

**The Women and
Girls Initiative
Synthesis Report #1
(2016-19)**



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Information in this report is drawn from the Women and Girls Initiative, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

It is supporting 62 projects with funds raised from the National Lottery.

The Women and Girls Initiative

The National Lottery Community Fund is the largest community activity funder in the UK, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players. The Fund created the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) in 2016, investing £44.7 million in order to enable a stronger women and girls sector through:

- Increased provision of holistic, person-centred approaches for women and girls;
- A greater number of women and girls being supported through the provision of improved specialist support;
- Increased role and voice for women and girls in co-producing services;
- Better quality of evidence for what works in empowering women and girls.

Between three and five years of project funding was awarded to 62 Women and girls' organisations in order to deliver specialist, tailored work. To find out more about what and who the WGI is supporting, see [Diving into the Women and Girls' Initiative](#).

WGI Learning and Impact Services

In January 2018, the Fund awarded the WGI Learning and Impact Services contract to the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), DMSS Research (DMSS) and the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) – the partners. The partners are delivering a programme of support to projects with the aim of capturing and sharing learning, and creating a stronger community of services that has greater influence on decision-making structures across the country. This programme includes:

- One-to-one support for grant holders;
- An online learning hub for grant holders to enable collective conversations;
- Action Learning Sets;
- Masterclasses and workshops;
- Regularly published blogs, reports and briefings;
- A national conference in 2021, to showcase and share project achievements and learning.

This report is the eighth public output produced by the partners. Previous outputs produced and available online are:

- [1. Have we lost the 'we'?](#)
- [2. Diving into the Women and Girls' Initiative](#)
- [3. Why Women's Centres Work: An Evidence Briefing](#)
- [4. Influencing Commissioners](#)
- [5. Why Work with Young Women and Girls Matters: An Insights Briefing](#)
- [6. Safer Pair of Hands: Black and Minority Ethnic \(BME\) specialist violence against women work](#)

Executive Summary

The Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) is a £44.7 million investment in the Women and Girls Sector by the National Lottery Community Fund.

It is funding 62 projects between 2016 and 2021, in order to help strengthen the sector. In addition, the fund has contracted learning and impact services, in order to offer a programme of support, including capturing and sharing learning. This document reports on outcomes and learning so far from the first two years of project delivery. This report draws on data from:

- Project monitoring reports;
- Telephone interviews with project staff;
- Thematic reports already produced with grant-holders.

Key successes include:

- The delivery of holistic, specialist support in the time and ways that best meet the needs of women and girls, working with women and girls where they are at;
- The relational approaches being used that are trauma-informed and support a wide variety of practical, emotional and social needs;
- Being flexible in order to respond to needs as they emerge and change, without restricting criteria;
- Women and girls are experiencing benefits from support offered including increased confidence and wellbeing, improved relationships and employment opportunities.

Key challenges:

- The high demand for services and support can stretch capacity and lead to waiting lists;
- The work is demanding for staff, emotionally as well as operationally – burnout and high staff turnover is a concern for projects;
- Wider funding pressures present a challenging backdrop for the WGI, with sustainability an ongoing concern.

There were some areas of delivery which were working well for some projects, but presented challenges for others, depending on organisational history, infrastructure, size of grant awarded etc. Undertaking partnership working, co-production and evaluation were key areas that will continue to be explored over the rest of the initiative.

Overall, it seems that WGI-funded projects are working well towards the programme's ultimate goal – empowering women and girls to take control of their lives. The WGI has been a much needed and valued investment, enabling new services to be offered and existing provision to be extended to new geographic areas or for new groups of women and girls.

A key recommendation is that all projects report demographic data, with annual participation figures, to the Fund. This will help give a better understanding of who is benefiting and who might be facing barriers to accessing services or support available.

Future learning and impact services work will include exploring the impact of the funding on the organisations funded, enabling further exploration of areas such as staffing, partnership working, evaluation capacity and sustainability.

In recognition that the WGI is a time-limited initiative, and that many projects are completing and ending over the next year, partners will continue to offer support to projects with their evaluation activities, supporting projects to have the resources and space to advocate for their work and the benefits it brings to women and girls.

Introduction

This section sets the context for The Women and Girls Initiative Synthesis Report #1, summarising its purpose and scope and the data on which it is based.

Purpose and scope of this report

The Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) Synthesis Report #1 (2016-19) is the first synthesis report covering the first two years of the initiative, written primarily for the National Lottery Community Fund (the Fund) and the 62 projects funded through the WGI. It brings together and summarises some of the key achievements, challenges and learning captured so far, in order to:

- Highlight how the initiative is working overall to achieve its objectives, and;
- Inform ongoing developments in the delivery of the WGI and in the learning and impact services being provided.

Figure 1 illustrates the WGI theory of change, as created by the Fund during its design. This report addresses each of the desired outcomes, with a focus on outcomes 1 and 3. It seeks to describe and interpret what both holistic, person-centred approaches and improved specialist support means and looks like in the context of the WGI. We use some quantitative measures to try and understand whether a greater number of women and girls are being supported as a result of this funding. We also report on what projects say is working well, what the challenges have been so far and identify some considerations for project delivery and for exploration through future learning activities and reports. Through this, we hope to help the continuous improvement in the quality, validity and usefulness of future initiative-wide reporting.

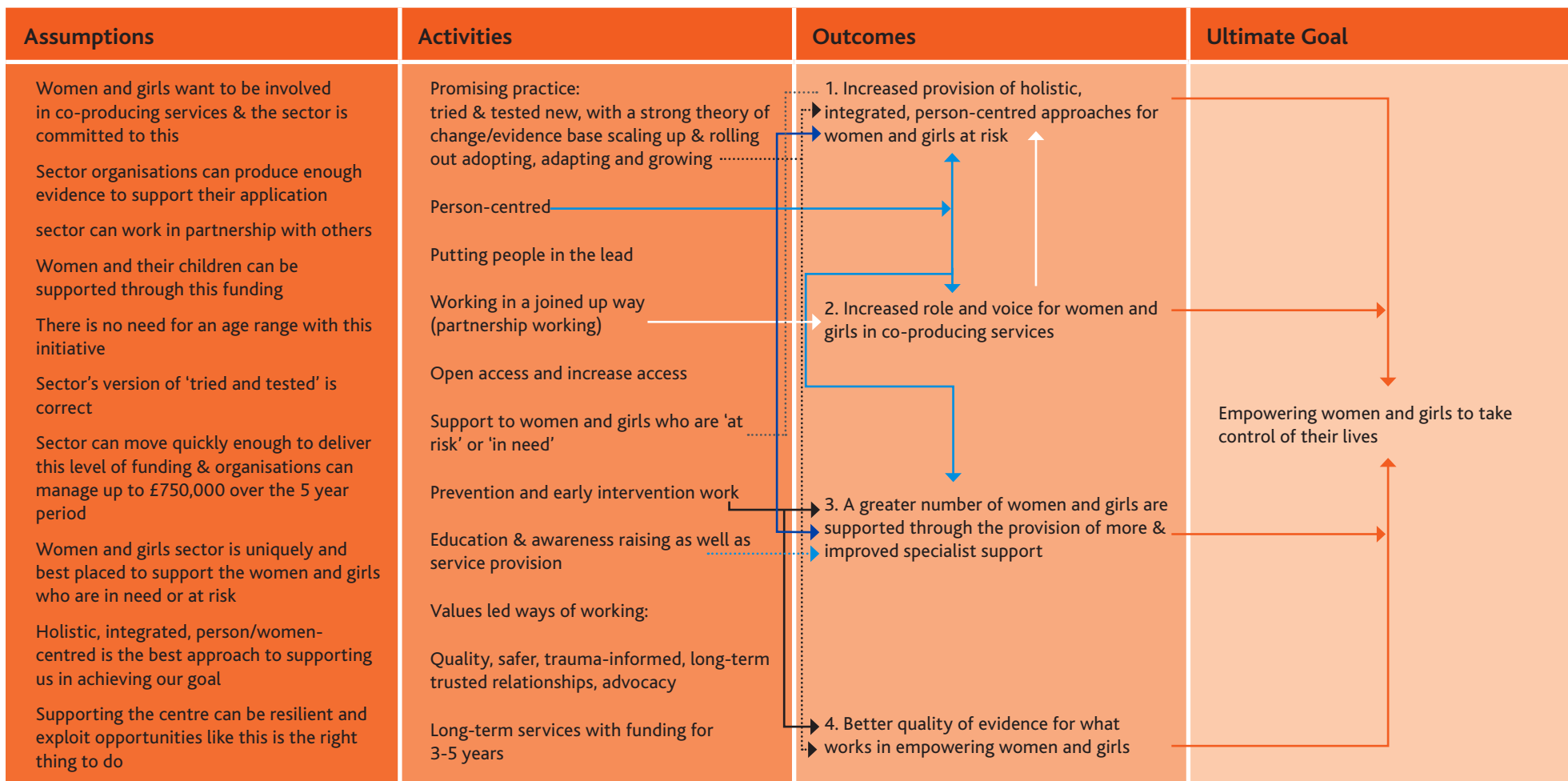


Figure 1: Programme Theory of Change

Methodological approach

At the time of writing this report, very few external evaluation reports of individual projects had been completed and shared with partners. This synthesis report therefore presents aggregated data provided by projects in their Year 1 and 2 monitoring reports to the Fund, drawing on external evaluation reports where available. In addition to our analysis of project reports, we have also drawn on data from:

- Telephone progress reviews undertaken by our team with the majority of projects in both Years 1 and 2;
- Reports published as part of the learning and impact services work, and;
- Learning shared through Masterclasses, action learning sets and one-to-one support.

As well as identifying what has been common across projects, the report highlights some cluster- and project-specific learning, illustrating that whilst there is much that is shared between projects, there is also great diversity. This report puts the spotlight on 33 projects within the following three clusters:

- Projects led by and for women from BME communities – 12 projects
- Young women and girls focused projects – 12 projects
- Women's Centres – 9 projects

Our intention in creating clusters for analysis was to ensure that we record and learn from particular forms of provision (e.g. Women's Centres) and/or the needs of specific groups of girls and women (e.g. young women and girls, BME women). We grouped projects in clusters, firstly by asking projects to identify what they viewed as their core area of WGI work. We then reviewed the specific aims and activities of projects as reported to the Fund, and membership of specific action learning sets. In this way, we gathered together projects whose main focus within their WGI delivery could be best understood within their identified cluster.

Even though all of the projects grouped within each cluster share a key focus, there are also differences in how they work, the target groups they work with, the forms of support they offer and the outcomes they are seeking to enable. Likewise, some projects are delivering newly developed interventions, while others are expanding their current offer to more beneficiaries or are entering new geographic areas. This section goes on to introduce projects in each cluster.

No primary data gathering with women and girls receiving services is being undertaken as part of the learning and impact services. Individual project learning against each of the WGI outcomes has been captured and shared through the creation of case studies. These illustrate what the initiative looks like for individual projects and what this has meant for some of the women and girls accessing WGI-funded support. Please see Appendix 1 for more detail on the methodology used to bring together information from across funded projects, into this synthesis report.

Introducing the clusters

BME

The BME cluster comprises projects that offer specialist services to BME women and girls. These projects have similar offers to projects in other clusters (e.g. women's centres) but identified themselves as being 'by and for' BME women. The twelve projects in this cluster are:

Angelou Centre

The Ariana project

Hibiscus Initiatives

Latin American Women's Aid

London Black Women's Project

The Maya Project

Savera UK

Somali Integration Team

Southall Black Sisters

Stitches in Time

Women And Girls Network

The Zinthiya Trust

Young Women and Girls

Whilst there are many WGI projects providing support to girls and young women alongside other strands of work, the projects in this cluster are those with a primary focus on girls and young women as a core focus of their WGI funded work. The twelve projects allocated to this cluster are:

A Way Out

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid

Chayah Project

The Girls' Network

Noa Girls

Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre

Solace Women's Aid

Venus

Wild Young Parents Project

WomenCentre Limited

Young Women's Outreach Project

You're Cherished

Women's Centre

The Women's Centres Cluster comprises projects that run women's centres. Again, whilst there are other projects offering women's centre type services, the nine projects allocated to this cluster are those who provide a Women's Centre as a core focus of their WGI funded work. They are:

Aspire Learning, Support and Wellbeing CIC

Inspiring Futures Partnership CIC

Marylebone Project


The Nelson Trust

The Nia Project

Greater Manchester Women's Support Alliance

Trevi House

WOW! Women on the Wight



For further information about each project within each cluster, please see Appendix 2.

