



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Women's Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at on Tuesday 25 January 2022 at 11.00 am over Teams.

Present Pauline Woodhouse (Co-Chair), Katy Newman, Cllr Janice Duffy, Tina Collette, Eleri Neale, Irene Bianchi, Alex Rex, Sarah Franklin, April Dawn, Sally Woods, Laura Boatwright, Cllr Danielle Stone, Diana Belfon, Dawn Brett, Divya Terry, Ifeoluwa Adeniran, Debbie MacColl.

1. Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made around the screen.

Apologies were received from Cllr Anna King (Co-Chair), Neelam Aggarwal, Rachel Duncan, Morcea Walker, Debs Burns and Mavis Munderwa

2. Code of Conduct

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. BAME Sub Group Update

The last meeting had to be cancelled due to unavailability of the Co-Chairs. The next meeting was scheduled for 10-11.30am on Tuesday 8 March. Any one who is interested in joining the group please contact Jane.Houston@voicenorthants.org to be added to the list. Eleri Stated that DS Clare Harvey would be attending the meeting to answer questions.

5. Women at Risk Project

The project was set up to be a multi-agency one stop shop to support women at risk of exploitation to county lines/sex trade. A lot of good work was already going on but it was not joined up and required agencies to signpost to each other. Since SWAN had been disbanded in 2013 there was no specialist support for women who wanted to exit the sex trade.

Partners already engaged included
Change Grow Live
West Northants Council

NAASH
C2C Social Action
NHFT
DWP
Bridge
Hope

Cases were taken on if they fulfilled 1 or more of the following criteria but they needed to be ready to make the change:-

- Customer stated they were at risk
- They had historical links to county lines/sex working
- They had current links to county lines/sex working
- Situation they were in put them at risk (ie drug use, homelessness)
- Their behaviour indicated they were being exploited

Monthly case conferences shared information to identify the customer was at risk and provide the support they needed immediately and the provision would be bespoke to the person. They would ensure the person was claiming the benefits they were entitled to so they had their own money, help into accommodation if necessary and to get other types of support as appropriate. They currently had 12 cases for discussion at the next meeting.

Funding had been secured for a 6 week session where they could learn the signs they were being exploited and how to gain self-confidence. This included an away day with activities.

Tina asked if referrals could be made and if the project would ultimately get funding if successful. Laura responded that currently only the partners involved in the project but asked if anyone knew of anyone to send details and she could speak to the partners to see if they were known. Also, it was hoped the project would attract funding for a full time role as it was currently being undertaken alongside Laura's normal job. Kettering had already expressed interest.

Pauline stated that it was a great project, going out to women in crisis rather than getting the women to go to the various services. She also asked if there any room to extend to include community organisations. Laura stated that yes, she had reached out to partners asking for any organisations they knew who were providing support, and asked that they be put in touch.

Irene stated that it would be good to link with Laura as gambling was a hidden harm and these women would be at high risk for gambling to try and get a bit win, or to be forced into sex trade to earn money to pay for someone else's gambling. She asked that anyone they came across to get in touch with Laura providing the person gave consent.

Eleri was concerned that police were not engaged and thought it would be something perhaps for CIRV. Laura stated that they had been asked but they had concerns that it could be a conflict of interest and did not attend any planning

meetings. **Action: Eleri and Laura discuss outside of the meeting.** Laura stated that engagement would really cement the partnership. A lot of names kept coming up and raising red flags.

Cllr Stone stated that it was an amazing project and was very pleased to learn about it. There were a lot of brothels and sex working in Castle Ward including sex for rent and she was very concerned about vulnerable women renting unregulated accommodation. Laura responded that they will tackle all the problems the women bring and access all the services they possible can as long as the women are willing to step away. They were figuring out the best and new ways of fitting with the customer's needs.

6. **International Women's Day**

Cllr Stone thanked the Council for celebrating national days in the way they did and stated that not many local Authorities did this at all or not as well. The only small criticism was that there were many women who could be making the Inspirational Woman presentation – this will be fed back.

Debbie stated that the plan was still to run a scaled down event at the Guildhall. In order to give more space and keep people as safe as possible it was not possible to provide refreshments or live entertainment. This gave the Court Room as well as the Great Hall for stalls so they could be more spaced out. There would be some entertainment and interviews played over the big screens in both rooms. The Inspirational Woman awards would be by invitation only in the Jeffrey Room but would be filmed and relayed down to the big screens so no one need miss anything. It would also be live streamed on the Council's You Tube channel for those at home and available later as a recorded video. There had been 63 nominations for Inspirational Woman with a fairly even split across the 2 categories.

7. **Community Information Exchange**

Diana's role at NHFT was Equality and Engagement Manager and it was a treat to have a women's group. She was more than happy to lend support to this group if required and Forum members we welcome to contact her directly - diana.belfon@nhft.nhs.uk. There were some brilliant women out there and she agreed we should celebrate us! Within the NHS she was working on the mandatory vaccination requirement which, if brought in, would impact on not only existing staff but volunteers, future staff and contractors.

Laura reported they were holding several events including a youth hub at Northampton Library for 18-24 year olds. There had been a decrease in Universal Credit claims for that age group. Face to face appointments were being reintroduced as from Thursday. They were being approached employers desperate for staff,

offering increased wages and flexible working hours which was good for women who have the main care responsibility. Previously employers had said no to offering flexible working times but they were now changing their minds.

