
Sharpen Her -

The African Womens Network



A Visual Guide & Directory
for Mental Wellness



With thanks to:

Sharpen Her - for hosting & providing a brilliant project team

See Me, for supporting, through their Mental Health Arts Fund

Open Aye, for facilitating the participatory photo sessions

the Team! Aiseosa, Angie, Beauty, Deliah, Enesia, Happy, Jacobina, Josephine, Robyn, Rahab, Sindi, TK, Vee, Virginia

Angie's Introduction

I am proud to introduce this resource which is aimed at supporting mental health of New Scots women (and men too).

Firstly, I would like to introduce our organization, Sharpen Her: the African Women's Network. It was born on International Women's Day in 2019 to bring together African women living in the UK to support each other, network, connect, socialise, motivate, and build each other's capacity. The concept of sharpening is derived from the saying 'iron sharpens iron'.

It is therefore our mission to encourage women to 'sharpen' each other.

We exist to foster cohesion, collaboration, and networking amongst African women. We also work to support integration and capacity building for our members into Scottish society. Our goal is to support African Women to be active citizens in the community they now call home.

Women migrants often face challenges based on various factors such as their race, ethnicity, educational status, disability, religion, sexuality, immigration status which compound the inequalities that they may already be experiencing based on their gender.

In addition, women also face inner challenges such as low self-esteem and confidence, poor mental and physical health.

This resource comes at a crucial point in history, it is a result of women's own lived experience, navigating challenging circumstances. Who best could shine a guiding light than one who has been there?

Angie's Introduction

I salute the women who took part in this project for sharing their thoughts and experience to create this resource which is bound to make a difference in others' lives.

I am also very grateful to Becky of Open Aye for the amazing ideas and expertise, using art to create conversations which have addressed mental health both directly and indirectly. We explored vital topics in a creative and fun way.

Finally, I am thankful to See Me for offering us this opportunity, through funding and guidance to make this happen.

It is my sincere hope that many will benefit from the resource, and they navigate the immigration landscape, mentally, emotionally, socially and physically.

CYANOTYPES



- Jacobina

“Mental Health Supports like Faith, Options, Routine & Reflection are things that can be accomplished independently and, in a group, with others. It is about creating support around yourself that isn’t all the same but balanced, like the leaves.” - Aiseosa



Julie's Mental Health Supports:

- Family reunion
- Being busy
- Exploring
- Health
- Driving fast!



“This shows my connection to nature. Its not only about fancy things that will cost you, the garden outside your own yard is enough to keep you busy and help you forget about your problems and challenges.” - Sindi



**“Life has not forgotten you.
It holds you in its hand,
while it waits for you to find beauty and blossom.”
- TK**



Becky's Project Summary

Angie & I met at a South East Integration Network event. By the end of the session we had decided to bid for the See Me Mental Health Arts Fund together, to try and build a visual guide which could help to tackle mental health issues and highlight intersectional discrimination. I have come to expect nothing less than similarly brilliant ideas from Angie Mwafuilirwa and her team of outstanding women, at Sharpen Her, the African Women's Network.

For this project, we used various participatory photography methods to creatively explore issues around migration, mental wellness and resilience. We considered some of the work produced by incredible photographers like Maud Sulter, Sandra George, Joy Gregory and Tina Tona. We had discussions around what discriminations these women may have faced, and what kind of support structures they may have had to help.

On our weekly Wednesday evening sessions the women experimented with different styles of photography, cyanotypes, montage, still life and landscapes. From the outset, images created were accompanied by words of wisdom. So it is fitting that this collection of images and words, created by the team from Sharpen Her The African Women's Network, has been gathered into a visual guide and directory, designed to help others.

LEAVES



- Virginia

“From being whole... to have the centre removed. It can't go back in again the same way. It will never be the same. But that's ok. I just accept it won't be the same again. Change is not always a bad thing.”
- Aiseosa



“This collage of leaves is all broken pieces that won't fit together. But it's still trying to blossom.” - Beauty





**“This bunch represents
family, back home. Before
being in a strange land.
Before racism.
Before breakdown.”
- Julie**



**“This is about self stigma.
We are individualised.
But we are all facing similar issues.
There is a heaviness in the language around
mental health. Words might cause stigma.
I prefer to say mental wellness.” - TK**