Cautionary note around interpretation

Information presented in this report is accurate to the best of our knowledge, as it is based mainly on project reports to the Fund. WGI project reporting requirements were not standardised by the Fund, enabling projects to report in the most suitable way for them. This, together with the difference in aims, activities, approaches, scale and size between projects, and their divergent approaches to evaluation mean it is not possible to provide an initiative-wide meta-analysis of beneficiary numbers and outcomes for individual women and girls supported through the WGI. Where quantitative data is reported, we have given minimum figures rather than estimated actuals or maximum numbers, to protect against over-claiming numbers of women and girls benefiting.

Holistic working

WGI outcome: increased provision of holistic, person-centred approaches for women and girls

This section starts by discussing what 'holistic, person-centred' approaches mean for work with women and girls, before considering whether provision has increased as a result of WGI funding.

It goes on to consider the factors that projects have identified as important ingredients of holistic, person-centred approaches, giving examples of what this looks like in practice. We note what is working well, some of the challenges experienced by projects and other learning so far.

What do we mean by holistic, person-centred approaches for women and girls and what does this look like?

Our briefing paper *Why Women's Centres Work* notes that holistic approaches:

'...view each woman as a whole person and tailor provision to her individual needs and life experiences – rather than just in relation to her mental health difficulties or her responsibilities as a parent. This means women do not need to identify specific issues to receive services.'

Key factors that help Women's Centres work so well for the women and girls they support are that the support offered is:

- Values driven, gender and trauma informed;
- Relationship based;
- Women only;
- Holistic, tailored and multi-agency;
- Strengths based and co-produced with an empowerment focus.

To find out more about the evidence for Women's Centred-approaches and what these key factors look like in practice, read [Why Women's Centres Work: An Evidence Briefing](#)

Project reports and learning activities during the first two years of the WGI have included considering what working holistically means in practice. The flexibility embedded within WGI funding has been cited by projects as welcome primarily because it supports holistic, person-centred work. This is unlike other funding streams which may place arbitrary limitations on which women are to be supported, what the support consists of and/or the length of time of interventions. WGI has enabled projects to work with women and girls in **a variety of ways, for as long as support is needed and wanted**. Being able to offer **a range of options that women and girls can easily access and move between**, is in itself a recognition that women do not experience issues in isolation from other events in their lives. **As women and girls needs change, support has been able to follow, without rigid timeframes**. This has been contrasted to commissioning of services in particular, where often time-limited, specific, targeted support is funded. These types of restrictions seldom meet all the needs of women and girls, meaning that the potential for deeper change and longer-term outcomes are lost.

In addition, local authority funding pressures mean that women and girls may struggle to receive statutory services, even when they might be eligible.¹ Through WGI funding, one to one support helps women and girls navigate the different statutory and non-statutory services that might be involved, often providing advocacy when services are not felt to be responsive. WGI funded support has enabled women and girls to build on their strengths, for instance through leisure, artistic and educational opportunities, often in addition to support from a 'key worker' around critical needs which could include accommodation, immigration, and/or healthcare needs as a result of leaving a violent relationship.

¹ E.g. www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-48105787

Our briefing, *A Safer Pair of Hands: BME specialist violence against women* work identifies working within an intersectional framework as key to successful holistic work with BME women:

[...] holistic working means taking the perspective of the whole person for whom their experiences of violence and abuse may span childhood and adulthood and include experiences of racism, insecurity and poverty. They may face the threat of violence from multiple perpetrators and have profound concerns about confidentiality as a result. BME women's organisations recognise and respond to these needs and concerns. [...]

BME women/children can use the space and activities to build trusting relationships with other women/children and [...] benefit from a sense of solidarity. [...] BME women's organisations are also spaces for relaxation, fun and enjoyment.

To read more about the importance of provision that is led by and for BME women, read [A Safer Pair of Hands](#)

Has provision for women and girls increased through WGI funding?

All projects have reported increasing their provision of holistic, person-centred approaches as a result of WGI, often through a combination of:

- Recruiting additional staff in order to provide more support (e.g. Ashiana Network; Southall Black Sisters);
- Extending services to new client groups, for instance a new refuge for young women (Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid) or a new Women's Centre (Nia Project);
- Designing and running new activities such as peer support, leisure or educational activities (e.g. Aspire's Supporting Sisters Service; Somali integration Team).

We are not able to conclude that support for women and girls as a whole has increased, because whilst WGI funding was an increase in resource, other funding for aspects of provision may have been cut or lost in the same time period. Some projects, in their annual progress reviews, noted challenges associated with other funding ending, leading to some services being stopped or reduced. In contrast, other projects had been able to lever in new, additional funding on the back of their WGI success. On the whole, it seems that without WGI funding, the specific services being delivered as part of the initiative are unlikely to have otherwise been available, and some organisations delivering services have expanded as a result. WGI funding has, therefore, supported new, additional provision for women and girls.

Hibiscus Initiatives – Holistic working

Hibiscus has a 30 year track record of working with foreign national women caught up in the criminal justice system, all of whom are black, minority ethnic and/or refugees: to date 1000 women from 119 countries have been supported. They work with women in prison, in detention centres and from their own offices offering case work, support and advocacy. They have specific expertise in resettlement in the UK and international resettlement when women are returned to their country of origin. An increasing proportion of the women they work with have been trafficked.

There are a range of circumstances in how women came to the UK – some as children, some as adults – and variation in their immigration status. Their journeys to, and lives within, the UK speak of oppression and marginalisation, stories which are hard to voice and to hear. The layers of disadvantage and rights gaps which they face mean that it is impossible not to work holistically – with the whole woman, her needs, fears and aspirations. Many have no recourse to public funds and some are destitute, some are undocumented, others are over-stayers and still others have had asylum applications refused. Case work is intense and demanding, as all have multiple and complex needs: each woman has a personalised support plan, based on documenting her history, in some cases for the first time. They currently have more referrals than they have capacity to work with.

Hibiscus describe their women centred approach as:

'To provide services to meet the unique needs of women, that value women's perspective, that celebrate and honour women's experiences that respect women's development and empower women and girls to reach their full potential.'

WGI funding was used to expand Hibiscus services, given the huge unmet social needs of women – for connection with others and life affirming activities – through a Women's Centre: a space in which women can meet, where classes and social events are offered. The centre is in the same building as their offices, but has a separate entrance. It is a bright, inviting space with a kitchen, children's play area, meeting room and a large enough space for physical activities like yoga and dance. Cooking and sharing food has become an important way of connecting and belonging.

'Finding a home is difficult, I am glad I found Hibiscus.' Woman accessing support

They work with what they call the Citizen's Curriculum which includes legal workshops on rights, literacy, workshops on employment and finance, creativity and wellbeing. The Women's Centre offers a changing menu of events Monday to Friday including: art therapy, yoga, dance and movement, self-defence, IT classes, ESOL classes and a book club. Following feedback from women using the centre, additional funding was sought to open at the weekends and offer basic counselling.

The centre has given women a space to be, to make connections with one another and to begin skill sharing. It has also enabled Hibiscus to re-fashion how they do their work, to add creativity and sociality to the ways in which they work, making them even more holistic. The centre is a place of hope, solidarity and inspiration for a group of women whose lives are precarious, with joy and fun often hard to find.

What is working well with holistic, person-centred approaches?

Nearly all of the projects taking part in the annual progress review reported success in working holistically with the women and girls they have been supporting during their first two years of funding. Key to their success were the following.

1. **Providing flexible and tailored support for individuals** – the high demand for and high levels of engagement in services demonstrated to projects that they were offering what was needed and wanted.
2. **Skilled staff with specialist expertise** – having staff with the right skills, commitment and strong team relationships were identified as crucial to delivering a high-quality service (and a factor in being able to offer specialist support, as discussed in the next section).

For projects working with young women and girls, the following factors were reported as contributing to successful holistic support:

- Being responsive to complex, interconnecting needs as they emerge;
- Voluntary participation;
- Group work which enables young women to share, reflect and learn with their peers;
- Being persistent in keeping young women and girls engaged;
- Work which challenges and changes young women and girls' negative self-perceptions;
- Preventative work, for instance with young mothers before social care pre-proceedings take place.

'Social workers have identified that no-one else is offering holistic support, especially once court processes are initiated - we are definitely filling a gap.'

Wild Young Parents Project

For Women's Centres, successful work was reported as being achieved through:

- Using alternative approaches to mainstream services e.g. providing 'social solutions' for beneficiaries' health and wellbeing that work 'beyond the medical model'- this might mean, for instance, supporting women to develop social networks and/or volunteer, addressing isolation through building on individual strengths, rather than relying only on medical approaches such as prescription drugs that attempt to address depressive symptoms;
- Taking a 'trauma informed' approach, and training staff accordingly;
- Offering diverse activities so that women find something that works for them at any particular time, from informal drop-ins to structured activities and groups;
- Building partnerships with organisations that can support women and girls with different needs – from accessing job placements and skills development courses, through to sexual health services, housing provision and midwifery services.

.....
'We have been able to enhance our follow up support – offering one to one, tailored support to women who have moved out in to their own homes, which has seen 100% of the women sustaining their tenancies to date.' Marylebone Project
.....

.....
'...This is the first time some of our users have been able to access counselling in Bengali and will be a real breakthrough... We hope to be supporting 2-3 women in desperate need of talking therapies in their mother tongue in the next quarter.' Maya Project
.....

For projects providing support for BME women and girls, successful holistic working was being achieved through:

- BME-led services who have expertise to support minoritised women and girls with their practical, social and emotional needs within the context of multiple overlapping barriers including racism and sexism;
- Initial needs assessments that can lead to personalised one to one support;
- Increased partnership working with other charities, universities, community and legal organisations, opening up new referral pathways and links to wider support;
- Supporting beneficiaries to access those additional services needed, avoiding the need for women to navigate different services alone;
- Increasing organisational capacity through involving a range of other stakeholders in their delivery, including mentors, placement students, volunteers, interns, teaching assistants and translators.

Together, these factors enable projects to work more efficiently to identify and provide the most appropriate support required.

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid's Seerose project – holistic working

In 2017, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid (BSWA) opened the doors to the Seerose refuge for 16 to 25 year olds which focuses its work on the specific needs of young women. Based on BSWA's learning from their existing five refuges for women and children who have experienced any form of violence across the Birmingham & Solihull region, they identified a need for provision of holistic support to this age group. In their first year, Seerose supported 40 young women and children and in their second year, 2019 has seen them extend this support to pregnant young women, with two babies and two more to come. At the same time, they have expanded their reach to women who have moved to live independently in the community, recognising that the transition presents its own challenges to wellbeing where social isolation impacts on women's mental health. A new group gets together and young women now receive support through meeting up and sometimes, social activities.

Seerose is committed to providing a 'holistic' service. For the refuge, the concept is about being women-centred and supporting the whole person in every aspect of her needs. This has been based on the assumption of a collaborative approach across agencies in order to fully meet those needs.

Seerose offers a flexible and responsive service. This is not just 9 to 5 but at evenings and weekends. They aim to meet the social as well as practical needs of young women. This is in recognition of wider issues, building confidence in preparation for independent living, offering courses on money management and 'understanding your rights'. The refuge has started meditation at night, is soon to have yoga and they cook together as an opportunity to also explore healthy eating and its relationship to emotional wellbeing. However, staff suggest that providing a holistic service in practice has changed in recent years.

Where 'holistic' assumed a high level of interaction with and provision from, e.g. statutory services, if they are not there, it falls to the refuge to literally provide for every need. External factors including the political and financial climate impact on provision.

'If other services are not there doing, e.g. early interventions, we have to try to and it's difficult.'

Project Manager

Seerose has been upskilling staff to support the whole person but still needs to know who else is doing what through care plans, for example. A growing shortage of mental health services means staff are doing more crisis work. Young women are experiencing a range of mental health issues, including self-harm, depression and anxiety and seeking support is difficult for them. At the same time, young women residents are often financially deprived, accessing food banks and charities. Where local welfare provision has ceased (providing fridges or furniture when moving on), Seerose has started loaning airbeds and table top cookers and thus 'holistic' has come to incorporate more than a concept to the practical delivery required to meet young women's needs.

Seerose now offers support to women from arrival through to settling into independent living. Staff provide more in terms of practical support as part of their holistic approach which hitherto had been provided by other agencies. Thus their work is less about identifying needs and signposting young women and more about developing ways to provide for them from within the project.

Many WGI projects have been using National Lottery funding to provide a wider range of services and support than was previously possible, with particular resources available to help women and girls with multiple and complex needs. This has reportedly led, in some cases, to outcomes such as women being better safeguarded and improved attitudes from the wider community towards women being supported. These potential benefits could be explored further through ongoing project evaluations, where appropriate, to understand better what these outcomes might look like.

Challenges experienced with holistic working

Across the three clusters, very few challenges overall were reported by projects with working in a holistic, person-centred way. This perhaps indicates that working holistically is a key strength enabled by WGI funding. Most challenges reported were specific to individual projects. However, partnership working came up as a challenge shared by a number of projects – particularly with external partners whose approaches might conflict with the holistic, person-centred approaches of projects.

