

Women Connect FIRST

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

"Working to improve the lives of disadvantage communities in South Wales"



WOMEN CONNECT FIRST

Women Connect First was established on 1st March 2001 to empower Black & Minority Ethnic Women in Cardiff and South East Wales by offering a range of services and training in order to improve their livelihoods and employability. The organisation has moved on since and has expanded its services. At present we cater for a wider client group and offer a range of services including advice, advocacy, counselling, and a wide range of training programmes and volunteering opportunities amongst others. WCF targets in particular, disadvantaged, isolated and marginalised Black and Minority Ethnic women, who are experiencing multiple layers of deprivation, discrimination and exclusion in accessing services and employments.

OUR MISSION

WCF mission is to empower and improve the lives of disadvantaged BME women and communities in South Wales, to help them realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to Welsh Society.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES 2014-15

We held our very successful annual International Women's Day celebration. Over 500 women from all over the world participated. This is a unique event in Wales where women from every corner of the globe come together to celebrate diversity and womanhood. The event was held at the Youth Pavilion in Butetown in Cardiff.

During the year the organisation ran three main projects that provided the following activities in relation to our purposes:

BRIGHT NEW FUTURES 'YOUTH CONNECT' PROJECT

"Youth Connect" is funded by the Big Lottery Fund under their Bright New Futures Programme working with young parents aged between 14 to 25. The project aims to improve the lives of young parents who are living in South East Wales by building emotional resilience, self-confidence, personal development skills and widening their social support networks, we help to improve their well-being and abilities to manage key transitions in their lives.

This is achieved by adapting a holistic, co-ordinated approach of diverse, free, joined up services tailored for marginalised communities as well as mainstream Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking young parents (women and men).

This financial year we engaged over 900 beneficiaries in all our activities against a target of 545.

ORGANISATION AIMS

- ✓ To promote Social Justice, Gender and Racial Equality.
- ✓ To offer a holistic service that embraces the diversity of our participants.
- ✓ To maximise the participation of vulnerable and marginalised people, especially BME women by tackling the barriers they face and enhancing their opportunities of training and employment.
- ✓ To raise awareness of the needs of BME communities, especially women amongst service providers and policy makers.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

<p>Parent Nurturing Programme : 48 Young parents have accessed this service in Year 2</p> <p>A 10 week interactive course promoting mental and emotional wellbeing. The aim is for young parents to learn different skills to use with their children for a better family life. This year we ran the programme twice in house and twice in the community in partnership with Barnardo's and Flying Start.</p>	<p>Personal Development Sessions with 1-2-1 support 28 young parents have had 1-2-1 support in Year 2</p> <p>The course is aimed at enabling young parents to develop their emotional intelligence giving them the skills to deal effectively with people and problems in a way that reduces anger and hostility and enhances a life balance, producing creative energy. Beneficiaries also have the opportunity to have a 1-2-1 session to discuss more confidential issues that are troubling them.</p>
<p>Volunteer Opportunities</p> <p>Year 2 of the Youth Connect Project has been very rewarding to the volunteers as we recruited 86 new volunteers against a target of 75 actual volunteers. They come from a variety of different educational and cultural background and used the different skills they had to enhance the delivery of the project. The volunteering programme also incorporated 3 EU overseas volunteers through ETS and some students from Fitzalan High School on work placement. Their knowledge and skills enhanced the delivery of the project enormously.</p>	<p>Trips /Events</p> <p>During the last year 160 beneficiaries participated in three trips and 2 big events. The trips and events are a good opportunity for the Young Parents to improve their interpersonal skills as they interact and socialise with each other cutting across different social, cultural backgrounds. It is also an excellent way to promote social integration.</p>
<p>ESOL and IT provision</p> <p>67 beneficiaries accessed this provision during the last year. Their English language has improved as well as making friends with other attendees and learning social skills from each other. From a teacher's note, beneficiaries are now able to fill in simple forms, make phone calls and carry out their daily tasks with better ability.</p>	<p>Advocacy & Advice</p> <p>147 beneficiaries accessed this provision, total for project to date 282. WCF are able to help all the beneficiaries with a wide range of advice. Most of the advice given has been on training. We refer to other relevant service providers when necessary.</p>
<p>Road Mapping/ Confidence Building course 32 young parents accessed this service in year 2</p> <p>These courses focus on the beneficiary's aspirations and learning how to work towards them. It's about empowerment and raising self-belief by exploring these issues and building confidence with a combination of practical support. During the year 23 young parents attended.</p>	<p>Taster Sessions</p> <p>During the last year we offered taster sessions, including a health and social care, art, photography with their mobile phone, teaching the young parents how to take pictures well with their phone. Finally they had sessions on reflexology and aromatherapy. 12 young parents attended the sessions.</p>
<p>Sailing Trip in partnership with Challenge Wales, 9 parents sailed on the Bristol Channel. They learned essential life skills to help broaden horizons and to improve their employment prospects. They learnt how to be part of a team, develop communication and decision making skills, learn about responsibility and respecting others whilst running a boat.</p>	<p>Free in-house crèche 48 children attend every week during term time. We have Children between the ages 0-5 whilst their mothers are accessing our services. The crèche offers many activities and events such as language & play and baby & play courses for parents. We are working towards registration with the CSSIW during 2015/16 as the demand for the crèche is on the increase and this will enable us to provide longer hours and a more comprehensive service.</p>

GOLDEN YEARS PROJECT

The “Golden Years” Project funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation in England & Wales working with BME older women who are isolated & marginalised facing complex economic, cultural & social issues. The project aims to address these issues in an integrated manner, encouraging good community relations. The project offers a holistic service and a sustained programme of support that enables them to be more independent, empowered and equipped with the necessary life skills that will help them improve their livelihoods.