**“Racism is like arthritis. It hurts and there’s no
cure. But there’s things you can do to help”
- Virginia**



**“Community revives.
There is no place for racism
here. Everyone is equal.”
-Virginia**



“Every small step forward matters. There will be setbacks, but that doesn’t mean you’ve failed. Each day offers a new opportunity to try again.”
Sindi



TK's Threads of Healing:

Mental Health, Identity, and Connection

When I think about mental health, I think about how deeply it is tied to the layers of who we are, where we come from, and the identities we carry into the world. None of us lives single-issue lives; our identities overlap, and sometimes collide in ways that shape how we experience mental wellness and struggle. This project invited me, and all of us, to hold those complexities gently. Through working with leaves, cyanotypes, and photography, I found myself slowing down in ways I rarely allow. Nature became both a medium and a metaphor, leaves reminding us of change, cycles, and resilience; cyanotypes offering a way to hold fleeting moments of light and shadow. Each piece we created was more than an art object; it was a reflection of resilience, of change, of the beauty that exists even in fragility.

What struck me most was how these small creative acts opened doors to conversations that can often feel heavy. Pressing a leaf into a cyanotype became a way of pressing pause, of honouring where we were in that moment. For some, the process was grounding; for others, it symbolised the weight of carrying multiple identities. For me, it was a reminder that healing is not linear and that meaning can be found in stillness. This experience affirmed that caring for our mental health requires both individual reflection and collective acknowledgement.

When we make space for creativity, for slowness, and for one another, we begin to imagine new ways of being well, ways that honour difference, that centre empathy, and that remind us we are not alone.

TK's Threads of Healing: Mental Health, Identity, and Connection

The photographs presented here remind me that individuality doesn't exist in isolation, at least not in the way we often imagine it.

Each person came into this project with their own story, their own vision, and their own way of engaging with the material. And yet, when you place these works side by side, a quiet connectedness begins to emerge.

If you look closely, you notice threads running between them: the repetition of shapes, the shared presence of light and shadow, the echo of resilience and release. What seems separate at first glance reveals itself as part of something larger, a collective expression of what it means to hold complexity, to seek balance, to carry identities that intersect and overlap. In that way, the images become a metaphor for mental health itself.

Our journeys may be individual, but they're never disconnected. There is always a larger web of connection, reminding us that healing is both deeply personal and profoundly collective.

MONTAGES



- Sindi

be where your feet are



- TK

Vee, On Creative Inclusion

Diversity and inclusivity are not just moral imperatives; they are vital for mental well-being. When people from underrepresented ethnic minority groups, especially women, are given voice, space, and creative tools, the effect on self-esteem, belonging, and resilience can be significant.

Many of the women involved in this guide have lived through migration, trauma, racism, intersectional discrimination, and even mental health struggles. By participating in the photographic workshop, they weren't just learning about light, composition, or framing — they were reclaiming their stories. In that workshop, women shared images, words, and perspectives, and saw their lived experience validated. Many participants expressed how simply being seen, heard, and witnessing others' stories reduced their feelings of isolation. The act of creating, of capturing what matters, opens up new pathways: reduced anxiety, improved mood, enhanced sense of identity and agency.

Mental wellbeing is impacted in many ways: lowering stigma (both internal and external), helping with self-acceptance, reducing feelings of shame or invisibility, strengthening social support, and boosting hope. When ethnic minority women who might otherwise be excluded are included in such creative initiatives, they gain access not only to skills but to community, to belonging, and to the healing that comes with expression.

Projects like this are essential. They demonstrate that inclusivity is not token or peripheral work — it is central to mental health. For many, without such opportunities, their voices remain unheard, their stories unseen. Expanding participation, especially for ethnic minority women, is crucial — because everyone deserves not just to survive, but to flourish.

GO girl



realism

ANGER

raw



I Forgive You

On a
journey
to make
things
better

IN ME

It's totally inhumane. There's
a narrative of being too much,
too emotional, being hysterical.
You're not allowed to react

history

-TK



- Julie

Deliah, On Intersectionality

Migrant women in Scotland experience a range of interlinked challenges that affect their ability to interact, integrate, and thrive.

A central issue is employment. Many are highly skilled, yet their qualifications are frequently unrecognised, professional networks are limited, and language barriers persist. As a result, migrant women are often concentrated in low-paid and insecure jobs, despite having prior expertise and experience. This employment mismatch undermines their financial independence and reduces confidence, self-worth, and their sense of belonging within Scottish society.