Whilst a strength that most projects are working in holistic, person-centred ways, it could also be a challenge to allocate appropriate resources and ensure that staff are not over-stretched in time, skills and emotional capacity. For instance, difficulties with holistic, 'wrap-around' provision might stem from the uncertainty of what individual women and girls might need, how long they might need support for, and how changing needs might be responded to. A number of projects offered supervision, including clinical supervision, for staff, but this has come through as an important support need, which the Learning and Impact Services partners are hoping to explore with projects in the next year.

Other learning about holistic working

A few projects across both the young women and girls and Women's Centres clusters identified the importance of individual choice when accessing services. For example, we were told that local authority referrals sometimes coerced women to participate in support. This experience led some projects to review their referral and assessment processes to ensure that women are not forced to engage with support if they do not want to.

Other learning reported by BME-focused projects include:

- The importance of listening to women when designing services, helping ensure services are right for individual needs. For instance, providing services in women's first languages was found to be particularly impactful for some projects, supporting women to feel heard and understood;
- BME women, particularly those with no recourse to public funds and subject to immigration controls, have a different starting point from other women. For instance, immigration status, legal costs, challenging racism and discrimination present additional barriers for BME women, requiring more time and higher levels of support in order to access statutory services and build autonomous and independent lives.

For young women and girls projects, other learning includes:

- Many young women are very vulnerable, facing difficult situations and may have encountered multiple services before reaching a WGI funded project;
- Building trust and relationship building is crucial for the engagement of young women, takes time and needs consideration in the delivery plan, before impacts can be expected to be seen.

'[The] first few months of engagement are crucial in building rapport with young women, giving them reason to believe they can trust staff, enabling them to move on to the engagement stage.' A Way Out

- Early information gathering to gain a detailed picture of needs is a crucial first step, supports developing trust and understanding;
- The transition from adolescence to adulthood can involve many changes for young women, requiring services to be sensitive to changing and potentially complex needs;
- There needs to be clarity about where the service sits within the wider field to be able to communicate the distinct features of WGI projects and to link with other services.

In conclusion to this section, providing a flexible and tailored approach for women and girls is a key component of holistic work and a vital contribution to the success that projects have reported. Using standard and pre-defined approaches do not work well for many of the WGI projects because of beneficiaries' multiple, complex and changing needs. It will be useful to explore which successes, challenges and learning so far are commonly shared across the WGI and what learning is unique to specific clusters. For instance, as this section highlights there are unique factors to consider when working with BME women, particularly those with no recourse to public funds. Likewise, future reports will seek to explore specific factors for those projects supporting women within the criminal justice system.

WILD Young Parents Building Futures Project – holistic working

WILD Young Parents is a charity that provides support to young parent families, offering a whole-family service for young mums, dads and their children and working with them to meet their individual needs. Building Futures, a project funded by the WGI, helps young mothers whose children are the subject of safeguarding plans, or who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care. Many of these young women struggle with understanding safeguarding processes and are reluctant to work with agencies. Case workers provide one-to-one support to give them a voice when dealing with agencies and help them to build skills for more positive futures. The project aims to foster self-esteem and break cycles of behaviour, by valuing the young women's experiences, and enabling them to support and learn from each other through tailored individual key work.

Holistic working at WILD is interpreted in a number of ways. Firstly, it means recognising that each service user is unique and providing targeted support at multiple levels, which may be physical, emotional, psychological or practical. All of the young women are referred to the project for the same core reason – they are experiencing safeguarding, care or adoption processes – but they come from lots of different situations and are facing various combinations of issues that need to be addressed before deeper behaviour change work can begin. These issues might include mental ill-health, domestic violence, sexual abuse, insecure housing, financial hardship, physical or sexual health complaints and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Since each young woman's circumstances are different, there is no single formula for providing support, so a completely individual approach is adopted in every case. Each young woman receives support and advocacy from a key worker to self-assess the issues she is facing, identify the changes she would like to make and put changes into action. The goal is to establish a network of support involving relevant professionals, friends and family members, with the young woman at the centre. WILD describes this as working with the young women to build a parachute with different support services attached to each string, so that they know who to call on for support when they need it. This might include putting key people's names and numbers on a card that they can call at different times. WILD, too, are part of the parachute. Another aspect of their holistic working is building relationships with professionals in a range of different agencies such as the NHS, mental health and social care services, as well as working with local companies like supermarkets, to generate donations.

Two things that have worked well for WILD when delivering a holistic approach are not being timeframe limited or target driven. The social care court process is 26 weeks, but case workers try to devote as much time as is needed to building relationships with the young women and can be in touch with them longer term if required pre and post proceedings. The idea behind the project was to give the young women time and give them a voice. This means not rushing sessions or scheduling them too close together. To manage this, where possible, caseloads are kept at a manageable level, so at any given time a case worker might have around 10 young women that they are working with actively and 4 or 5 outreach cases. They also try to keep form filling and note taking during sessions to a minimum to keep them more personal.

While the core values of the service have remained the same, WILD are always evolving their practice in response to service users and their needs. This means not necessarily following funding trends, but rather seeking out funding that will benefit the young women.

Supporting more women and girls through improved specialist services

This section addresses the WGI Outcome: **A greater number of women and girls are supported through the provision of improved specialist services.**

For the purposes of this report, specialist services are defined as services for women and girls that are gender-specific, with particular expertise in supporting women and girls and which include additional knowledge, experience and expertise, for instance around:

- Domestic and/or sexual violence;
- Working with and within the criminal justice system;
- Work with specific population groups e.g. children and young people; specific cultures, faiths, and/or ethnicities;
- Providing refuge accommodation;
- Sexual exploitation and/or trafficking;
- Delivering education and training.

Section 3 begins with the presentation and interpretation of numerical data reported by the projects to the Fund during Years 1 and 2, before going on to describe and interpret how and in what way the WGI is supporting the provision of improved specialist services. Together these provide indications of the reach of the WGI as well as highlight some of the achievements, challenges and learning so far.

Are a greater number of women and girls being supported through the WGI?

Figure 2 presents the number of beneficiaries that the WGI has reached during the first two years, as reported by projects to the Fund. Of the 62 projects that received funding, we were able to extract the number of women and girls reached from 50 projects for year 1, and 50 projects for year 2. However, these are not the same 50 projects, therefore a direct comparison between these numbers is not possible. We also report Year 1 and 2 figures from the 44 projects where we have data for both years.

The steep increase in the number of beneficiaries between Year 1 and 2 that is apparent in Figure 2 is mainly due to two projects. One project had approximately 2000 additional beneficiaries and the second project just under 1000. Overall, 34 of the 44 projects reported higher beneficiary numbers in year 2 than in year 1. However, this is likely to be due to Year 1 involving project set up time, before delivery could begin.

Some caveats to bear in mind when interpreting data

- No baseline figures were reported by projects so it is not possible to compare numbers reached prior and subsequent to the WGI funding;
- Whilst efforts have been made to report unique numbers of beneficiaries, there may be some duplication of numbers from year 1 to year 2 as some beneficiaries will have continued receiving support in year 2 and so counted in both reports. There also may be some double-counting since women and girls may access more than one form of support;
- It is likely that the actual numbers of beneficiaries for some projects will be higher, since they offered activities/events where numbers of new attendees were not recorded;
- The range of support varies within and between projects, from in-depth case work through to workshops, awareness raising sessions, telephone and web based contact;
- Some projects have not reported on an annual basis (e.g. some provided one report for the first eighteen months);
- All projects have slightly different funding periods, therefore Year 1 and Year 2 relate to individual project funding periods rather than Years 1 and 2 of the overall WGI (which ran from April 2016 to March 2018).

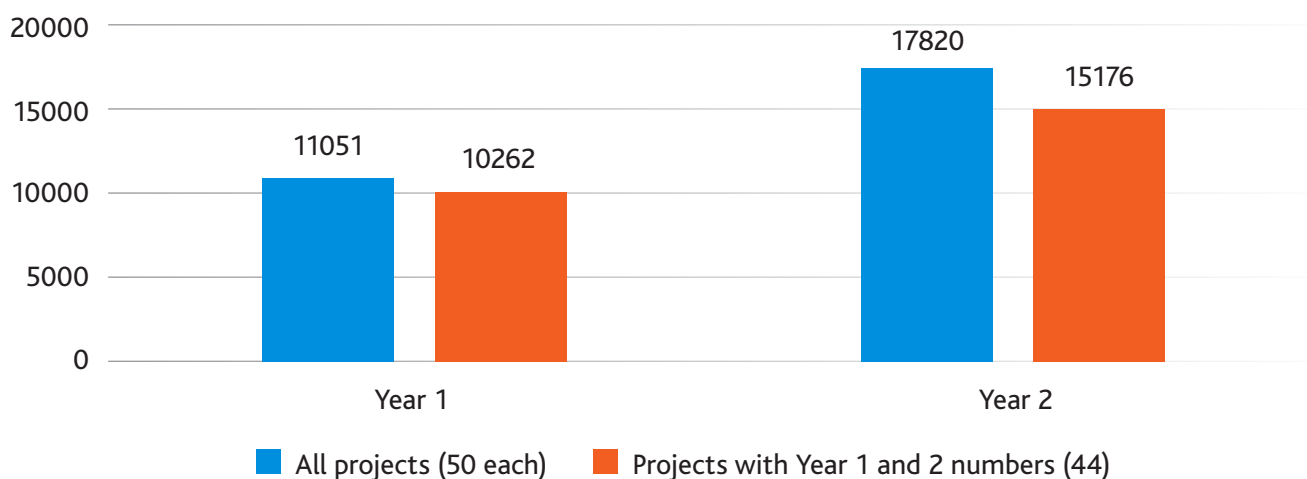


Figure 2: Numbers of women and girls reached through the WGI in Years 1 and 2

Of the 33 projects across all 3 clusters, 23 reported numbers reached through WGI funding in both Years 1 and 2. Figure 3 shows the numbers of women and girls supported per cluster and per year. Between them, 6,369 women and girls were worked with in Year 1 and 9,036 in Year 2, an increase of 2,669 (42%). The smallest number of women and girls worked with by a project was 9, and the highest 2,834, highlighting the diverse range and scale of work taking place.

The difference between numbers reached within the young women and girls cluster and the BME cluster can primarily be understood as being due to the different type of work undertaken. For instance, one of the young women and girls projects (Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre) ran workshops on consent which reached thousands of people, whereas most of the BME projects are doing one-to-one support with women facing a range of multiple issues including not just issues of violence but also immigration and asylum issues. Eighteen projects reported increasing numbers worked with in Year 2, with 5 projects reporting a small decrease in numbers.

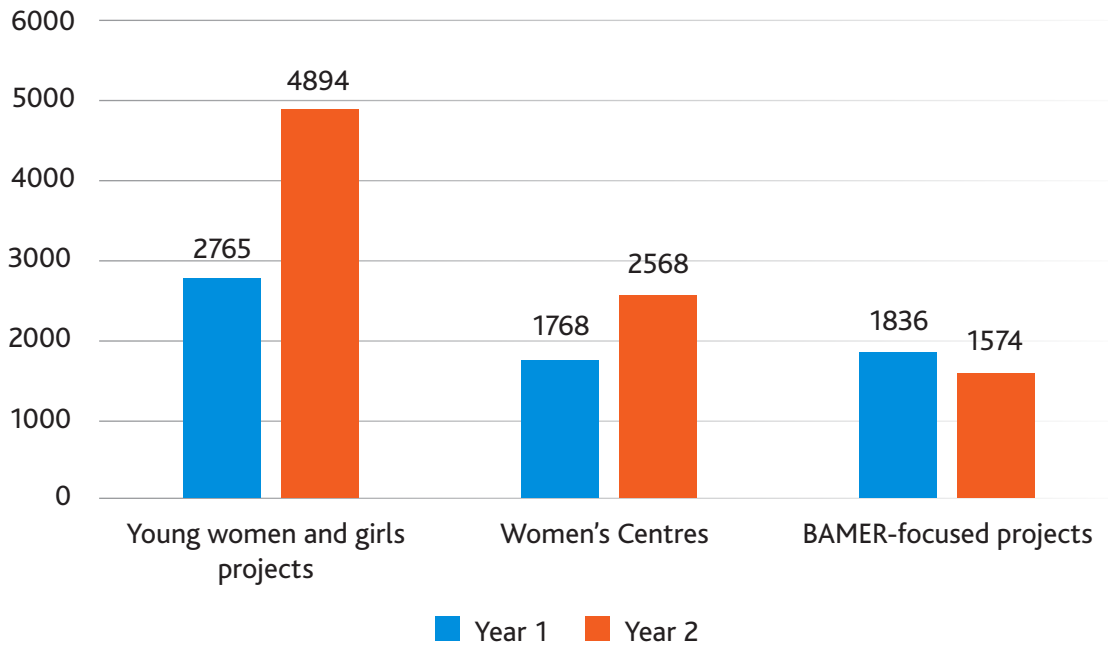


Figure 3: Numbers of women and girls reached across 3 project clusters in years 1 and 2

Overall, projects reported reaching more women than expected, and facing extremely high demand, as mentioned in Section 2. A number of projects have expanded their reach in terms of the demographics of women that they are working with, or the geographies they are working within, whilst others have expanded their service offer.

