

*Dhek
Bhal*

30

th

*Anniversary
Album*

Our journey from South Asia...

...to Bristol



People who have come in the last ten or fifteen years have generally not had too many problems. People who came in the 50's like us have had some good times and some bad times. The really bad time was in the 70's, racism got worse and worse. We have had to really struggle for our religion - sons not getting jobs because they wore a turban. My son was attacked while he was playing on a slot machine by some racists who also took his turban off (a very serious thing to do to a Sikh) and he was scared for his life. The next day I came back and found that he had cut his hair and I was so shocked and upset. (Not cutting your hair is very important in Sikhism.)



It's nice, life is very nice here. But the thing is, it's very lonely. In this country there is no love. You've got your food, you've got your clothes, you've got your place, you've got your car, gold, everything - no love. That's what I think. But you get used to it, you know, those things. You cry at first, but you get used to it. But when I came to this country I went to church, a Methodist church. And the church people became - somebody's my mother, somebody's my sister, somebody's my brother. So I don't miss my family now. My church is my family.



In Pakistan, you're never safe when you go out by yourself. Here, nobody touches you without your own will. These days it's different, but still, when I came over, that was really nice. I like quite a few things, it's nice and clean everywhere. And whenever you go shopping when you've got your kids with you they help you a lot. I liked going to clinic where you take your baby. Once when my son was four and a half months old I went to the clinic to see the nurse and she said, 'How old is he?' and I said, 'Half past four!' She laughed, but she said, 'It's ok, my love'. At that time they were so nice.



The marriage was arranged when I wasn't sixteen yet. I was fifteen and ten months when I married. I didn't like it but still, I had to obey my parents. My husband was fifteen years older than me. I didn't like him at first, but after a few months he was really nice to me. When I was pregnant with my second daughter, my husband came over to England. In one way I was happy because I didn't see him any more! I know it's not nice to say, but that's the truth! But after a few months, I really missed him, because he loved me. After four and a half years I came over to England.



Imoved to a new street where all the people are English and they don't like Muslim people. I don't know why. They tell the kids off for kicking the football into their garden. I say, 'They're only children.' Maybe they're jealous. They say, 'You Muslims, you Pakis, you come here...' It has got better slowly.

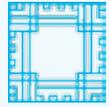
When I came to England I couldn't think anything. I had lost everything, all my family. I was just alone with my husband and then one baby. Once I came to Bristol, I was much happier. I still didn't have any family around me, but there were people from the same place as me. I could talk with people in the same language and understand people.

When I got married it was very unusual to have an Asian wedding in England, and we got a lot of attention from the media, lots of photographs for the newspapers. But years later when I applied for a British passport, they told me that they couldn't put my husband down as my husband because I didn't have a marriage certificate. It turned out that although we were properly married according to our religion, we should have had an English wedding too. In the end we got married in a civil ceremony after 22 years of marriage! My relatives came again - my father said he wasn't going to miss his daughter's wedding. Everybody teased me about it. They even put lights round the bed and said it was my wedding night. We had a party with food and drinks, and my son bought his own mother's wedding cake! The funny thing was we got into the papers again the second time because an Asian lady's house burned down and my husband helped them and took her mother to hospital.

When I was staying with my in-laws in Pakistan while my husband was in England, they only let me have two sets of clothes a year, and a bath only once a month. They said, 'Why are you bathing, why are you wearing new clothes? Your husband isn't here.' Here my husband only gave me one or two pounds and I found it difficult to manage. But now I have my own money from the government (pension) now life is all right, I spend my own money and help my relatives.

