



HER CENTRE LIMITED



To engage, enable and empower women to move away from abuse, and to move **forward** with their lives

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# Her Centre Annual Report 2023-2024

## SECTION 1: ONGOING SUPPORT TO WOMEN EXPERIENCING ABUSE

Her Centre continues to receive high levels of referrals, with an increase of **31%** on clients engaged from 5 years ago. This year we had **1058** referrals which is a slight decrease from last year of just 58 referrals. Our engagements including women attending our one stop shop were **749**. We are seeing more women with complex challenges that can be a barrier to leaving abuse, such as mental ill health, substance misuse problems, and having unsettled status in the country. For these reasons many women need to try leaving a number of times before all the support they need is in place to succeed. Our recent grant from City Bridge Trust will allow us to employ a complex needs domestic violence advocate to better support women facing multiple challenges.

We can often help women experiencing abuse who have unsettled status to access advice on the right to remain and benefits, as well as to leave abuse, but many don't realise we can offer this. To get this message out we have expanded our outreach to both Eltham and Thamesmead. We continue to run our 3 basic English classes for 12 weeks 3 times a year, and inform the students of our range of services, which can also lead to some women seeking help with domestic abuse.

## SECTION 2: PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES

Below are the outcomes we gathered from our exit survey with women we support. They show lower levels than last year reflecting the increase in complex cases where women are less sure that they are safe and so less confidence and feeling of self-control. We hope our new post and our joint work with the council's Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme will improve this. Fortunately, women still show strong awareness of where to access help.

### Using a Survey of Service Users:

- Services users that are confident that they can stay safe.
- Service users that are aware of where to access help and support if needed.
- Service users that feel more in control of their lives.
- Service users that have increased levels of confidence.

April-  
Mar  
%

87
93
78
74

### **SECTION 3: TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR GPs ON RECOGNISING ABUSE**

Our Health programme has been renewed again for 2024/25. This is a training and support programme where Her Centre provide Greenwich GP practices with specialist training and then takes referrals from the surgeries to support women into safety. We have amended the training to be done as open training for all GPs run 6 to 8 times a year, rather than running for each surgery, as this will better allow new GP staff to get trained. We trained **73 GPs** last year and had **50** referrals.

### **SECTION 4: SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN ACCESSING HOUSING**

Our Housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) post is based in the council Housing Options team two days a week supporting women who present as homeless due to abuse. This post has built strong links with housing and given additional support to women to understand where they can stay safe. We have worked to improve the types of temporary housing clients find themselves in, but recognise the lack of housing available, and press to keep families out of hotels with no cooking facilities. Last year we supported **176** women referred through housing or with housing as their primary need.

### **SECTION 5: Support for Children of Families where there has been Abuse**

Our Children's IDVA continues to work with children and families affected by abuse, taking referrals from Children's Social Services and once children are engaged referring to counselling provided by Deborah Ubee Trust. This service focuses on the child's experience of living with abuse in the family and works to help children come to terms with the changes in their lives, to understand what a healthy relationship is and to build better relationships with their non-abusive parent.

### **SECTION 6: SUPPORT FOR GIRLS WHO EXPERIENCE ABUSE.**

Our project for teenage girls continues and has helped girls facing a range of challenges including bullying as well as abuse by their peers. We have had high levels of engagement by working with other support providers to best meet girls on their own terms and then provide one to one sessions on consent, healthy relationships and look at building up their resilience. Girls and young women face huge challenges where boys are not challenged for their abuse. We are fortunate that the Violence Reduction Unit are funding us to work with teachers in secondary schools this year to give them the tools to discuss misogyny in a way that boys and girls can respond to positively. This work starts from September 2024.

### **SECTION 7: SEXUAL ABUSE SUPPORT**

Our Sexual Violence advocate supported **60** women who experienced sexual abuse either from within a relationship or from casual acquaintances or strangers and **14** cases of stalking. We also supported **14** women experiencing honour-based violence, **6** women whose children were at risk of female genital mutilation, **5** women who were trafficked, and **3** fleeing a forced marriage. Henry Smith continues to fund our Sexual Violence Advocacy work.

## SECTION 8: GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

Our weekly support group continues to run with a counsellor facilitator but as a peer led group, and we refer clients to partners Deborah Ubee Trust for individual long-term counselling. In all **103** women attended group and individual counselling.

## SECTION 9: BASIC ENGLISH CLASSES

Our basic English ran 3 courses 3 times a year with **54** attending over the year. We also ran our confidence building course for **10** women and our parenting workshops for 22 women.

Picture from Training & Info Day.