Challenges and learning around increasing numbers

In progress reviews and reports to the Fund, projects overwhelmingly celebrated reaching more women and girls, but reported capacity issues. Caseloads were in some cases much higher than had been anticipated, waiting lists were filling up, and promotional and/or evaluation activities have not always been fulfilled because of the greater amount of time spent on delivery.

Challenges specific to BME-focused projects

A number of BME-led projects have reported an increase in the severity of cases they are working with. This is seen to be due to BME women's reluctance to report violence to statutory services due to a 'hostile environment' and a decrease in available support from statutory services. More time is needed to support these cases, which may include the need to challenge decisions made by statutory services that they feel are unlawful. The support that beneficiaries need can be complex and time consuming (e.g. around immigration), with staff needed to support beneficiaries at interviews and appointments, as well as deliver one-to-one and advocacy support.

Some projects experienced a higher workload due to referrals made from mainstream agencies who lacked time and/or specialist knowledge to be able to support some BME women and girls. Furthermore, the fact that some beneficiaries are 'at life-long risk of severe violence and murder by multiple perpetrators', means projects are required to provide long term support for their beneficiaries.

These factors together put additional strains on BME organisations' staffing and accommodation capacity, not faced by more generic services. In the insights briefing 'A Safer Pair of Hands', this is called '*Case work plus, plus plus*'.

Who is being supported through the WGI?

During annual progress reviews with projects, the learning and impact services team were told how partnership working was increasing access to specialist support through the widening of referral pathways to WGI services from other providers, enabling a more diverse group of women and girls to receive support. In addition, projects within the three clusters reported promoting their work through increasing links to other organisations, such as schools for young women and girls and attending community events, for instance around specific issues (e.g. FGM). Most projects were making efforts to promote themselves in their community, while others hosted training courses or created promotional materials to share on their websites and through social media.

A meta-analysis of projects demographic reporting was undertaken, so as to understand more about who is benefiting from WGI funding, and to identify any gaps. However, most projects did not submit information summarising the demographics of beneficiaries. In total, 16 projects reported demographic data, 11 of these reported for Year 1 (3725 beneficiaries), and 10 for Year 2 (3559 beneficiaries). As these are not exactly the same projects, no direct comparison between both years is possible. Furthermore, this is not a representative sample of all projects. For instance, five of the 16 projects were specialist BME-led organisations who each reported that at least 88% of the women and girls they worked with in Years 1 or 2 were BME. This highlights the success of BME-led and focused organisations in being able to reach, support and best understand the needs of minority ethnic women and girls, that other organisations may struggle to engage. However, using this data to make claims about the reach of the overall initiative could be misleading.

Having reviewed the data available on who is being supported through the WGI, we believe it will be of long-term benefit to all organisations funded through the WGI to consistently report demographic data around who is accessing WGI-funded support. As demonstrated by the BME-led organisations who have reported this information, it helps highlight the value of the specialist expertise being funded. The ability of funded projects to support women and girls who might not feel able to approach statutory services or whose needs are not met by generic support on offer can be better evidenced with data on who is being supported. It can also help identify gaps which can then be addressed.

For instance, women with a long-term illness or disability are more likely to experience domestic abuse (British Crime Survey, 2016) and so it would be interesting to understand whether WGI projects are reaching this population.² It could also be of value to explore how accessible support is for women and girls who might have specific support needs, perhaps related to learning disabilities, or who live with degenerative or life limiting conditions. Those projects with specific expertise around supporting different access needs might be able to share their knowledge and skills more widely with other WGI projects. However, without data available, it is difficult to draw any further conclusions.

Having said this, we can be confident that because some projects have developed a new service for a new target group (such as for young women and girls or staff working in universal services), there have been a wider range of groups accessing support where there was unlikely to have been anything available previously. The case study in Section 2 on the Seerose refuge run by Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid is an example of this. Other projects have developed additional services for women and girls that they were already working with. In these cases, the numbers of women and girls worked with may not have increased but the services have done, and the depth of support given increased accordingly.

Has the WGI led to improved specialist support?

In essence, most of the WGI projects are delivered by specialist women and girls organisations with expertise in, for instance domestic and sexual violence, sexual exploitation, gender-specific provision. Within this cohort, there are further specialisms, including work in criminal justice settings, with issues around FGM and trafficking, as well as the three clusters highlighted in this report – Women's Centres, BME-led and focused projects, young women and girls projects. Investment of National Lottery funding for between 3 and 5 years has improved specialist support by enabling organisations to increase staffing, improve physical premises and/or extend and increase services. In some projects, paid staff have been employed for the first time. For many, it seems the length of and flexibility embedded within funding awards has helped projects to focus on their provision.

² See: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/domesticabusesexualassaultandstalking

Widening engagement – specialist services led by and for BME women

BME-focused projects have reported that because BME women face intersecting inequalities, and therefore experience multiple, complex needs, this requires specialist knowledge and a safe environment which is welcoming and not replicating barriers faced in wider society. Having a centre led by, staffed and supported by BME women provides that difference immediately on entry. For instance, the nia project has led the running of the Huggett Women's Centre in East London. They commissioned Imkaan (the BME-led, membership organisation focused on ending violence against women and girls through research, training, advocacy, support and consultancy) to undertake a review into Black and minoritised women's access to, and experience of nia's Huggett Women's Centre.

Imkaan reported that the majority of the project's advisory group were Black and minoritised, as were all frontline staff. In addition nia were working with Ashiana Network (a BME-led organisation) who delivered counselling on the premises. Together these factors seemed crucial in enabling access for Black and minoritised women, with feedback from women including:

'I'm not coming in as a Black British female from a Jamaican background, I'm stepping in the door as [me], and that's what's special about here. It's a kind, safe, peaceful, non-judgemental building and staff.'

Woman accessing support

With over 50% of those gaining support through Huggett Women's Centre being Black and minoritised at the time of the review, proactive efforts by nia to be more widely inclusive were seen by Imkaan as having productive outcomes.

The Ashiana Network: Ariana Project – A greater number of women and girls are supported through the provision of improved specialist services

Ashiana is a London-based project set up to provide holistic services for Black and Minority Ethnic women and girls, particularly from South Asian, Turkish & Iranian communities, who are at risk from domestic and sexual violence. They have been operating since 1989 and provide a specialist refuge, advice, counselling services, and education programme and awareness raising workshops.

They have been involved in a range of activities in order to promote their services and increase their provision. They have maintained partnerships and relationships with other organisations, such as VAWG leads, children's centres and immigration solicitors in order to open up referral pathways and promote their offer. As a result of these partnerships, Ashiana have been able to provide an in-house immigration service, which has meant that they are able to work with their clients more efficiently in order to resolve their immigration matters as well as a gardening project which has proved to be particularly successful among their beneficiaries. Ashiana have also engaged in community outreach through running stalls in public places, disseminating paper and digital promotional materials and delivering workshops in schools.

As a result of their activities, they were able to reach more women than anticipated across their different services. They achieved a higher than anticipated number of women who were able to access specialist safe housing (86 from a target of 35), specialist support services (574 from a target of 200), translation and interpretation (131 from a target of 50) and specialist legal advice (308 from a target of 100). In terms of demographics, they have extended their reach to Middle Eastern women and they are seeing more numbers come in from women with diverse backgrounds (e.g. North African women).

They have experienced some difficulty in recruiting staff members who have the required skills, knowledge and resilience. This has had some impact on their delivery as, due to a higher than anticipated staff turnover, they were unable to meet their target number of clients for counselling. Additionally they have found that their clients often present multiple complex issues, meaning that it can take a long time to work through their clients' cases, placing a strain on their small team. The impact of the heavy workloads along with the emotional toll of hearing about the experiences of their clients was said to be a challenge for staff.

The women's stories and experiences are so extreme and horrendous that staff can get impacted by them; frontline staff, and clinical staff, have access to supervision and monthly meetings but it is hard for staff who work with these women, and this is one of the most challenging things. Senior manager

How is specialist support improving through the WGI?

Most projects have reported success with building partnerships, which help enable the delivery of specialist provision within other services and for signposting to and from partners. Additionally, working in partnership or having close links with other organisations was mostly seen as adding value. However, this requires active engagement from partners, timely referrals and where possible, early intervention – so that specialist providers like the WGI projects can work most effectively and where possible, have the opportunity to support women and girls before needs become critical.

Some projects identified the development of Women's Centres as being particularly successful in providing specialist support to women and girls. This seems to be due to the holistic, flexible and accessible services on offer, as discussed in the previous section. For instance, some Women's Centres, such as Inspiring Women Oldham, nia project and Trevi House have opened new premises in order to better meet women's needs.

Projects overwhelmingly report positive feedback from the women and girls engaging in their services. These services and/or levels of support were not available when the WGI funding began and they are being delivered by specialist organisations focused on women and girls. Together with the positive feedback, high levels of engagement and demand, this suggests that these projects may be best placed to meet the needs of women and girls, with gender-specific enablers to accessing and receiving appropriate specialist support. However, the question of how specialist support is improving (and the barriers to improvements) could be explored in more depth through future WGI learning activity.

The importance of specialist support for young women and girls

'Why Working with Young Women and Girls Matter' draws together research evidence with insights from WGI young women and girls projects to highlight why specialist projects are needed and how this support is effective.

'Class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, culture, geographical location and community intersect with being female and shape life experiences and outcomes for girls and young women. When compounded by disproportionate experiences of violence and abuse and other disadvantages, outcomes for girls and young women can be negative and severe through the course of their lives.' McNeish and Scott, 2014.

WGI projects understand how girls and young women operate, their identity, social worlds, relationship and developmental needs, and work in the here and now, are often activity based, flexible and always positive.

'Project 1325 has helped me to cope and manage better whilst at home. I got help with housing and support to apply for university, which I got in! I feel so much better about things and now I have hope for the future.' Young woman

To find out more about the specialist needs of and work with young women and girls, read '[Why Working with Young Women and Girls Matter](#)'.

Challenges with providing specialist support

A few challenges have been identified in being able to provide specialist support. Some projects reported issues with receiving adequate information about beneficiaries from referring services. Whilst referrals overall were reported as working well, there were also examples given of these being received too late to be able to work preventatively, for instance where court proceedings had already begun for young mothers. The key challenge reported by many projects in their reports and progress reviews though was around staffing, including:

- Recruitment of staff with the appropriate skills and experience;
- Staff turnover, which can cause delays to delivery and increased workload pressures;
- Ensuring staff have up-to-date knowledge to provide specialist support e.g. around legal issues; housing; project management and development;
- Concerns around staff wellbeing and risks of burnout because of the intensive, emotionally demanding work involved.

Other learning about specialist support

The importance of communication between staff and with partner organisations was emphasised by some projects in their reports, as well as ensuring staff are supported through clear communication and supervision.

Learning specific to young women and girls projects reported include:

- Full-time roles for staff members can be much more effective than part-time as they allow more time for relationships to be established and for skills to be built up by staff members more quickly;
- Using social media can be effective as a way of connecting with young women and girls;
- Clarity on where referrals are expected to come from is important, so as to ensure appropriate procedures and protocols are in place, e.g. around data sharing;
- For many projects, group work and mentoring support was proving successful and popular with beneficiaries. However, keeping aware of the age ranges of group members was reported as important by some projects, bearing in mind the rapid changes that occur during adolescence and the potential for too narrow or too broad an age range to have a negative effect on the group's functioning;
- Further learning for projects working with young women and girls was around the challenge of maintaining involvement after initial engagement. For instance, one project that had developed a new counselling service faced some young people dropping out as they did not know the counsellor. Therefore, the counsellor made sure they attended group work so that the young women and girls could get to meet them before starting one-to-one work, which was increasing retention.

One Voice 4 Travellers Empowering Gypsy, Traveller and Roma women and girls to enable change: Increased and improved specialist support

One Voice 4 Travellers is a well-established voluntary organisation providing support to women and girls in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GTR) communities. Their WGI funding is supporting GTR women and girls experiencing or at risk of domestic violence and abuse (DVA), working across the six areas of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. It is doing this in a number of ways, including raising awareness and understanding; developing DV champions from across the communities; providing culturally appropriate support; and providing a safe space through two 'safe caravans'.

No-one knows how much DVA occurs within the GTR community, but One Voice's experience suggests that it is widespread but largely hidden. Women and girls face numerous barriers in seeking support. Some kinds of DVA can be seen as 'normal' and to be expected. Women may fear reprisals against other family members and rejection from the community if they disclose abuse. They are likely to encounter limited understanding from external agencies and a lack of culturally appropriate services. All this is in the context of continued prejudice against the GTR community meaning that many women opt to tolerate lives of abuse rather than face the alternatives.

