

Women's Mental Health Service Annual Report 2021 - 22

WomenCentre is a registered charity with a mission to improve the quality of life for women. We deliver a range of services for women and girls across Kirklees and Calderdale.

“WomenCentre is like an anchor or a safe haven when I am feeling vulnerable and low.”



“WomenCentre has helped me with confidence, mental health, wellbeing, physical health and what strategies I can do to help myself when I'm not attending groups.”

1. Women's Mental Health Service Overview

WomenCentre works with women of all ages and backgrounds, using a holistic approach to support each woman with the range of issues she may face. Our core concept is that each woman leads the way out of her presenting troubles with resources,

facilitation and support provided by our staff, volunteers and peers.

A significant number of women use our Mental Health and Wellbeing Service because it is gender specific.

"I have felt safe, helped and not alone with my problems I feel much more positive and able to cope better ... I have learnt a lot It's good that all us women can benefit and it's very helpful and supportive."

Our Women's MH Service

supports women living in Kirklees, aged 18 years+, who experience mental ill-health to access opportunities that promote, protect and improve mental health, physical and emotional wellbeing, recovery and enable a fulfilling life.

We:

- Provide safe women-only spaces.
- Value women's expertise.
- Work with women to shape and deliver their support & the service.
- Promote social inclusion and self-determination.
- Support women's journeys towards employment, volunteering and education.
- Focus on peer support.
- Meet the needs of specific groups of women – e.g. women from minority communities and LGBTQ women.
- Work in partnership with other MH and VCS providers to enhance our offer and use resources well.

Summary of Activities 21-22

530 women supported

333 referrals – 202 of whom were new

Person-Centred Counselling

122 women (phone, online, in person)

Creative Therapies – Dance & Movement, & Music & Art (Group & 1:1)

70 women (online, phone & in person)

Peer Support Groups (online & in person)

115 women

Women in Exile, Mothers Apart, SisterShout (LGBTQ), Tea & Quiz (Dewsbury), Relaxation, Covid Support Group, Addictive Behaviours, Drop-in

Activity Groups (online & in person)

86 women

Sewing & Knitting, Walking, Singing, Yoga & Stretching & Personal Safety

Coproduced Courses (online & in person)

78 women

Making Sense, Healthy Relationships, Aromatherapy STEPS to Thinking Straighter, Breaking the Cycle, Confidence, Wellbeing & Menopause

1:1 Support – (phone, online & in person)

320 women

Covid support calls in the first part of the year, casework support, practical support & signposting.

2. Service Delivery During Changing Covid Restrictions

Spring (April-June 2021)

We started our return to face to face working in a gradual way from April 2021, regularly refreshing our Risk Assessments in line with changing Government guidance throughout the year.

In May, we started to deliver SisterShout (LGBTQ) and Music Therapy groups, with a maximum of 4 women and a facilitator, back in the Centre, maintaining 2 meter social distancing.

In Spring we also made the most of the better weather with a variety of fun and very successful **outdoor events**, coproduced with women and enabling them to meet face to face for the first time for over a year, including:

- **Dewsbury women met in Wilton Park, Batley** in groups of 6 from April.



- **Picnic in the Park for Volunteer Week (31st May)**. Sobiya, our Volunteer Coordinator organised a picnic for our volunteers in Greenhead Park. She presented the volunteers with flowers to say a massive thankyou to all the volunteers who have supported us during the pandemic through zoom groups, phone calls and walk and talk sessions to support women.

- **Allotment event (17th June)** for women who accessed online Dance & Movement and Music Therapy. Women had space to rest and be quiet with their inner selves and also celebrate being together through song and dance. Below are the lyrics to a short song created as part of the event:

*Birds are singing
Children playing,
Hello sky, no walls around us.*

*In rhythm together
With warmth in our hearts
Nature is fluid, but please don't rain!*

Women fed back:

*"I felt like I was coming into myself.
Getting more into my body and myself. I
was feeling freer."*

*"I'm proud of myself for coming – I was
really anxious but it was worth it."*

- **A Refugee Week Picnic in the Park (18th June)** joined by 17 women. They made bunting which represented how they kept connected with others through lockdown and what refugee week meant to them.

Some said they kept well through love and connecting with nature and others said it was about thinking about their friends and family they have left behind.