Social isolation adds another layer of difficulty. Gender norms shaped both by host communities and within migrant households, restrict participation in public life. Access to essential services is often obstructed by fragmented information channels, high childcare costs, and a lack of family support. These limitations leave many women confined to the home, heightening risks of loneliness, poor mental health, and reduced access to supportive networks.

Discrimination and gendered racism present further challenges.

Migrant women frequently encounter prejudice in workplaces, public spaces, and particularly within healthcare settings, where discriminatory attitudes can erode trust and discourage engagement with vital services. Such experiences not only hinder integration but can exacerbate anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties, creating long-term barriers to participation and well-being.

Deliah, On Intersectionality

Despite these challenges, resilient pathways exist.

Community organisations, such as women's groups and cultural associations, provide solidarity, safe spaces, and mentoring opportunities.

Initiatives to recognise overseas qualifications and provide tailored training can unlock access to meaningful employment, while affordable childcare would make such participation feasible.

Broader policy reforms to strengthen protections against discrimination and systemic exclusion are essential.

Finally, accessible language and cultural orientation programmes designed with family needs in mind can support integration and reduce isolation.

In conclusion, migrant women in Scotland face significant economic, social, and cultural barriers. Yet with targeted support and inclusive policies, these barriers can be transformed into opportunities, enabling women to contribute fully to Scotland's communities and economy.



- Happy

Directory Listings of Support Organisations

ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION

Ethnic Minorities Law Centre - <https://emlc.org.uk/>

Freedom from Torture - <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/>

Govan Law Centre - <https://govanlawcentre.org.uk/>

Legal Services Centre - <https://lsa.org.uk/>

Scottish Refugee Council - <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>

West of Scotland Racial Equality Council - <https://www.wosrec.org.uk/>

Just Right Scotland - <https://www.justrightscotland.org.uk/>

ART RELATED ACTIVITIES

Big Noise (Sistema Scotland) - <https://www.bignoise.org.uk/>

Gilded Lily - <https://gilded-lily.org.uk/>

Music Broth - <https://www.musicbroth.org/>

Sewing2Gether All Nations - <https://sewing2gether.org.uk/>

Open Aye - <https://www.openaye.co.uk/>

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Africa Challenge - <https://africachallenge.org.uk/>

Africa Future - <https://www.africafuture.org/>

AfricAlba - <https://africalba.org.uk/>

AfroScot - <https://afroscot.org.uk/>

Byres Road Community Hub -

<https://www.glasgow.ac.uk/community/byresroadcommunityhub/>

Hwupenyu Wellbeing - <https://hwupenyu.org/>

Interfaith Glasgow - <https://interfaithglasgow.org/>

Refugee Sanctuary Scotland - <https://refugeesanctuaryscotland.org/>

Roystonhill Community Hub -

<https://www.roystonhillcommunityhub.org.uk/>

Springburn Unity Network - <https://www.springburnunitynetwork.org.uk/>

Tempo Community Space - <https://www.tempocommunity.co.uk/>

Directory Listings of Support Organisations

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Black Professionals Scotland - <https://blackprofessionals.scot/>

Business Gateway - <https://www.bgateway.com/>

Dechomai - <https://dechomai.co.uk/>

Dress for Success Scotland - <https://scotland.dressforsuccess.org/>

MoneyMatix - <https://www.moneymatix.com/>

SMART Works - <https://smartworks.org.uk/>

EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

Breaking Barriers - <https://breakingbarriers.scot/>

Bridges Project - <https://bridgesproject.org.uk/>

MILK - <https://www.milkglasgow.com/>

Positive Action in Housing - <https://www.paih.org/>

Rosemount Lifelong Learning - <https://www.rosemount.ac.uk/>

ENVIRONMENT

Ibroxholm Flower Garden - [[datathistle.com/place/62781](https://www.datathistle.com/place/62781)]

<https://www.datathistle.cagqflower-field-garden-glasgow/>

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative - <https://www.ngcfi.org.uk/>

Zam'munda - <https://www.facebook.com/p/ZamMunda-100090411370783/>

GENDER BASED ISSUES

East Dunbartonshire Women's Aid - <https://www.edwa.org.uk/>

Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis :

<https://www.glasgowclyderapecrisis.org.uk/>

Glasgow Women's Aid : <https://glasgowwomensaid.org.uk/>

Hermatt Gryffe Women's Aid : <https://www.hematgryffe.org/>

SAY Women : <https://www.say-women.co.uk>

Directory Listings of Support Organisations

GENDER BASED ISSUES

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline -

<https://www.sdafrmh.org.uk/en/>

South Lanarkshire Women's Aid : <https://www.wasler.org.uk/>

HEALTH AND WELLBEING – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Afreshe - <https://www.afreshe.com/>

Baba Yangu Foundation - <https://babayangufoundation.org/>

Inclusive Homework Club - <https://inclusivehwclub.org.uk/>

One Community Scotland - <https://onecommunityscotland.co.uk/>

Pachedu – Visionaries - <https://pachedu.org>

School of African Cultures -

<https://www.facebook.com/schoolofafricancultures/>

The Young Women's Movement - <https://youngwomenscot.org/>

HEALTH AND WELLBEING – GENERAL

AfroCaribbean Elders in Scotland - <https://www.creative-lives.org/community-creativity-and-pride-from-the-african-and-caribbean-elders-scotland>

Central and West Integration Network - <https://www.cwin.org.uk/>

Govan Community Project - <https://govancommunityproject.org.uk/>

Maryhill Integration Network - <https://www.maryhillintegration.org.uk/>

One Parent Families Scotland - <https://opfs.org.uk/>

Refuweegee - <https://www.refuweegee.co.uk/>

Shine Your Light Community - <https://www.shineyourlight.org.uk/>

Waverley Care - <https://www.waverleycare.org/>

Directory Listings of Support Organisations

HEALTH AND WELLBEING – MENTAL HEALTH

Glasgow Association for Mental Health - <https://www.gamh.org.uk/>

Scottish Association for Mental Health - <https://www.samh.org.uk/>

See Me - <https://www.seemescotland.org/>

The Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

HEALTH AND WELLBEING – WOMEN

Adelphie Community - <https://theadelphie.org/>

African Women Connect - <https://africanwomenscotland.org.uk/>

Amma Birth Companions - <https://ammabirthcompanions.org/>

Anyiso - <https://www.anyiso.org.uk/>

Gilded Lily - <https://gilded-lily.org.uk/>

ISARO Community Initiative - <https://isaroinitiative.org.uk/>

Kairos Women+ - <https://kairoswomen.org/>

Menopause Warriors Scotland -

<https://www.menopausewarriorsscotland.com/>

Pachedu WICE - <https://pachedu.org/>

Sharpen Her: the African Women's Network -

<https://www.sharpenher.org.uk/>

TEC Community Initiative - <https://www.facebook.com/teccosi/>

Unity Sisters - <https://www.unitysisters.org/>

Women Integration Project (WIN) -

<https://www.womensintegrationnetwork.co.uk/>

Women on Wheels - <https://womenonwheels.org.uk/>

International Women's Group - <https://www.iwgscotland.org/>

Directory Listings of Support Organisations

HOUSING SUPPORT

Community Info Source: <https://www.infosource.org.uk/>

Asylum Seekers Housing (ASH Project) : <https://ashproject.org.uk/>

Homelessness Project Scotland - <https://homelessprojectsScotland.org/>

Positive Action in Housing (PAIH) :

<https://www.positiveactioninhousing.org.uk/>

Simon Community : <https://www.simonscotland.org/>

Women Asylum Seekers Housing (W-ASH Project) :

<https://newscots.scot/projects/women-and-asylum-seeker-housing-project-w-ash/>

LEGAL AND IMMIGRATION SUPPORT

Citizen's Advice Bureau : <https://www.cas.org.uk/>

Scottish Refugee Council : <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Strathclyde Law Clinic : <https://www.lawclinic.org.uk/>

SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Safety Awareness Glasgow : <https://safetyawarenessglasgow.org.uk/>

VOLUNTEERING

Scottish Refugee Council : <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Volunteer Glasgow : <https://www.volunteerglasgow.org/>

Volunteer Scotland : <https://volunteer.scot/>

A note on these listings..

Any directory of organisations, communities and groups is constantly evolving, adapting and changing. Whilst printed versions of this guide will offer a snapshot of the support landscape in late 2025, we hope to maintain and update the directory, in digital format. Please access this via the QR code:





CHANGING LIVES,
TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES
FOR GLOBAL IMPACT

