Women's Mental Health Service Annual Report 2023 - 24

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.

"Thank you for everything this year and all the time that I have been coming to the group and the WomenCentre. If it wasn't for this place I don't know what or where I would be."

1. Women's Mental Health Service Overview

We are a team of women with **a unique set of specialist expertise** and a wealth of experience and training in the areas of mental health and women's wellbeing. We believe that **every woman comes from a place of goodness** and yearns to grow and flourish. We listen to you. We support you to build a stable base of support and navigate a route through the obstacles you are facing, to create a life full of meaning and purpose.

We offer a range of group-based activities to help build resilience, confidence and self-esteem and reduce isolation. We offer **rich soil for you to root down in** and help you to flourish and fly when you are ready. We work hard to create an environment of warmth, acceptance, comfort and inclusivity.

Our service is holistic and creative, focusing on your strengths. We nurture a sense that **everything can be possible**, providing solace, security and support in a confidential space. We want you to feel safe in your bodies and **enjoy being alive**.

We welcome women of all ages, backgrounds, shapes and sizes, on differing journeys and at various stages of life. We cultivate a non-blame, non-judgmental culture that seeks to understand the complexity of women's lives. There is strength in numbers when we come together as a supportive community - we understand **that having a place to belong to helps bring the heart home.**

Understanding the bigger picture is important to us. We consider political, sociocultural, systemic and feminist perspectives and their implications for the work we do. **We recognize challenges specific to the life experience of women** and develop and promote women-centred ways of working.

As staff, we are genuine in developing self-awareness, learning from our own trials, challenges and mistakes. **We also involve you and listen to your voice** in the development of our service through co-productive and co-creative work. We promote self-care for ourselves as professionals and as women, a practice that nourishes all of us.

There is no time limit to how long you can work with us. We guide you towards a deep steadiness and attending to ease in the flow of change and growth. **This takes time and each woman's pace is unique to her.**

This is our passion. **It's what lights us up inside.** We want to provide a vision of the future for all women that is full of safety, hope and vitality.

"It's been a year!! And I feel it's very beneficial. As it is a support network for women, going through changes, i.e. mental, physical, and psychological. You know that you've got somewhere safe to go and feel comfortable to talk. All the staff and volunteers are supportive, and you feel you can express yourself and you are comfortable. It would be beneficial if there were more days or sessions for us to attend as it is very positive and helpful, supportive and very focused on ourselves which is reflective and helps you move forward."

"The environment felt like a cosy, safe space as soon as I walked in. I enjoyed the combination of theory/talking and movement. I found the theory useful in understanding my experience with grief and loss and talking about it allowed me to express and process my feelings and understand myself better. The movement aspect really helped with my emotional "stuckness" by making the connection between mind, body and emotions in a gentle way. I found this really helpful and fun. I would love it if there was a similar course that was a bit longer or even a regular group which used movement to connect body and mind. People close to me have commented that I am doing much better since I started

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.

2. Operating this year- Successes & Pressures

Successful Re-tender

The main success for this year was finding out that we were successful in our re-tender process. This gave us an opportunity to do some team building and a focus on the year ahead. It gave us time to reflect on our cultures and values as a team which provided a narrative for our service.

Events

As a service we take pride in the events we deliver. We always keep the women and coproduction at the heart of planning each event. This year we held 5 main events, this does not include attendance at partner events for example the Lantern parade, events we hold in our drop-ins to celebrate diverse religious/cultural celebrations, trips with Safe Anchor Boat trust & staff away days

- Sound Women Event
- Refugee week event
- Winter Solstice event
- International Women's Day Event
- Volunteer celebration event

Sound Women Event Lawrence Batley Theatre

This year marked 10 years since we first held Sound Women to celebrate women in music and showcase music made by women attending music therapy at the centre. It was also our first to be held in the wider community since COVID.

