

LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

**INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH
AND WELLBEING**



The Way Forward Evaluation Phase 2 Interim Report

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1. Context

The Way Forward project aims to involve all relevant local agencies to identify and engage with girls and young women who are slipping between service provision and who would otherwise enter adulthood with severe and escalating levels of disadvantage. The Project is led by WomenCentre to address the marginalization of girls and young women and statutory restrictions within current universal provision and to support girls and young women themselves to have a central and empowered place within the project. The work of the WomenCentre has been prominent in recently policy discourse and, in the influential Corston report, the work of WomenCentre was reported to:

“...contribute to key local and national priorities whilst delivering a range of services on the ground, particularly to disadvantaged and at risk groups, and contributing knowledge and expertise at policy level.” (Corston, 2007, p.65)

The Corston report was a catalyst to current funding for women-specific, community-based provision (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). Research evidence suggests that women’s centres produce improvements in wellbeing and can be a viable and effective setting for providing mental health interventions to meet client needs (Nicholles and Whitehead, 2012, Hatchett et al., 2014). Moreover, evidence suggests return on investment in women’s services, in terms of social value and savings from reduced demand in areas of health, reoffending and housing (Nicholles and Whitehead, 2012).

This report is the second interim report which seeks to evaluate the impact and process of delivering the Way Forward project. A previous report focused specifically on capturing the views and experiences of the young women who are engaged with The Way Forward Project and also ascertaining the perceptions of the project from steering group members (Warwick-Booth et al., 2013).

This report focuses specifically on exploring three key objectives:

1. To identify the ways in which the Calderdale Young Women’s Resilience Project operates and delivers its provision, identifying the factors that are important in developing and supporting progress. This will include an assessment of the importance of the engagement worker role.
2. To examine how the Calderdale Young Women’s Resilience Project works within a multi-agency setting, and to ascertain what this means for the success of the project including how the project informs local decision making and commissioning arrangements.
3. To map the potential replication of the Calderdale Young Women’s Resilience Project as a model that could be applied within other areas.

Organisation of the report

A brief overview of the methodological approach to the evaluation follows; this outlines the process by which evidence was gathered and how the data was analysed. The findings from the evaluation are then presented. Next, the key findings are synthesised and discussed and finally the conclusions and recommendations are outlined.

2. Methodology

The use of triangulation has been proposed as a means of achieving validity in evaluation studies (Green and Tones, 1999) and is particularly relevant to the Way Forward project. Triangulation relies on gaining a '360 degree' picture of a project through collecting evidence of impact from a variety of different stakeholders and making conclusions based on the overall data collected (Torrance, 2012). By triangulating various data sources it allows more robust conclusions and recommendations to be made.

Approach to gathering evidence

Evidence for this phase of the evaluation derived primarily from focus groups and interviews with project steering group members and those individuals that refer into the Way Forward project (for example, from schools or other community agencies). In addition, a re-analysis of data collected from phase 1 of the evaluation (Warwick-Booth et al., 2013) was examined to extract key themes of relevance to the evaluation objectives for phase 2.

Focus groups were chosen as an appropriate method to gauge the stakeholders' perspectives of the project and as a way to encourage interaction and dialogue between participants (Then et al., 2014). Two focus groups were facilitated by the evaluation team – one group consisted of individuals who had referred into the Way Forward project (3 participants) and another group comprised the project's steering group members (4 participants). Two individuals, who had regularly referred into the project but were unable to attend the focus groups, were interviewed individually so that their perspectives could be ascertained.

A focus group schedule was developed in line with the objectives for this stage of the evaluation and broadly covered the following key areas:

- Participants' expectations and experience of the project.
- Their understanding of how the local context influence the way in which the project works.
- The features of the project's success.
- Features of the project that are replicable or transferable to other contexts.
- If/how the project would work in other areas.

A full version of the schedule is available in Appendix 1.

