

Women's Mental Health Report

Annual report
2025-26



WomenCentre

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Women's Mental Health & Wellbeing project overview

The Women's Mental Health and Wellbeing Project sits within the umbrella organisation WomenCentre and is part of the Working Together Better Partnership, a collaborative network of commissioned organisations working to improve the mental health and wellbeing of communities across Kirklees.

The project is unique within the partnership as it is the only gender specific service dedicated exclusively to women. We recognise that women often experience difficulties differently and face different challenges and so benefit from a space just for them. Our aim is to provide an equitable, accessible service for women aged 18 and over living in Kirklees who are experiencing, or have experienced, mental ill health, alongside challenges affecting their physical and emotional wellbeing. We offer safe, compassionate, trauma-informed spaces where women are treated with dignity and respect and can begin or continue their journey towards improved wellbeing.

Our services are designed to promote diversity, inclusion, belonging and understanding while creating opportunities for women to explore their emotions, build confidence and develop meaningful connections. We achieve this through a broad programme of drop-in sessions, structured groups, specialist groups, therapeutic interventions, creative activities and wellbeing focused programmes.

Our drop-in sessions provide informal, welcoming spaces where women can connect with others over a cup of tea or coffee, reducing isolation and building supportive relationships. Alongside these, we deliver six-week structured programmes that explore topics such as menopause, women's health, self-esteem, resilience, understanding trauma, emotional wellbeing and many other issues relevant to women's lives.

We also provide specialist groups tailored to the needs of particular communities. These include dedicated support for migrant women, helping them build confidence, signposting to relevant agencies and feel part of their local community, as well as our Mothers Apart group, which supports women who are living apart from their children. Our LGBTQIA+ group, held on Wednesday evenings, offers a confidential space where women can come together for peer support.

Creativity and therapeutic support are central to our approach. The project offers access to qualified music, art and movement therapists, recognising the powerful role that creative expression can play in improving mental health and emotional wellbeing. We also provide low-cost, and private counselling delivered by a dedicated team of trained counsellors and student counsellors.

At the heart of everything we do is a strong commitment to peer leadership and co production. Women with lived experience play an active role in shaping, developing and evaluating our services, ensuring that the project remains responsive, inclusive and rooted in the real experiences and needs of the women we support. This collaborative approach empowers women to influence service delivery while fostering ownership and a sense of community.



Successes & Challenges

This year has been one of growth, achievement and meaningful impact for the Women's Mental Health and Wellbeing Project. However, Alongside many successes, we have also experienced moments of sadness and challenge. As a mental health service, we know that supporting women through difficult times is at the heart of what we do, but that does not make those experiences any less profound.

Throughout the year, we attended nine partnership and community events, strengthening our relationships with organisations across Kirklees and increasing awareness of the support we provide. These included Working Together Better Partnership events such as Great Get Together at Greenhead Park and the Lantern Parade, alongside external events including Pride, the University of Huddersfield Mental Health awareness week, and Pinderfields Hospital. These opportunities have strengthened multi-agency working, increased cross referrals and ensured more women know where to access support when they need it.

Alongside partnership work, we successfully delivered seven of our own community events, each designed to celebrate women, reduce isolation and create opportunities for connection. Highlights included our annual International Women's Day celebration, our Refugee Week event, for the first time at Lawrence Batley Theatre, and our popular Winter Fair. The Winter Fair welcomed 65 women through our doors and raised over £300, demonstrating not only the generosity of our community but also the importance of creating welcoming spaces where women feel they belong.



This year also saw new opportunities for women to experience wellbeing in different ways. Through the dedication of our Art Therapist, Sophie, women visited Leeds Art Gallery, allowing them to see how creative expression can be a powerful therapeutic tool and helping them connect their own artwork with wider artistic practice.

We also organised our first ever coach trip to Scarborough. For many women, this was an opportunity to experience a day out that may otherwise have been inaccessible. The trip was filled with laughter, friendship and memorable moments, highlighting the importance of creating positive shared experiences alongside therapeutic support.

