

WomenCentre Annual Report 2016/2017



Welcome



Welcome to our annual report for the financial year of 2016-2017. I hope you will find the content interesting and informative.

It has been another positive year and we continue to go from strength to strength with many new projects coming on board.

The staff and volunteer conference held earlier this year was a resounding success with contributions from everyone and with a focus on our wider communications and marketing work across the organisation. It was good to meet with staff and volunteers from across Calderdale and Kirklees sites.

We have welcomed new members to the Board who will be bringing a diverse contribution to the specific skills and expertise of the Board and the organisation as a whole.

This year Clare Jones our former joint CEO left WomenCentre. Her national work has been invaluable and she has been associated with WomenCentre for over 15 years. We all wish her well.

Finally I would like to thank all staff and volunteers for the inspiring and dedicated work done on behalf of women and the Board to ensure we provide high quality services.

Judy Gannon

Chair

Achievements & Challenges



This year, as always, has seen many challenges and our focus has been to continue to maintain as much of our current service delivery as possible and to test out new approaches to our work especially with the Big Lottery Funded projects.

It was with regret that in October 2016 we closed the doors on Evolve, our Women's Offender service. Evolve had been a big part of our organisational service delivery for 9 years and had received national recognition for the team's work with women in the Criminal Justice System.

On a more positive note WomenCentre was successful in securing the retendered Domestic Abuse Contract for Calderdale in July 2016, in addition to securing smaller bids to maintain, for example, the Women in Exile Service.

WomenCentre also relocated our base in Dewsbury to a more accessible venue at Empire House and this has led to an increased footfall and greater engagement with women in North Kirklees.

The Coutts Foundation has continued to provide an unrestricted grant to WomenCentre and this has been an invaluable source of funding for the organisation. The funding has been used to support some of the core organisational functions and has enabled WC to take forward both its internal and external communications and seek to attract more members, supporters and followers.

Our wider community fundraising has been supported by local groups including the Halifax Choral Society at their annual Carols and Brass concert in December 2016.

I hope you enjoy reading about our fantastic work and please promote it as widely as you can.

Angela Everson

CEO WomenCentre

Our 2016- 2017 story through the voice of Mary

“



I knocked on the door of WomenCentre one afternoon. I didn't know where else to turn. I was welcomed and listened to. Just knowing I was in a safe place and able to relate what I was experiencing in my life, knowing I would be understood, was the most important thing to me. I had several 1-1 appointments which helped me to clarify what I was dealing with and why I was struggling to cope.

I have attended the Reflections writing course which I find a good therapeutic way to express myself and I have attended several events at WomenCentre. Largely due to my experiences I am introverted and find it hard in busy social environments but in WomenCentre I feel very much at ease.

I am currently having counselling at WomenCentre and this is helping tremendously with moving forward with my life.

I cannot praise WomenCentre enough.

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Funding Secured in 2016/17

Calderdale Staying Safe

WomenCentre successfully tendered for the Domestic Abuse contract in Calderdale. Calderdale Staying Safe provides:

- Case worker support for women and men over the age of 16 who have been subjected to domestic abuse,
- An Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDVA) to support male & female victims,
- Young Peoples Violence Advocate (YPVA) supporting 13-19 year olds who are victims of domestic abuse in their own relationships,
- Children and Young People case workers supporting children from 5-18 years who are affected by domestic abuse within their own home
- Freedom programme a twice weekly support group for women affected by Domestic Abuse.



Women Making Changes funded by the Big Lottery Help Through Crisis Grant

Women Making Changes is delivered by a partnership consisting of WomenCentre Limited (Lead Partner), Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees, Christians Together Calderdale, Citizen's Advice Calderdale and the St Augustine's Centre.

The project provides tailored support, advice and advocacy to enable women to address difficulties and be in a better position to improve circumstances and plan for their future. The project will be rooted in the community with the project partners and will focus on supporting women who have most difficulty accessing mainstream services.