Research ethics

The evaluation was given ethical approval through Leeds Metropolitan University ethics procedures. The following practices were adhered to ensure ethical rigour:

- Informed consent – written consent was obtained from all participants in the focus group discussion and interviews (see appendix 2c for consent forms and appendix 2d for participant information sheets)
- Confidentiality and anonymity – no personal identifying information has been used in the reporting the data
- Secure information management – security was maintained through password protected university systems

Data analysis

The verbatim transcripts of the discussion groups and interviews, along with the accompanying notes, were analysed using Framework Analysis. Framework Analysis develops a hierarchical thematic framework to classify and organise data according to key

themes, concepts and emergent categories. The framework is the analytic tool that identifies key themes as a matrix where patterns and connections emerge across the data (Ritchie et al., 2003). The matrix was constructed using three main categories and several sub-themes which were aligned to the aims of this phase of the evaluation. These were agreed by members of the research team.

3. Key findings

This section presents the findings of this phase of the evaluation. The findings have been organised in relation to the cross-cutting themes that emerged across the interviews and focus groups with steering group members and referrers. Where quotations have been used to illuminate an issue, these have been anonymised to protect the participants involved.

1. Organisational components for success

Across the data gathered, participants mentioned several 'ingredients' that were critical for the success of Way Forward. Four reoccurring issues were reported:

- The positioning of Way Forward in the non-statutory sector;
- Ethos and values;
- Operating under statutory thresholds;
- A holistic approach and intervening early.

1.1 The positioning of Way Forward in the non-statutory sector

Both referrers and steering group members suggested the benefits of the project being based in the voluntary, rather than statutory sector. The flexibility and responsiveness of Way Forward was mentioned, although being 'distanced' from the perceived stigma of social workers, social services and other statutory bodies was seen as an advantage to engaging young women:

"A lot of the times, you know, young people come to you and the last thing they want to do is work with a Social Worker. You know, they've had enough of that thank you very much. They have no trust for adults in their lives: parents, teachers, you name it, we're all no good as far as they're concerned, and yet I think that the engagement workers can come in on a different level that we have been able to." (Referrer)

The importance of consistency was also discussed. Those individuals currently providing statutory provision discussed the challenges within the sector and the way that young people may be passed from professional-to-professional. The Way Forward project, however, was suggested to offer the young women a consistent point of contact (the Engagement Worker) where trust and rapport can be developed and nurtured:

"The door's always open. Now that's something that a lot of young people have not experienced, consistency of worker. It isn't necessarily something we could always promise because in every sector people have to move on, but within the statutory sector, it's designed to throw people and children, young people, from professional to professional." (Referrer)

The limitations on professionals' time and a lack of capacity within statutory services were noted across the data. Moreover, there was an expectation that professionals within the statutory sector 'moved on' their client base to other services (a 'tick box' culture as one participant described it). This often meant that despite professionals' best intentions, they were unable to dedicate the time, energy and resources that the Way Forward Engagement Worker was able to with the young women:

"If only, if only I had that time and that space!" Thankfully, the Engagement Worker can fill that gap." (Referrer)

"They [Way Forward] were able to give the more detailed work that I wasn't able to do in my current role." (Referrer)

1.2 Ethos and values

The underpinning ethos and values of Way Forward was a prominent theme to emerge from the data. This was regarded as a critical component of the project's success to date. A discourse around 'commitment' and to women-centred ways of working was clear and, moreover, working principles such as: listening and caring; working with young women on their terms; and being available at any time, was clearly articulated by participants:

“We are fortunate, in that the Engagement Worker is superlative, but also, she is supported by the ethos of the women’s centre which is non-judgemental, utterly dedicated to service users, to meet them on their terms, and to show that other people might have let you down, but we’re not about that.” (Referrer)

A viewpoint also reaffirmed by the young women themselves:

“It was a lot easier just having someone there because half the time you feel you’re on your tod and that everyone is ganging up on you. But when you’ve got [the Engagement Worker] sat there in your corner, it’s just so much easier.” (Young woman)

1.3 Operating under statutory thresholds

Participants were adamant that the Way Forward project was addressing a gap in service provision and able to address the needs of young women who may not meet the criteria for statutory service provision. Many statutory services were reported to only work with individuals demonstrating high levels of need, with thresholds often too high for many individuals to access.

