



Annual Report

April 2020 - March 2021

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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Registered Address: First Floor, Templeback, 10 Temple Back, Bristol, BS1 6FL

Charity Number: 125946

Company Number: 6676509

Trustees

Carolyn Hepple, Chair until 7 October 2020

Rachel Riggs, Chair from 7 October 2020

Sarah Hartshorne, Vice Chair from 7 October 2020

Elinor Lewis, Secretary

Patricia Higham

Naomi Yeaman

Sally Olewe-Richards

Margaret Coward

Senior Management Team

Sarah Dagley, Business and Fundraising Manager until 3 November 2020

Colette Byrne, CEO, from 4 January 2021

Chair's Report

This is the Twentieth Annual Report about Broxtowe Women's Project (BWP), which is especially important as we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the charity and describes some of our activities and how we continue to make a very real difference to women and families.

2020/2021 was a year of challenges and success

The staff team have continued to develop the service despite the challenges of a pandemic, and we are proud of what we achieved. This has been complemented by hard work from committed volunteers and input from our service users.

The beginning of the year saw us implementing the plan we had outlined in our Big Lottery Bid and we appointed a Partnership Officer and a Senior Outreach Worker both of whom were able to take up their posts in the beginning of April 2020.

The Outreach Service has remained busy and continues to help women. The restrictions of the pandemic meant that staff worked from home and used primarily telephone support and email to communicate. The staff were still able to offer support and to empower women and help them leave abusive relationships.

Many of these women self-refer to our service. We are still able to respond to referrals quickly, usually within a day or two and always within a week. Our support line is still busy functioning for longer periods.

As well as our on-going outreach work with women experiencing domestic abuse, we have also delivered Freedom Programmes. These again had to be adapted and delivered online. These focus on the attitudes and beliefs of a perpetrator and empowering survivors to understand what has happened to them alongside rebuilding confidence and self-esteem.

The Wellbeing Programme was also delivered mainly through social media. We also developed a number of bespoke wellbeing opportunities for our service users, including virtual walks, and reading groups. We have been able to do some outdoor activities directly with the women in a Covid safe way. It has been important to continue to involve our service users and offering ongoing support.

A major highlight for us in 2020/2021 was to run services throughout the year which were more family orientated.

The Children's Service Coordinator worked hard to support children affected by domestic abuse often seeing them individually in school and retaining contact by phone and Zoom calls where appropriate. This too was affected by the pandemic as schools closed to all but the children of key workers for many months. Both the Children's Service Coordinator and the Therapist kept in touch with the children and their families, although as it was impossible to offer more specialised psychological input as the Therapist was furloughed for some time. We were able to resume face to face work in schools following a detailed risk assessment and it was clear that the children had struggled while unable to socialise and being limited in their activities because of Covid.

To offer a holistic focus on the whole family is still a very exciting development for BWP and something we hope to continue and develop further.

The new post of Partnership Officer replaced the training and awareness post. This has allowed us to offer training about domestic abuse to a wide range of partners. Again, this had to be adapted to online training and meetings. We were able to combine our domestic abuse and training with our communication strategy and target different groups. One continuing development this year was to target businesses. We developed an exciting partnership with a national debt advice company and were able to focus with them on the needs of their employees and service users. Financial abuse is often a significant factor as part of domestic abuse as it takes away both control and opportunities from the victims.

We obtained some Covid funding which has allowed us to improve our Information technology and appoint a Communications officer and some consultancy for website development, which given the reliance on social media has been very important.

All of our achievements and information about our work are shared on the website and social media. This year we have struggled with fundraising as organisations and individuals helping us raise funds or making collections for us, have also been curtailed in their activities because of the pandemic. We did however receive a lot of donations and have been able to deliver parcels to our families to help them through these difficult times.

The work with our volunteers has also been rethought this year as we were keen to support and involve our volunteers without putting them at risk of exposure to the virus. We offered telephone support to all our volunteers throughout lockdowns. We suspended our befriending service and the Counselling Service for a number of months and tried to be creative in finding other ways our volunteers could contribute to the service.