- **Sewing & Knitting Group Picnic** in the Park (23rd June).
- **SisterShout our LGBTQ Group**, enjoyed a picnic in the park (30th June) and created a banner which they were going to take to Leeds Pride to signify the values of visibility, unity and equality - the theme of this year's events. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions the Leeds and many other Pride events were cancelled.



As the year progressed the emphasis changed from 1:1 support calls to many more women coming back into our Huddersfield and Dewsbury Centres to access group support.

Sistershout at Happy Valley Pride (11th Sep), four of our SisterShout group attended a Pink Picnic in Hebden Bridge where they enjoyed music, talks and spoken word performances from members of the LGBT+ community.

The event was very well attended and after the previous year and half when so many Pride events had to be cancelled it was wonderful to feel a part of a community again. This sentiment was expressed by the members of the SisterShout group who enjoyed dancing in the park.

- **We re-started our in person Walking Group.** The women were delighted. Women said:

'It's wonderful to be back face-to-face.'
'It's much better than online.'
'The park is beautiful and being outdoors is so uplifting.'
'I love the exercise circle. We stretch and move and we can also see the ducks on the pond or look up to the sky.'

Summer (July-September)

We progressed to delivering other small groups in Covid safe ways our in our Dewsbury and Huddersfield Centres from July 2021 and offered some face to face Counselling from October.

To meet women's needs we continued to deliver some online and phone counselling, 1:1 support and course delivery and some hybrid groups (a mix of online and face to face), based on women's feedback and needs.



One member of the group wore a T-shirt that stated **"The only choice I made was to be myself"** and it received a lot of attention.

The group member said that with *"being in lockdown and isolated from the LGBT+ community, the T-shirt symbolised her 'coming out' again with pride."*

Pausing Together in Greenhead Park (29th Sep). With funding from Creative Minds, our Creative Arts Therapists are running workshops for women, to create a series of 5-minute videos. These have then been used for 'pausing together' from our own homes and gardens at the same time each week.

Fifteen women participated in our first workshop on Wednesday 29th September at Greenhead Park, to share ideas for videos, film videos and experience nature using creative arts. Two women were inspired to write poems (below).

Fountain Ants

*I'm a little ant
relaxing with the sound
and the gentle breeze.*



*Rainbow colour flowers,
Twitching trees and leaves,
Falling leaves opening dreams*

*Wasps dancing and buzzing bees
Taking in the morning breeze
Feeding up my family tree.*

In the park

*We are in the park
Taking in the flowers
Different colours, reds, pink and blue
There's trees and fountains
All around the park*

*Taking in all the scenery
And to be a part of it*

*If we could have one of our own
We would make it a tropical park
With butterflies and fish
And make it lovely
For everyone to see.*

*Oh I do like Greenhead park
It is marvellous
To be part of it*

*To have been there
Having a morning out
Or maybe a few hours
We love it.*



"Enjoyed sharing and meeting other people and making me think of other things more."

"It brought some feelings out and I wrote a poem, which was read out."

By the end of March 2022, 27 women had participated in one or more Pausing Together outdoor workshops and/or editing sessions. An additional 5 women have contributed creatively to the PT videos individually or through attending other groups (e.g. regular Dance Therapy and Music Therapy groups).

Our first weekly video was posted on 5th January, with 11 being posted by the end of March, with an average 53 views/week (range: 25-103).

Autumn (October-December)

In the autumn we developed two cohorts of women for some of our bigger groups, each cohort alternating coming into the Centre on a fortnightly rota. We also re-started working in person with other partners.

Partnership Working in Autumn

S2R delivered 4 weeks of craft at WomenCentre's Dewsbury base, including rug ragging, town jars, book binding and jewellery making.



Our Dewsbury worker supported 5 women to participate in two S2R walking sessions at Earlsheaton Park, enabling them to make a

Women said:

"Really enjoyable, positive, creative, great movement and singing."

connection with S2R's worker. The women have since attended S2R coffee shop meetings on Tuesdays.

Dewsbury Women Said:

"I enjoy coming to the Dewsbury Centre because it helps me to meet others and find support. It's a very supportive environment"

"I find emptiness at home, so I enjoy coming to the Centre in Dewsbury and meeting others, I receive lots of encouragement"

We participated in a **Working Together Better Lantern Parade organised by Clear** in Crow Nest Park, Dewsbury held on 6th October. Several women we support made lanterns and three paraded with them. 28 women visited our information stand on the day. Link to Clear's Video of the Lantern Parade: <https://youtu.be/XryYRqsyDZo>

S2R Aromatherapy Huddersfield

S2R delivered a 6-week Aromatherapy course in our Huddersfield base. The sessions were very popular and in response to women's requests we arranged a 4-week follow-on course in January.