One of the most innovative aspects of One Voice's WGI project is the provision of two caravans as temporary safe spaces. Women can use one of these caravans, taking her children with her, for two or three days to think through her options. She can use the time to talk to her children, access support from other agencies where appropriate and develop a safety plan for herself and her children. The caravans are sited in one of several safe places, chosen very carefully. Hosts are trained and supported to maintain confidentiality and to be un-intrusive in their approach.

A key component of the success of the caravans has been attention to detail to ensure they are both safe and acceptable to the women who use them. For example, they were deliberately chosen as good quality but second hand, trailers that won't stand out or attract unwanted attention. They are carefully equipped with everything a woman is likely to need: toiletries, baby food, a mobile phone. Careful attention is given to deep cleaning the caravans after each use so that women feel comfortable. Since One Voice bought the caravans they have been well used and provided many women with a safe space to think and consider their choices. Very often a woman may opt to stay in her relationship but with some strategies in place to help her and her children to keep safer. Sometimes the caravans have been a vital stepping stone to escape an abusive relationship, such as by a young woman who used a caravan while she made the arrangements to go to her family in Ireland.

Of course, not all women will feel able to make use of the caravans – it is a big step for women in abusive relationships to seek such support even when it comes from within the community. However, the take up of the caravans has exceeded expectations.

'It's giving access to support where there was none. Even women who don't use the service now know that it's there if they need it and that's really important.' staff member

What outcomes for women and girls are being recorded as a result of WGI provision?

Because of the diversity of projects, and the wide range of outcomes being worked towards and measured in different ways, this section focuses on outcomes reported by projects in the three clusters – BME-focused projects, Women's Centres and Young women and girls' projects.

In general, outcomes that were being reported by projects across the clusters were:

- Increased confidence;
- Increased wellbeing;
- Improved relationships with others, and;
- Improved employment opportunities.

Some projects have been using validated or adaptations of validated quantitative scales (e.g. the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale³) at different time points to measure beneficiary outcomes. However, it was not possible to undertake a meta-analysis of quantitative data because what is being gathered, when and how is vastly different. Projects that had not implemented more quantitative methods of evaluation were able to provide more qualitative evidence to illustrate the impact of their project, such as through beneficiary testimonials or case studies. Aside from formal data collection activities, there are many instances where positive changes in beneficiary outcomes have been observed by staff members.

The most commonly cited outcome across the clusters was **an increase in confidence** amongst women and girls. This was generally measured through project-administered feedback forms, or may have been, for example, observed through increased participation in project activities. This was often attributed to the fact that the projects took a women-centered approach that gave the space for women to be themselves and progress at their own pace.

'A light-touch hand holding, informal befriending approach in the initial stages of engagement supports a woman on her journey of building her confidence and emotional resilience. One of the overarching strengths is the women themselves who are positive advocates for the services and programmes they have accessed.' Aspire Learning, Support and Wellbeing CIC

Increased wellbeing was also frequently reported, mostly in terms of increased mental wellbeing, though improved physical health was reported by some. This outcome was reported by women and girls themselves, either through feedback surveys or through testimonials. Again taking a holistic women-centred approach was said to positively impact on wellbeing, but being in a space with other women and being able to make connections with others was also an important factor. This relates to another observed outcome, which was

³ warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs

improved relationships with others. Projects observed that the women who came to them were (mostly) able to make connections with each other, alleviating their social isolation. In some cases this improved their social connections outside of the project, as they had the confidence to be able to engage with and rekindle relationships with others, such as family members.

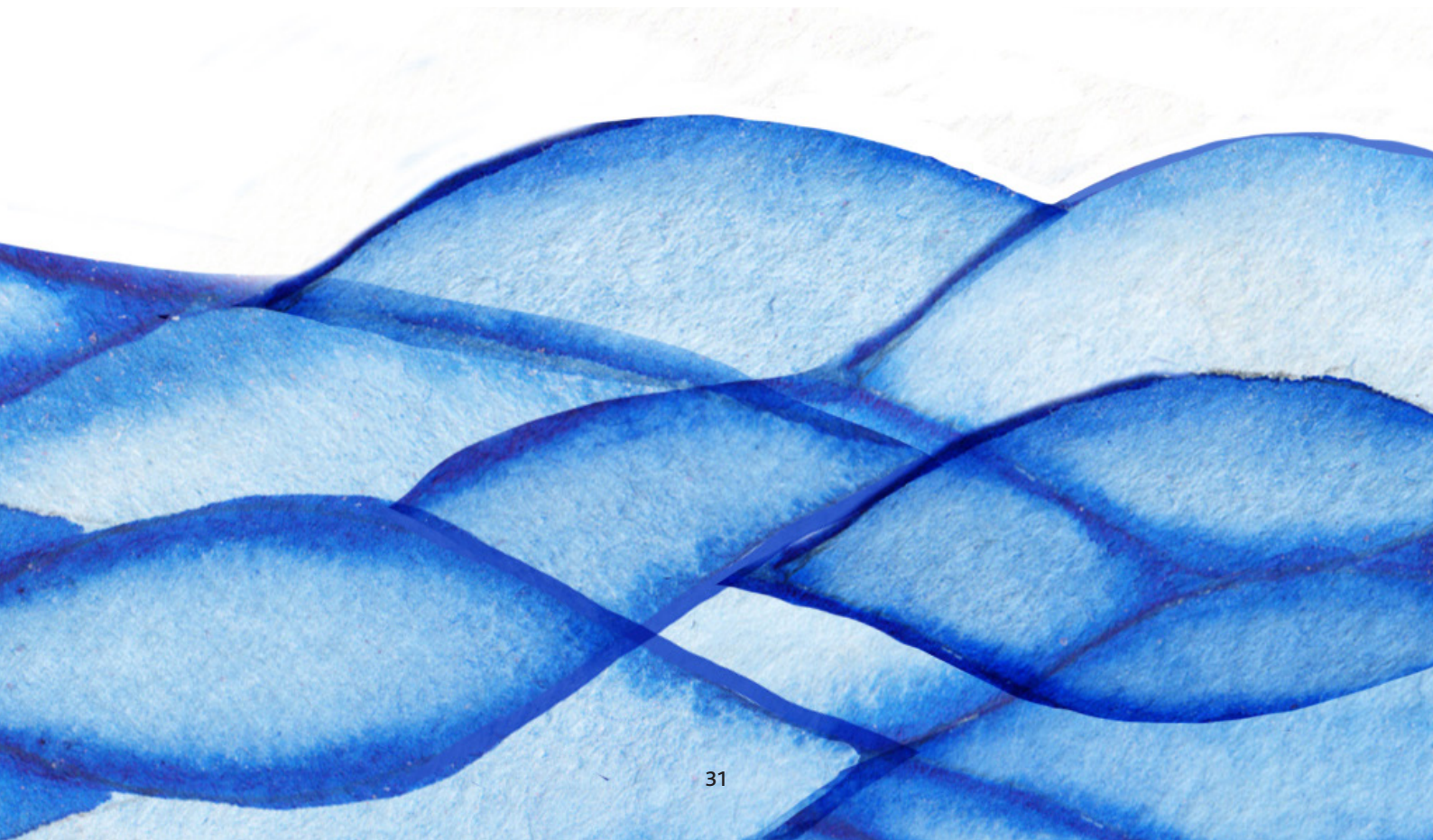
Several projects collected information on individuals' **employment and education outcomes** and were able to report that the proportion of women who were gaining and sustaining jobs or qualifications had increased over the first two years of the project. In addition, young women and girls projects reported more positive education and employment outcomes following involvement in projects. This may be due to the fact that several projects offered direct support around job seeking, or due to the fact that young women and girls had increased confidence and emotional support through participation.

Some projects reported that participants in groups and training had an **increased understanding of exploitation risks and/or healthy relationships.** Some of this training was delivered to both boys and girls. This outcome was often measured by feedback surveys after activities had been delivered. Therefore, these projects were able to indicate the numbers of participants who, for example, were better able to recognise abusive behaviours as a result of the projects' activities.

Several projects felt that their activities had generated evidence that providing a women-only space was important in empowering women, ensuring that they feel welcome and can talk openly about difficult experiences. One way in which this manifested itself was through an increase in the number of referrals that projects received. It was felt that having their own space made projects more attractive to potential partners and so the number of women who could be reached was increased. There was also evidence that having their own space was important to improving outcomes for individuals as it gave women attending activities a sense of ownership over the space.

In particular, BME-focused projects highlight the value reported by BME women in having a BME-led and staffed space. Not having to worry about the potential conscious or unconscious bias and barriers that can be a feature of non-specialist support, enabled women to actively engage from their first introduction to the WGI service. An immediate sense of belonging and connection meant that staff and women could start work with their support needs, without having to navigate discriminatory hurdles first.

In conclusion to this section, it seems that WGI projects are able to work with more women and girls and offer the specialist support that enables them to achieve the outcomes they want to work towards. Future reports will seek to understand if the learning and outcomes shared here are common with other clusters and how these develop or change over the rest of the initiative.



Learning from co-production

This chapter addresses the **WGI Outcome: Increased role and voice for women and girls in co-producing services.**

What do we mean by co-production?

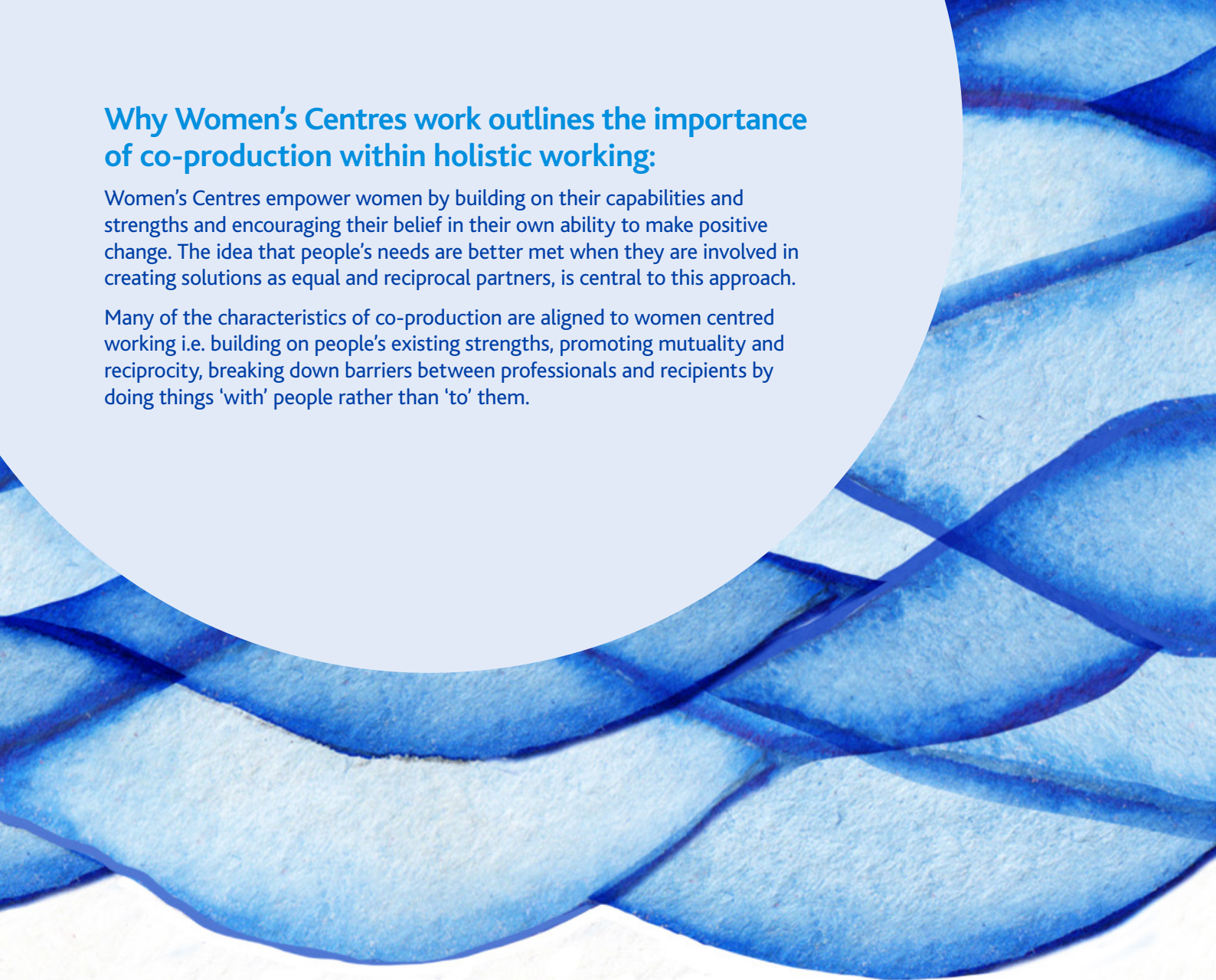
For the purposes of this report, we are defining co-production as women and girls who receive or have received support, working with staff and other volunteers, to do one or more of the following:⁴

- Co-design the services being delivered;
- Share decision making in relation to the staffing and other resources for service delivery;
- Co-deliver services as volunteers or as paid workers;
- Take an active part in the evaluation of services, such as helping design evaluation activities, interviewing or gathering feedback from other beneficiaries.