“Thresholds for statutory services are such, and demands for statutory services are such, that a lot of young people, young women with needs are not getting those needs met.” (Steering group member)

Participants suggested that the Way Forward project was essential in working with young women who did not meet the criteria for statutory provision, but who still had health and social need. Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were often cited as an example where young women with low-to-moderate level mental health issues were unable to access professional support:

“You’re battling against thresholds and criteria of organisations such as CAMHS or mental health services generally.” (Steering group member)

Referrers and steering group members appreciated the way that the Way Forward project was able to work with young women who may not meet the entrance criteria for other services. This was particularly beneficial for young women who may not display high-level need, but require early intervention and support:

“Statutory services have got a very high threshold to be able to access that kind of thing... for a lot of the young people, there’s a lot of stuff going on for them, but there’s nothing that tips them over into meeting the threshold for statutory services. So to be able to go “well, actually, I am worried about you. I can’t put my finger on exactly what it is. I can’t evidence specifically, but I know I don’t want you floating about on your own without something.” So, to be able to have a service that you can kind of signpost to is just really good.” (Referrer)

1.4 A holistic approach and intervening early

The ability of Way Forward to work with young women earlier than many statutory services, meant that there was potentially less likelihood of issues escalating for young women and moreover prevented these women from “falling through the net”. In cases where young women had met the criteria for statutory services, it was often suggested that this intervention was delivered too late to be effective:

“You’ve got this marvellous statutory provision, but there’s this swathe of young women in between who are, they’re going to come to those services eventually, but when it’s possibly too late, and interventions would be ineffective.” (Steering group member)

One steering group member neatly encapsulated the need for the Way Forward project to intervene early with young women:

“There was a glaring need for a service that had an earlier intervention approach. Trying to reach as early as possible, trying to look at what the need was earlier so that things didn’t become as entrenched.”

The Way Forward project was praised for its focus on holistic health and well-being issues. One young woman involved in the project commented on the myriad of ways in which the Engagement Worker had supported her:

“Well I started working with [the Engagement Worker] last year and she came up with millions and trillions of ways she could help me with everything because I got in really bad debts and got myself into a bit of a pickle and all sorts of stuff” (Young woman)

The Way Forward project was frequently juxtaposed against many other services which often had specific remits and functions. The project’s attention to holism was seen as being unique:

“I think the holistic approach of the Way Forward and this early intervention with sort of preventative stuff is really, really unique. It’s fantastic!”

2. Multi-agency working

At the core of the Way Forward project, was the philosophy of multi-agency working. This was a strong underpinning principle that was apparent in the data collected with steering group members. Perhaps unsurprisingly those referring into the project and the young women receiving support from the Engagement Worker, were unable to comment in any detail on this aspect of the Way Forward project.

Multi-agency principles of working were reported to manifest within the project in several ways, although information-sharing between agencies seemed to be mentioned most frequently by participants. Information-sharing enabled the work of the project to be conducted more efficiently; for example, in relation to avoiding duplication:

“I also think the multi-agency approach is, well it’s key...because at the point of referral we check with partners, to see if any girls and young women are known. To make sure we don’t duplicate. So we’re really checking from that multi-agency point, because we don’t want to duplicate what’s already happening. So we are checking from a multi-agency point of view, and that’s working much better. We’re more streamlined. We’re checking with our key partners and then we pick up the work where there’s unmet need, where nobody else is picking up that work.” (Steering group member)

The multi-agency constituents of the steering group were also seen as being pivotal to the Way Forward project operating efficiently. Bringing together individuals with a plethora of practice-based expertise and understanding of women centred approaches was seen as being helpful:

“I think it helps having a multi-agency steering group ‘cause there are a lot of us from different spheres.” (Steering group member)

Some steering group members perceived the multi-agency partnership as being the key to the longer-term sustainability of Way Forward:

“The multi-agency approach to the project is really vital, to the sustainability of it [Way Forward].” (Steering group member)

Despite the general consensus that Way Forward was operating successfully using a multi-agency approach, some steering group respondents suggested that the composition of the steering group should be re-evaluated given the changing nature of the project from that originally conceived:

“The project’s changing slightly and developing and evolving, perhaps we need different people around that table, fresh new people around that table.” (Steering group member)

3. Replication and transferability of Way Forward

There was general agreement that core features of the Way Forward project model could be transferred and replicated in other geographical areas:

“We know that each local authority is different, but there is that sort of model, the basis of that model, the core of that model could be done anywhere, I think.”

(Steering group member)

Most of the critical features that needed to be replicated in other areas have been discussed previously (see the previous section: ‘organisational components for success’) and in addition it was paramount that there was an experienced steering group driving the project and an Engagement Worker with the necessary skill-set to manage the challenges and complexities that young women may present.

It was suggested by a number of respondents that the success of the project in Calderdale had been, in part, due to the smaller geographical size of the area and the ability to network more efficiently and easily with professionals in the district. Several individuals, therefore, suggested that the model may be integrated more successfully in areas similar in size to Calderdale. Some questioned whether the same close-working between agencies and professionals would be possible in larger metropolitan areas:

“I think because Calderdale’s quite a small local authority, that sort of local, sort of, networks, people knowing each other, people talking to each other informally, as well as formally, works really well. That might be harder in a bigger place, say, for example, Leeds or Birmingham or somewhere like that. But I think, you know, it’s quite a small family really in Calderdale, and I think that helps.”

Summary of findings

- Participants reported four key ingredients for the Way Forward’s success: the positioning of Way Forward in the non-statutory sector; ethos and values; operating under statutory thresholds; a holistic approach and intervening early.
- Multi-agency working was an important ingredient of the Way Forward project and fundamental to how it operated. Information- sharing and avoiding duplication were seen as practical ways in which multi-agency working provided a more efficient service for young women.
- Multi-agency working was seen to manifest primarily in the steering group, which offered strategic direction and vision. However, respondents felt that the composition of this group should perhaps be reconfigured given the changing nature of the Way Forward project.
- Based on the participants in the evaluation and data collected as part of phase 1, a programme model has been developed which can potentially be transferred to other contexts and settings.

4. Discussion

This report builds upon previous work (Warwick-Booth et al., 2013) which contributes to understanding the process and outcomes of the Way Forward project. The main focus of this report was to ascertain stakeholder viewpoints and perceptions, particularly those from the project steering group and individuals who refer into the project. In addition, a re-analysis of data collected as part of phase 1 of the evaluation was conducted which contributed to further understanding and illumination of the objectives for phase 2. These objectives pertained to understanding more about the process of delivering the project and in respect to potential replication of the project in other areas.

According to the evidence gathered so far, there is little doubt that the Way Forward project is making a tangible difference to lives of vulnerable young women in Calderdale. Moreover, participation in the project has had a positive impact on the young women and in enabling them to develop their self-esteem and future aspirations (Warwick-Booth et al., 2013). Findings from this phase of the evaluation have helped to elucidate the organisational components of success. Furthermore, evidence from the evaluation (including data derived from Warwick-Booth et al. (2013)) has enabled key issues to be distilled from the Way Forward and a project model has been suggested that can be potentially applied to other geographical contexts (see Figure 1).

