

# Her Centre Annual Review 2015



Empowering women to move **forward** with their lives



**1114**

**Women engaged with  
in Greenwich**

Donate £5  
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to 70070

Improving the quality of life for women with free domestic & sexual violence advocacy, counselling, advice & training.

Empowering women to move forward with their lives.

### **Our vision:**

To eradicate violence against women and girls.

### **Our mission statement:**

To engage, enable and empower women to move away from abuse, and to move forward with their lives.

### **Our value statement:**

Her Centre is a woman-focused, women-led organisation. We believe that domestic and sexual abuse must be tackled both by empowering women and acknowledging the societal inequality that perpetuates and legitimised violence. We are resilient and inspire resilience in the women we support. Her Centre is a safe place where a woman can be listened to – and believed – in an environment of trust and respect.

### **What have we achieved this year?**

- Major awareness event for International women's day on the impact of domestic abuse on children, with over 90 attendees, including our local MP
- Increase in referrals of women experiencing sexual abuse, forced marriage and FGM
- Increase in levels of engagement, especially with younger women, against referrals
- Increased referrals and engagement of women with disabilities
- Secured ongoing funding for sexual abuse work and trauma counselling
- Secured new funding for engagement IDVA post
- Began the Pilot Light project of mentoring support to improve outcomes
- Developed Greenwich wide user steering group to ensure women who have direct experience of abuse can influence local priorities and decision making
- A thorough intervention at a local school to address high levels of sexual abuse, using Little Fish theatre workshops, group therapy for boys run by Tryangle, and both therapeutic group work with girls and individual support from Her Centre.

Left: Women and Democracy event  
June 2014



## Director's report

Her Centre continues to grow, and now has 11 paid staff, 11 trustee board members and 13 volunteers who all work together to provide a holistic women's service. Our focus is on front line services in our Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy service, providing emergency safety planning, practical support, legal advice and counselling to victims of abuse. Our work continues to be of high quality recognised in our SAFE LIVES (formerly CAADA) accreditation.

Our volunteers provide additional counselling (a student therapist), run support groups (from our peer support partner service, Hope, and from an ex service user), and give feedback on our services and on Greenwich services for women experiencing abuse (our user steering group). We also have two new Equalities Champions who will be raising awareness on women's issues, and now 5 volunteers who teach 3 basic English classes.

Our IDSVA service works closely with other domestic abuse service providers, including the police, and we are members of the Greenwich Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference, and sit on the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy Board. Our Young IDVA is part of the New Leaf service, working in partnership with Little Fish Theatre Company and Tryangle Project 2011, to raise awareness of abuse and risk with young people and to provide support to those already involved in abuse. We continue to lead the DV One Stop Shop, and also coordinate the Greenwich Equalities Forum.

Our trustees have been working on reviewing our vision and mission, and developing our long term goals, covered later in this report. Our Chair has worked hard to coordinate the board and further

define their roles, and our new Secretary has greatly improved our records and communication. Our Treasurer keeps our well ordered finances accountable and clear, and our Vice Chair leads on Policy and Personnel. These divisions of roles have worked well, and by further developing our 3 sub committees, the Finance and Facilities subcommittee (chaired by the Treasurer), Fundraising subcommittee, and Policy and Personnel subcommittee (chaired by the Vice Chair), our board are better able to oversee our work. Trustees meet regularly to further develop services, monitor quality and ensure accountability and sustainability of the organisation.

I would like to thank my very hard working staff team, and I would especially like to thank all the volunteers who give so much to Her Centre, both the board, and those who teach, counsel and support the women we work with.

**Stacy Smith**  
*Director*



## Chair's report

This time last year I sat down to write the chair's report during a time of significant change and funding uncertainty. We were however resolute that our service would and very much needed to continue, so it is with great joy that we write to you from a position of real strength and financial stability.

It is without a shadow of a doubt that getting to this point was not easy and would not have been possible without the hard work of all our staff and volunteers. On a daily basis you continue to provide a service that literally transforms women's lives and the communities they live in.

To our board of trustees I cannot thank you enough for the many hours you have generously volunteered. Your work has provided a great foundation of stability for us to build on. To those stepping down this year, thank you so much for all your hard work. To the new trustees joining us, a warm welcome.

This will be my last report as chair and as I reach the end of my tenure, I step down with great pride in what the charity and its trustees have achieved to date. I am full of confidence for the exciting future that lies ahead for our service.

It is the testimony from one of our service users, included within this annual report, that for me truly summarises the work that we do. Our holistic service is there from the point of crisis, ensuring women are made safe and staying with them until they are empowered. And we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with women in our fight to eradicate violence against women and girls, until one day when we hope our work is no longer needed.

