

Thanks to our Funders



Women Connect First would like to extend our gratitude to all our funders, partners, networking organisations & contacts for their support during 2012/13, we hope to continue working with you in the future. Also we would like to thank our directors board, staff, tutors, crèche workers, volunteers, classroom assistants and all other stakeholders for their continuous dedication, hard work and relentless efforts in delivering successful projects for empowering BME communities in Cardiff.

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WEBSITE: www.womenconnectfirst.org.uk

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/womenconnectfirst

TWITTER: https://twitter.com/Women_CF

BLOG: womenconnectfirst.wordpress.com

YOUTUBE CHANNEL: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcuaQKWMSp8FjjQusL8jYTQ/feed>



ORGANISATION HISTORY, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

HISTORY & BACKGROUND:

Women Connect First was established on 1st March 2001 to empower BME women in Cardiff and South East Wales, by offering them a range of free training services to equip them with the required skills in order to improve their employability. A range of Advice, Advocacy and Counselling service are also provided to give career guidance, personal support and financial advice. WCF is targeting particularly disadvantaged, isolated and marginalised Black and Minority Ethnic women, who are experiencing multiple layers of discrimination and exclusion in accessing services and employment.

ORGANISATION AIMS:

- To empower BME women especially vulnerable, disadvantaged, marginalised, deprived and isolated ones, who suffer from discrimination or any form of abuse by helping them to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to the Welsh life for 'Better Wales'.
- To promote Equality, Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion, Equal Opportunities, Social Justice and Racial Equality.
- To maximise the participation of BME women in Welsh society by tackling the barriers they face and enhancing their opportunities of training, education and employment.
- To raise the awareness of mainstream organisations and individuals in Welsh society of BME women's specific cultures and needs and the positive role they could play to enrich the Welsh society.
- To bridge the gap between BME communities and the mainstream society.

ORGANISATION OBJECTIVES:

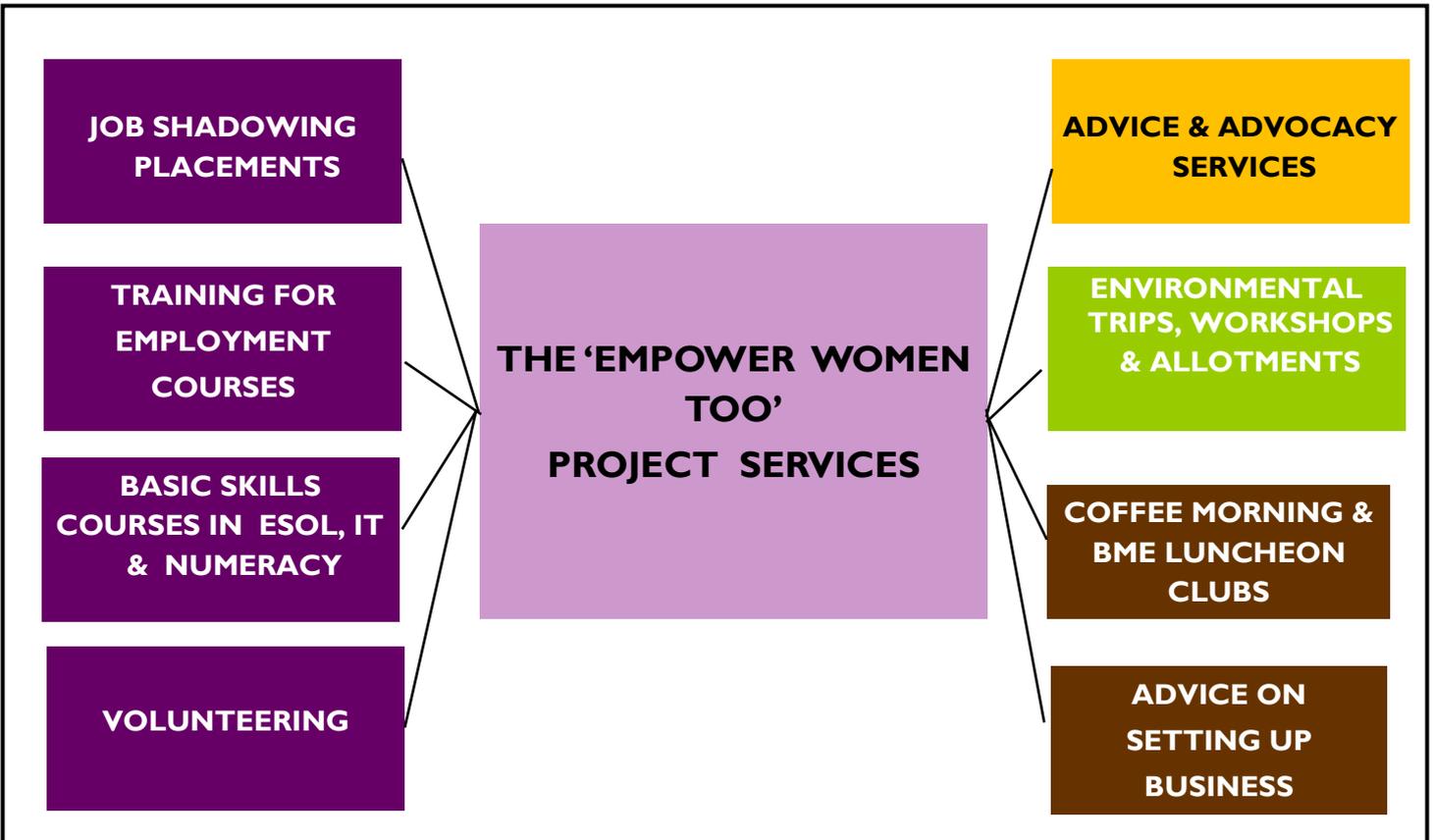
- To enable BME women who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion to have access to training, gain new skills, realise their full potential and improve their economic status.
- To provide Advice/Counselling/Mediation/Career Guidance, Personal and Emotional Support to BME women in Cardiff and South East Wales.
- To provide an opportunity of Volunteering to BME women to build their confidence, gain work experience in a supportive environment and move into employment.
- To provide Translation & Interpreting Services and a referral and signposting system.
- To provide free child care services for pre-school children, whose mothers are participating in WCF activities.
- To link with similar organisations locally, regionally and nationally for the exchange of expertise, information and partnership projects.

OUR PROJECTS 2012-13

The 'Empower Women Too' Project

This was the 3rd and final year of the 'Empower Women Too' project—Phase II. The project aimed at making a contribution towards the sustainable development of BME community in Cardiff and surrounding areas in South East Wales. The 3 year project focused on finding ways of addressing social, economic and environmental issues in an integrated way.

The project successfully delivered its outcomes and has exceeded its projected targets.



“In 2012/13 the total beneficiaries of our project were 877 BME women & 197 children”

“During the 3 years of the project the total number of beneficiaries were 2214 BME women and 429 children. We worked with over 400 organisations”



Healthy Lifestyle Project

WCF successfully secured funding from Comic Relief – Community Foundation in Wales for running a 2 year Healthy Lifestyle Project starting from January 2012. As part of this project WCF is running Zumba fitness classes & accredited 'Get cooking' classes focusing on healthy cooking & healthy eating for women. 'The Healthy Lifestyle Project' has enabled us to provide awareness as well as encourage our service users from diverse BME backgrounds living in Cardiff and surrounding areas, to change their attitude towards food shopping, growing and cooking organic food, raise their awareness on the importance of cooking and eating healthy food, the importance of keeping fit and adopting a healthy lifestyle by embedding sports and exercises as a crucial part of their daily routine.