It was held in the Cellar Theatre at the Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield which was packed on the night and buzzing with a warm and excited energy. A total of 26 women participated and performed to an audience of approximately 100 people

Women from Huddersfield music groups, a group from Dewsbury the Women in Exile group and the Youth Music Tuning In project all performed original songs and there were also a number of performances from individuals who had written their own songs. As well as singing, women contributed to arrangements of songs with instruments – this year with the cornet, violin and cello.

Kathryn Young who performed a romantic classical piece on the piano. For Kathryn, this was a perfect way to mark the end of her student placement at WomenCentre.

Refugee week event celebration

On Friday 23rd June our Women In exile group delivered an event for Refugee week. The theme was compassion through music. The room was displayed with items that were close to women and identified their own cultures, such as clothes and food items, flags from around the world were also displayed. Holy Marland played the Kora and Lou Houghton from Hoot creative arts playing the African drums. Our very own staff member Zenebu displayed an Ethiopian coffee ceremony. A tradition in Ethiopia where women would brew their own coffee and discuss important community issues. The event was also supported by WomenCentre volunteers. 25 women plus 10 children including 5 staff and facilitators attended the event.

International Women's day

On Wednesday 6th March we celebrated International Women's Day. The theme was Inspire & Inclusion. The event was a perfect opportunity to let everyone know about the Women's Mental Health Service re-launch too.

We had a special guest Satnam Galsian a Punjabi folk singer who re-told her journey and the struggles she had as a South Asian Punjabi Folk singer. We had the delight of hearing some of her Folk singing too.

Women also took part in an inclusion activity, thinking about what Inclusion means to them and in what ways they see inclusion fitting into WomenCentre Kirklees. The event ended with a beautiful Welcome song which Emily our Music Therapist supported putting together with all the words collected from the day.

50 women, staff and volunteers attended the event.

Winter Solstice Event

We celebrated the shortest day and longest night through music and movement. The ritual of letting go of the unwanted the old and welcoming in the new. It was a reflective morning with rituals of burning Rosemary, a herb that sharpens our mind and gives more focus symbolising remembrance, loyalty and fertility. It encourages us to use our memories in new ways shaping new memories and embracing those we want to keep. Here is what WomenCentre Deputy CEO shared of her new experience with us

"*The Solstice activity gave me some space and quietness to process my personal achievements and my needs. It was great to be outside as there was no physical boundary, no walls which let me think more freely. The music and dance, whilst not something I am naturally comfortable with, left me feeling part of something bigger than me as I was with others, and that helped me to take part and push some of my personal boundaries – which felt good, as I was in a safe space. The glow of the fire was warm and it felt like peace was around us – basically I loved it.*"

In total 17 volunteers and 2 students gave 1,571 hrs of their time this year

Volunteers

Our volunteer coordinator has worked hard this year recruiting volunteers. We have had some new volunteers recruited to run a book club, support in drop-ins, and walking volunteers. We have had 2 social workers supporting front line as well as group work. Our volunteer Co ordinator works closely with TSL and Huddersfield University recruiting volunteers. The majority of our volunteers come through word of mouth, enquiries on our website and students.

Counselling service

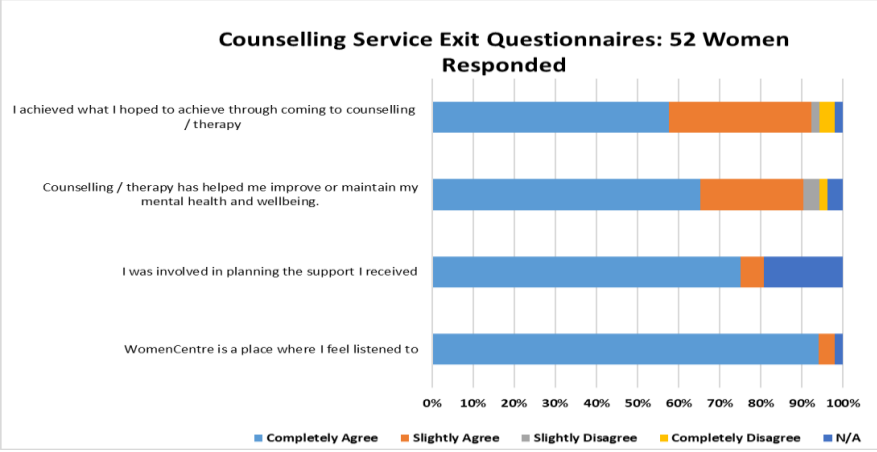
The demand for our low-cost counselling service continues to be in high demand. With the majority of referrals coming from the Kirklees talking therapies service. We have had to close our counselling waiting list many times when we reach a capacity of 60 women, we try to refrain from having long waiting lists and encourage women to ring us back to make a referral once our waiting list re opens. The counselling team have worked hard to keep our counsellors to at least 12. We have had trainee counsellors complete their placements, we currently have 2 counsellors in Dewsbury and 10 counsellors in Huddersfield.