Icame to England when I was 23 with two kids. I wasn't nervous, but I was so shy. In Pakistan I was wearing a burqa, and when I came over, before I got in the plane, I had to take the burqa off. I was so shy I couldn't look up. When I came over my husband held my hand. I said, 'Don't!' because in Pakistan they never do that, they think it's rude. He tried to kiss me and I said, 'No - you never!' Once I saw a girlfriend and boyfriend, and the girl was leaning on the boy. I said to my husband, 'Aw, she's ill!' and he said, 'No, it's what they do in England.' I said, 'No, it's rude!' I was shocked because I never saw that kind of love in Pakistan. Once we were in town, it was Christmas I think, and everybody was walking around doing shopping and there was a really nice jacket, and I asked my husband, can you buy me this. He said, 'All right, fair enough. I'll buy it now if you kiss me now.' I said, 'No, no, no way!'





Dhek Bhal Timeline

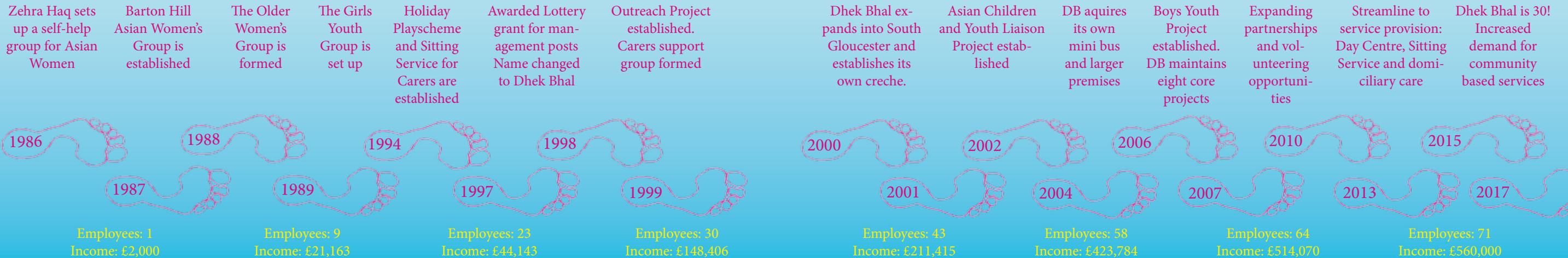


The group in 1986



25th Anniversary celebration at the AGM in 2011

Over the last 20 years, Dhek Bhal has moved from being a small informal community group to becoming a well-established, well-respected, professionally led voluntary organisation
Graham Partridge, AGM Guest speaker 2007



Sewing machines



This is a picture of me and Settlement Co-ordinator Graham Partridge meeting with funders who gave us the money for our sewing machines. You see, the older women didn't want the young women coming to us, they were afraid that we would be diluting their culture, but when we were encouraging traditional skills like sewing and cooking they were happy. Then when we introduced more challenging activities like rock climbing and photography, we did it all together, so all the women felt included and they weren't worried. We didn't need to do sewing any more.

Zehra Haq



I enjoy the discussions we have, especially on very sensitive issues, most often racism, race, culture, drugs and also our sexuality.
Azmeena, Youth Project 1998

Management groups through the years



There were only twelve of us when the group was formed. I remember feeling isolated, shy, and lacking in confidence and self-esteem. I wouldn't have dreamed that I would be taking any position, let alone being Chairperson of this organisation.

