

WOMEN'S LIVES LEEDS

Empowering Women and Girls in Leeds

Highlight Report 2016–2017

From the Partnership Chair

Women's Lives Leeds (WLL) is a unique consortium of 11 women's organisations, coming together in partnership to deliver a project that aims to put women truly at the centre of the services they receive. With over 250 years' experience, across many areas of complexity, combining to form a powerful force to amplify the voices of women in Leeds.

And what better place for this consortium to develop, evolve and thrive – a city of compassion and a city with strong and visible women's leadership. The partnership has formed with the support of many individuals, those who have seen the potential and dynamism of those involved in this initiative and those who are leading from within it: 11 inspiring leaders, working to improve the outcomes for, and alongside, women who are at the heart of our communities.

The WLL consortium is a partnership of learning; for each partner to be able to contribute its unique expertise and for that expertise to be shared to ignite change for women who deserve an exceptional service. We are very fortunate that our vision was recognised and supported by the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) in their Women and Girls Initiative. They have funded our WLL Project for 4 years and we are very grateful to them for their ongoing support. Our ambition is for Leeds to be a city that is committed to women with the most complex of circumstances and our Project is the keystone for that change.

We look forward to sharing that journey with you.

Gemma Scire **Chair – Women's Lives Leeds**

Our Vision

That many more women and girls in Leeds will have their needs met and be empowered to lead safer and healthier lives.

Our Mission

To ensure that the most vulnerable women and girls have improved and extended access to the services and support they want, when they choose.

To ensure that the needs of women and girls with multiple and complex needs are better supported through a holistic response from services; and that they are able to live independent lives in society.

To ensure that women and girls are empowered to support their peers and influence service delivery, development and design across the city.

Women's Lives Leeds is made up of the following organisations: Leeds Women's Aid incorporating HALT, Behind Closed Doors, Getaway Girls, Hooner Kelah, Together Women, Women's Counselling and Therapy Service, Women's Health Matters, Shantona, Basis, Asha Neighbourhood Project and Nari Ekta.

Complex Needs Service

Our committed Complex Needs Workers provide one to one intensive support and take a holistic approach to meet women and girls needs. Whilst covering multiple needs, they also offer specialisms in domestic violence, sex working, post pregnancy removal, mental health, newly arrived women and young women.

Women access the Complex Needs service, through an internal referral process, which the partners designed and agreed. Referred women will already be accessing one of our partner's services and it is through these that partners will be able to identify women/girls who have complex needs and would benefit from the intensive support offered.

Community Development Service

The WLL Community Development Service offers light touch support, information, advice and signposting through the provision of drop in and outreach sessions at community settings throughout the city; by working in partnership with local community groups, partners and organisations, in a range of community venues.

The service is geographically split in to three "wedges" of the city: East North East, West North West and South East. It reaches out to women and girls in their localities, where women and girls feel more comfortable. A fourth role focussing on "Emerging Needs" is city-wide.

WLL Community Development Workers establish local relationships with partners and through these, co-produce sustainable opportunities in local areas for women and girls.

Activities are developed where it is clear that there is a need identified by women and girls that has not been met; where it is agreed that it is not being currently delivered; and that no-one else is better placed to deliver it.

Virtual Women's Centre Online Directory

WLL have developed an online directory for women and girls to find out information that will enable them to access the support and services they may need. Until this point there has been no women centred directory of this nature in Leeds.

WLL has worked with women and girls across Leeds to design and develop the new WLL website, which includes the Virtual Women's Centre Online Directory.

To ensure that the resource includes as many services as possible for women and girls, the directory is now open for partners outside of WLL to populate.

Women and Girls Advisory Board

WLL prides itself on service user engagement which is at the heart of everything that WLL does. WLL offers many ways for service users to be involved and to influence the service delivery.

The Women and Girls Advisory Board is one way WLL facilitates service user involvement. It is open to all women and girls who have ever accessed, or are currently accessing, any of the WLL services or it's partner's services. It provides an open and supportive space for women to learn the skills to best represent their peers.