This year has also been an important one in terms of the organisations Governance. Following the discovery of what appeared to be fraudulent activity we have been re-invigorating our financial procedures and policies and developing more thorough office procedures. This also involved liaising with our funders and satisfying them that the financial procedures had been rigorously reviewed and that procedures were in place to ensure their money was safe. There has also been substantial liaison with the Police over this matter which is now with the Criminal Prosecution Service.

Our Trustees continued to meet monthly throughout the year on Zoom. We delayed our AGM until October 2020 with Rosie Hepple continuing as Chair but with substantial support from Rachel Riggs who took over as Chair in October and Sarah Hartshorne who was appointed Vice Chair. We also welcomed two new Trustees in October 2020. One of these Trustees also took on the post of Treasurer. The Board have also set up four new subgroups (HR, Risk, Finance, and Inclusive Practice).

Each sub-group meets monthly and reports to the Board every few months.

These sub-groups offer an opportunity for staff and Trustees to work together on key areas of Governance.

There has been quite significant staff changes over this year, and we welcomed our first Chief Executive Officer in January 2021. We believe this new post will ensure the charity can go forward in the future and offer leadership to the staff team while working closely with the board on the governance of the charity.

I am proud of what the Trustee Board, the Staff Team, all our volunteers, our partners and our supporters have done this past year.

We know the work we do can change lives, but we cannot do it alone.

We need to work together both now and, in the future, to continue to achieve our aims and fulfil our mission.

Rachel Riggs
Chair

BWP VISIONS AND GOALS

Our Vision

A society free from domestic abuse.

BWP's vision is that women and their families who are affected by domestic abuse in Broxtowe are empowered to feel safe, to take control of their lives and to lead safer lives. BWP wants everyone in Broxtowe to have more awareness of all types of domestic abuse.

Our Goals

Women receive an excellent -bespoke service from BWP

We believe that all women and their families who are affected by domestic abuse should receive high quality care and support. We take a holistic approach to deliver excellent services that are tailored to the needs of the individual. Our service users remain at the heart of all our service development.

Women have access to other supportive services

We believe that women experiencing domestic abuse should have access to appropriate housing, emergency services and wraparound support. We work to equip agencies with the knowledge and understanding to effectively support women.

Women are empowered

Women are empowered, able to live safely and take control of their lives.

Our community is aware of domestic abuse

Everyone in Broxtowe has a greater awareness of domestic abuse and its impact.

Children are safe and happy

The children of women experiencing domestic abuse live safer lives and are happy, confident, and successful.

SUPPORTING WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

BWP continues to offer a holistic, wraparound support including a helpline for women where they can have a conversation with a trained Outreach Worker. We continue to offer text support, during this time period we received 2062 texts. Additionally, we support women over email which for some is safer, as they can use their work email addresses meaning they are less likely to be checked and monitored.

Outreach Support

Outreach Workers provide expert support to women. We make sure that anyone who is referred in gets support immediately, no matter their level of risk. Our Outreach team has an IDVA which has specialist knowledge in supporting high risk women. The entire Outreach Team continue to help women who are medium and standard risk to rebuild their lives and look to the future, empowering them and giving them the skills to live safely and independently. With all women, we safety plan and offer practical advice and liaise with agencies such as the Police and the Local Authorities in order to help the women become or continue to be safe, and if needed support

them to flee to refuge. The Outreach Team continue to work with our children's team and counsellors to ensure our women receive a holistic service which is unique to their needs.

Case Study

Farah* emailed our service stating she thought she was in an abusive relationship as her midwife had gone through a risk assessment after she gave birth the same month and this came out as high risk. Farah explained that her husband was controlling and would always check her phone, videocall her when he was out of the house which was rare as he worked from home and be verbally abusive towards her. When Farah had brought this up with her family, they told her that talking like this was making them ill and that she had to stay married to him. Farah's husband became sexually abusive, telling her she cannot have any contraception, nor will he use any and would force himself onto her regularly. Farah came to the UK on a Spousal Visa 9 months prior meaning that she was completely dependent financially on her husband with no means of applying for her own money.