Parveen Akhtar, original group member and Chairperson from 1987 to 1995



Working with Mothers



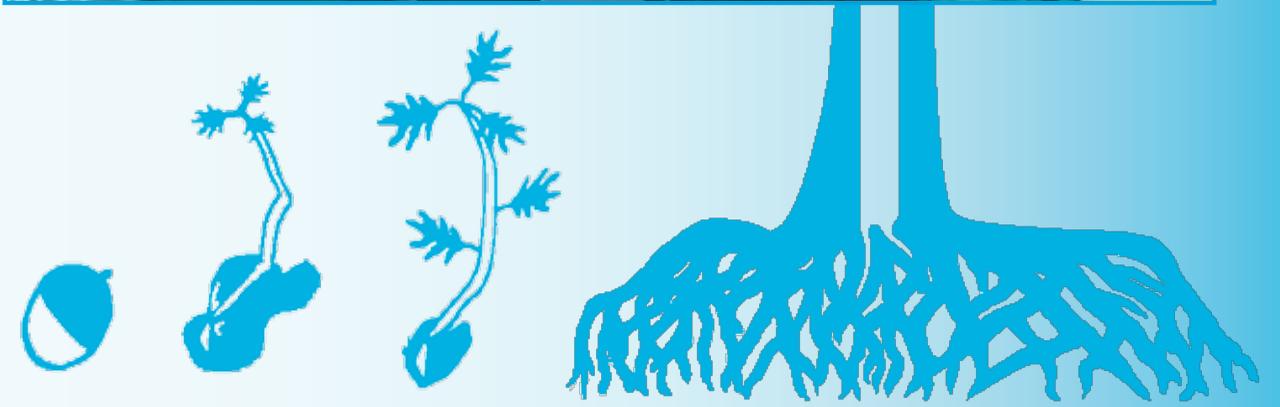
Dhek Bhal helped me in socialising, getting qualifications and eventually a job. I gained qualifications in Community Interpreting and I am now working for LSC.



The best thing about Dhek Bhal is the friendship. I don't like this ignoring of each other. At Dhek Bhal everyone respects and helps each other; it's good. Happy Chowdhury



I am a housewife and seldom get the chance to go out and enjoy myself on my own. Dhek Bhal provides transport and a crèche, making it possible for me to enjoy carefree time with my friends and learn useful skills at the same time.



Working with Elders



*I've been coming here for seven years - I love it, it's my life! I love the company and activity.
Balbir, Day Centre 1996*

*I am a widow in my late sixties. I am in a wheelchair as the result of my stroke two years ago. I live in Bedminster, the area is very cut off from the community and I am mostly on my own in the house. I look forward to coming to the project and wait anxiously by the window, like a child, for the minibus to arrive with the happy smiling face of the escort to take me to the centre. I really love to take part in all the discussions, talks and other things that go on. I am supported by the helpful and friendly staff and volunteers, whom I regard as my family.
Day Centre user, 1997*



Working with Children

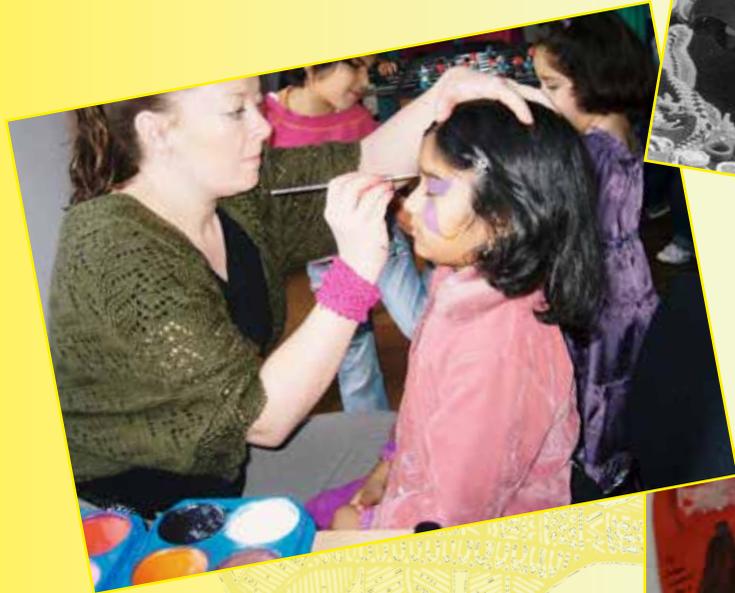


I am a single Mum and never had a break from childcare. Dhek Bhal provided me with opportunities to learn while my child was taken care of.

