



FWT – Coventry University Community Grant Fund Project Report (February 2016)



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ABOUT FWT

FWT has 26 years experience of tackling the Social, Health and Economic barriers that women face and empower women to overcome these to enable women to move forward.

FWT is a non – profit organisation built on a small workforce of women for women.

Coventry University Community Grant – overview of Project Plan

- To offer a six hour pw post to staff member to be Project Co-ordinator
- To expand and develop our weekly ‘Women’s Wellbeing’ coffee morning workshops at Hillfields Hub
- To engage more women in Hillfields.
- To run weekly Wellbeing workshops at FWT.
- Develop partnership links
- Engage 50 women to attend coffee morning workshops at both localities
- Nurture entrepreneurial skills of women in the community and showcase talents
- To recruit and engage Coventry University students on the above objective by offering volunteering opportunities to them.

Delivery – up to end of February 2016

The project began at the end of September 2015. So far we have delivered 40 themed ‘Wellbeing workshops’ (coffee mornings) every Wednesday at the Hillfields Hub, and Friday mornings at FWT.

The workshops have been designed with innovative and differing themes each week/month, to keep attendees interested, and to enable women to develop their skills continuously whilst beginning to tackle health inequalities and confidence issues.

Since September 2015, 15 new women have been engaged and are regularly attending the Hillfields Hub Workshops. The women were isolated, hard to reach, and these coffee mornings enabled them to take their first steps forward on their pathways. 25 new women have attended the FWT workshops, with a further 15 attending who were previously engaged. We have delivered additional Wellbeing workshop activities for Coventry Peace Festival which welcomed a further 12 women to the programme.

Wellbeing Workshops are holistic and culturally diverse and inclusive. We have recognised faith days to promote community inclusions, including shared discussions from women of different faiths.



Activities have reflected this and we included Christmas activities around December and celebrations for Diwali and EID.

Wellbeing Impact for women

All women attending the workshops are taking their first steps forward and the holistic element of the workshops enables them to build confidence, build friendships and break down barriers that led them to be previously disengaged. Referral pathways are embedded, with all FWT programmes being promoted to the women with invitations to enrol and attend.

The outcomes and Impact so far have included:

- 50% of women progressing onto informal learning opportunities at FWT including 9 week 'Cook & Eatwell' courses and starting our 'Learn My Way' Digital Literacy courses.
- 5 women becoming active volunteers for FWT.
- 10 women, as a result of engagement, have progressed to formal learning at FWT including working towards ESOL & English qualifications.
- All women are still attending the weekly themed coffee mornings at both localities.



Volunteering element

The Project Co-ordinator, Sheridan Henderson, developed new links with Coventry University through partnership meetings with Heather Parker, and attended a number of University Volunteering Fairs to recruit new learners.

The project was promoted extensively on Social Media with Twitter links with University departments to engage student volunteers.

We actively recruited 4 female students and developed a flexible volunteer programme to enable students to gain professional experience whilst recognising their weekly engagements and pressure of over workloads. In return the students have developed relationships with women of the community, and produced wonderful materials that FWT can use.

We engaged a graduate from Coventry University and have supported her with finding suitable work and furthered her professional working portfolio. What we have gained from her is a committed and professional approach that was instilled from her attending BA fashion course at Coventry University.

With the combination of students and graduates we have developed an enthusiastic, lively and diverse range of young women actively engaging with communities that may not necessarily had experience with. With a major barrier across many universities finding volunteer placements that are suitable for students that have many demanding and heavy work loads and the rise in wanting paid work rather than unpaid, we have offered solutions by being adaptable with many positive outcomes.

Partnership Working

We wanted to develop new partnership links through the project, as well as offering a base for partners to engage. As well as Coventry University, the Wellbeing Workshops were attended by a range of agencies inc Mind, CRASAC, WEA, CEMAP, Community Policing, Artspace and KAIROS.

Partnership Testimonial - CRASAC

“We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support and partnership work with CRASAC, particularly with our outreach work. FWT has provided CRASAC with many opportunities in the past to allow us to talk and raise awareness about sexual violence in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way with the women in your groups.

Once again you gave us this opportunity on Friday 26th February to discuss child sexual exploitation, we found that it was a very successful workshop and the women were very engaged throughout. The women in the group participated in the discussions and we felt many took away useful and practical knowledge on the topic of CSE and how to access support. We felt the women were able to participate because they were in a safe and supportive space where their voices and opinions could be heard without being silenced.

We hope to continue to work in partnership with FWT in the future and are confident that the work delivered will be a success.”



Service user Testimonials

“I love coffee mornings, I love the different activities we do, the women that come into the coffee and the chats we have, it’s great. Sheridan and the volunteer Diana are great they make everything fun and entertaining; it relaxes me and make me feel comfortable”.
- TINA BAL

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Fashion show – Coventry Peace Festival

On Friday 13th of November 2015 we produced a culturally diverse fashion show and represented many nationalities from English to Romanian traditional dress with many beautiful colours of Asian suits. It was about finding peace with one another in a fun and uplifting manor.

FWT asked the student volunteers to record the show. We left the students to edit the film and currently in discussion of having a follow up to this fashion show which would be a film premier.

This project was a great example of volunteers and service user engagement. There was a great turn out for the fashion show and many women brimming with confidence and big smiles.

The film is online and we plan to do official launch by the end of the programme, but it can be seen online here;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkkFw-c1yNw>





© Special thanks to Kirsty Robinson for fashion picture

Issues & lessons learnt

The funding amount was small but we were innovative and brought value for money to the project with additional staff time, volunteering and Management support.

Some students we engaged were unable to commit time to the project. A referral system from the University would have proved useful and is an area to be explored if the project commences again.

There is a need to sustain this project, but after discussion with Coventry University, there isn't current funding which would enable us to continue. FWT is looking at alternative funding streams to see if there are opportunities to explore. Women & partners who have engaged in the project have stated a desire for continuity through testimonials and evaluations.

Project delivery – March 2016

As we approach the final month of delivery, we are culminating the work with a celebration of women through International Women's Week. We have a variety of activities and workshops planned including:

- Taking over City Arcadia Art Gallery Space
- Exhibiting crafts that women have created since September
- Showing a Cervical Screening film, created in partnership with Wild Earth

Report authored by Christine McNaught & Sheridan Henderson - February 2016