Project 1325 funded by the Big Lottery Women and Girls Initiative

WomenCentre was successful in receiving funding from the Big Lottery for a project that provides both emotional and practical support around a wide range of issues for girls and young women between the ages of 13 and 25. The project works with girls and young women across Calderdale and Kirklees to support and empower them to reach their full potential. We offer 1:1 support in a variety of settings and group work to raise self esteem, confidence and resilience.

Supporting women through our existing services

Womens Mental Health and Wellbeing (Kirklees)

This well-used service supports over 400 women each quarter with new activities developed in response to feedback that include Dance and Movement Therapy, a Chronic Illness Group, Peri-natal working and a Ukulele course. We also have courses in the Recovery College prospectus including Reframe the Past for women who have experienced childhood abuse.



A new base in Dewsbury where women can access drop-in services, counselling, 1 to 1 support, and a range of groups.

This place is a life saver, it is amazing. I feel very comfortable just calling in as it's such a safe and friendly environment and you offer amazing workshops

Our **Women in Exile Project** provides a specialist service for refugee and asylum seeking women supporting them to rebuild their lives and to achieve a greater sense of safety and belonging. We also support Syrian women as part of the Syrian Resettlement programme in Kirklees



Money in Your Pocket Project Calderdale has worked with community organisations to help people manage their money. We also took the lead on the Holiday Kitchen project working with over 250 low income residents who learnt about food poverty and how to cook on a low budget.

Womenslink continued to deliver a health & wellbeing drop-in across 4 days per week through a volunteer led service providing a range of support on many issues e.g. health, debt etc. Additional courses and workshops were offered aimed at developing the skills and the beliefs of 'thinking for ourselves, and building capacity to make decisions and choices and to find a voice to tell your own story.'

Our **Counselling Service** provides one-to-one counselling sessions across both sites.

Learning and Skills offered over 400 learning opportunities e.g Wellbeing Group, Confidence Lab, Information Advice and Guidance, Yoga, Wellbeing and Peer Mentoring.

Bradford Maze increased the safety of victims and children by working with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Celebrating International Women's Day



We have continued to celebrate International Women's Day.

In Calderdale we invited women to come and share lunch, listen to poetry and song by the **Powergirls**, and to join in with art activities including having a henna tattoo and creating beautiful pictures (some of which are on the front cover of this report).

In Kirklees our successful annual Sound Women Event marked International Women's Day by celebrating women through music. Songs were sung that warmed hearts and bridged the world, bringing women together, to explore and promote issues of human dignity and human rights through song, story and myth across different lands

We appreciated all the community fundraising events in support of our work around IWD including:

The Fox and Goose cooperative pub in Hebden Bridge held talks over 3 days. To celebrate topics included Sylvia Pankhurst, experience of a volunteer supporting Refugees and the male role in combating violence against women.

I have been very lonely, yoga and sewing have offered me comfort and a way of looking after myself and managing my sad feelings- what can I say but thank you to the wonderful women here

Alyssium presented a musical soiree in a celebration of music written by women, performed by women. It was a great evening!

Holly Lynch MP organised a special screening of the film Suffragette at Square Chapel in Halifax.

Despite not living with my children, I now have something worthwhile enough to get out of bed for, coming here and being part of this community has made me realise what I have to offer and I am not just a victim

Spreading the Word



As a learning organisation WomenCentre takes every opportunity to share learning and best practice both nationally and locally.

Through our national Women-Centred approach initiative led by Clare Jones we have shared four critical principles around women-centred working:

- putting each woman and what matters to her at the centre
- looking through a gendered lens in order to have awareness of differences in life experience and service requirements for women
- designing services in a way that enables women to receive the right support at the right time in the right way
- recognition and nurturing of the resilience and individual strengths and qualities of each woman

Locally we share our work at conferences and through other learning opportunities, for example women from Mothers Apart share their experiences through presentations at Universities including Salford and Huddersfield, speak at several conferences every year and promote their book “In Our Hearts” - a resource for frontline workers and mothers in the same situation.

At Board level we have been working to raise the profile of WomenCentre and to share the story of our work more widely with a strong focus on external communications. WomenCentre recognises that it is vital that we talk about what we do openly in order to celebrate our work, to build support and to ensure that the organisation becomes more resilient in the long term.