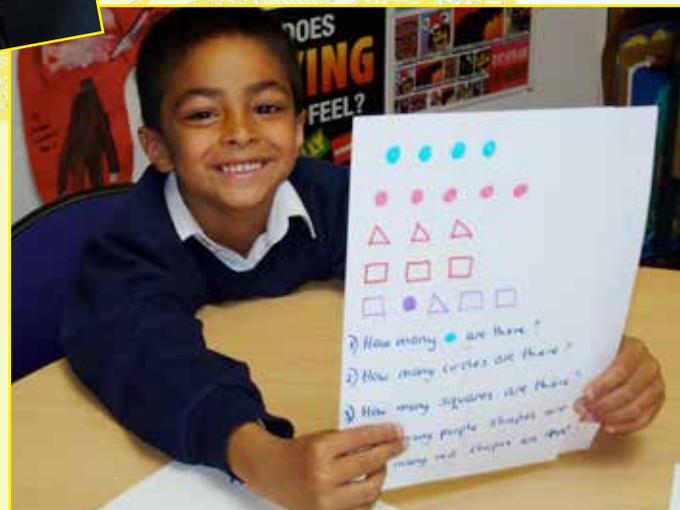
Crèche user, 2007



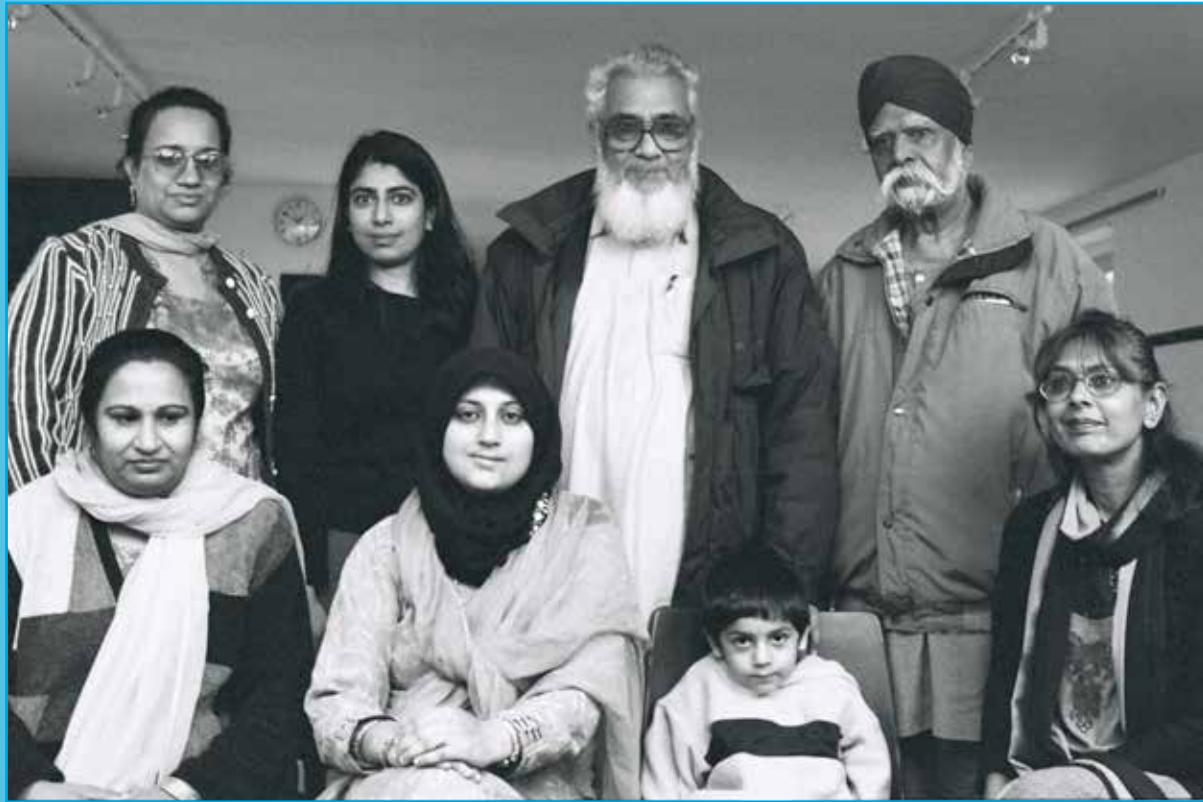
You don't have to sit at home and watch TV. You can come here and play with new friends and make jewellery!
Rifat,
Playscheme, 1998