While we celebrated many achievements, we also experienced significant loss. We sadly said goodbye to two long standing women one of who had attended our Dewsbury centre and another our music and singing groups. A. was a much loved member of the singing group, and throughout her final months our commitment to her never wavered. When many services had reached the limits of what they could offer, our door remained open. Emily, our Music Therapist, went above and beyond in supporting A, regularly checking on her wellbeing, visiting her in hospital to sing with her, and ultimately attending her funeral to say a final goodbye. We are equally grateful to the women within the music group, who continued to welcome, support and accept A. without judgement. It was a powerful reminder that extraordinary things happen when women come together in kindness and compassion.

The year also brought operational challenges. We experienced a prolonged period without a reception triage worker, while recruitment took place and we also recruited a new Counselling Coordinator. We are pleased that both staff members have now joined the team and are settling in well.

A continuing challenge has been the absence of a dedicated case worker within the project. As a result, staff often balance intensive practical support alongside delivering therapeutic groups and activities. With a predominantly part-time staff, this can place additional pressure on the team. However, we are fortunate to be part of WomenCentre, enabling us to make internal referrals for specialist support, particularly around domestic abuse. We have also strengthened our internal referral pathways across the Working Together Partnership, ensuring women can access the right support more quickly and effectively.

Having a dedicated case worker would also support situations where sometimes women will come into the centre facing a mental health crisis and at times we have had to call the emergency services out for support, again taking time out of a pressured day.

Despite the challenges faced throughout the year, we continue to provide compassionate, gender specific support, work collaboratively with partners and create safe, welcoming spaces where women are heard, valued and empowered. This year has once again demonstrated the resilience of the women we support and the dedication of the staff and volunteers who walk alongside them every step of the way.

Developing Groups Around Women's Voices

The variety of groups we offer throughout the week continues to reflect the interests, needs and aspirations of the women who access our service. We believe that the women themselves are best placed to shape the activities that support their wellbeing, and we regularly adapt our programme in response to their feedback.

This year, women attending our Dewsbury service expressed a strong interest in starting a book club. In response, we launched a new group, which has gone from strength to strength.

As the group has developed, we have begun exploring the opportunity to evolve it into a bibliotherapy group, using shared reading and discussion as a therapeutic tool to support mental health, emotional wellbeing and connection.

"I feel my brain is opening up new pathways with reading, expression and listening"

Interestingly, this highlights how the needs of our communities can change over time. Several years ago, our Huddersfield book club was thriving, while there was little interest in establishing a similar group in Dewsbury despite repeated attempts. Now the situation has naturally reversed, with the Dewsbury group flourishing. This reinforces the importance of remaining responsive rather than prescriptive, listening to women and recognising that interests and needs evolve. By allowing women to shape our programme, we ensure our groups remain relevant, engaging and meaningful to those who attend.

Strengthening Our LGBTQIA+ Offer

Our LGBTQIA+ group remains an important part of our programme, providing a space to connect with others who share similar experiences. While the group has traditionally been smaller than some of our other peer support groups, recent changes across Kirklees, including the closure of community meeting spaces, have contributed to a further decline in attendance.

Recognising the importance of ensuring LGBTQIA+ women have access to dedicated, welcoming spaces, this is an area we are committed to strengthening over the coming year. Working alongside partners within the Working Together Better Partnership, we will explore new ways to increase engagement, improve accessibility and better understand the needs of LGBTQIA+ women in our communities.



Statistics

What women say about our project

I'm implementing new things I've learned into everyday life which in helps my overall wellbeing.

I have never been on a barge before and this was a very nice experience, I told all my family and they think it is amazing how you look after us. Thanks

Coming to the centre helps me to understand things better and keeps me going. Sharing informally helps us all alot. This groups is a true blessing for women in need

We come to see other women from our culture and speak our mother tongue. We meet here and talk about our problems and they listen and that helps

I played and sang solo at sound women and absolutely loved it! I do lots of things with my new friends. coffee, shopping , events, walks. Music group is the happiest thing in my week.