## SECTION 10: EVENTS

Her Centre held 3 open events in 2023-24, with a range of themes. The first in June looked at the Housing Crisis and how it was impacting women. Several women raised their own pain at having to live in hotels with their children with no cooking facilities, and both the cabinet lead for Housing and the assistant director of housing were there to take questions and hear people's concerns and experiences. Our October event focused on Young People and situationships, which included an workshop from a Little Fish and talks from our own Young women's Advocate as well as a talk from the cabinet lead for Community Safety and had a really positive response from both students and the wider audience.

The final Open Forum on International women's day was on Mothers and Others and had talks from our own Children's Advocate as well as Young Mums, East Childrens' Centre Director, Pause service that supports mothers with children in care and Amour Destine that supports care leavers. In all we had **173** people attend and had good feedback from all **3** open forums.

We also ran two Training and Information days to help women access further educations, accredited courses for work qualifications and job placement opportunities. In all **75** women attended our two drop-in days and spoke with our wide range of stall holders, including DWP, Twin Employment, GCDA, Grip, Volunteer Centre Greenwich, First Step, Greenwich Local Labour and Business, Southeast London Community Energy and Live Well.



Her Centre staff at the Housing Crisis, Open Forum Event - June 2023

## SECTION 11: ONE STOP SHOP AND THE ADVICE HUB

Though we are no longer directly involved in food distribution, we are still helping families who need it access the weekly Clockhouse food as well as covering the advice hub with other key advice agencies. Our One Stop Shop has seen numbers increase by **22%** from last year as we come out of restrictions, with **289** women attending our weekly drop-in sessions at Clockhouse, St Mary's in Eltham and the Moorings in Thamesmead. All three sessions are linked to the advice hubs that run in the same locations on the same day and time.

## SECTION 12: TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS

Her Centre has run training for our stakeholders this year including Stand by Me, teaching men and women how to be active bystanders where they see sexual harassment and abuse in public, as well as our GP training, our training for council staff and other volunteer sector agencies on our work. We ran our 3 levels of basic English courses, parenting courses and

confidence building for women we work with, and for our staff ran refreshers in our data base and safeguarding children, wellbeing session, and in substance misuse, equalities awareness and motivational interviewing. We have run awareness training for women champions from diverse local communities, to ensure they know what services are available and encourage women to support other women. Our champions have also attended safeguarding training and brought a wide group of women together for health training. This is funded from the new increase in our Equalities grant from Greenwich council.

### **SECTION 13: FUNDRAISING**

Her Centre was looking at a large deficit in November for the current financial year but now have a much smaller gap to fill. Our fundraising with the Big Give match funding programme was much smaller last year due to only one round rather than two, so we hope to increase our donations in the current year. While we are managing, short term grants from central government often limits the depth of service we can provide to the most complex cases, who need numerous calls and appointments to stay engaged. We are grateful to City Bridge for funding for 5 years for our complex needs post.

### **SECTION 14: THE COMING YEAR**

Our work with women experiencing abuse continues with phone and face to face support depending on what works best for the client. Our One Stop Shop expansion will be promoted, to increase the take up in Eltham and Thamesmead. Our English classes are still hugely popular and give us a platform to inform women of our wider services. We continue to develop prevention work and will develop and run training for teachers from September, working in partnership with Little Fish Theatre. We continue to work closely with the Violence against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership group and with our user steering group who actively voice their views, at both local level through council meetings and events and at national level such as when speaking with the Ministry of Justice on family courts.

The team continue to work extremely hard and face high numbers of clients to support, but they stay focused on supporting women to make their own choices. We face another year that starts in deficit but are confident we will find enough money to meet our service commitments, as we did last year. Our board of trustees continue to provide support with their range of skills and experiences and will help us to keep the service meeting women's needs in Greenwich.

### **SECTION 15: FUNDERS**

Her Centre would like to thank all our funders, especially Greenwich council who now fund us through 5 different funding streams. We would also like to thank Henry Smith, City Bridge and Lloyds Foundation, who have all funded us over multiple years and projects, and Brook Trust and Charles Hayward for funding our outreach and drop in work and our work with teenage girls. We continue to receive a grant from Health for our Health Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate, and also had funding from Garfield Weston and Sara Charlton, Goldsmiths, Peabody and TUUT charity. The Home Office funded our stalking project that ended in October. Thank you all for keeping our work alive. And a special thanks to Linda Moylan and

Louise Hatch for running the Her Voice event during International Women's Week, that raised £1000 for us, and to Mycenae House for giving them free room and support for the event.



**Louise and her band at the Her Voice Event, at Mycenae House in March 2024**