STEPS to Confidence Course – Adult Learning

A 10 weeks STEPS course was delivered in our Huddersfield base to support women around confidence and self-esteem and provide them with the employability skills.

Winter (January-March 2022)

By the end of January 2022 most women we support and our staff had been double vaccinated and had had Covid.

We started to increase the number of women we could support in our group rooms, reducing to 1 metre spacing and we held our first big indoor event.

Sound Women Lite (16th March)

34 women gathered for a small Sound Women event held at our Dewsbury Centre; made up of 23 regular WMH participants, staff, volunteers and two friends who had come to support performers.

This was our first big indoor event since lockdown and for many, it was their first experience of socialising in a larger group for two years. Usually our Sound Women and Open mics are evening events, but we held this in the afternoon, setting up the space to create a sense of occasion and a welcoming atmosphere.



As with previous events, the variety in the performers was striking and moving: There were those stepping up for the first time, some more experienced performers, there were songs of sadness and grief and songs with a strong sense of resilience and hope. The event was both uplifting and touching.

It was a powerful reminder of the resilience and extraordinary strength and creativity of women in our community. It was also a reminder, after experiencing the isolation of social distancing, of the power of music and poetry in being able to bring people together.

"Thank you for your beautiful songs and your brave words; such a lovely expression of love and courage, both alone and together. Much appreciated!"

We continued to develop face to face partnership working, including a big indoor celebration for International Women's Day.

International Women's Day – Dewsbury

The event, led by Clear with support from Working Together Better (WTB) Partners including WomenCentre, was held at Connect Housing on 7th March.

It was a great event with around 50 people attending which included people who access services (11 from WomenCentre), staff members from CLEAR, WomenCentre, Hoot, S2R and Carers Count. Speakers from other services such as KRASSAC and Carers Trust spoke about their services to begin the day.



A lovely lunch was provided and art exhibitions from Carers Count and Poetry around the room filled the space with creativity and positivity!

S2R delivered 4 sessions of Aromatherapy

Women learned how to use different oils for different ailments including Arthritis. One woman said:

"I can't believe it's worked so well, the Geranium oil is really good and it's really helped my knee a lot, the creams stopped working and I've only put the oil on for a week and already I can feel the difference."

S2R also funded 6 sessions of personal safety training delivered by Active Bodies



Women enjoyed it so much that they were keen to have Julie back from Active Bodies to deliver more sessions.

WomenCentre organised another 4 sessions and women were willing to pay a donation towards the cost with WomenCentre funding the rest.



Followed with a crafts workshop delivered by hoot. The workshop was all about flowers and seeds coming to bloom especially with spring around the corner.

The afternoon session started with a dance and an Ethiopian coffee ceremony presented by Zenebu (WomenCentre worker), with support from some of the women who attend our Women In Exile group in Huddersfield. The ceremony was all about women connecting and having a chat over coffee! The afternoon finished with S2R providing a self-care session with some essential oils and a well-deserved hand massage.



Working Together Better (WTB) Partnership Development

The Partnership, made up of seven voluntary sector organisations: Carers Count, Clear, hoot, Richmond Fellowship, S2R, Touchstone and WomenCentre; commissioned by the Council and CCG; is **Working Together Better to:**

- Improve community mental health services for people & with people
- Ensure services are accessible to all
- Increase positive outcomes
- Enable independence and resilience
- Increase prevention & early intervention

We have met monthly over the year to progress these aims. Next year we will strengthen our partnership work and impact by employing a support team including: a Strategic Lead, a Comms Officer & an Administrator.

Supporting Staff Over This Year

Our staff and volunteer team are our most precious resource. We are proud of the amazing resilience and flexibility they have demonstrated over this last two years.

Covid-19, lockdown and the changing restrictions affected staff as well as the women we support in different ways. To support our staff team we have the following measures in place:

Flexible Working Arrangements

Throughout the year staff have worked flexibly, from our Centres when delivering activities and from home for administration, preparation and making phone calls. Staff who have had Covid have been able to work from home (if well enough) to maintain continuity. Based on staff feedback and the space available we intend to maintain flexible staff working arrangements.