Investing in Volunteers

We could not achieve all that we do without our magnificent team of volunteers. Volunteers are involved in service delivery across all our services and help to raise the profile of our work through speaking at events too.

During the year 90 volunteers gave 6834 hours of their time which is equivalent to in-kind funding of £80,000.

We have 4 volunteer courses annually across the Calderdale and Kirklees. The courses aim to embed the core values of WomenCentre and key communication skills needed in supporting women. Recruitment is very positive.

Following expressions of interest/applications to volunteer and initial training, formal recruitment into identified services is determined. Volunteers are fully inducted in to their service area and are continually supported in terms of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which includes early mandatory safeguarding training which is commissioned externally.

Our volunteers are very robust, professional and highly experienced. All these attributes are needed as they are very often the first point of contact for woman accessing the centres. WomenCentre would like to thank all volunteers and peer mentors for all their hard work.

We continue to host student placements and could not manage without their hard work across our services.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for being so welcoming and friendly! I am really appreciative for the experience I have gained. I have thoroughly enjoyed my social work placement here



“
Volunteering has enhanced my life, brought fun and purpose, as well as a great deal of life skills learning and tools that have helped me consider maybe finding paid work after years of illness, medication and lack of self work. Time for me to live
”



Partnership Working

WomenCentre works in partnership across Calderdale, Kirklees and Bradford at a strategic and operational level. Strategically we participate in the Third Sector Leaders in Kirklees, Chief Officers in Calderdale, West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Third Sector Advisory Group. Calderdale Safeguarding Boards and Calderdale, Kirklees and Bradford DA Strategy Groups

Operationally we work in partnership with Yorkshire Children's Centre in Calderdale and Kirklees, Staying Put and Domestic Violence Services in Bradford and District and Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees, Christians Together Calderdale, Citizen's Advice and the St Augustine's Centre. We are key members of Calderdale's DA Hub and DA Operational Group.

At a national level we continue to maintain close working relationships with The Survivors Trust, Respect, SafeLives, Women's Aid and Agenda.

Quality Assurance

In December 2016 we achieved Quality for Health (Level 2) accreditation. Quality for Health is a national quality assurance system to support our sector demonstrate the difference it is making to service users through the delivery of high quality services.

We maintained the Mindful Employer status and have continued with the Safelives Leading Lights accreditation.

Quality assurance is also part of our work around safeguarding and this was assessed as part of the Bradford Quality Assurance Framework in March 2017 and the Section 11 audit process in Calderdale.



We have continued to grow

We have moved to new premises in Dewsbury. To celebrate we had an official opening.

One of our exciting new developments for 2017-2018

Led by Migration Yorkshire and funded by the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund as part of the Building Better Opportunities programme WomenCentre will be involved in the Connecting Opportunities project. Supporting the most socially excluded new migrants to tackle the complex barriers they face in integrating in their local areas, WomenCentre's specific role will be to provide women-centred training, advice and evaluation with the aim of embedding women-centred ways of working with women migrants across the project.

Acknowledgments

WomenCentre appreciates the support from all its funders, national partners and also The Coutts Foundation, Bearder Trust, Lindley Adams Accountants, Halifax Soroptimists, Community Foundation for Calderdale, Together Housing, University of Huddersfield, Hawdon, Russell Architects, Verd de Gris, Halifax Rotary Christmas Shoebox appeal, Co operative Travel Halifax, Halifax Choral Society, Kirklees Methodist Mission. Henry Smith Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Calderdale Community Safety Partnership, Together Housing Group, West Yorkshire Police, Safer Kirklees and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner West Yorkshire.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made to all our service delivery by our staff, volunteers, work placement workers and social work placement students.



Finally to all our members, friends and family who support our work both financially and in kind. We thank you all on behalf of all those we support through our work.



To find out more about our work please visit our website
www.womencentre.org.uk



See our annual accounts and trustees report on the charity commission website
www.charitycommission.gov.uk








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