Over an 8-month period an Outreach Worker planned with Farah how she could leave, including looking at applying for the Domestic Violence Concession with the Home Office so she could be entitled for 3 months benefits whilst she applies for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Domestic Abuse Rule. If she is declined ILR it is likely she would be deported back to the country where her family is. During this 8 months Farah's risk remained high, and she was heard at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) twice. Police and Social Care became involved to offer advice behind the scenes and communicate this secretly to Farah. She continued to experience pressure from her family to remain with her husband and Farah herself really deliberated what this would mean for her life if she left with her child. The Outreach Worker continued to give emotional support and practical advice to Farah whilst empowering her that she can leave when she is ready, and it is completely her choice.

Farah decided she wanted to go to refuge and was ready to leave. The problem was planning this safely, as due to Covid her husband never left the house. The only way Farah and her worker had been communicating was by email, and this was getting more and more risky as time went on. Farah strictly did not want the Police involved so we had to think outside of the box. She has a sister in Australia and as the borders had reopened there, she persuaded her husband that they all take a trip out to visit her sister. On their journey the borders closed, and they had to quarantine for two weeks in Europe before going onto Australia. They spent two weeks there and Farah begged her husband to let her, and their child stay for a little longer whilst he returned back to the UK for work.

Whilst Farah was travelling the Outreach Worker liaised and made plans with a refuge for when Farah returns from Australia to get picked up from the airport nearest to the refuge and go straight in. As soon as Farah's husband left, her sister booked Farah and her child a flight back to the UK in the same location as the refuge. The plan came together, and she returned to the UK and was taken straight to refuge where Farah and her child are safe and supported. Farah has been accepted to do a master's degree at a local University and she is looking forward to a future free from abuse.

Outreach Service User Quotes:

"I couldn't put a price on the support I've been given."

"I'm really grateful for everything BWP has done for me, and I would love to volunteer with you to give back."

"I can't thank you enough for all your help. You supported me a lot and were there for me emotionally. I got over so much of my pain because of your support."

"The Freedom Programme changed my life, I have never been able to see these things before and it's helped so much, thank you."

"I'm really grateful for all your support and I know you've always been on my side."

"My worker was brilliant. She is always so calm, all the time. She makes me feel calm."

"Thank you for listening and for all your support, it really has helped me."

"If I didn't have you to talk to, I'd sometimes think I was going mad."

"Thank you so much, I know you're in my corner and I don't have many people who are."

"Thanks a lot for all your support. Your cause is amazing and needed. It was great working with you. You're an integral part of my story and would be mentioned whoever I tell my story to."

"I could not have got through this without the support from BWP. I've never had this kind of support before even from family growing up or friends, I didn't know what to do with it at first. Thank you for all your help."

One local agency rang to tell us:

"Thank you for your fantastic work. I know things will get done when I refer a family to your service, and I am very grateful. BWP are one of the top agencies I work with."

Freedom Programme

We delivered two Freedom Programmes via Zoom during the pandemic, both of which were well attended with 9 women completing.

"The reassurance that I got from the content of the programme, from your input and from listening to others that I am not alone and that the things I have experienced did happen and that it was not my fault".

"I found the programme being done via Zoom was actually much better for me, I was in the comfort of my own home with the ability to turn my camera off if I felt the need to. This I found to be very reassuring during more sensitive sessions."

Wellbeing

During this time, we were able to hold three monthly open Wellbeing events that offered a range of activities and information sources, plus consulting with the service users about what they would like at future events.

Key outcomes were:

- Training women to become 'Reading Friends' - the aim of the project was to use reading as the starting point to a conversation that would reduce isolation and loneliness.