Regular Line Management & Support

This includes: day to day phone, online and in person contact with line and senior managers as needed and monthly 1:1 in person, and for Counsellors group, online supervision supporting wellbeing, checking workload and addressing related issues and training needs.

We have also maintained fortnightly online alternating WMH Team and Kirklees Operational meetings to catch up with each other, including a wellbeing activity & some small outdoor face to face meetings.



Additional/Specialist Support

All staff have access to a 24-hour confidential helpline through our Mindful Employer Plus service and access to the Integrated Care Systems Hub and resources to support staff. Details of these have been circulated to staff at regular points throughout the year.

Staff who require additional support can access independent counselling services for a minimum of 6 sessions, paid for by WomenCentre.

Wellbeing & Staff Away Days

In November we held our first in person **staff half day conference** for two years at the Briar Court Hotel. This was an opportunity for all staff across the organisation to get together. It was surprising to see how many new staff had been recruited during lockdown as we had extended our work through various additional funding sources. This was an enjoyable and celebratory afternoon.



Looking After Staff at Eden Forest

In August, thanks to Third Sector Leaders funding, we held a WMH half day of wellbeing sessions at Eden Forest, and in March 2022, WomenCentre paid for a second half day for all Kirklees based staff (photos above & to right).

Sobiya, our Senior MH Facilitator said:

"It was a great morning and an opportunity for staff to practice some self-care. We had chance to participate in Forest Therapy, zip-wire, wood chopping, making spoons and a home-made pizza lunch around a wood fire."

3. Outcomes & Impact

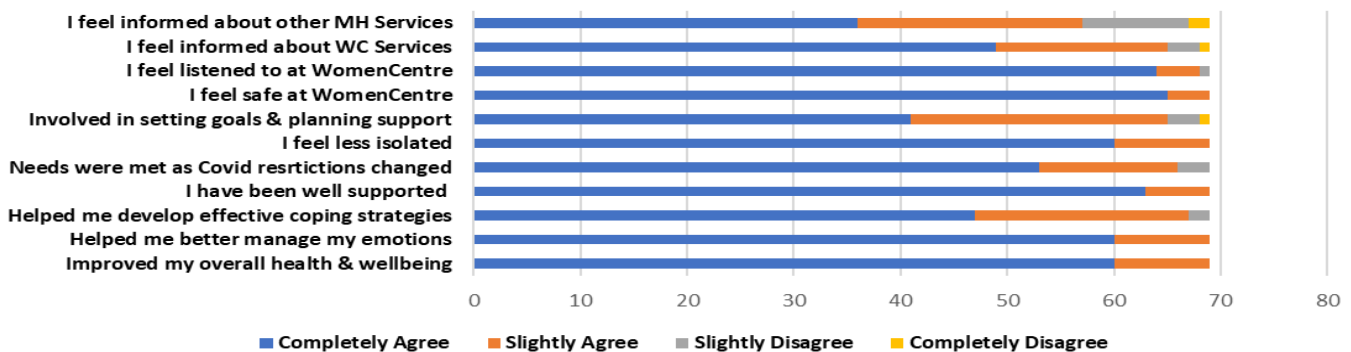
This year **108 women** fed back that they had fully or partially **met their goals** with support from the service.

69 women who accessed groups, courses, 1:1 support and creative therapies (excluding Counselling – see below) answered our annual survey in March 2022. They fed back on **the positive outcomes and impact of the service** (see chart below).

All women said the service helped them improve their mental health and wellbeing, manage their emotions, helped them feel less isolated, that they were well supported and that they felt safe in our service.

The vast majority said that they felt listened to, were involved in goal setting and planning support, that they developed better coping strategies and that their needs were met as Covid restrictions changed.