What women say about Counselling

The therapy has been helpful but just not long enough. Some emotions like anger are feeling better and manageable.
It has helped me to clarify things in my mind & understand what's happening to me.
I feel more able to set goals to improve my wellbeing

I'm actually facing up to my problems and I know eventually I will be able to learn more about myself. I still feel like I am a work in progress and it will take time to put coping mechanisms in place

Having an outlet and opportunity to talk. Completely neutral. Having someone to talk to.
I was hoping for more longer-term counselling as I wanted more than 10 sessions



Partnership working

Networking meetings attended

- Ethnically Diverse Communities networking meeting
- Multi-agency meeting (Asylum, Refugee, Migrant support)
- TSL volunteer networking meeting
- Mental Health Day Planning meeting with partners
- WTB partnership meeting
- WTB Steering group meeting
- Richmond fellowship- Newsletter meeting

Events attended

- Lantern Parade supported by all WTB partners
- Joint events held with HOOT to celebrate The Year of Music
- Pride event attended with WTB

Partnership work

- Huddersfield University 'Get set Goal' workshops- delivering CPR and discussion around menopause, nutrition & eating well with diabetes
- CGL attended both North and South Kirklees Drop-ins
- Zone offered free tickets to families at Christmas
- Umbrella yoga offered yoga in both North and South Kirklees
- Give a few words presence in Drop-ins

Professional hours- A total of 10 hours was offered to professionals to come in and find out about our service, an opportunity to network with each other and ask questions too.

Partnership Statement

Working Together Better (WTB) We are a partnership of seven voluntary sector organisations: Carers Count, Cloverleaf Advocacy, CLEAR, hoot creative arts, Richmond Fellowship, S2R Support to Recovery, and WomenCentre; commissioned by Kirklees Council and NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. We are Working Together Better to:

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

Partners meet regularly to progress these aims and this year we have been working more closely than ever to ensure our participants know about our partners so they have a wider choice of ways to improve their wellbeing.

- Set up a group of peer champions to represent the interests of service the users we engage with and help shape our service
- Collaborated in joint celebration's such as the Lantern parade and publicised and contributed toward each other's events
- Signposted participants to each other's activities
- Visited professional referring agencies together to ensure they are aware of our joint offer. Facilitated participants to produce a peer led newsletter – "Your Voice in Kirklees" https://avoiceinkirklees.wixsite.com/yourvoiceinkirklees
- Attended public events together to publicise the partnership offer to potential participants and professionals
- Developed a strategic plan to guide our future development

We all look forward to building on this relationship working together better for people in Kirklees in the years to come

Pressures

- Women have felt the pressure of austerity with the increase of cost of living, fuel, utility bills and the increase of parking costs which has resulted in a hesitancy of attending groups on a regular basis – Funding bids from One community fund have been sourced to support women with essential items to keep warm and also help with phone sims to decrease the pressure overall. A large donation from the Ahmadiyya Muslim women's association in Batley/Dewsbury donated water bottles, blankets, self-care toiletries, socks, hats and duvets to keep warm over winter.
- Some groups and counselling have remained over the phone and over zoom to support those women unable to get into the centre or travel between centres in North and South Kirklees.
- An increase in food bank referrals have been sought
- Changes in staff have meant extra time for recruitment and an increase pressure on the rest of the team.
  A new operational manager was recruited
  A new Admin Triage worker was recruited
  The Women's Mental Health lead and Operational manager are currently studying for a Level 7 Apprenticeship award, which means that they are away from the office once a week. This puts an extra pressure on the team to cover the office and extra work load for both workers. Managers from internal services have supported to cover the office when the WMH service lead is out of office.
- Some women still felt the distress of loosing loved ones through the pandemic and so a new group with two staff members was delivered. It was an integrated body orientated approach with a talking therapy element.