Building confidence, understanding my self-helping as a peer

I have experienced mental health issues for a long time. I first accesses the women centre about 8-9 years ago. However I have been struggling with self confidence since I can remember. But i reconnected with the women centre recently and joined the self esteem group. It has been central to help me.

Counselling has helped me implementing boundaries and coping strategies when dealing with difficult situations.

Everything has become clearer, after years of struggling. I incorporate what I have learned from the make sense group

The group has made me aware of my health. I feel that i am listened to; same as the drop in, but i find this group deeper. Ive met some nice people in the group, I hope to come back in September.

Referrals - 330 women

Assessments and Reviews - 468 women

Remote/ in person counselling sessions offered- 959

Casework Support - 668 women

General 1:1 work, Liaison with other professionals, Mothers Apart 1:1 Casework, one to one, Pre-& Post Session comms, Risk Management, Safeguarding and Post Closure Contact

Therapeutic Groups & 1:1- 115women

Music, Dance & Movement, Art & Pausing Together

Activity Groups - 332 women

SisterSing, Sewing & Knitting

Courses - 149 women

Self esteem group, Wellbeing for women in later life, self care

Drop Ins - 402 women

Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Women In Exile

Support Groups- 248 women

Mothers Apart, Tea & Quiz, Fruiti Tutti (LGBTQIA+ group), Relaxation, Women Together, Clothes Exchange

Supported by - 24 volunteers & 19 Peers



Women In Exile

Woman from Syria attended the event for the first time. She was overwhelmed with emotion when she left as she said she hasn't felt as safe for the longest of time. She loved communicating to our volunteer who speaks Arabic and talking about her struggles and how she came to the UK. The GP advised her to attend the Women In Exile group as she was feeling isolated and low in mood. Her journey started in Libya, where she then took a treacherous boat trip to Italy. She traveled for 3 and half days, and found herself in a camp for 3 years. She eventually found herself in Calais living in a secret forest for 3 months. She made 3 attempts to catch a boat from Calais to to the UK. She had to swim 50 meters to the boat and nearly drowned twice and was caught by the police on the 2nd occasion and taken to hospital with a lung infection after nearly drowning. She studies to be a Psychologist in Syria and offered to come to the group and share her skills around Jewellery making and art. We were painting birds as symbol of migration and travel and the woman said next time bring fishes as she felt she migrated as a fish to the UK. We look forward to her coming to the center in the hope to become a Peer and volunteer W

Art Therapy

Starting to Art therapy helped me talk about my feelings and it let me change my overwhelming and confusing emotions into forms that I could have Infront of me and see.

The group was so important to me because it gave me some structure and routine. Being around other women who were working on their mental health made me realise that I am not the only one.

I stopped criticizing myself all the time and I could accept my emotions and situation.

I decided to do the Art show at the Packhorse centre for WomenCentre because I wanted to make something creative and positive that could help women like me. I had so much fun with the exhibition, and I couldn't have managed to do it, if I had never been to WomenCentre and I had the support that I needed.

Music Case Study

Lynns story (Name has been changed) is one of finding and celebrating her true self, which had been buried by the burden of responsibilities and a sense of shame for many years. Our work together took place over five months, and supported Lynn to connect with herself and others in new ways, and to find new purpose in life.

Lynn's music therapy consisted of twelve sessions, which fell into two blocks. The first part of our work provided a space for Lynn to step out of her usual roles and find a vibrant voice, which she used to express her frustrations find the self she had lost. In the second stage of our work together, the focus was on unblocking and expressing trapped emotions and moving boldly forwards.

Lynn is now performing with her community church, and getting older people to sing along. It felt that Lynn has found a way of helping others by being herself, rather than pleasing people and not being herself. She said ' It all started here'.



