Some of them died or had serious problems because of this. Asanbe does not want to be cut and is very scared about going to her home country now.

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## About Us

Established in 2015 with funding from the Big Lottery, Bright Choices was created to offer Edinburgh a unique, holistic support model. We provide intense emotional and practical assistance to individuals and families; use restorative practices to heal old wounds and mediation to prevent new ones; and provide all agencies working in the field of community human rights with comprehensive, free training on how to engage effectively.

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## What Makes Bright Choices Unique?

- We support your rights and decisions in a way that is appropriate to your culture
- We do not exclude anyone from our service without discussing their situation first
- We engage both with individuals, families and communities as well as with strategic networks to advocate for the rights of the people we support
- We are always looking for opportunities to work together and share our knowledge and expertise as well as to learn from the knowledge and expertise of others
- We provide a bridge between vulnerable, hard to reach communities and mainstream services.

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## Our First Year

In our first year we have received referrals from partner organisations, the NHS, community organisations, community members and the City of Edinburgh Council enabling us to support people directly. We have trained over 250 professionals to understand, recognise and respond to the issues we are addressing, appointed an expert advisory board and now participate in several key strategic networks.

Bright Choices has also engaged with dozens of individuals from affected communities. This has been done through both awareness-raising and groundbreaking applications of mediation which support safe, meaningful conversations between those affected by Honour Based Violence (HBV). This creative form of engagement has resulted in successful mediation outcomes and the dissemination of conflict resolution skills throughout the relevant communities.

To further our prevention work Bright Choices has also responded to several Scottish Government policy consultations highlighting issues and is working with the Children's Rights Alliance Scotland on the report they will be submitting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in September 2016.

Our direct work with people has involved 52 sessions in people's homes; 83 sessions with individuals and families in the community; seven community conflict resolution workshops attended by 67 individuals; 14 training sessions to over 250 professionals; 151 sessions of emotional support, and 111 sessions of practical support.



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## Our Results

Service user feedback has been overwhelmingly positive:

“Without Bright Choices I would most probably not be here right now. I did not see the point in living...please just keep doing what you are doing.”

Bright Choices Service User May 2016

“I have hope now and I no longer feel that I live in a fog, I can see clearly, I can breathe and I know that myself and my children have the whole life ahead of us and we can be happy. That is thanks to Bright Choices.”

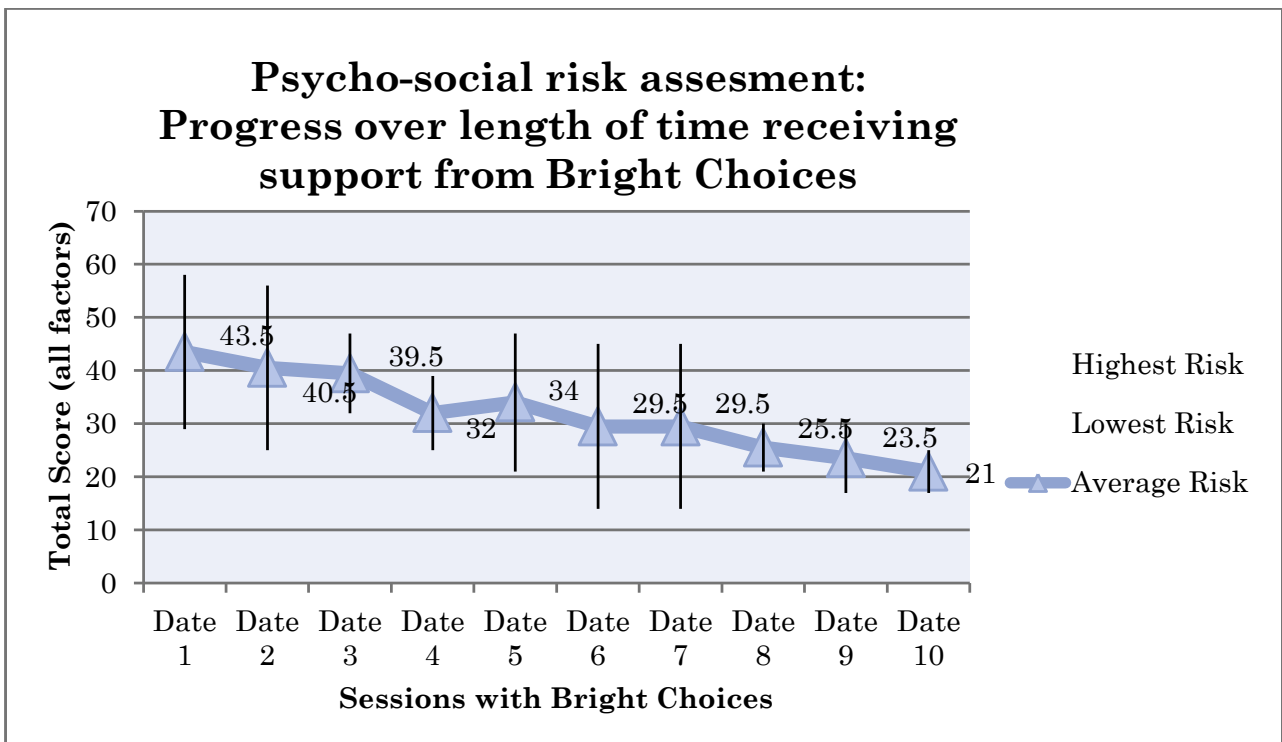
Bright Choices Service User April 2016

“I am very strong now, you gave me direction and choice in my life, [...] and one day I will be independent and free enough to look at this part of my life as something distant that cannot harm me anymore. [...]

Bright Choices Service User December 2015

“Anything is possible with [Bright Choices].”

Bright Choices Service User's child - 11 years old, October 2015



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## Thanks for your support:

We would like to offer our warmest thanks to the three organisations that have made Bright Choices possible:



And our supportive funder:



We would like to acknowledge the support of the following organisations:

- > Police Scotland
  - > Chalmers Sexual Health Centre
  - > The Scottish Government
  - > The Lothian Community Health Initiatives Forum
  - > Health All Round
  - > Saheliya
  - > Sikh Sanjog
  - > Immigration and Asylum Social Work
  - > The City of Edinburgh Council
  - > The University of Edinburgh School of Social Work
  - > The University of Edinburgh School of Education
  - > Waverley Care
  - > Lifeline Pregnancy Counselling & Care
  - > Meal on Me
  - > The Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh.
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Contact us at:

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