A strong and reoccurring theme throughout the data was the positioning of Way Forward in the voluntary and community sector. This positioning was seemingly contributing to the particular successes of Way Forward to date. It was clear from the respondents that the Way Forward project and the staff working within it, were not stigmatised in the same way as statutory agencies, for example Social Workers or criminal justice professionals (Bove and Pervan, 2013). A recent report noted that adolescent women often have a deep-seated mistrust of helping professionals who have failed them in the past; the report suggests that interventions focussing on this group must, therefore, work in different ways to statutory bodies (McNeish and Scott, 2014). We would argue vehemently that the Way Forward project does this. From those participating in interviews and focus groups, it was suggested that stigmatisation of statutory agencies by vulnerable young women occurs in Calderdale which means that Way Forward makes a valuable contribution to addressing the needs of young women who would have otherwise avoided statutory bodies. This stigma is a growing challenge for statutory agencies, particularly as these views are often perpetuated and reinforced in the media (Zugazaga et al., 2006).

Those interviewees from statutory service backgrounds reported that their time was finite and their ability to work 'long-term' and across service boundaries with vulnerable young people was limited, despite their best intentions. These respondents, therefore, praised the ability of the Way Forward's Engagement Worker to work longer-term with young women and her tenacity in making contact and building rapport with service users (something that the statutory sector were frequently unable to do) was commended. The advantages of working outside of statutory bodies is clear and the Corston report highlighted the way in which the voluntary sector could make a significant contribution to women-centred ways of working (Corston, 2007). Since then, there has been explicit recognition that voluntary sector-run women's centres are ideally placed to provide holistic services for low-risk women offenders with complex needs (Radcliffe et al., 2013). Findings gathered as part of this evaluation largely verifies these comments, especially as the Way Forward works below statutory thresholds and can invest more time and energy in the young women than other agencies.

The ethos and values of women-centred working that permeates the project was another important component of success that was mentioned by respondents. The focus on gendered-centred ways of working, or women-centred working, has been conceptualised as