**Mariam Lolavar**  
*Chair*

**Right: Santa  
& helper at our  
Holiday celebration**



488

Attendance  
at events

# The Her Centre's Holistic Model



## Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy Service

The IDSVa service has developed to become the heart of the Her Centre. Through the hard work of the IDSVa team we have provided support to over 523, the number of clients who were affected by domestic and sexual violence in the past year. This is in addition to our Young Women's service (part of New Leaf), which continues to provide support to young women affected by domestic / sexual violence and those at risk of sexual exploitation.

The IDSVa service continues to be the main advocacy partner in the Greenwich Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). These partnership meetings meet fortnightly to discuss 15 of the most high risk cases in Greenwich with the aim to help those at most significant risk of harm.

The IDSVa service works in close partnership with the Metropolitan Police Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT). IDSVa's liaison with DVIT to assist clients being escorted to refuge provisions, appointments with local solicitors and courts to obtain injunctions and other civil orders. IDSVa's are also able to utilize the DVIT services to safely visit high risk clients at their homes to provide support. This helps us to reduce repeat victimisation for those high risk cases heard at MARAC.

The Her Centre is now entering into the second year of working with Greenwich University Law students as volunteer advisors. Due to the Legal Aid cuts some women are no longer being able to access support from solicitors. With the volunteering of the students we are able to assist women and children in obtaining orders such as D.I.Y injunctions, Child Arrangement Orders and Divorce, through advice and support with forms and at court.

We have recently been successful in securing additional funding to recruit a full time BME engagement IDVA. This allows us to assist women from the BME community who may be suffering from domestic abuse and/or be affected by issues such as Forced Marriage, FGM and No Recourse to Public Funds. These women can often be the hardest to engage due to the cultural barriers they may be facing. Through this post the Her Centre and our partner solicitor from the One Stop Shop assisted a family with children at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in obtaining a FGM Protection Order. This Order was obtained through the High Courts and was the second order granted in Britain.

The Her Centre remains formally endorsed by the Safe Lives Leading Lights accreditation. We are now entering year 2 of a 3 year certification. Considerable staff time and resources were invested into achieving and maintaining this standard.

## Domestic Violence Outreach Service

The One Stop Shop is our weekly confidential advice drop in. With the continued commitment from our partnership agencies, women are able to access free legal advice and support to deal with any form of domestic abuse or advice on family law matters. With the support and use of the room at Brookhill Children's Centre, and through the invaluable services of our family solicitor from Hudgell and Partners and our advisors from Housing 4 Women and Ascent, the One Stop Shop provides a dedicated service to those women who may not be at high risk or may not be eligible for Legal Aid funding.

The general nature of advice that can be provided also means that many who do not wish to receive support from mainstream services have an opportunity to reach out for help.

The One Stop Shop has successfully engaged 99 women wanting advice.

## Sexual Abuse Advocacy service

Following 3 years of service to women who have been sexually abused, Her Centre has been able to renew funding from Henry Smith and to increase the referrals from the specialist police unit. Our referrals to this specialist support work for victims of rape have more than doubled from last year, in part by providing police training and widening our referrals catchment area. The sexual violence advocate also provides support to those sexually abused within a violent long term relationship.

## Counselling

Our Counselling Service recognises the devastating effects of domestic and sexual abuse on a woman's well-being, often leading to post traumatic stress disorder and depression. The service has developed a holistic pathway where a woman can engage with us whilst still in an abusive relationship, through the process to ultimately, being safe and making the journey of healing.

The free service offers access to long term counselling through two groups, one focusing on crisis recovery followed by a therapeutic group. There is then an option of one to one counselling. The groups are particularly effective as this reduces isolation which is so often experienced by victims. Our trauma therapist, a Registered Member of the Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, also provides training, volunteering and psycho-educational opportunities, such as parenting and confidence building courses.

This year we engaged 109 women and were able to report feedback from 70% of clients, showing a marked increase in well-being and positive outcomes.

## New Leaf project

The New Leaf service for young people 13 to 19 years old, run in partnership by Her Centre, Little Fish Theatre and Tryangle Project has now completed its second year and has worked with 2758 young people over the two years. Most of these young people have participated in theatre workshops in schools, pupil referral units, colleges and academies. Her Centre have engaged 106 young women providing individual awareness raising sessions, safety planning, legal support where required and counselling. Tryangle have worked with 106 boys and young men in more in depth group work on healthy relationships, and seen 6 boys for one to one counselling. Of these 76 feedback forms were collected, all but two showing positive signs of change.