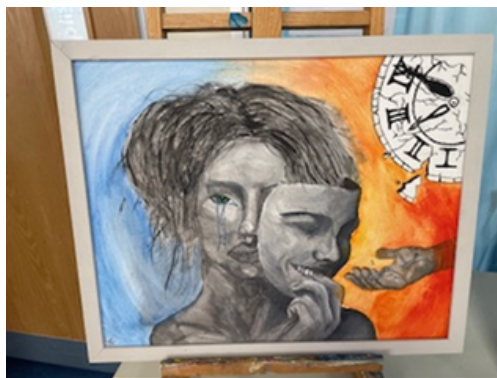
Counselling Service

Following the Easter period, our new Counselling Coordinator joined the team and has spent time settling into the role, developing systems and building positive working relationships with our counselling team. This has provided a strong foundation for the continued development of the service.

While the counselling waiting list has remained temporarily closed during this transition, significant progress has been made towards reopening. New client allocations to counsellors have now begun, bringing us closer to resuming referrals and improving access to support.

We currently have a team of seven counsellors delivering therapeutic support and plan to recruit additional volunteer counsellors on placement over the summer. This will strengthen our capacity and help meet the growing demand for counselling.

The introduction of the SumUp payment system has also been a positive development. The new donation process has resulted in an increase in voluntary client contributions, helping to improve the long-term sustainability of the counselling service while ensuring support remains accessible.

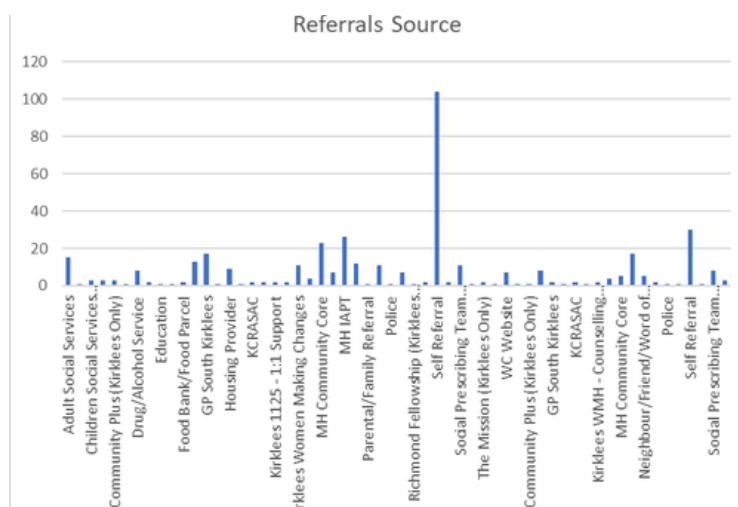


Outcomes

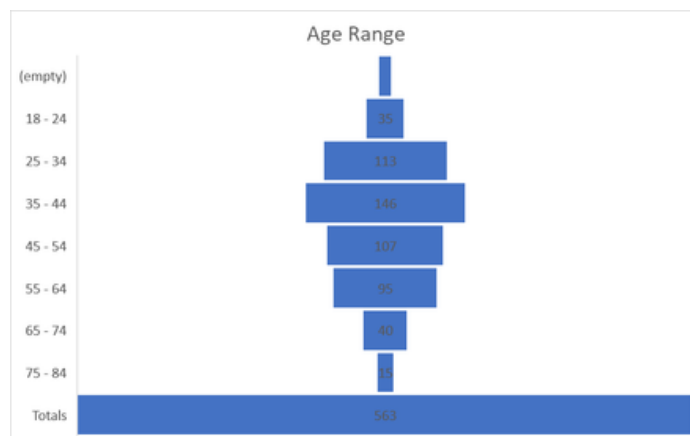
The following graphs and information present the key performance indicators for the service. These provide an overview of our referral source, our reach and distance traveled for women.