- Women were trained by the local Health Team to become 'Walk Leaders' - the aim of this project was to lead risk assessed walks that would improve both physical and mental wellbeing.
- Created Wellbeing Packs and a monthly Wellbeing Newsletter - [The BWP Wellbeing Project - Broxtowe Women's Project](#)
- Conducted regular 'safe and well' calls
- Introduced our Zoom coffee mornings.
- BWP supported our partners PayPlan with the development of some 'Money Matters' financial resources and families were given access to the resource packs and asked to complete them and give feedback to the PayPlan team, both the families and the developers learnt a lot. This has led to our families being given access to newsletters and resources, with a dedicated reference number if they need financial or debt management advice. We also have access to the PayPlan financial wellbeing microsite, with direct links from the BWP website. This partnership has led to families feeling more in control of their financial situation and how to budget during these difficult economic times.
- Evolving from the Wellbeing project, a small group of service users have named themselves as our 'Wellbeing Warriors' - they are full of enthusiasm and ideas and BWP are helping them to form their own group that will support with fundraising and sharing their lived experience with others.
- We introduced some creative writing sessions and have been overwhelmed by the impressive pieces that have been shared. A set of the pieces titled #DontJudgeMe, alongside some artwork and a children's 'Worry Doll' project were exhibited virtually in a book produced by the National Justice Museum (NJM) in March, this is the start of a year programme with NJM. Here is a link to the project: [#DontJudgeMe - Broxtowe Women's Project](#)

Service User quote:

"I was a little nervous to join the group at first, but I am so glad I did. The other women in the group are so lovely and supportive and I look forward to our meetings and projects. It is unique in that there is a mutual understanding about the trauma that has been experienced that doesn't need explaining if you don't want to. I have made some

amazing friends through the group and love engaging in the activities on offer as well as the projects we come up. The group reminds me I am not alone and picks me up when I forget how far I have come."

Counselling

The Counselling is all voluntary and delivered by one qualified Counsellor and one newly qualified Counsellor. During this period, we supported 4 women – totalling 48 hours in counselling.

We delivered Wellbeing Packs and essential items during October half term to all our service users which amounted to around 50 deliveries, and again at Christmas which included Christmas presents for all the women, children, and young people. This included donations from a range of local groups. Within the Wellbeing sessions, the women created gift bags for around 30 women and their children. We also received donations from some of our service users to share with those in need, and some people who donated goods after looking at our Social Media Platforms.

Service User quote:

"If somebody had told me at the start of counselling that it would be such a hard, rewarding, and emotional day, I would never have believed them...that anxious and worried person at the start of my sessions now feels like I lost a part of me. You became such a big part of my journey, my healing, and my Thursdays. I am really going to miss you."

Achievements

The positive outcomes our team have with the women they support please see below. Please bear in mind that we often support women who have long left an abusive relationship, so will already be physically safe. During this time period we supported 191 women and children.

81% of women feel more empowered after support

76% feel safer after support

80% feel risk has minimised after support

40% fled the relationship

71% felt their skills have increased following support, these skills include being able to recognise tactics of abuse, know how to protect themselves and being informed on legal rights.

During the pandemic we have recognised more so than ever the importance of improving mental health and increasing self-esteem and confidence, and have been working hard to help women that are struggling in these areas:

53% of women felt their mental health improved after support

66% felt their self-esteem has increased

46% have discussed their aspirations for the future with an Outreach Worker

61% felt their confidence had increased

Partnership Highlights:

The Partnership Officer role has become an integral part of BWP reaching across all departments and across all stakeholders:

- attend meetings, forums, and Networking events to engage with a new audience who would be interested in the purchase of training awareness sessions, leading to income generation for BWP.
- raising awareness of the broader issues of Domestic Abuse, the changing nature of abuse, support required due to COVID-19 and the potential impact for their own organisation, staff team and service users. In turn this has introduced discussion about best practice with internal policy & procedure to support any individual experiencing domestic abuse.
- Income generation was an unexplored option for BWP, but targets were exceeded within the first year of this role.