Upcoming learning activity around co-production will explore how co-production is defined and understood in the context of the WGI. It is therefore expected that this definition will be altered as a result.

This chapter focuses on sharing learning from those projects that described some form of co-production, as described above, in their reports. Most WGI projects are enabling women and girls to have a role and a voice in shaping services, through for instance gathering feedback forms, running consultation activities and focus groups, or supporting other forms of involvement. However, for the purposes of this outcome, the focus here is on co-production, rather than these other forms of involvement.

⁴See www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/what-is-coproduction/defining-coproduction.asp



Why Women's Centres work outlines the importance of co-production within holistic working:


Women's Centres empower women by building on their capabilities and strengths and encouraging their belief in their own ability to make positive change. The idea that people's needs are better met when they are involved in creating solutions as equal and reciprocal partners, is central to this approach.

Many of the characteristics of co-production are aligned to women centred working i.e. building on people's existing strengths, promoting mutuality and reciprocity, breaking down barriers between professionals and recipients by doing things 'with' people rather than 'to' them.

What is working well with co-production?

Examples of co-production that worked well were provided by projects across the three clusters. These included beneficiaries co-producing a conference, designing their own individualised assessment process and support plan, designing, setting up and leading peer support groups and toolkits, co-designing publicity materials and resource toolkits and undertaking peer research. One young women and girls project had set up a connection with a university to facilitate a mentee advisory group in which they developed their own research project.

'With their new found research skills, in June 2017 they began work to answer the question: 'What barriers do girls face to personal success in 2017?'. We were astounded when the girls returned to us with a number of innovative research collection methods, including a graffiti wall and whole-school presentations. They also returned over 70 questionnaires containing data from their fellow female students.' **The Girls' Network**



For Women's Centres, successful work was reported as being achieved through:

- Having a volunteering model through which women can contribute to the overall running of a project in support of the core staff. Frequently this offered women who had previously benefited from the organisation's support, a way of giving something back to the organisation they valued whilst continuing development of their own skills and experience;
- Setting up workshops for service users to run and encouraging women to spearhead their own activities;
- Inviting women to sit on staff selection panels, taking part in coproduction workshops to help design and develop services, and being part of advisory groups or shadow boards.

Co-production, as an activity in itself, was identified by some as helping women build greater confidence and ambition.

However, whilst there were some examples of embedded and in-depth co-production, these were relatively few. This is perhaps because many projects are working with women and girls who might be facing a crisis situation and have multiple, complex needs. At these times, co-production might not be appropriate. Instead, WGI projects' skills in listening to women and involving women and girls in decision-making about their support package is potentially more critical at the time. The subject of co-production is going to be explored in more depth over the next year of Learning and Impact Services, as this was raised by many projects in their first progress reviews as a development need.

Co-producing a support package that meets one's own needs: The London Black Women's Project

The London Black Women's project has been taking a more in-depth co-productive approach, through allowing women to choose their own therapeutic support from a menu of options as part of their core initiative.

'90% of women and girls were engaged in the co-production aspect of the project, having a voice in how their needs were determined and how support was agreed with them.' The London Black Women's Project

Women who came into the project would have their needs assessed through creative means (the exact method is up to the beneficiary) and they then choose what happens next (e.g. one-to-one support, advocacy etc.). The women involved in the project can also feed into the community assets register, in which information is stored about networks which other women may benefit from (e.g. housing, clothing exchange). The project reported that this approach has worked well, such as in this example:

'a woman [...] fled a violent marriage [...] She used story-telling to address feelings of anxiety but also, [...], she felt that finally someone had given her space to be herself. She found the project to be healing because it was not conventional.' The London Black Women's Project

Challenges experienced with co-production

There were no particular challenges reported by projects in relation to co-production. From reviewing project reports, it is clear that the understanding of what co-production means in service design and delivery varies considerably. The only challenge reported was that some staff found it difficult to adapt to co-production as an approach, leading to some staff changes. Co-production can involve a fundamental shift in organisational culture, as well as a re-organising of the way resources are allocated and decisions are made. The very few issues reported around co-production may be explained by the fact that many projects are taking a more light touch approach and are not always using the term as defined in this chapter. As more projects potentially increase co-production efforts, it is possible that more challenges might be experienced.

Key learning about co-production

From the data we currently have, the following elements are important to bear in mind when considering how coproduction works for different projects:

- **Starting point of projects:** the relatively large number of Women's Centres using co-production is undoubtedly linked to some of them having this embedded in their approach prior to WGI funding.
- **Balancing with other demands:** other projects spent time in year 1 setting up new services, dealing with high demand and stretched organisational resources. Beginning new co-production at the same time was perhaps more of a challenge for these projects.
- **Situation of beneficiaries:** because many projects work with women and girls who may be facing immediate crises relating to abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking, and as a result housing and immigration emergencies, it is not necessarily appropriate timing for women and girls to get involved with co-producing services. Likewise, those no longer in need of support might not always want to continue engagement with the organisation, as they move to new geographic areas and life phases.
- **Lived experience of staff:** services for women and girls are run by women, some of whom will have lived experience and this personal as well as professional expertise will also be informing the development of services. Therefore, project reports may not reflect the full extent to which projects are informed by this experiential knowledge.

In conclusion, WGI projects seem to have had different starting points and very different processes, meaning that co-production is therefore at different stages across the initiative. Whilst there were some examples of co-production in project design, decision-making, delivery and evaluation, these were not widely reported. Therefore, this is an area for future exploration through learning activity, and in case study development. This will help deepen understanding about how co-production is defined within WGI projects, as well as when, why and how it works best in the contexts it takes place, and what can be learnt from this.

Belonging, creating, changing: Women on the Wight – WOW

Established as a 'safe space' for women on the Isle of Wight, with a specific focus on multiple disadvantage, the ambition of this women's centre is to create a welcoming space with a changing diary of events, combining creative activities, health and well-being, life skill classes and inspirational talks.

What is unique about WOW is that every woman who visits the centre becomes a member and all members can become volunteers by offering activities, drawing on a strongly held belief that everyone has skills they can share. Mutual peer support is at the heart of this project which means co-production is built into the warp and weft of how the centre functions. They now have 900 members, and at least 30 women a day visit the centre.

Located on one of the main streets in Newport, it is a conversion of a large shop: there are a number of rooms that can be used for activities and a large welcoming kitchen and soft furnished area, in which it is possible to do collective food preparation or just sit and chat.

A number of courses (on domestic abuse, adverse childhood experiences) and ongoing support groups (addiction, ex-offenders) are part of the WOW offer, alongside sessions and activities offered by members. It is also possible to just come and 'be', which several older women with long standing mental health problems do, as does a 16 year old who has had a disrupted adoption. Centre staff also offer support, advice and advocacy, and work has increased recently on Universal Credit. Newer activities include: a walking group – short walks for all abilities; a bicycle maintenance course in which if women repair one it becomes theirs; a theatre group working with the probation group on local stories.

In the last year WOW have prioritised doing more work with volunteers, encouraging them to take responsibility for specific courses/activities, as a way to make the project more sustainable. Volunteers, board members and staff now also take activities to other parts of the island, offering 'pop up' events in other towns and at community events.

The activities in the centre have always included creativity, with a number of collective art works displayed. The offer has become increasingly about 'traditional' female skills – sewing, knitting, cooking and craft. A recent focus group with 9 volunteers asked why 'making' was so popular. Responses were revealing with several women with mental health issues saying that being occupied by a task meant they could have a quieter mind and through this interact more easily with others. Sitting alongside others in conversations full of kindness and recognition was valued – the phrase *'in making things, we re-make ourselves'* captures this part of how WOW works. This group of women clearly felt they belonged in WOW, one said very positively *'this is our place'* and the others strongly agreed. Another theme was that through the centre they got to meet women they would not otherwise, including recent migrants. The map (see picture) close to the entrance shows all the countries of origin of current members. Recent migrants have found their way to the centre and long-time island residents appreciate the opportunity to meet and engage with women different from themselves.

One example perhaps exemplifies the WOW philosophy – that this is a space in which women find their own place, what works for them. A 92 year old woman, in the early stage of dementia, attends a group working on addiction: she does not have substance misuse issues, but feels comfortable in this group and they accept her. Her daughter talked with centre staff about not being sure why she was in that group, their response was 'nor are we but it works!' Other examples of co-production in action are that a long-established member is now employed as a worker and another is involved in the evaluation, finding ways to enable women to tell their stories in a creative way.



Building evidence of what works well

This section focuses on the WGI Outcome: **Better quality of evidence for what works in empowering women and girls.**

Projects' progress with evaluation?

As part of their WGI funding agreement, projects committed to evaluating their work, in order to try and evidence their impact and to increase understanding of what works and why in supporting women and girls. The Fund were flexible in enabling projects to choose how they might best approach evaluation, based on the needs of their project. Since WGI had no set requirements, projects have reported vastly different approaches to evaluation and evidencing impact. Approximately a third of projects have commissioned external evaluators or researchers to support their evaluation, whilst others are using their internal capacity, or combining internal and external evaluation resources. Projects are also at different stages, given that some are close to the end of their funding and others have more than two years to go.

Many projects are gathering quantitative data, some have been undertaking qualitative evaluation activity from the beginning, such as interviews and focus groups and others have commissioned evaluators as the project comes to a close. Supporting projects with their evaluations has been a key area of work for the Learning and Impact services team, since being contracted in early 2018. However, since this was over eighteen months after some projects began, a pragmatic, 'live' approach to this work has been necessary.

From the team's engagement with projects, there seems to have been good learning around evaluation that the projects will carry forward and help them in future work. A number now have bespoke theories of change and have been able to work through designing and undertaking evaluation activity. The support offered has included help with commissioning external evaluators, running focus groups, or designing and writing final reports. There were some examples of projects embedding evaluation activities into their work in a way that was appropriate and flexible for their beneficiaries, such as through piloting evaluation tools and re-evaluating them based on how well they worked. However, as with co-production, the different organisations funded through WGI have different starting points with evaluation and so the quality of evidence being generated seems so far also to be very varied.

Whilst some excellent examples of evaluation have been seen, it is also apparent that a number of projects have struggled with setting up and undertaking evaluations. This is not a surprise, bearing in mind that a number of projects are run by very small, local community-based groups and for many this might have been the first grant of this kind received. Several have experienced issues with staffing, and evaluation was often one of the areas which fell behind, while projects addressed these more immediately pressing issues. Other projects have been overwhelmed with the amount of data gathered and have then struggled with what to do next, as there was not often an evaluator involved at the outset or a staff member with data processing skills.

Whilst some projects have had external evaluation reports completed, so far only a few of these have become available. It is difficult to say at this stage whether a better quality of evidence has been produced to determine what works for women and girls. However, it seems that the evaluation capacity of projects has potentially been increased by having an investment that encourages and supports the funding of evaluation activity.

Women in Prison's Health Matters Project: The benefits of and learning from working with external evaluators

Health Matters is a three-year funded project, delivered by Women in Prison, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of women in custodial settings, offering direct health advocacy, advice, workshops, and information services.

Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) have been undertaking an external evaluation of Health Matters, which aims to: 1) independently assess the overall performance of the project; 2) identify what difference the project made and why; 3) make recommendations for the external dissemination of the findings. This is a mixed methods evaluation, using quantitative and qualitative methods that seek to capture both 'hard' data and the stories behind the numbers. Evaluation activities carried out to date have included:

1. An initial secondary analysis of data collected by the Health Matters team, to identify additional data required to assess the project's performance, and establish a baseline to allow for comparisons over time;
2. At the project's midpoint, a review and analysis of:
 - i) the Health Matters questionnaire, which women complete when they enter and leave the service, and provide a 'before' and 'after' picture of women's health and healthcare needs to evidence the difference the Health Matters advocacy is making;
 - ii) a service evaluation form, which capture women's experience of the service in terms of what they found useful and the difference it has made to them;
 - iii) a feedback form for the workshops delivered as part of the project, used to monitor their quality and evidence their impact.
3. Focus groups with women to supplement the quantitative data, and regular reflective sessions facilitated as part of the Health Matters staff's team meetings, which capture changes as they occur and staff views on what has led to the change.