Agencies such as Dhek Bhal promote and develop strong school/home partnerships, which then impact positively on the children.
Head teacher, Easton Primary School, 2001



Working with Carers



I moved to the area two years ago and have no family in Bristol. I am 74 and a carer for my husband, now 78. Because I have a sitter, I can now visit the day centre. It gives me a chance to talk to someone and allows me to get things off my mind.
Carers Project, 2001

They looked after my daughter so nicely, I've never seen her so happy, she was so impressed by the support given by the young staff. Dhek Bhal gives me courage.
Nirmala Rajput, Carer, 2002



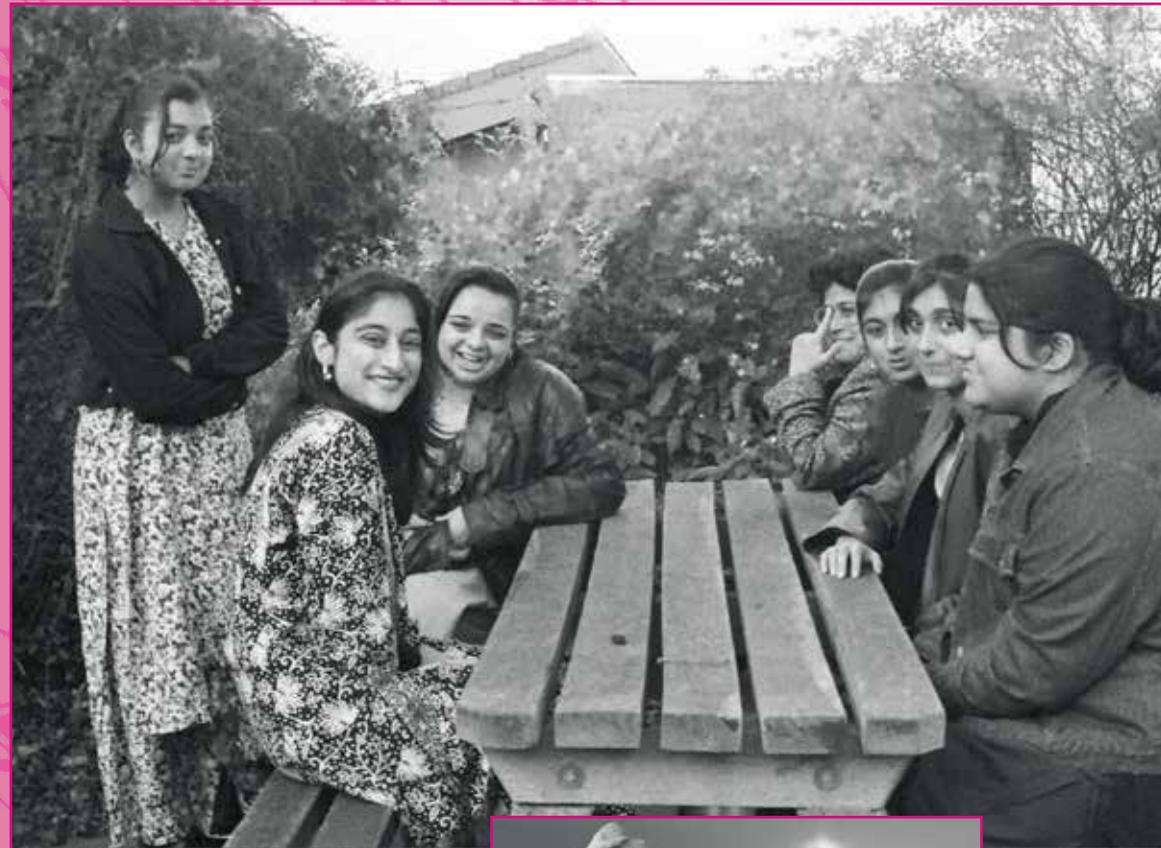
My mother-in-law suffers from dementia. Juggling a career and caring responsibilities is a great challenge that I am able to meet with the help of Dhek Bhal. The service helps me cope with the daily stress of caring and working life. How can we ever thank you enough!
Carer 2009