Her Centre works closely with the police and the Children's services, and takes a high number of referrals from the Multi Agency Panel for those at risk of Child Sexual Abuse. Following our analysis of our Year One data, we have found that over 50% of young women experiencing relationship abuse have been subjected to sexual abuse so this is now a major emphasis of our work. This influenced the change in play used by Little Fish from Jaded, a play based on generations of domestic abuse, to Kiss and Tell, a play about sexual abuse through mobile phone filming. It has led to Her Centre and Little Fish seeking funds from Big Lottery to have an additional young sexual violence advocate to compliment the work of the New Leaf young women's IDVA.

We fed our data into Ms Understood's Greenwich-wide mapping of responses to young people's peer-on-peer abuse and have been mentioned in their report as an important part of the borough's response to young people experiencing abuse. We

continue to feed data into CAADA/Safer Families work on young women to inform this new area of support work. We are also providing data for the council's Violence against Women and Girls Strategy from this work.

Also, our reach among young people we believe has been very representative:

- 45% have been from a White/White British background, 13% from a Asian/Asian British background, 27% from a Black/Black British background and 15% from a Mixed or other background;
- 55% have been female, 45% male;
- 8% of young people so far have had a disability.

Our engagement on ethnicity is higher than the council populations according to census data. Our focus now is to get better engagement with LGBT young people through work with Metro and their young people's group

'I came through those dark times with the support of the incredible staff at The Her Centre by having one of their team shoulder to shoulder with me at court, just being present and supportive made me feel worthwhile.'

A HER Centre service user



523

Women made safe



**109**

**Counselling clients**

## Equalities and awareness-raising

Her Centre ran 4 open forums last year, with key equalities themes, and ran many training and awareness sessions with professionals and community groups.

Women and Democracy June 14 Key speaker Teresa Pearce MP – 30 attended

Young people and social media Sept 14 covering the risks of social media with Little Fish theatre and young volunteers – 47 attended

Women and training January 15, bringing together women from across Greenwich communities and 15 free training providers to ensure women access further education – 51 attended

The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children March 15, Key speaker Councillor Jackie Smith, Community Safety lead - 92 attended

The impact has been that there is a greater understanding of the risks to young people of abuse using social media, more connection between domestic abuse and children's expectations for the future, and more grasp of why democracy matters for women. The training session led to 34 women registering for ongoing training courses, half of which give registered qualifications.

Her Centre brought service users to the Council Community Safety Scrutiny Committee to give their views on the needs of women experiencing abuse, and fed into 3 local and 3 national consultations on issues affecting women including housing, campaigns on raising awareness, legal support to women, and future planning for Greenwich services in the 20 year plan.

Her Centre ran 12 courses for professionals on domestic abuse awareness, training 357 professionals, spoke at an event on women and housing needs to 35 from the statutory and voluntary sector, ran 4 sessions on young people and abuse for 84 professionals, and ran two sessions for women at risk on dealing with abuse with 90 in attendance.

## Basic English classes

Her Centre has been running English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes in the community for several years. Started by ESOL qualified volunteer and trustee Samantha Woodgate, the programme has continued to expand with the recruitment of additional trained and qualified volunteers. As many of the women attending have no English at all, some retake the course in order to build their confidence and be better prepared to move to more formal English courses with qualifications, as provided by the local Greenwich Community College. The courses are advertised through leaflets and on our website and other local media, but also through word of mouth from former classmates, who sometimes bring their friends and help them to settle into the class. In the spring of this year, we were approached by Time Bank to work with them on the Talking Together basic English training programme, and have since run two funded courses, as well as continuing our courses with volunteers working with a mix of new and repeat students. In all 103 women have attended our basic English courses in 2015.

## Plans for 2015/20

Below are the agreed future goals from the Her Centre's Business Plan, within which we focus on our holistic service model that puts our clients at the heart of everything we do, as shown on page 6.

### Engagement

- Improve our engagement from women who are vulnerable due to health, ability, or understanding, or who are less confident to take up services, to ensure all who need support around abuse are able to access this support.
- Build on our successful partnership work addressing wider issues of abuse, and on our joint planning approach to identify unmet needs and developing new services.
- Expand our young people's work to best meet the needs of those more resistant to engaging with services or identifying their own risks.

## Crisis Support

- Expanding our holistic domestic violence support services outside of Greenwich to neighbouring boroughs, where there is currently limited or no appropriate services.
- Strengthen our work addressing wider violence against women, including increased referrals to our sexual violence advocate and more work on areas of FGM, forced marriage and honour based violence.
- Widen our service to provide for women not at high risk but needing intervention to avoid further increase in risk to her and her children, enabling them to build on our holistic model but avoid high levels of crisis.

## Counselling and after support

- Ensuring women can access counselling so that more of our clients are able and supported to address trauma and rebuild their lives.
- Address the gap many women experience after crisis support by providing follow up support that builds confidence and practical skills.