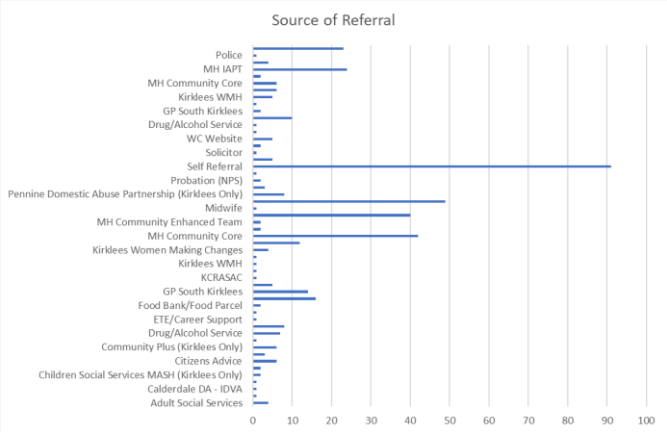
"The environment felt like a cosy, safe space as soon as I walked in. I enjoyed the combination of theory/talking and movement. I found the theory useful in understanding my experience with grief and loss and talking about it allowed me to express and process my feelings and understand myself better. The movement aspect really helped with my emotional "stuckness" by making the connection between mind, body and emotions in a gentle way. I found this really helpful and fun. I would love it if there was a similar course that was a bit longer or even a regular group which used movement to connect body and mind. People close to me have commented that I am doing much better since I started the group. It has been a great experience."

"Safe; supportive; open; warm; emotional; thought provoking; enlightening; informative; personal; interesting; relevant; body wakening; calm; sometimes releasing difficult emotions; relatable."

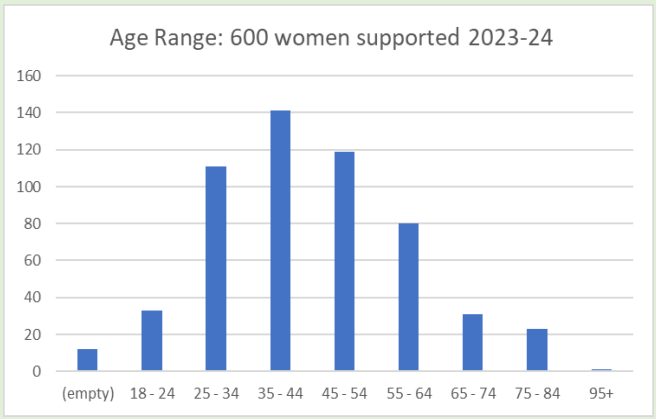
3. Outcomes & Impact

Referral Sources

We continue to receive a high number of self-referrals from women through word of mouth, referrals from GPs, Mental Health Services in North and South Kirklees, Housing Providers and Social Care. Referrals from community mental health teams have increased due to Working Together presentations.

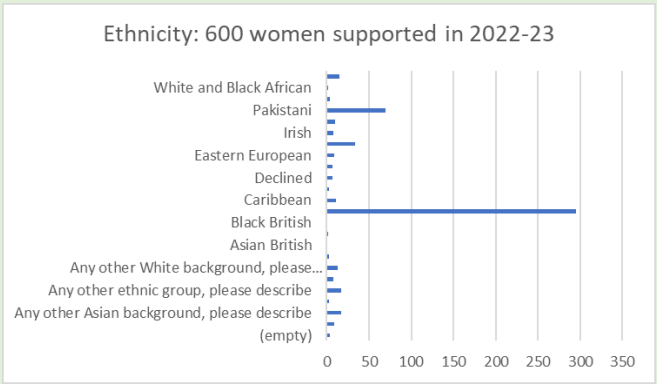


Age - We support women from 18 to women in their 80's, but the majority (81.86%) of women we support are aged between 25-64 years.