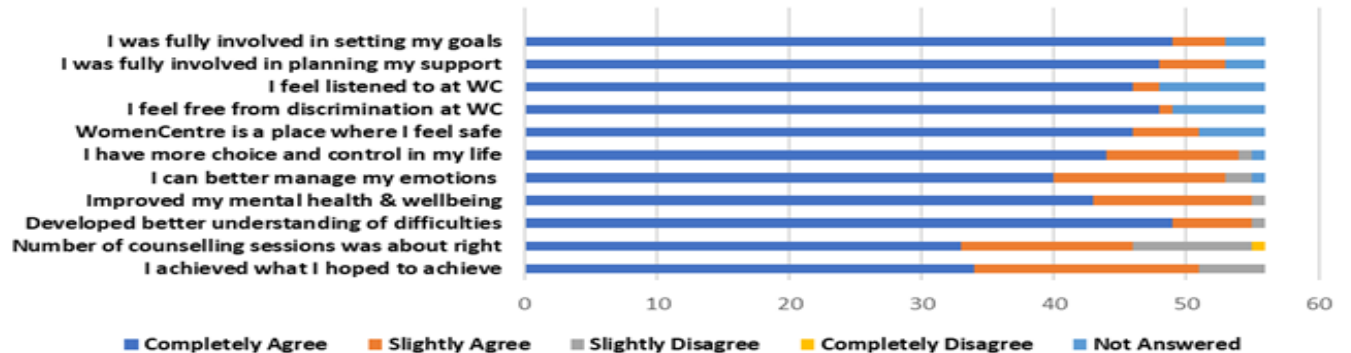
WMH Key Performance Indicators 2021-22: Feedback from 69 Women



We ask our Counselling clients to complete an exit survey, which asks many of the questions listed in the chart above.

Over the year 56 women completed a Counselling Exit Survey with very positive results (please see the chart below).

Counselling Service Exit Questionnaires: 56 Women Responded



We also gathered information about women's journeys and progress using the Outcome Recovery Star (Triangle Consulting Ltd).

Over the year **40 women completed at least two outcome stars reporting a 3% average improvement** across all 10 Domains of the Recovery Star.

Examples of Counselling Feedback

"Helped my self-awareness. I am more clear in my mind with issues ... helped me to see where I am and where I want to go to maintain my mental health."

"It helped me to understand self-worth and confidence. I have more choices and my head space is better and to take control of my decisions."

"Counselling has helped me control my anxiety ... it made me feel like I can stand on my own two feet not only financially but emotionally and physically, I can do everyday activities without a struggle and made me believe in myself in all different kinds of ways."

"Counselling has helped me to be more positive, giving me coping strategies- love the breathing techniques. I have felt listened to and cared about."

It has been helpful to be listened to without being judged, to think of positive aspects of my life and be hopeful for the future. I am learning to be more self-aware by listening to my instincts."

Case Study:

Improved Confidence, Gained Employment & Partnership Working

"I began with WomenCentre lacking confidence and suffering from anxiety. WomenCentre supported me and offered me confidence building courses. They then referred me to Richmond Fellowship to support me with finding employment.

Richmond Fellowship offered me courses such as confidence with employment and also then referred me to Generation who offered me a 5-week customer support programme. I now have been offered a really good job.

This is all because I attended WomenCentre and I was in a positive and caring friendly environment with lovely supportive people who pushed me to achieve and believe in myself.

The WomenCentre in Dewsbury is a great place and without it I wouldn't have been able to build myself back up and think about my future."

4. Developments, Vision & Targets 2022-23

Vision & Targets for 2022-23

We will continue to:

- Develop coproduction mechanisms to further improve and develop our service.
- Review the Women's Mental Health Team structure.
- Strengthen mechanisms to maintain and further improve staff wellbeing.
- Work with our Working Together Better partners to embed a new infrastructure team to help us achieve our joint aims and strengthen our impact.
- Inform and influence mental health provision for women locally and nationally.

5. Annual Statistics

Women Supported

Over the year we supported:

- **530 individual women** – 122 of whom accessed our Counselling Service
- **333 referrals:** of whom 202 were new and 131 had accessed the service at some point before.

Referrals Sources

We receive referrals from GPs, Mental Health Services in North and South Kirklees, Housing Providers and Probation Services; but most referrals come from women who have used our services, word of mouth and other Voluntary Sector Providers including our Working Together Better partners.