The experience of working with an external evaluator has brought the organisation many benefits and generated several learning points about what works well in generating evidence in this area of work. The following key factors supported the Health Matters team, and the organisation, to generate evidence.

- **Investing time to develop a monitoring database** that could capture, in a more efficient, systematic, and tailored way, all the work and information that the team was undertaking and collecting (e.g. baseline and follow-up questionnaires, feedback forms from women and staff in prisons). Although this was a big investment for the organisation, it has made it easier to have a better overview of all the activities being undertaken, the characteristics of the people they work with, and to run reports.
- **Adapting data collection tools.** Working in challenging contexts such as prisons means that being able to tailor approaches to data collection is important. Working alongside external evaluators enabled the team to gain the confidence to change their existing tools and/or approaches to data collection as and when the situation required. Examples include: sending mail-outs to ask for feedback from women in prisons, rather than interviewing –particularly when women were going through challenging circumstances; or shortening the number of questions. This way of approaching the evaluation activities enabled the team to overcome some of the challenges inherent in collecting data in a prison.
- **The relationship between the external evaluators and the team** was crucial to the work. By building a relationship built on trust and working together as a team meant that it was possible to make changes to tools and approaches in real time. In addition, evaluation methods included reflective sessions at team meetings at regular intervals, which themselves provided additional data that was captured and used.
- **Co-producing project activities with women:** workshops delivered in prisons for women have been co-produced with the women themselves. In addition, the Health Matters team trained a small number of women in prison to deliver the workshops on behalf of the team. The strong relationship built as a result brought the dual advantage of:
 - 1) supporting women's skills development (e.g. facilitation and leadership skills), and;
 - 2) providing an additional way to collect high quality data (women were collecting feedback forms from workshop participants).

Key lessons learned have been:

- **The importance of having monitoring and evaluation in the forefront of the team's minds.** This is the first project which had an external evaluation from the start of the project, working alongside the team as the project evolved. It is also the first project where there is a dedicated member of staff whose job is focused on it. Taken together, this has created the infrastructure to support monitoring and evaluation and embed it into the organisation's way of working in a way that it had not been before.
- **Not being afraid to change and adapt.** A key lesson has been that the realisation that there are different ways of doing things and that adapting tools such as feedback forms (even multiple times) to ensure they are sensitive to service users' circumstances does not reduce the quality of the data, but rather enhances it.
- **Generating and using data from less 'formal' tools.** Over the course of the evaluation work the team were encouraged to generate and use data from 'off-hand' comments, rather than always from pre-designed questionnaires. The key learning here was that views, feedback, reflections from project beneficiaries isn't, and doesn't always have to be, captured in 'formal' settings and ways. This has enabled the team to be more creative in the way they approach data collection.

What is working well with gathering better quality evidence?

There is evidence that some projects are making progress with conducting evaluations of their work and a number of projects are attempting to build an evidence base of how individual outcomes are improving. Many projects were also giving women and girls an opportunity to feed back on the project's activities.

'[our evaluation tool] allows space for the young women to give feedback on each of the individual twelve sessions as well as exploring what other issues they would like to discuss. We are then able to incorporate this feedback into future session planning.' Women's Community Matters

Challenges experienced with collecting evidence

There were several challenges associated with collecting evidence for evaluations. Having the staff capacity to be able to carry out the evaluations was a challenge experienced across the three clusters. Knowing which evaluation tools to use was also a challenge for some projects, who wanted to ensure they had chosen something that was sensitive and appropriate for their service users. Additionally, at women's centres where multiple activities were being carried out, they needed to ensure that their evaluation tool could account for all of the different activities. Likewise, having multiple funders often requires measuring and reporting against different outcomes and performance measures, which can make evidence collection onerous. Overall, it appeared that there had been a need at the earliest point for guidance around how to go about carrying out an evaluation and the core principles underpinning this.

Key learning about undertaking evaluations

We found from project reports, that whilst there was some learning around the general experience of undertaking evaluations and collecting data, BME-focused organisations and Young Women and Girls projects had additional learning about what works best when evaluating with their beneficiaries.

A few projects reported that they had learned from their experiences of collecting and monitoring data and were adapting their collection methods accordingly. There were a variety of ways in which the projects were adapting these, such as choosing different systems for tracking their activities or different data collection tools. There was also learning around the importance of having time to think about the best approach to evaluate ahead and set realistic expectations.

In conclusion to this chapter, it is yet to be seen if overall better quality evidence is generated through the WGI about what works well in empowering women and girls. However, through ongoing qualitative data gathering, some rich examples of WGI achievements, successes and learning will continue to be reported. Undertaking the meta-analysis activity for this report has given the partners an understanding of where projects are in their data gathering and evaluations and the further support that might be needed. It seems that overall evaluation capacity has been increasing, and there are examples of this becoming more embedded within some organisations. However, with a number of projects currently at their end, this presents an opportunity to see whether this capacity is sustained and developed further.

Project 1325 – WomenCentre Limited

WomenCentre's Project 1325 is a new service that offers skilled and committed support to girls and young women aged 13-25, living in Calderdale and Kirklees in West Yorkshire. The project believes that the points of transition in girls and young women's lives are critical to their wellbeing and offering the right support, in the right way at the right time is crucial in effecting positive change. And earlier intervention is needed in order to avoid the long-term cumulative impact of adversity and abuse, and negative outcomes, affecting women's lives.

The project is underpinned by a robust, co-productive and participatory approach to evaluation and learning, with a strong interface between girls and young women, the organisation and an external evaluator (University of Huddersfield). Girls and young women were involved in interviewing for an external evaluator. The external evaluator uses a multi-method approach to complement the work of the organisation, including observations and interviews with girls and young women, along with analysis of case files and interviews/action learning with workers. WomenCentre's Project 1325 records and analyses detailed monitoring information about referrals and their sources, the girls and young women accessing the service and their demographics. It identifies and analyses the presenting needs of girls and young women and what they wish to work on. It keeps detailed case information on any interventions and notes and observations about progress. Girls and young women complete a bespoke outcomes questionnaire at intervals across the project and record what bugs them and what's changed visually and creatively on a 'tree' at intervals. A feature of the external evaluation is to capture key turning points in the journeys of girls and young women and to follow up progress with girls and young women who leave the service.

The project is finding that most elements of the evaluation are working well, and together they 'triangulate', to provide rich sources of evidence for the intended outcomes of the project and formative learning. Monitoring reveals a steady increase in multi-agency buy in, referrals and the presenting needs of girls and young women. The bespoke outcome measure provides clear evidence of progress. Case files are a rich source of evaluation evidence and contain nuanced insights into different dimensions of mental health needs and progress. Girls and young women are able to produce creative outputs that highlight their journeys, like a song and/or art and it is intended that these will be included as evidence. The visual 'tree' creations are a powerful tool about what has changed for girls and young women, emerging from the individual stories of girls and young women and informing practice.

Conclusion and points to consider as the WGI continues

The Women and Girls Initiative has been a much needed and valued investment in the Women and Girls Sector by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Having analysed and reviewed:

- Monitoring and some evaluation reports submitted by projects;
- Telephone interviews with project staff undertaken by the learning and impact services team, as well as;
- Thematic reports already produced as a result of action learning sets with grant-holders.

This report has illustrated how the investment has been utilised in its first two years, to provide holistic person-centred provision through increased specialist support. Projects overwhelmingly report success in engaging and working with women and girls, and being able to deliver support in the time and ways that best suit their beneficiaries. There has been some learning around increasing the role and voice for women and girls in co-producing services, as well as in building a better quality of evidence of what works. Overall, it seems that WGI-funded projects are working well towards the Initiative's ultimate goal – empowering women and girls to take control of their lives.

As a result, it has been possible to share some of the strengths and quality of work being delivered through the WGI, what has been working well as well as some of the challenges so far. Key strengths seem to have been the relational approaches used, that work with the whole person, are trauma-informed, and support a wide variety of practical, emotional and social needs. Flexibility in being able to respond to needs as they emerge and change, without time or other restrictions to access, has also been key.

It seems that the WGI has enabled the delivery of effective gender-specific services, working with women and girls where they are at and supporting them in multiple areas of their lives. Projects have reported that women and girls have experienced improvements in their lives as a result of support received, such as increased confidence and wellbeing, improved relationships and employment opportunities.

The need for the work being delivered has been demonstrated by the high demand experienced by many projects, requiring the need to set up and manage waiting lists. This pressure on projects has led to some concerns around staff capacity and wellbeing. WGI projects have also experienced difficulties with staff recruitment and turnover. Likewise, wider funding pressures has provided a challenging backdrop to WGI delivery. With 32 of the 62 projects due to have completed by the end of 2020, sustainability is a concern for many. Finally a number of projects have increased their partnership working and this overall has been a reported strength and benefit. However, there have also been difficulties working within some WGI consortia as well as with external partners who may have different values, approaches and criteria.

Whilst some evaluation capacity amongst projects has grown as a result of the WGI, evaluation remains a challenge for projects and this is an area where projects will continue to need support. Likewise, how co-production is defined in the context of this work, when it works best and how, are areas that require further exploration. Future work of the learning and impact services will seek to build on the learning shared in this report, in partnership with projects and the Fund. This report concludes with the following points for

consideration for the remainder of the WGI:

- We strongly recommend that all projects seek to report demographic data to the Fund in future years and annual participation figures. This will help understanding in more depth and at an initiative-wide level, who projects are reaching and benefiting, how many, and where there are gaps. This will inform learning around who might be facing barriers to accessing services or support available. If projects are not monitoring demographic data, we recommend that they begin doing so, using the Fund's Equality monitoring form to guide the collation of data.
- The definition of co-production in the context of WGI work needs some debate, to test whether that described in this document is one that resonates and works for projects, or whether a different conceptualisation works better. Further data gathering around what co-production activity is taking place, how it is working and what is being learnt will assist in building knowledge and skills for co-production.
- Other areas for further exploration, which were raised throughout the report, include:
 - Partnership working, to build on the strengths reported and share learning from the challenges;
 - How high demand is being addressed by projects and what areas of work are facing the most pressure;
 - Staff wellbeing, when the work is emotionally demanding, in high demand and increasing in complexity;
 - Understanding how projects are using their evaluations to develop services, advocate for the women and girls they work with and gain continued funding support; and
 - Sustainability of activity and of organisations delivering this specialist provision.

As the learning and impact services continue, the partners will be leading activities (*Masterclasses, Action Learning Sets and one-to-one support*) which help address these areas. In particular, the third year of the learning and impact services will include a conference, as well as round-tables with regional and local commissioners and other funders. These are both in development at the time of report writing. In recognition that the WGI is a time-limited initiative, and that many projects are completing and ending over the next year, partners will continue to offer support to projects with their evaluation activities and use different events to give projects the space to advocate for their work and the benefits it brings to women and girls.

Appendix 1

Methodology

This section summarises the approach to analysing quantitative and qualitative data for the purposes of this synthesis report.

Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis was used primarily to understand how many women and girls had benefited from WGI and the demographics of those accessing support. Analysis of beneficiary numbers presented was based on individual reports from projects submitted to the National Lottery Community Fund or shared with members of TIHR, CWASU and DMSS. Beneficiary numbers were recorded separately for year 1 and year 2. If the report showed the total count of beneficiary numbers for that reporting period as one whole number which was true for the majority of reports, we used this number for our calculation. If no total number was reported, we summarised the number of beneficiaries per activity to calculate the total number for that year. In a few cases not every activity reported on the number of attendees in which case we are under-reporting the true number of beneficiaries. In other cases, there might have been an overestimation as beneficiaries could have attended several types of service offers. Wherever possible we tried to triangulate total numbers of beneficiaries with information about the number of beneficiaries in other tables or parts of the report. We also tried to report unique numbers of beneficiaries. As some beneficiaries who started receiving support services in year 1 continue to receive support in year 2 these numbers would count towards both years. It was not possible to estimate the proportion of year 2 beneficiaries who had been already reported in year 1. We did not adjust for different reporting schedules of projects and we tried to use beneficiary numbers for a whole year. In a few cases numbers were only reported for a 6-month period in which case we relied on this number but did not adjust it for the one-year reporting period. Overall, we only used numbers reported by projects and did not estimate numbers based on other reports.

Further analysis was undertaken of the projects identified within each cluster - Black and minority ethnic (BME) focused projects; young women and girls (YWG) projects and Women's Centres projects. The aim was to understand if there were any cluster-specific differences in data.

For the presentation of the demographic information we mainly used the equality information forms and in a very few cases other reports if the categories from the equality form were used. Other projects reported on demographic information, however, in most cases categories were not comparable with categories of the equality form provided by the Fund so that demographic information could not be summarized.