Additional Needs - 312 women have a disability (56.62%)**.** In addition to mental health support many women have other needs, including: 93 women (16.88%) have a physical disability, 40 (7.26%) women have a learning disability.

Ethnicity-We support women from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds – 56.26% were White (British, Irish or other), 12.53% were Pakistani and 2.72% were white & Black Caribbean.



Distance Travelled

We also gathered information about women's journeys and progress using the Outcome Recovery Star (Triangle Consulting Ltd).
All women said the service helped them improve their mental health and wellbeing, manage their emotions, they mentioned improvements in their relationships, and felt that they had improvements in their social networks. 42 women have had 2 outcome stars between 01/04/23 and 31/04/24

Mothers Apart Spring Networking Event

Mothers Apart Project is part of the Women's Mental Health Service. The project is a peer support group that welcomes a diverse cohort of women, who for different reasons live apart from their children.
The Spring net-working event was planned to offer an opportunity for professionals to get together and discover more about the WomenCentre including Mothers Apart and what it offers. The following is feedback from a Peer who attends the Mothers apart group and showcased some work and spoke about her experience:

Peer Feedback for the Mothers Apart Networking Event

I feel the event went incredibly well, met some amazing supportive professionals who really did seem to have the interests of the women they support in their hearts.

I started off incredibly anxious, my voice didn't want to voice and I felt like I could cry but the goldfish bowl activity gave me the opportunity to speak to 2 Litigation solicitors, Rebecca Davis and Claire Exelby, from Ramsdens Solicitors and that helped me refocus and centre my brain which allowed me to continue.

It helped getting to the slide about our Forest project and Connecting Project at Wellholme Park when I mentioned bailey (my dog) and was able to put a bit of humour into it which helped me find my flow a bit better.

By the end of the presentation I was very proud of myself and got a lot of positive feedback from the professionals in attendance.

One lady, I think it was Rebecca Davis from Ramsdens, said that she wishes she could come on trips out like we have. This got me thinking that maybe we could try and have a day out with a professional just to help break down the tension and barriers that are present amongst us ladies and the professionals we have/are dealing with.

Rebecca Davis and Claire Exelby also spoke with Emily, myself, another member of staff and Lesley about what their role is within Ramsdens and left us some business cards. They said they would be happy to come in and speak to our group of ladies as it may help us or they could arrange a clinic.

Making a Difference

Case Study A

Mothers Apart

June, I will use as a pseudonym, submitted a job application. When June first joined the MA group she was experiencing loneliness and isolation, having very recently relocated from a different area, and compounded by the impact of no longer living with her children. June was struggling with debt and financial hardship. Her mental health was low and erratic, she found participating in group difficult. However, the group have been really supportive. June describes the MA group as her "life-line" and without which, she says that she "wouldn't be here." June's confidence and mental well-being have improved during her attendance at MA to a point where she felt able to think about training with a view to gaining employment. I made a referral for June to Richmond Fellowship. She went on to complete a challenging volunteering course with a local charity. June was also selected for a job interview, and shortlisted. Although June did not get the job, she drew upon positive aspects about the experience and this was reinforced by interview feedback and MA group's encouragement. June is hopeful she will find employment and continues to attend MA regularly. June feels more self-assured and this is backed up with the group's confidence in her to represent their recommendations for social services improvements, regarding birth mothers, at Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Group.

Case Study B

SistersShhout

A member of the Sistershhout group started attending as she had found it difficult to find a safe space to be with people who would understand and support her due to her gender identity. She had been out of work for a considerable amount of time and had lost the confidence to attend job interviews and was struggling financially. By attending the group, she grew in confidence and felt more accepted and able to slowly begin applying for jobs. She had many rejections but was able to share this with the group who supported her to keep trying. She eventually found employment where she feels supported too but this meant she would no longer be able to attend the group due to the nature of the shift work. She recently took a day's leave so that she could return to the group and update us on her progress. She now has many plans for the future and has been able to start tackling her debt and build up her credit rating and then plans to move to more suitable accommodation.