“ 70% of beneficiaries reported increased self-confidence, improved health, increased social networks and becoming more sociable & physically active after taking part in the project”

“ 35% of beneficiaries reported that they feel differences/changes as a result of taking part in the project such as weight loss, improved health & fitness, having a balanced diet and more organised food regimes.”



Personal Testimonials

Pujitha Veravalli (Age: 19-24 ; Ethnicity: Indian)

I started doing Zumba 5 months ago. These are the free classes provided by the Woman Connect First every Tuesday. At the start I felt it hard to do it but enjoyed it a lot. I used to meet a lot of people from different countries and have fun with them. But later on I started doing it better and I improved my fitness a lot. After I joined the Zumba I lost my weight to some extent. I feel very energetic on the day I do the Zumba workout. Now I am feeling very enthusiastic to learn new steps. My body has become more flexible than before. It has improved my dancing style too which was very bad before. It's like a recharge for my life and soul with the music. Zumba has helped me to burn my calories and increased my stamina,

Zobia Zaman (Age: 25- 39; Ethnicity: Pakistan)

I have joined the healthy cooking course for the last four weeks with WCF and it's very informative as well as interesting. Not only I get a chance to meet other ladies with different ethnic backgrounds but have learned a lot about the cooking and eating. Especially about the right portion sizes, different groups of foods, use of less oil/salt and other cooking techniques. It has also given me an understanding of how to shop on a budget and benefits of seasonal vegetables etc. As a positive result to this I have changed my diet a lot especially choosing the brown varieties of rice, pasta and breads etc. I have also learned some new recipes to use more vegetables and pulses. I also attend the weekly Zumba class. It's a very fun way of keeping fit and again meeting other ladies as well. Ladies only class, with the child care provided it also means more opportunities to attend the class as well as to enjoy and move more freely. The morning session energises you for the rest of the day. On the whole I find both healthy cooking and Zumba very beneficial for a healthy and more energetic lifestyle which leads to healthy mums and families.

Intercultural Learning Network - EU GRUNDTVIG Programme

In August of 2011 Women Connect First (WCF), became part of the Intercultural Learning Network programme. This European Lifelong Learning programme aims to create more awareness about the position of refugee women, with the focus on education. The five European partners from Netherland (As the lead organisation), Belgium, Denmark, and UK (Women Connect First & Reading Refugee Group) strive together for the improvement of integration and for the creation of better positions for refugee women to integrate in the labour market. The project started in October 2011 and was delivered over a period of 2 years. It involved reciprocal visits to and from partner organisations with some of their learners who are refugees, in order to learn from each other how and what services are supporting the refugees to help them to settle and participate in public life. Totally around 36 women from Cardiff participated in the project including learners, volunteers and WCF staff and Directors. In June 2012 WCF hosted a visit for around 40 learners and partner organisations to Cardiff.

“This project opened my eyes because I thought I was the only person with a story but this experience proved me wrong. I want to see this project wide spread across the globe”.
(Belgium visit participant)

“It’s very good to know that I am not alone in my wishes in a better society and that all EU is busy in finding more and more solutions for a better society, it’s how it actually should be, together we are strong”. (Denmark visit participant)



Placements from EU Countries

WCF has been working in partnership with the Leonardo Programme since 2011 offering long-term work placements to young women from EU countries. The ‘Empower Women Too’ project has helped WCF in moving a step ahead and forging links with organisations working on a European level. We successfully attracted and forged links with the European Training Services in Penarth, Cardiff for offering long-term work placements for young women from EU countries through the Leonardo Programme. We offered long-term placements for 6 students from Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Slovakia.