Quantitative analysis

Qualitative analysis was undertaken to understand how projects are working towards the programme outcomes, and identify key learning, lessons and areas for future exploration. After gathering all available project reports for Years 1 and 2 activities to the Fund, these were read through and coded in relation to the programme outcomes. Progress reviews with projects undertaken in Years 1 and 2 by the learning and impact services team were also reviewed, with key learning and themes drawn from each of these sources. A second wave of analysis was undertaken of project reports for those within the BME, YWG and Women's Centres clusters. Thematic reports generated through the work of the BME, YWG and Women's Centres Action Learning Sets (ALSs) and learning from *Msterclasses* and ALSs were also reviewed, to identify learning shared through these activities, that built on or diverged from analysis of project reports.

A thematic analysis was undertaken of reports, coding inductively from the data, generating basic themes.¹ Basic themes were grouped into organising themes, and subsequently into global themes. Themes generated were then matched to the programme outcomes through a thematic mapping process and interpretations developed. Throughout the process, raw data (including that from progress reviews, ALSs and *Msterclasses*) was also revisited to check and review codes and themes identified, with further refining of themes, in order to validate interpretations made within the final report.

In addition, individual projects were identified that could offer case study examples of the learning shared within the report. Case study projects were chosen according to criteria including whether they were imminently completing, whether they were within one of the clusters, and how their example illustrated specific programme objectives in practice. Case studies were written from analysing reports, undertaking visits in some cases, telephone interviews and/or in email discussion with projects.

¹ Attridge-Stirling, J. (2001) 'Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research'. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405.

Appendix 2

Cluster summaries

Funded projects that are included within each of the clusters reported on in the Synthesis report

1. BME cluster

Angelou Centre: A specialised BME refuge for survivors of violence and abuse across the North East region. They offer frontline support as well as advocacy to promote the voices of BME women.
www.angelou-centre.org.uk

Ashiana Network: The Ariana project, run by Ashiana, will provide 'specialist bespoke refuge, advice and counselling services for BME women survivors' of violence against women and girls. The funding was used for a 'Housing Support worker who will offer holistic and consistent support to its residents, a full-time Advice Worker and a part-time Counsellor to strengthen the advice/advocacy and therapeutic services offered to BME survivors of VAWG.
www.ashiana.org.uk

Hibiscus Initiatives: The project has set up a hub for 'marginalised foreign national (FN), BMER and migrant women ... affected by the criminal justice [system]'.
www.hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk

Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA): The Women Weaving Change project works to offer person centred services to Spanish/Portuguese speaking BME women and girls, extending the work they already do in the LAWA Advice Centre and outreach project through drop in sessions and prevention and empowerment work. Women and Girls are involved as change makers, offering peer to peer empowerment and advocacy.
www.lawadv.org.uk

London Black Women's Project: This project aims to empower women through shifting the dynamic of service provider and service user, by giving the women more agency. They have introduced a method of assessment called Vision of Me, which allows service users to identify their needs and choose their support method through a co-production methodology.
www.lbwp.co

The Maya Project: Led by Sahali Ltd, the project 'aims to work with over 2000 women and girls [aged 11+] over a 4-year period. Half of these women will access a pathway of support that meets their specific needs whilst other women will benefit from training, support, awareness raising and activities that improve health and well-being.'
www.mayaproject.org.uk

Savera UK (Merseyside): A project that aims to deliver a 1-1 service with women suffering from harmful practices and/or domestic abuse from BME communities. 'The support we offer is holistic, as we support [...] additional needs ...[...] and work with other agencies to provide care, support and advice in a wrap-around service. Engage with young people in schools and communities to inform them about harmful practices and domestic abuse with the aim of reducing incidences of harmful practice and to offer educational sessions. Engage community members by running embedded focus groups to raise awareness.'
www.saverauk.co.uk

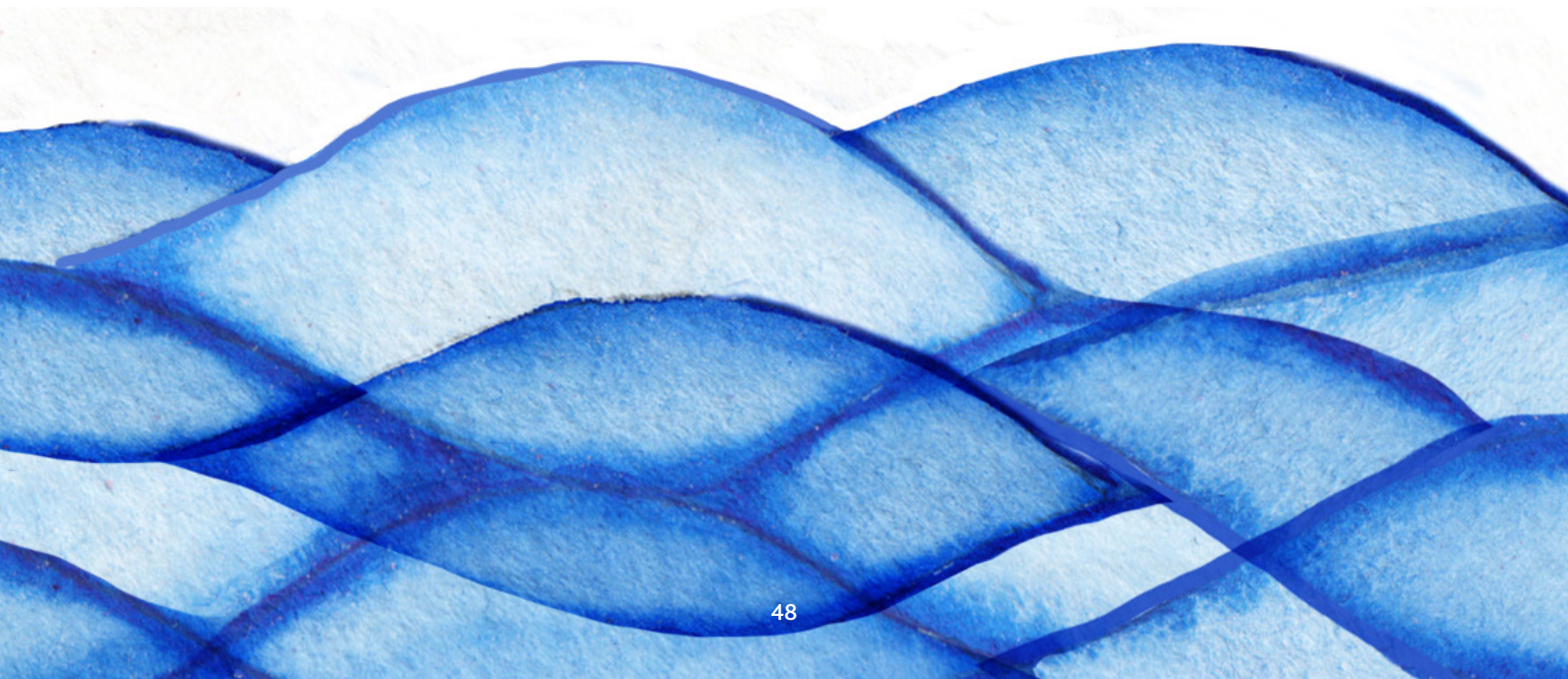
Somali Integration Team: The Somali Women's Empowerment and Employment Project (SWEET) provides Somali women in Tower Hamlets (TH), Newham and Hackney with a Somali Women's Hub, providing a space for skills development through 'informal learning, volunteer placements, assisted job searches, mentoring and the launch of a food-based Social Enterprise.'
www.muslimwomenscollective.org.uk/somali-integration-team.html

Southall Black Sisters: The project has expanded its existing advocacy service, with additional advocates to 'enable prevention through early intervention as well as crisis and long-term interventions to resolve multiple problems through tailored, wrap around services' as well as enhanced prevention and outreach work to encourage more referrals.
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Stitches in Time: The Sewing Support Network is a network of sewing social groups taking place in community centres and schools. The group provides a peer led support network as well as volunteering opportunities. The groups give the women who attend an opportunity to build supportive networks as well as learn English through the groups.
www.stitchesintime.org.uk

Women & Girls Network: This project was set up for 'women and girls presenting with complex, high-risk needs primarily associated with experiences of gendered violence.' It delivers a person centred and holistic service through offering an integrated advocacy and counselling service that offers individualised pathways and provides a single point of contact and coordination with other health and social care professionals.
www.wgn.org.uk

The Zinthyia Trust (Leicester): The project provides 'support for women and girls including advice, guidance and practical assistance on issues such as; domestic violence/abuse, isolation, confidence building, money/ debt, welfare/benefits, utilities/energy, housing, training, employment and self-employment.' The project does this through 1-1 support/counselling, peer mentoring, and drop in support.
www.zinthyiastrust.org



2. Young Women and Girls Cluster

A Way Out: The Blossom project delivered by A Way Out provides outreach and engagement as well as targeted support for young women facing multiple disadvantages. Through a flexible approach young women's support workers are providing holistic support and advocacy.
www.awayout.co.uk

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid: 'Seerose' is a specialist refuge being set up by Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid, aimed at young women who have experienced abuse. The project further provides support in the community.
www.bswaid.org

Chayah Project: The Reach Programme is set up to provide holistic support to young women via a peer mentoring approach. The particular focus of the project is to improve young women's life skills and employment outcomes.
www.chayahgroup.co.uk

The Girls' Network: The project is expanding their mentoring work with young women and girls into remote areas across the UK.
www.thegirlsnetwork.org.uk

Noa Girls: The project aims to expand their reach within the orthodox Jewish community in North West London to provide support to a greater number of vulnerable girls and young women. The support is provided through a keyworker approach.
www.noagirls.co.uk

Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC): OSARCC is delivering the SEE Project which is a holistic support service aimed at girls and young women affected by sexual violence.
www.osarcc.org.uk

Solace Women's Aid: The project is developing a programme led by young women and girls to empower vulnerable young women and girls. Their work consists of the development of a network of champions and young people advocates who provided support to young women.
www.solacewomensaid.org

Venus: Step Together is the project delivered by Venus supporting women and young women who have lost their child into adoption or public care. Each woman receives person-centred support focused on the individual needs.
www.venuscharity.org

Wild Young Parents Project: The WILD - Change for Young Mums project provides holistic support for young women who are going through safeguarding, care or adoption processes with regard to their children. Support available includes peer support, advocacy and keyworker support.
www.wildproject.org.uk

WomenCentre Ltd: WomenCentre's Project 1325 gives girls and young women access to early intervention support and is delivered in two geographical areas.
www.womencentre.org.uk

Young Women's Outreach Project: The Camomile Project extends the work the Young Women's Outreach Projects provides, both in terms of geographical reach and number of young women supported. Support on offer includes specialist support in domestic violence and counselling.
www.ywop.co.uk

You're Cherished: Cherished is expanding its delivery of services to vulnerable girls and young women. Provision includes one-to-one mentoring support, group work and a community group.
www.cherisheduk.org

3. Women's Centres Cluster

Aspire Learning, Support and Wellbeing CIC: Aspire's 'Supporting Sister's Service' provides Peer Mentoring and Befriending; Confidential Listening and Advocacy; Social Support Groups; and a Women's Wellness Service. It encourages and enables women to raise their aspirations and achieve their full potential.
www.aspire-northeast.co.uk

Greater Manchester Women's Support Alliance: Led by Stockport Women's Centre, this alliance offers women-specific services in the criminal justice system. It was formed from an alliance between different services operating within this space across 10 local authority areas and the centre operates as a central hub for referrals.
www.gmwsa.org.uk

Inspiring Futures Partnership CIC: This project provides 'vulnerable' women in the Oldham area with a space for developing their life and social skills as well as their personal wellbeing. It is a partnership between various initiatives aimed at helping Oldham women.
www.inspirewomenoldham.co.uk

The Marylebone Project: TREES is an aspect of the Marylebone Project's offer to homeless women in the City of Westminster. It offers a space for women to be able to identify and gain life skills in a free-of-charge female only environment.
www.maryleboneproject.org.uk

The Nelson Trust: This project operates in Gloucestershire and Swindon and offers support services to women with complex needs.
www.nelsontrust.com

The Nia Project: The Huggett Women's Centre is run by The Nia Project for women and girls (aged 11+) primarily in the Barking and Dagenham area of London. Its focus is on domestic abuse and sexual violence, though the centre is open to all.
www.niaendingviolence.org.uk

Trevi House: Project Sunflower was launched by Trevi House, a rehabilitation centre for mothers with substance or alcohol abuse issues in Plymouth. It offers a variety of activities including peer mentoring, a social enterprise and advice.
www.trevihouse.org

WOW! Women on the Wight: A women's centre on the Isle of Wight for women and girls to access information and support. It is aimed at women experiencing a range of difficulties and was set up by Wight DASH, a former women's refuge on the Island.
www.wightdash.co.uk/wow

Women's Community Matters: This project is a 'one stop shop for women specific services' in Cumbria. It provides services around education, mental and physical health and promoting issues that are close to their beneficiaries.
www.womenscommunitymatters.org