Womens Health Matters reduces health inequalities experienced by women from communities across Leeds. We work with women who have unequal access to health and support services, due to poverty, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or traumatic personal experience.

Our outreach work allows us to broaden our reach to a wide range of women who have often found it more difficult to work with statutory services. Through group work, peer support and intensive 1:1 support we create a safe environment where women can build trusting relationships and begin to recover their health and regain control of their lives.

Womens Health Matters

“Thanks to Womens Health Matters I feel a lot better. I’ve left the person who mistreated me and realised I don’t need to be with anyone to be happy. I’m a lot more confident, I’ve got my fire back about me.”

Over 80% of women we work with intensively have improved wellbeing, better physical health and feel more empowered to make their own choices

| 5505 women reached by our services | Intensive support for 615 women |
| We worked with women and girls aged 13 - 88 |
| We worked with 122 asylum seekers | DV support for 179 women |

CHAIR’S REPORT

2015-2016 has been a year of significant progress for WHM. In the last year we have continued to offer high quality services to some of the most vulnerable women in Leeds. We thank our funders for enabling us to do so. Our approach enables us to respond to the complex lives and issues many women face, through support that is tailored to each individual. Choice and a path that meets each women’s needs is integral to how we work.

There are of course ongoing and significant challenges for all third sector organisations and WHM is no exception. Funding is tighter than ever before and the public sector support available to those most in need is ever-decreasing. WHM succeeds because of the women who use our services, volunteer to help others, work for us in paid positions and who make up the Board of Trustees. In spite of the increasing additional demands that are placed on all of these women, I know that they will continue to contribute their time, energy and vision. I would like to say a huge thank you to all of them for this and for making it such a privilege to be Chair.

Alison Cater
GROUP WORK

420 group sessions run

Group work is at the heart of WHM’s approach - creating a safe space where women draw support from one another to talk about issues often for the first time. Groups also offer those who are reluctant to engage with 1:1 support the chance to begin building trusting relationships and allow them to contribute at their own pace. This year we expanded our Domestic Violence work and geographical reach with new groups in outer South and West Leeds. WHM was awarded funding for Footsteps, an innovative group for women whose children are being cared for by someone else (either through adoption, special guardianship orders or foster care). We support women to understand the issues leading to their children being removed and give them a chance to plan for the future. An evaluation by Leeds Beckett University of The Key, our young women’s project, showed that coming to our groups has led to 80% of women feeling better about themselves.

VOICE

WHM has a strong commitment to ensuring women’s voices are heard. Through our research and evaluations, our contribution to a range of consultations and longstanding relationships with a network of organisations and strategic forums on teenage pregnancy, young women and domestic violence we make sure the experiences women share with us can also inform and influence change. This year our DV groups worked with Leeds City Council to develop a safe app for women experiencing abuse.

WHM chair the Leeds Maternity Services Liaison Committee, bringing together women and health professionals to shape and improve maternity services. Our involvement in implementing the Leeds Maternity Strategy included speaking at the strategy launch and chairing a cross sector working group which has developed a pioneering maternity pathway for women with learning difficulties/disabilities. We were one of 12 women and girls’ organisations to form the new Women’s Lives Leeds consortium. With Big Lottery funding the consortium will use its collective knowledge and experience to deliver a 4 year project reaching greater numbers of Leeds’ most vulnerable women and girls, ensuring they receive holistic, joined-up support.

ACCESSIBILITY & OUTREACH

Information and advice to 2143 women

By focusing on the woman rather than single issues we work successfully with women experiencing a combination of different issues including disability, CSE, historic or ongoing sexual abuse, FGM, poverty and mental health problems. WHM’s proven record of being able to reach out and work with a diverse range of women has led to our cancer screening work being extended. Working across projects we delivered cancer screening sessions to more than 500 women from BME communities. Women told us they were often more likely to go for screening after speaking to us. Through new partnerships our SEEN project has been delivering additional health education, including sessions on sexual health and domestic violence, to women with learning difficulties/disabilities.

PEER SUPPORT & VOLUNTEERS

1442 Volunteer hours donated

“More than 80% of women we work with say we provide support that is unavailable anywhere else.

57% of women we work with have a history of domestic, emotional or sexual abuse.

More than 80% of women we work with who have a history of domestic, emotional or sexual abuse.

Women across our projects are offered opportunities to increase skills and confidence and to draw on their personal experiences to support others. Our SHINE project trained 16 volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including asylum seekers and women from Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities, to offer other women health information, raise awareness of sexual health issues and signpost to services. These amazing volunteers reached 1395 women, breaking down cultural and language barriers. Women told us they find it easier to approach our volunteers because of their friendly, knowledgeable, respectful and non-judgemental approach to discussing difficult or embarrassing issues.

More than 60 women from Rainbow Hearts participated in a pilot mental health programme having identified this as a key issue in their lives. The sessions aimed to empower women when dealing with professionals and women said it increased their understanding and confidence in their own coping strategies and ability to share their learning more widely.

Young mums attending our South Leeds group were supported to take over planning and running a group. The volunteers, who won a community action award from The White Rose Centre, said their experiences gave them confidence to do things they had never imagined they could do. Many volunteers have moved on to college courses, paid employment and university using the skills and confidence they developed with WHM.

ONE TO ONE

357 women received 1:1 support

“We offer a range of intensive support for women, responding to the complex problems they are dealing with. Our non-judgemental and accessible approach lets women take control of their decisions. Through groups we reach a wider range of women and can then identify women who may need additional support. This year we extended our involvement with Leeds City Council’s Caring Dads Programme where we provide 11 support for partners or ex-partners of men who are part of the project. We continue to work with young women across Leeds through our 11 service. Include. For 15 years this successful project has provided support and advice to young women who think they might be pregnant, are pregnant or are already mums. This project has an established track record of engaging women and supporting them to bring about important changes in their lives.

“I want to continue helping people, make a difference in people’s lives and to continue progressing as a person in my life.” (WHM volunteer)
Thank You

Thank you to our funders, partners and supporters whose invaluable commitment to WHM enables us to improve the health and wellbeing of women across Leeds.

Key Funders and Partners

Thank you also to our wonderful volunteers who help us to reach further into the communities of Leeds and extend what we can achieve together. Our Trustees guide the vision of WHM and ensure stability and strong governance.

Trustees
Alison Cater (Chair), Caroline Schonrock (Treasurer), Amie Tolson, Hannah Jones, Emma Dickens, Victoria Thirlaway, Shazma Waqas

FUNDING SOURCES

Leeds City Council (Public Health) £194,900
Leeds City Council (other projects) £92,432
Fees and donations £3,136
NHS and CCGs £14,770
Charitable trusts and Lottery £70,224
Bank Interest £710
Total £376,172

EXPENDITURE

Staff Costs £249,350
Raising Funds £3,817
Admin & Office costs £11,781
Premises £22,132
Governance costs £3,564
Depreciation £5,047
Other Project Costs £89,925
Total £385,616

Surplus project funds from 2014/15, such as NHS funding, have been carried forward in our accounts, hence income received in the year minus expenditure shows, on paper, as a deficit even though these projects were all fully funded.