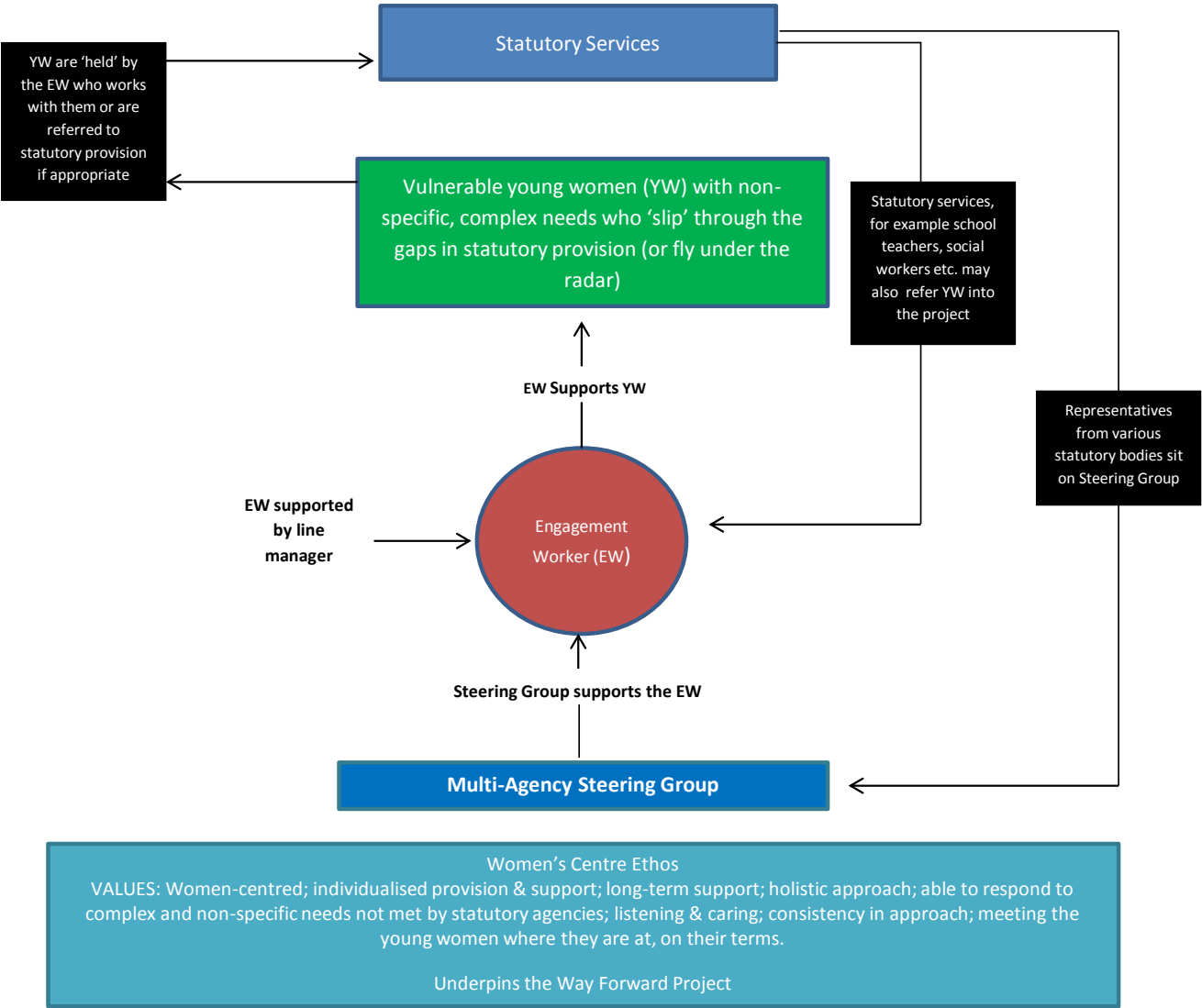
focussing on women's expressed need and lived experience which is informed by an understanding of what works for women. Moreover, the importance of services being located within a women only, safe and enabling environment has been recognised. Many statutory bodies fail to work with a 'gendered lens' which means that services may be poorly tailored to the specific needs of very marginalised and 'at-risk' young women. The evidence gathered in this evaluation resonates with recent work from Nicholles and Whitehead (2012) who argue that women's community services have distinct ways of working; this includes providing support and empathy and creating a 'family-style' environment. The Way Forward, via the Engagement Worker, was reported to be highly committed to women-centred ways of working and to core principles such as: providing individualised provision and support; listening and caring; consistency in approach; and meeting the young women where they are at, on their terms. The Engagement Worker's approach was considered exemplary and it seems that this role is crucial if the model is to be replicated or transferred to other contexts.

Prior evaluations have suggested the importance of 'wrap-around' or holistic services for vulnerable women (Rice et al., 2011). Evidence indicates that services which are tailored to individuals' needs rather than 'pigeonholing' women into specific services (i.e. mental health services, drug and alcohol services) is beneficial (Radcliffe et al., 2013). In respect to women with offending backgrounds in the community, Gelsthorpe et al. (2007) advocate holistic approaches to enable women to address underlying social problems. The Way Forward project was often juxtaposed by respondents to other services with specific remits and functions and who were unable to work outside of disciplinary boundaries. In contrast, the Way Forward project was able to work more holistically and in a more universal way with young women which was regarded by respondents as being advantageous and effective. This has also been reiterated in a recent review of effective interventions which argued that interventions with young women need to be cross-cutting and holistic, and reflect the whole reality of women's lives (McNeish and Scott, 2014). This, in many ways, is the *raison d'être* of Way Forward. Moreover, being able to undertake early prevention work was seen to potentially offer better returns on investment than statutory services which were reported to often intervene too late.