The sitting service makes it possible for me to get out of the house, attend the Sikh Resource Centre and go to the Temple. The mini-bus can take my disabled wife to the Day Centre where she can meet friends and socialise.
Mr Nagina Singh, Carer 2002



I cannot tell you how much we appreciate the friendship and cheerful companionship of our sitter. This service has made such a difference to me and my family.
Sitting Service 1994

Working with Youth



Sabrina was a Carer for her mother and younger siblings when she joined the project, and wrote this in 1997: *I'm really grateful for this opportunity to be able to be with other girls my own age and have fun. Life at home gets me down sometimes but I try not to show my feelings because of my younger brothers and sisters. What I really enjoyed was meeting with other Asian girls in Birmingham. It was reassuring to learn that we mostly face similar problems in our lives.*

I have been on a self-defence training course. I feel safe and, most important, I have made so many new friends
Naila, Girls Youth Project, 1998



The group is action-packed and enjoyable because you get to do exciting things that are affordable.
Boy's Youth Project, 2008



I really enjoyed playing football and I can't believe I got to the finals in Manchester.
Girls Youth Project 2007



My parents like me coming here as it keeps me out of trouble and I am in a secure cultural environment. The youth workers helped me to settle in my new school.
Boy's Youth Project, 2008



Working with Volunteers



This work occupies a major part of my week and has given me enormous interest and satisfaction. I have gained lots of new friends and kept in touch with my students. The services provide great assistance for a particularly vulnerable group of people and it is wonderful to be part of a system that supports them so well.

Sylvia Butterfield,
Volunteer English teacher



For a year I worked as a volunteer driver. Later on I secured paid work with Dhek Bhal. I appreciate the support I get from my colleagues and manager. When I hear good words about Dhek Bhal in the community I feel proud.

Volunteer 2007



Nazlin came and helped. For once we didn't need to explain our culture and background because she understood.
Mr and Mrs Sumar,
Outreach Project, 1998



Before I was lost and helpless, but now I am happier and content. The volunteer visits warm my world and make my life more worthwhile.
Kalsoom Begum, Outreach Project, 1998

When the Carer Support Worker got involved things changed - I was so relieved, I felt lighter, someone was finally here to help me, and understand the cultural side of my issues.

Carer 2008

Outreach Project

The Men's Group



*The Men's Group is the best gift to us in our twilight years.
Men's Group, 2009*



You have no idea how much it means to me to feel alive again. I was going nuts staying home all day caring for my wife, much as I love her. I feel more energised now in carrying out my caring role. My wife noticed the difference too. Thank you Dhek Bhal for giving me a new lease of life.



Courses and Training



*After attending the literacy group,
I feel confident now to speak to
my GP and also in answering the
telephone.
Mum's Group member, 1997*



*The group has been valuable to me,
I have developed my skills and have
found a paid job.
Mum's Group member, 1997*

*Taking part in film,
radio and photography
has enabled me to
grow in confidence and
landed me my current
volunteers role on a
satellite TV channel.
Dhek Bhal helped me
raise my aspirations
and gave me the liberty
of doing things that
otherwise would not
have been possible.
Memoonah Zainab,
Girls Youth Project,
2010*



Well-being



I enjoyed the Health Workshop, I learned about how my body works, and especially about stress and menopause and now I understand all the things I am going through.



Activities



*I have been part of Dhek Bhal from the very early years, from the Girls Youth Project, to representing them on the Management Committee, to working as a Manager for the past thirteen years. It has given me the unique opportunity to be part of such an amazing organisation that actually makes a difference to people's lives.
Nheed Kauser*



Our Legacy



Zehra Haq planted the seed, and has been leading Dhek Bhal's growth for thirty years with integrity and vision as well as personally supporting users, staff and volunteers with love and understanding.