April reported that Creating Equalz and NDAS were starting a DA recovery tool kit programme on 21 February for black and brown women who had left an abusive relationship. It had been specifically tailored for cultural needs and was a trauma informed programme. It would be online, on Mondays at 10-11.30am and last for 12 weeks. It was not just for women in refuge or who appeared to have complex needs, but any black or brown woman as long as they had left the abusive relationship. This would be led by April and she was also training other professionals to train. Divya would be the NDAS support and she said she was very glad to be on board and would be trained to take group work.

<https://createequalz.co.uk/domestic-abuse-recovery-toolkit/>

<https://twitter.com/CreatingEqualz2/status/1485871250073432068?s=20>

Alex – gave an update on funding available - as always, if anyone needed more information or support, please contact Alex@ncf.uk.com

Global Goals Fund for Northamptonshire

The Global Goals Fund for Northamptonshire aims to help build a sustainable and safe future for Northamptonshire communities. The fund will focus on the following themes in 2022 which aim to address: decent work and economic growth; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; peace, justice and strong institutions.

This is a rolling programme meaning you can apply at any time and the maximum funding award is £3000, for more information please visit -

<http://www.ncf.uk.com/grants/grant-finder/global-goals-fund-northamptonshire>

Arts Council Let's Create Jubilee Fund

The Let's Create Jubilee Fund will support voluntary and community groups to develop creative and cultural activities as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. This fund has been created by Arts Council England (ACE) with funds from the National Lottery. It is open to voluntary organisations with charitable aims and working towards a common goal which does not have to be based solely around arts and culture.

Groups can apply for amounts between £750 and £10,000. Projects must:

- Focus on art and creativity
- Engage with at least one of the artforms that ACE supports (see below)
- Be high quality and inclusive in their approach
- Culminate in June 2022
- Benefit people in Northamptonshire particularly those on low incomes or facing disadvantage

The closing date for applications is **28th February**, for more information please visit -

<http://www.ncf.uk.com/grants/grant-finder/lets-create-jubilee-fund>

Family Food Aid Fund

Food charities and other community organisations can apply for funding to support access to food to specifically support families with children and young people.

Grants of up to £2,000 will go to small, local charities and community organisations that meet our eligibility criteria. This is restricted funding that can only go towards supporting families on a low income with children and young people.

This is a rolling programme and you can apply at any time, for more information please visit - <http://www.ncf.uk.com/grants/grant-finder/familyfoodaidfund>
Cllr Stone – told the meeting about Rights of Women, a group set up around areas of concern for women and to ensure they were kept on the agenda. It was a non-political group. She was also very concerned, through her work with schools and youth groups and around mental health and that girls often did not feel safe in various locations and had asked the Community Safety team to look at this.

Ifeoluwa was a student at Northampton University and was trying to get into volunteering with NHFT working with Mental Health and had been referred to this group only the previous day. Diana offered to speak to Ifeoluwa outside of the meeting. Everyone welcomed her to the group as a new member.

Irene – said it was very heart warming to see how everyone was linking in so well together. She explained the service had previously been with Aquarius and was now with GamCare and she was calling for women to access the services.

Sarah – explained that Irene was on the treatment side and she herself was on the training side. The training was currently online but would soon hopefully be able to offer face to face as well as being able to attend community events. Irene would be attending IWD with a stall. Women were disproportionately affected by gambling, either their own, or someone else's and it was a hidden harm that needed to be addressed. Since the boom on online gambling and bingo sites it had really exploded. Public Health had started to get involved.

Katy stated that she had attended the training and could really recommend it. Recruitment to the Fire Service was ongoing and there would probably be some more on-call recruitment later in the year.

Tina – the Fire Service had set up a Women's Forum which was going well having had its second meeting. Linking in with this forum was really beneficial. The Fire Service now had more females than it had ever had and soon they would know the percentage of females in the new draft of recruitment. Community Engagement was still on hold due to Covid but should soon be back up and running so they could attend events. Home Fire Safety checks had been ongoing and if anyone spotted anything in the community please refer in and she would write something up so people could recognise things to spot. Pauline asked if she could attend one of the forum meetings as a critical friend, this was welcomed.

Eleri – Any community events coming up please let Eleri know. She asked GamCare if there they worked with suicide prevention as she had previously working in the Coroners Office and been aware of a family where the husband had taken his own life because of gambling debts leaving the wife and son to suffer the effects.

Irene stated that they supported individuals/families affected by someone else's gambling and would refer to mental health service Gambling with Lives
<https://www.gamblingwithlives.org/>

Sally – was an elected member of the Federation of Small Businesses which had free virtual network meetings if anyone was interested in attending -

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/event-calendar/northamptonshire-virtual-networking.html>

She had also been supporting schools but getting local inspirational people in front of

the children. Recently they had a Dragons Den event at NIA with a really good response. She was interested to hear from anyone who would like to get involved. Pauline stated the network meetings were a really good peer support network especially for those starting up, very friendly and inclusive.

Cllr Stone stated that many of the girl asylum seekers were traumatised and had been sexually assaulted. They were not offered any counselling. They were seriously ambitious and needed support to progress and be guided away from the criminal economy. They did not understand the risk and were easily seduced.

Debbie – informed the group that the Knife Angel, national symbol against violence and aggression, would be coming to the county in May, spending 2 weeks in Northampton at All Saints Piazza, then a drive through Wellingborough before spending the last 2 weeks in Corby. There would be various activities during this time. If anyone would like to get involved please get in touch -

forums.nbc@westnorthants.gov.uk

A trial of the required IT equipment for a hybrid meeting was being carried out with the following week's Disabled People's Forum. Hopefully this option could be offered for the March meeting.

8. Items for Future Meetings

Review of IWD

9. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 29 March 11am - Teams