

HER CENTRE LIMITED



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

Her Centre Annual Report 2024-2025

Ongoing Support to Women Experiencing Abuse:

Her Centre continues to receive high levels of referrals, with an increase of **12%** on clients engaged from 5 years ago. This year we had **1105** referrals which is an increase from last year of 98 referrals. Our engagements including women attending our one stop shop were **835**. 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 grant from City Bridge Trust and Charles Plater Trust has allowed us to employ a complex needs domestic violence advocate and we have brought in more training for the team around mental health and substance misuse. We continue to look at how we can hold women facing this combination of 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 expanded our outreach to both Eltham and Thamesmead, and now these are weekly we are seeing a gradual increase in uptake. 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 from these classes seeking help with domestic abuse. Our Community Champion volunteers have increased our engagement from the Nepalese and Somali communities again raising awareness of our services.

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.

24/25

Survey of Service Users:

%

Services users that are confident that they can stay safe.

97

Service users that are aware of where to access help and support if needed.

100

Service users that feel more in control of their lives.

95

Service users that have increased levels of confidence.

94

Training Programme for GPs on Recognising Abuse:

Our Health programme provides training and support to Greenwich GP practices. All GPs are invited to specialist training and our Health IDVA takes referrals from the surgeries to support women into safety. We trained 109 GPs last year and had 79 referrals, of which 44 were high risk referrals at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference, or MARAC. When the programme started, we received very few GP referrals and no referrals from GPs went to the MARAC.

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 175 women referred through housing or with housing as their primary need.

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. In the past year we worked with 75 children.

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 for a second Young IDVA, as well as to work with teachers in secondary schools to give them the tools to discuss misogyny in a way that boys and girls can respond to positively.

Sexual Abuse Support:

Our Sexual Violence advocate supported 55 women who experienced sexual abuse either from within a relationship or from casual acquaintances or strangers and 18 cases of stalking. We also supported 13 women experiencing honour-based violence, 2 women whose children were at risk of female genital mutilation, 11 women who were trafficked, and 3 fleeing a forced marriage. Henry Smith funded our Sexual Violence Advocacy work for the past 9 years.

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 **48** women attended group and individual counselling. We have also started a group for mothers abused by adult children, which is an area we are seeing a large increase in referrals.



Support Group

Basic English and other Classes:

Our basic English ran 3 courses 3 times a year with **156** attending over the year. We also ran our confidence building course for **14** women and our parenting workshops for **19** women. Our Community Champions brought in women from their communities to attend both our health awareness sessions and a money management session, with XX attending over 3 events.



Our English Students and Teachers - December 2024

Events:

Her Centre held 3 open events in 2024-25, with a range of themes. Our June Open Forum looked at services for women who are lesbian, bisexual and transexual with Metro and Star as well as Her Centre promoting our support. This has led to an increase in women from the LBT community who are taking up our services. Our October event focused on Young People and how to talk about misogyny, introducing our training for school staff as well as our partners in the My Ends project who provide a range of services for young people.

The final Open Forum on International Women's Day was on Women and Creativity and had speakers who are artists, photographers, writers and poets, as well as 4 singers, all sharing what had inspired them to take up their art, and how it made them feel. In all we had 168 people attend and had good feedback from all 3 open forums.

We also had a holiday celebration last December for women and their children with **85** attending for food, games, dancing and presents. In August we took **62** women and children to Broadstairs beach for the day. Both events were very popular even though the weather was a bit grey in Broadstairs this year!



Our October Open Forum on Young People and talking about Misogyny

One Stop Shop and the Advice Hub:

We continue to help families who need it access the weekly Clockhouse food as well as covering the advice hub with other key advice agencies. We also have funding to give small grants directly to our clients for emergency food when living in hotels, for transport to refuges, and to meet other urgent needs. Our One Stop Shop has seen **230** 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.

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 continues to bring in funding every October, with this past year's focus on counselling for young people. The great local singers Linda Moylan and Louise Hatch did another fundraiser for us in March raising **£1000**. Thanks to them for their ongoing support and to all the team at Mycenae House for giving them free space and tech support on the night. Ellie Brown's runners did a fundraising run for us in February and raised **£2063**. We so appreciate this local support from those who live in Greenwich and care about our work.



Linda Moylan and Louise Hatch

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.

The Coming Year:

We provide our support to women experiencing abuse continues using the format that works best for them, over the phone, face to face or with third party joint meetings. 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 for teachers, 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 and health meetings and events and at national level such as when raising issues through Safe Lives and the Home Office VAWG meetings.

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.

A new CEO, Naomi Smith, starts in July to bring fresh ideas and stronger engagement more widely. This will be a full-time post, giving more time to expand work with corporate funders and further develop our impact reporting.

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 the National Lottery, 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 funding from Garfield Weston and Sara Charlton, Goldsmiths, Peabody and Hyde Housing. The Violence Reduction Unit have kindly funded us for two projects, our training for teachers and a full time young IDVA. Thank you all for keeping our work alive.