Referral Sources

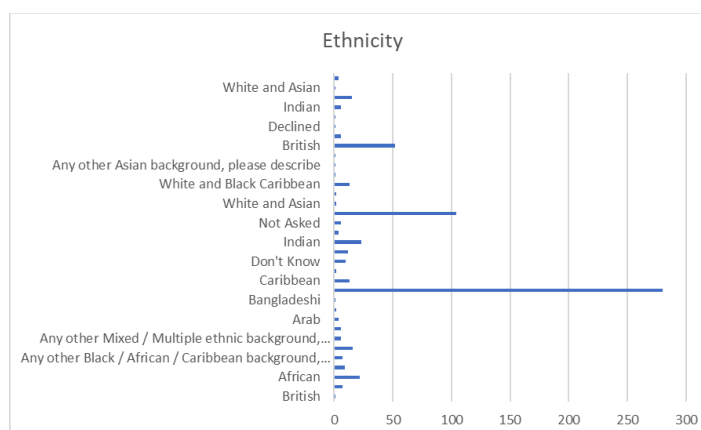
As previous years self referrals continue to be our main referral source. Word of mouth is a very important way to pass on information for women, especially if they have had a good experience with the project. Women often say 'we didn't know you existed, until we needed you.' Referrals from Social Services have increased from 2 the previous year to 15 this year, due to closer links and training sessions with them.



Age Range- The age range 35-44 range continues to represent the largest proportion of women accessing the project. Highlighting the ongoing need for accessible mental health and wellbeing support for women during this age. We recognise that women from 18-24 are still underrepresented, but we continue to explore ways to increase engagement and meet the needs of younger women in the community.



Ethnicity- The majority of women who attend our service continue to be White British but we still continue to see a steady upwards trend in the number of women from other Ethnicity groups. Team members recently attended training focused on working with Roma and Gypsy communities. The training has enhanced our understanding of the cultural experiences, barriers and inequalities different communities face. The learning will inform ongoing work to reduce barriers and improve engagement with underrepresented communities.



Outcome STAR-We also gather information about women's journeys and progress using the Outcome Recovery STAR (Triangle Consulting LTD) In the reporting quarter 1/04/24 to 31/03/25. 99 women filled in 2 STARS whilst on their journey with us and 171 women filled out 1 STAR with us. The Wellbeing outcome STAR reviews changes across different areas of well being and helps women and staff recognise achievements, identify strengths, and highlight areas where additional support maybe needed. The holistic approach remains tailored to each women's needs while demonstrating the positive impact of the project over time.

Networking Meetings Attended

- Ethnically Diverse communities networking meeting
- Multi agency meeting (Asylum, Refugee, Migrant support)
- Third Sector Leader networking meeting
- Mental Health Day Planning meeting with partners
- Working Together Better Partnership meetings
- Working Together Better steering group
- Kirklees Mental Health Forum
- Kirklees Suicide Prevention Group
- Partnership Anti-Racism session
- Partnership Neurodiversity meetings

Events Attended

- Great Get Together-Picnic in the park
- Pride event
- Lantern Parade Partnership event
- Tree Planting organised through the council & S2R
- Volunteer event organised by Waythrough
- Joint Working Together Better event well being events
- Huddersfield University Mental Health Awareness week

Partners attending Drop-ins

- Huddersfield University 'Get set Goal' workshops - delivering CPR and sessions around wellbeing
- Community Plus, Kirklees College, Change Grow Live, Locala Sexual Health & Mental Health nurse, Woven project.
- ESOL provided by third sector leaders continues



Working Together Better Partnership statement

Across 2025/26 we continued to be very committed to partnership working across Kirklees, especially as part of the Working Together Better Partnership where we come together with seven community mental health charities to help adults in Kirklees find their way to better mental wellbeing.

Each charity brings its own strengths – including creative and nature-based activities, employment and peer support, advocacy, information and advice, counselling and therapeutic groups. By working together, we can offer people a wide range of support and make sure help feels joined-up and complimentary.