The project targets those most in need, those who have limited access to mainstream services, transportation social networks, those with limited communication skills, language barriers, low confidence, self-esteem, restricted mobility, etc.

During the last year WCF saw 1,483 BME against the 1,019 target older women take part and attend the activities offered exceeding our expectations.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

- ✓ **ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) & IT provision:** 35 beneficiaries attend the classes weekly to overcome their language barriers, improve their communication skills and overcome some of their isolation.
- ✓ **Monthly Seminars:** Over 400 women attended. Working in partnership with other service providers to raise awareness of the needs of BME older women and an opportunity to share information about available services.
- ✓ **Coffee mornings & luncheon club:** 345 women attended. An opportunity to socialise and build networks of friendship and support. In addition complementary therapies are available.
- ✓ **Advice, Advocacy & Counselling:** 250 1:2:1 sessions were delivered, dealing with a variety of issues including practical and emotional support.
- ✓ **Quarterly cultural heritage trips:** 304 women joined 4 trips during the year.
- ✓ **Volunteering:** 40 BME older women are now actively participating in the planning, development & running of the project, helping coordinate the activities and making decisions with their peers as what activities they like to get involved in .
- ✓ **Networking:** The project has actively engaged with other service providers and decision makers to raise awareness of the needs of BME older women and coordinate better services for our beneficiaries.
- ✓ **Extra courses & activities:** In response to the women’s requests we have provided the following extra activities: Food & Safety, Money management, Leadership skills, training for employment, Introduction to Health & Social Care, Arts & crafts workshops, Story Telling, weekly Yoga, Pilates and cycling sessions. Two big events (summer & winter celebrations) were organised in partnership with other organisations, at which over 100 women attended.

ESOL PROJECT

With funding from the Lloyds Bank Foundation WCF were able to provide ESOL classes for BME women with onsite crèche. The funding is coming to an end at the end of July 2015. The attendance & demand for these sessions has been overwhelming with a waiting list of over 80 people at present, we are applying for further funding to enable us to cater for these group of women and the provision of a fulltime crèche.

We refer to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission’s general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS & PERFORMANCE

Women Connect First provides a place of safety for many women. A place where they can explore and build their skills and confidence, we continue to endeavour to work with the most disadvantaged and disengaged BME women in Cardiff and South Wales to take them through a journey of integration and good community relations.

Over the year Women Connect First saw over 2,500 beneficiaries using and participating in all the different services & activities that we offer.

WCF has had an increase in demand for services. There are over 100 women of all ages on the waiting list to attend our activities with the highest demand being for ESOL and for our crèche facilities.

We have built strong working partnerships with many organisations to maximise & share resources. We are currently working closely with the Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff & Vale College & Severn Road Adult Education centre delivering courses and activities at our centre and in the community.

We have exceeded the targets for all of the projects and have positively responded to our participants needs, we are now providing 1:2:1 sessions supporting young parents with their emotional and transitional needs, relationship counselling, etc.

We have increased our participation and representation at networks and forums at all levels. We represent the needs of BME women at ministerial meetings, Health Boards, at the Cardiff Parenting Forum, at the Elder Peoples Commissioner working group, at the Race Wales forum to name but few. Through our gathering of evidential and knowledge of this sector we are able to influence policy & decision making at local and national levels.

Over the last year we have conducted over 35 focus groups and consultation exercises with over 300 participants. The feedback we received from participants we have used to draft our reports and seek further funding to achieve our objectives.

PROJECT PARTICIPANT QUOTES

“Very helpful project which has really brought a big difference in my life.”

“Now I can have the confidence to speak better.”

“It’s a very good opportunity for my future.”

“I feel more confident in all situations”

“The social activities help me talk about my problems, make friends and meet different people”

“It is a home for a lonely woman”

“One week I don’t come to WCF I feel sad”

WCF has implemented a monitoring and evaluation system throughout all our work that enable us to be transparent and accountable.

It has been a very successful year which has seen many changes. We have recruited new staff, MaryAnn Hale joined us in September as the new Project Manager for the Youth Connect Project, which she has taken from strength to strength. Chelsea Edwards joined us in December as our Admin Officer, she has made a great contribution to the team with her media skills and enthusiasm. Maria Mesa took post in February as the new Operating Director bringing valuable experience in the third sector and a true passion for helping disadvantaged communities.

During the year we have reviewed our five year strategy and the organisation is focusing on building the capacity and confidence of BME women in partnership with others to achieve a more sustainable integration.

During the next financial year we will be working with the board & the staff to increase our funding and capacity to respond better to the needs of our participants.

We will be working in partnership with other sister organisations to use and share our resources more effectively and plan our local and national work in a more strategic manner. We are working towards the Investors in People Gold Award and will be joining the charities evaluation services through WCVA to obtain the PQASSO quality standard. We will also be working towards the Small Workplace Health Award.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

WOMEN CONNECT FIRST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (incorporating the income and expenditure account)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds	Total Funds
Incoming Resources				
Charitable Activities	-	329,386	329,386	324,153
Generated funds	28,673	-	28,673	55,970
Investment Income	598	-	598	1,172
Total Incoming Resources	29,271	329,386	358,657	381,295
Resources Expended				
Governance costs	100	1,567	1,667	1,309
Charitable activities	11,075	327,819	338,894	367,580
Total Resources Expended	11,175	329,386	340,561	368,889
Net outgoing/(incoming) resources for the year and net income/(expenditure) for the year	18,096	-	18,096	12,406
Funds brought forward	234,153	-	234,153	221,747
Funds Carried Forward	252,249	-	252,249	234,153

WOMEN CONNECT FIRST

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