4. Annual Statistics

Summary of Activities 23-24

Women supported 570 of **63** accessed counselling service

New referrals – **387 women**

Person-Centred Counselling
1,047 (phone, online, in person)

Creative Therapies – Dance & Movement, & Music & Art (Group & 1:1)
113 women (online, phone & in person)

Peer Support Groups - (online & in person)
410 women
Women in Exile, Mothers Apart, SisterShout (LGBTQ), Tea & Quiz (Dewsbury), Relaxation, Menopause Support, Addictive Behavior support,

Activity Groups- (online & in person)
253 women
Sewing & Knitting, Walking, Singing, Yoga & Stretching & Personal Safety

Coproduced Courses -(online & in person)
163 women
Making Sense, Healthy Relationships, Confidence

1:1 Support – (phone, online & in person)
756 women
casework support, practical support & signposting.

Drop-Ins- 322 Women Accessed Drop-in, in Huddersfield & Dewsbury

5. Developments, Visions & Targets 2023-24

Vision & Targets for 2023-24

We will continue to:

- Further develop our peer champion board to enhance the development of all aspects of our service.
- Enhance our staff champions in the development of Neuro-Diversity work, Dementia, in areas of Equality & Diversity and reaching out to minority groups
- Continue the role of volunteering through the support of our volunteer coordinator
- Continue to develop a culture of wellbeing for everyone within the service, including staff and volunteers.

Social and Added Value

In 2023-24 we secured additional funding for our activities in Kirklees, including:

- ✓ One Reconnect Worker to support women returning to their communities after a custodial sentence.
- ✓ One manager and two Sexual Exploitation Workers across Kirklees and Calderdale (regional Partnership Project) funded by the National Lottery.
- ✓ One Manager and two Project 1125 Workers across Kirklees and Calderdale, National Lottery funded, working with girls & young women (11-25).
- ✓ Common Threads Collective - women experts by experience delivering training through Barnados to social workers and pre-adoptive parents and Letterbox Project, giving voice to mothers apart from their children.
- ✓ One Manager and three project workers in partnership development of Kirklees Domestic Abuse Specialist Services (KDASS) with PDAP, KCRASAC & Women Making Changes Project.
- ✓ One project worker for the Mayors Safer communities funding for a joint project with PDAP for a group work domestic abuse recovery programme
- ✓ Household support fund benefitting 99 people (women and their families) with the cost of living crisis.

6. Finance 2023-2024

Core funding for our Women's Mental Health and Wellbeing Service was provided by Kirklees Council and NHS Kirklees Integrated Care Partnership. The table below provides a summary of income and expenditure for our WMH Service for 2023-24.

Note - includes extra £10,335 (50% of which was paid to Richmond Fellowship and shown as consultancy cost).

Summary of Income and Expenditure for WMH Service 2023-24	£
Income	
Income from Grants	241,529.50
Total Income	**241,529.50**
Expenditure	
Direct pay costs	182,102.48
Contribution to central services, senior management pay costs	23,514.70
Staff travel and training	1,098.08
Recruitment and Consultancy costs	10,927.00
General direct project costs	3,097.30
Room and venue hire for Dewsbury	2,463.10
Volunteer expenses	523.93
Contribution to premises and organisation costs	20,993.59
Total Expenditure	**244,720.18**
Net surplus /(deficit) in year to 31/03/24	-3,190.68
Brought Forward Surplus at 31/03/23	23,874.74
Sub Total of Surplus at 31/03/24	20,684.06
Less Low-Cost Counselling Deficit at 31/03/24	-8,657.21
Grand Total Carried forward at 31/03/24	12,026.85

Kirklees
COUNCIL

NHS
NHS West Yorkshire
Integrated Care Board