Much of this work happens behind the scenes. Partners meet regularly to share learning, plan projects, develop joint communications and agree priorities. We also share expertise – for example around neurodiversity – so that everyone across the partnership can offer the best possible support.

During 2025/26, Working Together Better:
Developed a shared "Theory of Change", setting out the impact we want to have on mental health in Kirklees and how we will achieve it together
Listened to local people through community consultation to understand what matters most to them about mental health and wellbeing
Set up a simple internal referral system, so people can move between partners smoothly (with consent) and get the right support at the right time
Created a Participation Strategy to ensure lived experience shapes all our work

We also delivered four much-loved community events:
A vibrant and intimate International Women's Day celebration in Dewsbury with creative and wellbeing workshops
A summer event at Crow Nest Park for Carers Week and The Great Get Together with information stalls, games, Tai Chi and music-making
The return of the Lantern Parade to Crow Nest Park for World Mental Health Day
A Volunteer and Peer Champion celebration in December, thanking those who make our work possible

Peer Support & Co-Creation

Our Peer Group continues to play a vital role in shaping and improving our service, with five women regularly attending our quarterly peer meetings. Their lived experience, ideas and honest feedback help ensure that the voices of women remain at the heart of our work.

This year, we were saddened by the loss of one of our valued peers. She made a meaningful contribution to the group, and we remember her with great warmth and gratitude. She is greatly missed.

One of the group's key achievements has been the redesign of our service review feedback form. Women told us that the previous version was too lengthy and not accessible for everyone. Working together, the group helped simplify the form to a single page and introduced the use of colour to improve accessibility, particularly for neurodivergent women. This has resulted in a more user friendly and inclusive feedback process.

The Peer Group also carried out a walk through of our building to review the environment from a service user's perspective. Feedback highlighted that some noticeboards competed with the information shelves, making key messages difficult to see. The group made practical suggestions to improve the layout, and one peer has volunteered to support with reorganising the displays to make information clearer and more engaging.

Looking ahead, the group is exploring new ways to share information about groups, activities and courses more effectively. Ideas include creating a shared Google Drive or using a WhatsApp broadcast list to help women receive updates and new groups.

We would like to thank all of our peers for their continued commitment, valuable lived experience and ongoing support. Their contributions are instrumental in helping us develop a service that is accessible, responsive and shaped by the women who use it.

Added Value

- Donation of new furniture for our loft space worth £25,000 from Naughtone furniture
- Kirklees Digital Inclusion donated emergency phones and internet dongles.
- We received £600 from a local mosque in Dewsbury to support running of our Yoga sessions
- Funding given by One Community. The Household fund was available for all teams at WomenCentre to give to women in need.



Social Value

- We continue to commit to supporting the local economy by employing employees from within Kirklees specifically on the delivery of the Women's Mental Health Service throughout the duration of the contract.
- We continue to contribute to waste reduction through specific schemes to recycle waste, clothes and make-up recycling, we will record waste.
- We encourage and enable our staff/ volunteers/service users to recognise environmental benefits of walking, cycling and using public transport – we collect data to identify reduced car usage.
- We use locally sourced for for events.
- We support volunteering and placements for community benefits.

Financial Summary

Summary of Income and Expenditure for WMH Service 2025-26	
Income from grants	215,287.79
Expenditure	
Direct Pay costs	160,533.19
Contribution to CS	20,441.44
Staff travel and training	183.47
Rec and Consultancy	4,361.65
General costs	3,516.34
Room and venue hire	1,847.90
volunteer exp	1,526.13
Contribution to premises	18,288.02
Total expenditure	210,698.14
Net surplus in year	4,589.65
Brought forward surplus	12,026.85
Sub total of surplus	16,616.50
Less low cost deficit	-1,615.00
Grand total carried forward	15,001.50

Developments, Vision and targets for next year 26-27

- Continue to develop our Co production Peer Board and champions
- Continued development of staff around Neurodivergent training and Anti-Racism training
- To plan an away day with staff
- A wider goal for WomenCentre is look for a bigger premises