‘Bright Tomorrow’ Project

WCF delivered a short project during the period January—March 2013 funded by the Cardiff Council Families First Disability Focus Grant. The project targeted disabled children, young people and their families from diverse BME backgrounds living in Cardiff. It offered a wide range of FREE holistic services to provide additional specialist advice, advocacy and counselling services and support, to enable them to access benefits and mainstream services and make them better informed about their entitlements through the Seminars and focus groups as well as offer them opportunities to network and meet other families in similar circumstances and widen their social networks. The project aimed to support disabled children, young people and their families from diverse BME communities by reducing their barriers, providing advice & support services to improve their lifestyles and overall well-being. WCF was able to advise and support 15 families who have children with special needs; during the short period of time that was designated to the project. The most common factor between all families was the lack of English and limited knowledge and understanding of their children’s disabilities. During the focus group meeting, we identified the common needs for the families, who attended the focus group. WCF arranged 2 seminars, which were run by two specialists: an Occupational Therapist and a Welfare Reform Officer to answer all the questions raised by the families during the focus group, which was held in advance. WCF has worked closely with the families and helped each one of them with their individual needs.

OTHER ACTIVITIES 2012-13

International Women's Day 2013

"Visible women: Empowering girls and women in Wales"

WCF organised the IWD event on 14th March, 2013, at Channel view Leisure Centre. The event was supported through funding from the Welsh Government. The event was organised in partnership with South Riverside Community Development Centre, Welsh Refugee Council, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Taff Housing. Over 300 people from diverse cultures and backgrounds from Cardiff and surrounding areas attended the event. The festival targeted the general public, encouraged participation and attendance from women, men and children from all backgrounds, ages, and cultures. This IWD celebration included a one-day event of information and entertainment, bringing together a wide range of local and national organisations and community groups to display information through stands, performances, speeches and displays. The event mainly promoted, reflected on and celebrated the achievements of women & young girls in Wales as well as empowering young ladies and women from BME communities by encouraging them to fulfil their full potential.



TESTIMONIALS

A Tribute to our Volunteer/Mentor

Amneh Dalloul joined WCF as a volunteer in October 2006. After successfully attending different courses she achieved certificates in mentoring and childcare and became the Job shadowing placements mentor in 2008 at WCF and a crèche worker.

Amneh was a cheerful person who brought a smile to everyone who knew her. She took part in volunteering on environmental trips and had her cheerful stamp in all WCF events. Even when she was diagnosed with cancer she decided to participate at the end of year Christmas celebrations at WCF by cheerfully dancing and socialising.

Amneh passed away on her flight back to Lebanon in April 2013.

Amneh, we will always remember your cheerful presence.



Client Name: Rashida Mamuwala

Ethnicity: Indian

Age Group: 19-24

Background:

I am a computer graduate from India. I have been working as a tutor in India. I am looking for employment and learning opportunities in Cardiff. I am currently volunteering with Women Connect First.



Services Accessed :

Training for Employment course Volunteering and Advice services.

Outcome:

The employment course has been of immense help in improving my resume, job applications & Interview skills. I currently volunteer to assist teachers in IT, Numeracy, ESOL classes & office work. As a volunteer I got an opportunity to conduct an employment workshop with my co-volunteer. The preparation for the workshop has helped me understand the finer details of making an efficient CV. All my work as a volunteer helps me become more efficient with my facilitating and report making skills. WCF has given me exposure to meet women of different ethnicities & learn more about their culture.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

WOMEN CONNECT FIRST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013

INCOMING RESOURCES

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2013 (£)	Total Funds 2012 (£)
Incoming resources from generated funds	550		550	415
Incoming resources from Charitable activities	55,970	288,878	344,848	311,210
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	56,520	288,878	345,398	311,625

RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2013 (£)	Total Funds 2012 (£)
Charitable activities	590	287,678	288,268	252,625
Governance costs	14	1,200	1,214	1,314
TOTAL Resources Expended	604	288,878	289,482	253,939

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2013 (£)	Total Funds 2012 (£)
Net (Outgoing) Incoming resources for the year	55,916	-	55,916	57,686
Balances brought forward	165,831	-	165,831	108,145
Balances carried forward	221,747	-	221,747	165,831

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**Registered charity: 1110834
Company No. 4715832**

Opening hours: Mon - Fri from 9.30am to 5.00pm

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