The Women's and Girl's Advisory Board aims to empower women and girls and to provide the voice, produce and oversee meaningful service user participation.

It does this by providing opportunities that will enable the voice of Women and Girls to be present throughout the delivery of the WLL Big Lottery Project.

Peer Support

WLL has a dedicated Peer Support and Participation Link Worker who is developing best practice across the partnership and is supporting partners to develop new, and improve existing peer support programmes. The Link Worker has established relationships with other Peer Support Networks across the city and can now in partnership direct those interested in peer support to appropriate programmes across the city.

Leeds Women and Girls Forum

The WLL Forum was launched in March and has met three times since, making huge steps in such a short time. The first meeting saw the forum agree its priorities:

- **Safety**
- **Violence against Women and Girls,**
- **Employment and workplace rights**
- **Poverty and Austerity**
- **Health and Wellbeing**

Through successful partnership working with Public Health the Forum is now leading on the development of a “State of Women’s Health in Leeds” report, (Health and Wellbeing priority) which aims to influence local health and wellbeing service commissioners and also is developing a “Women Friendly Leeds” concept, (Safety priority) which aims to be launched next year.

In August the Forum launched its Girls sub group which has met twice and also have agreed their priorities:

- **Equality**
- **Safety**
- **Freedom/identity**
- **Opportunities for Girls**
- **Diversity**

A Physical Activity group has also just been launched and is being led by the Active Leeds and Leeds Girls Can teams.

Service user involvement case study

C has been actively involved with WLL since a service user participation event in February 2017.

C’s motivation for getting involved has primarily been because she wants to give something back. Her involvement has covered many aspects of the project including attending the Women and Girls Forum and being involved in the recruitment and selection of the Complex Needs and Community Development Workers.

Most recently C has been involved in organising the year one celebration event. C hopes her involvement will give her confidence and job skills.

“Everything I am doing by getting involved with WLL is giving me something. It is as much about building myself up, and my confidence, as it is about developing the skills.”

C has also been, and remains, one of the core members of the WLL Advisory Board since the beginning.

“It’s amazing how it is giving women a chance to come in and do something that is benefitting them as well as WLL. It’s nice when they (a service) are hearing from the other side, from the people using a service, having their voice, in fact most of the time, giving them back their voice. It’s nice to be involved and see how it’s expanding and progressing. It’s like watching a small dot get bigger, from the first Advisory Board meeting, you can see it is expanding. You are meeting other people you might not normally meet in a social situation. You start talking to them and you are breaking boundaries that would normally be there for a lot of people. I really enjoy the Advisory Board. I think it will keep growing.”

Key Achievements

Target Groups

We have reached the following numbers within our target groups across all of our services

178 Young women under 25

344 Newly arrived/Migrant women

122 Women with complex needs

Complex Needs Service

We have successfully worked with **95** women who have had complex needs. Outcomes monitoring demonstrates an increase in women's confidence, independence, self-esteem, empowerment, safety and participation through engaging with WLL.

Community Development Service

1,506 women and girls have received information about WLL

1,311 professionals have received information about WLL

7 drop-ins have delivered 114 sessions to 162 women and girls

29 workshops and awareness raising sessions have been delivered to community groups

Service User Involvement

28 women have attended the Advisory Board, 9 have returned on multiple occasions

20 women attended the Make a Change workshop

67 women were consulted and contributed to the development of the website and the service user expenses policy

8 women shaped and participated in staff recruitment processes

Women and Girls Forum

3 Women's Forum meetings with over 160 attendees

2 Girls Forum meetings with over 40 attendees

Nearly **300 members**

Women's Lives Leeds Online Presence

9,574 Website views from **3,138 visitors.**

220 Facebook followers

1,170 Twitter followers

New website launching 29th November 2017! Please contact **Camille@leedswomensaid.org.uk** if you would like your services for women and girls listed on the directory.

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