It is well-recognised that multi agency working and information sharing is crucial for an holistic service model that addresses the needs of vulnerable women (Radcliffe et al., 2013). Steering group members involved in this evaluation perceived multi-agency working as critical for information sharing and avoiding duplication. This multi-agency approach was seen as providing a more efficient and co-ordinated service for the young women. Although participants commented that the constituents of the multi-agency steering group could be extended to reflect the changing direction of the Way Forward project, most suggested the benefits of the collaboration in relation to the collective vision and understanding and the sharing of expertise. This largely resonates with the literature on effective multi-agency working, partnerships and collaborations (Green and Tones, 2010). Steering group members commented less frequently on how the Way Forward project could influence local decision-making processes or commissioning arrangements.

The transferability of the Way Forward project was widely discussed by the majority of participants, with the overwhelming consensus that the model could apply beyond the Calderdale locality. It is axiomatic that the application of the model needs to take into account the local context in which it is to be embedded, but critical components have been distilled from the evidence to produce a transferable programme model that has the potential to be deployed in other geographical contexts. Figure 1 depicts the programme model and shows the centrality of the Engagement Worker if replication is to be executed successfully. Both evidence presented in this report and other findings (Warwick-Booth et al., 2013), show the lynchpin role that the Engagement Worker makes to the project delivery. Nonetheless, the importance of the underpinning values; multiagency steering group; and the importance of statutory service referrals and support are demonstrated.

Figure 1. Transferable ‘women’s-centred’ programme model



5. Conclusions

This report is the second interim report which seeks to evaluate the impact and process of delivering the Way Forward project. A previous report focused specifically on capturing the views and experiences of the young women who are engaged with The Way Forward Project (Warwick-Booth et al., 2013).

There is great consistency in the findings presented here and what the literature suggests service users find valuable in women-centre based services (Radcliffe et al., 2013). There were some prominent ingredients that respondents suggested were critical for the success of the Way Forward project. These were: the positioning of Way Forward in the non-statutory sector; ethos and values; operating under statutory thresholds; a holistic approach and intervening early. These organisational 'ingredients' alongside multi-agency working have been applied to a 'women's-centred' programme model which can potentially be used and applied to other geographical contexts.

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Appendix 1

In mapping the impact of the project this part of the stakeholder workshops specifically seek to address the following objectives:

- to identify the ways in which the Calderdale Young Women's Resilience Project operates and delivers its provision, identifying the factors that are important in developing and supporting progress (what works)
- to examine how the Calderdale Young Women's Resilience Project works within a multi-agency setting, and to ascertain what this means for the success of the project including how the project inform local decision making and commissioning arrangements
- to map the potential replication of the Calderdale Young Women's Resilience Project as a model that could be applied within other areas.

Workshop Outline:

Preliminaries

Welcome and housekeeping

Introductions from evaluation team and participants (name, organisation, role etc)

Opportunity for participants to ask questions before consenting to participate

Main focus

The workshop will be organised around the three objectives for this stage in the evaluation:

- *to identify the ways in which the Calderdale Young Women's Resilience Project operates and delivers its provision, identifying the factors that are important in developing and supporting progress (what works)*

Discussion will be facilitated around the following kind of areas/questions:

- Participants' expectations and experience of the project.
- Why are they involved?
- How did they get involved?
- What experience have they had of the project?
- How did they find out about it?

- *to examine how the Calderdale Young Women's Resilience Project works within a multi-agency setting, and to ascertain what this means for the success of the project including how the project inform local decision making and commissioning arrangements*

Discussion will be facilitated around the following kind of areas/questions:

What is the nature of the project within Calderdale?
How does the local context influence the way in which the project works?
How does it work?
What agencies are involved? How?
What makes the project unique?
What is the role of the steering group?
What do you know about the Women's Centre approach/ethos?
How important is the Women's Centre approach for the project? Why?
How does the project inform local decision making?

- to map the potential replication of the Calderdale Young Women's Resilience Project as a model that could be applied within other areas.

What are the features of success?
What features of the project are directly replicable? Transferable to other contexts?
How would the project work in other areas? What would it look like?

Workshop wind down:

Any final questions/comments?

Thanks for coming