Quotes from Partners:

“Thank you for taking the time to talk to us last night, it was interesting to learn more about BWP and the services available and, sadly, the statistics. I hope that Beeston Methodist Church will be able to support BWP further in the future.”

“Thanks ever so much for your presentation this morning, a really helpful message. If you can give me some dates/times which you might be free to run a one-hour session for Darren (Henry, MP) and yourself to run to businesses that would be really helpful.” MK, Parliamentary Secretary

White Ribbon Highlights:

For White Ribbon Day, and the 16 Days of Activism, we were able to partner with the Broxtowe Borough Council Domestic Abuse Coordinator and colleagues from the Housing & Community Safety team to deliver a White Ribbon coffee morning, attended by the CEO of White Ribbon UK. During the event a poem was read that had been written by a BWP service user, it was very moving and got really positive feedback – a link to these pages on our website is here: [Supporting White Ribbon UK - Broxtowe Women's Project](#)

Children's Service:

The service adapted to support children during lockdown via Zoom and walking sessions, although due to school closures this was in a reduced capacity. All young people that accessed digital support sessions stated they were happy with this interim support and felt less isolated as a result.

Comments from children

"I am sad I won't be seeing you anymore, but I will always remember you and how you helped me".

"I have enjoyed my support it has been nice to have someone to talk too. I have learnt a lot about myself like about having anxiety and i have also learnt a lot about healthy relationships".

Comments from Parents

"Thank you for everything you have done for Cassie* and also for me. Cassie has really enjoyed working with you and we will both be sad to not receive support from you anymore. Although me and Cassie still have a long way to go, we finally feel listened too and you were a big part of that so thank you for everything".

"Thank you so much for working with the girls they really enjoy seeing you and I can see a massive difference in behaviour"

***Names changed**

Treasurer's Report

The financial year of 2020-2021 has seen significant change for BWP's ways of working due to the dual effects of the Covid pandemic and the uncovering of fraudulent activity the previous year. As our 20th year we have seen one of the largest in terms of income, mainly due to the team's continuous hard work to deliver against large, funded activity, as well as the influx of Covid specific funding to help our service users in a time of particularly high and complex need.

Main financial points to reflect on are the changes in personnel at both staff and board level, and a revisiting of our financial plans, policies and procedures due to the experiences of the last 12 months. In terms of personnel change we have welcomed a new Treasurer, Vice Chair and Chair. These positions were appointed in October of the year, and helped to embed a new governing structure via the establishment of the Funding and Finance sub-committee, chaired by the Treasurer with membership drawn from operations and strategy. This has been a key forum to drive forward work in this area and ensure strong communications and scrutiny throughout. We also recruited a new Finance Officer after a long period of vacancy, and a CEO as a new post. These were supported by interim administrative support provided by CA Plus who aided in the bookkeeping for the first half of the year. From January 2021 we have seen a successful structure of CEO and Finance Officer, complemented by Treasurer and other Board members emerge to ensure the necessary skills and oversight are in place to create robust and best practice accounting, reporting and budgeting.

We would like to thank the Lloyds Banking Foundation and other skilled individuals who have offered both structured and ad hoc support during this dynamic time, which have allowed us to review all our financial processes as well as embed the new structure and support the budget setting process for 2021-22. This help has been incredibly valuable throughout the pandemic and has left a lasting legacy of confidence and ownership within the team.

We have also had significant support from our established and new funders throughout the year, allowing for pragmatic, transparent and adaptable approaches to covid activities, ensuring we can use our funding to respond

to service users' needs in the most appropriate way in exceptional circumstances and more information about these services can be found in the Chair's report. As such we would like to thank all our funders and supporters for their generosity during this year.

Moving towards the next financial year, we finish the year in a strong financial position with an increasingly diversified portfolio of funding which we aim to continue to nurture in 2021-22 by creating a period focused on consolidation and stability. This will provide a strong foundation upon which to build our next five-year strategic business plan in 2022.