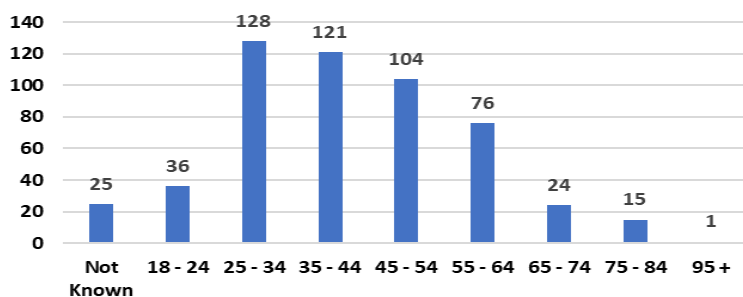
Many Counselling referrals for women (50 women) with complex needs came either directly or indirectly from IAPT. We had to close the waiting list twice for 3-4 months due to the high number (52) of women waiting. Many women have experienced childhood and adult traumas, e.g. abuse.

Additional Needs

In addition to mental health support many women have other needs, including:

- 104 women (20%) have a physical disability
- 19 women (4%) are carers
- 38 (7%) women have a learning disability
- 128 women (24%) have needed some form of casework support e.g. around mental health risks, children's safeguarding, domestic abuse, housing, food banks, debt, immigration & courts.

Age: 530 Women Supported 2021-22



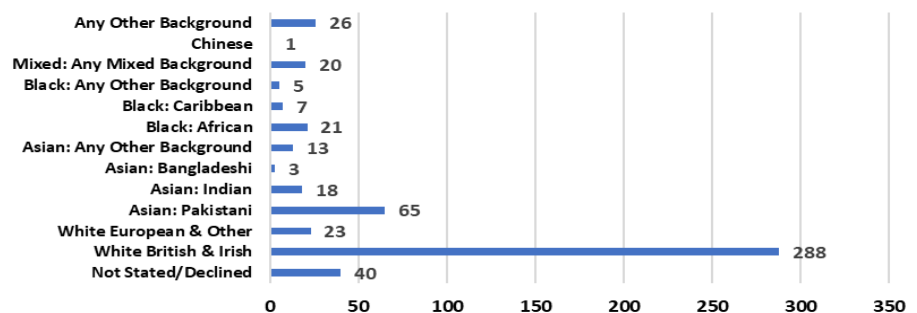
Age

We support women from 18 to in their 80's, but the majority (67%) of women we support are aged between 25-54 years.

Ethnicity

We support women from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds – 57% were White (British, Irish or other), 19% were Asian or Asian British and 6% are Black or Black British.

Ethnicity: 530 Women Supported



6. Finance 2021-2022

Core funding for our Women's Mental Health and Wellbeing Service was provided by Kirklees Council and NHS Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Group. The table below provides a summary of income and expenditure for our WMH Service for 2021-22.

Summary of Income and Expenditure for WMH Service 2021-22	£
Income	
Income from Grants	217,140.81
Total Income	217,140.81
Expenditure	
Direct pay costs	168,535.68
Contribution to central services, senior management pay costs	18,069.16
Staff travel and training	232.05
Recruitment and Consultancy costs	200.00
General direct project costs	1,760.00
Room and venue hire for Dewsbury	0.00
Volunteer expenses	238.93
Contribution to premises and organisation costs	21,197.92
Total Expenditure	210,233.74
Net surplus /(deficit) in year to 31/3/22	6,907.07
Brought Forward Surplus at 31/03/21	22,623.51
Sub Total of Surplus at 31/03/22	29,530.58
Less Low-Cost Counselling Deficit at 31/03/22	-4,597.77
Grand Total Carried forward at 31/03/22	24,932.81

Social and Added Value

In 2021-22 we secured additional funding for our activities in Kirklees, including:

- ✓ Two Liaison and Diversion Workers to divert women from the criminal justice system.
- ✓ A Sexual Exploitation Worker (regional Partnership Project) funded by the National Lottery.
- ✓ A Project 1125 Worker, National Lottery funded, working with girls & young women (11-25).
- ✓ A University of Lancaster grant for our Letterbox Project, giving voice to mothers apart from their children (due to end July 31st 2022).
- ✓ Creative Minds match funding for our Pausing Together Project led by our Creative Therapists.
- ✓ Kirklees Council Place Based funding for a Central Huddersfield Menopause Project.
- ✓ Connecting Opportunities working with new migrants funded by ESIF and the National Lottery.
- ✓ Empowering Women programme in North Kirklees funded by Kirklees Communities Directorate.
- ✓ Previous social value work has evidenced that for every £1 spent on our Service between £2-£8 is saved depending on women's strengths, needs and circumstances.