## One woman's experience of the Her Centre

I was first introduced to Her Centre 5 years ago when I had my third child. I had been entrapped in a constant cycle of destructive and abusive relationships. I was referred from the police and then social services. It saved my life. At the time, being 25, I didn't even realise the nightmare I was trapped in. ...

I was referred for counselling at Her Centre and at first I felt scared, sceptical and unsure of what it was that I was there for. I was concerned that any form of disclosure would result in me having the children removed from me.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

If it hadn't had been for the tireless and generous support, encouragement and care that Her Centre provided I would not be here today. It was not just the fantastic one-to-one sessions I had that allowed me space, freedom and confidentially to express how deeply desperate I was; it was the practical support too. I was trapped in a nightmare of a court case (that still continues today after 8 years) that made me feel that I was genuinely drowning.

I came through those dark times with the support of the incredible staff at The Her Centre by having one of their team shoulder to shoulder with me at court, just

being present and supportive made me feel worthwhile.

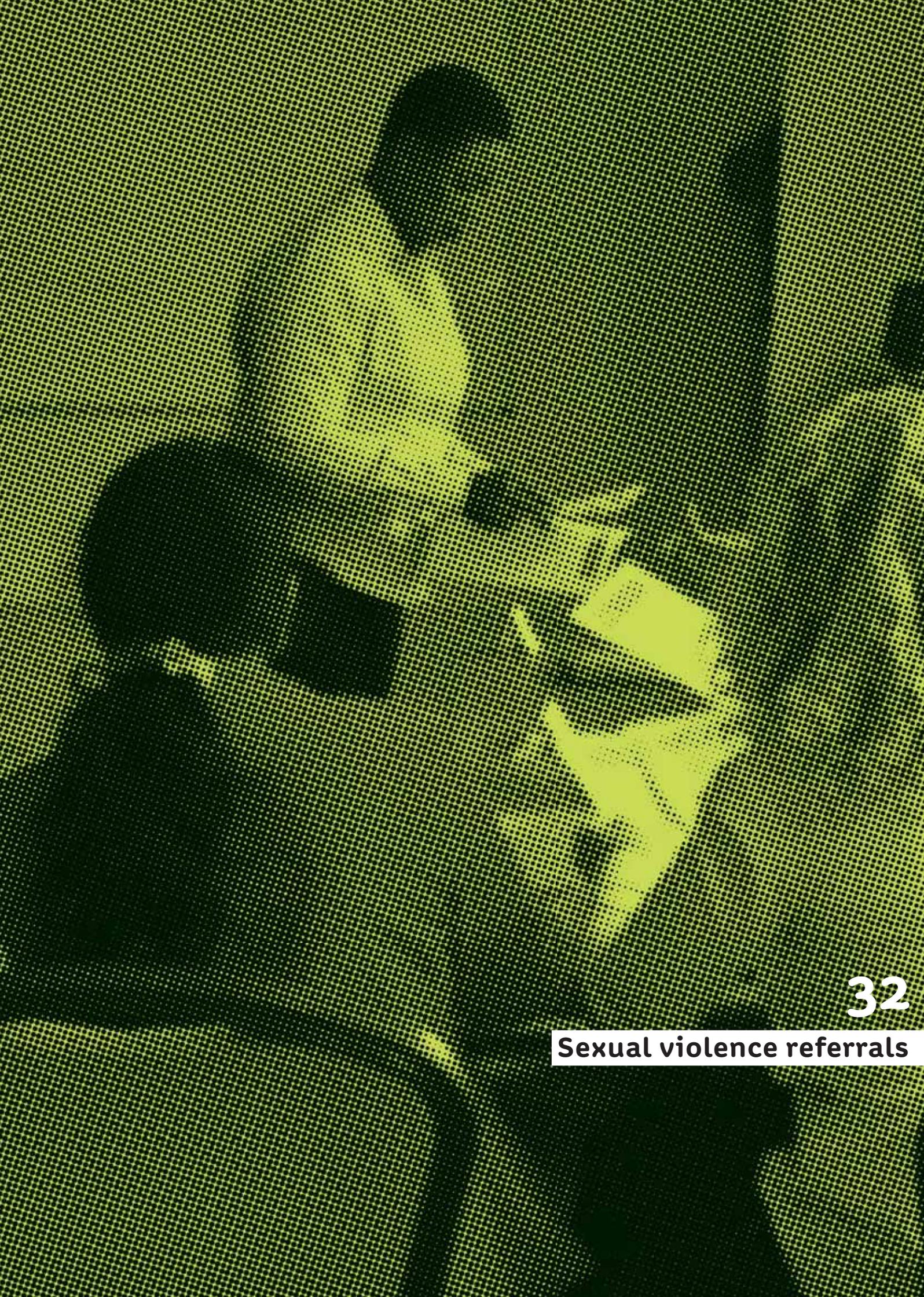
The strength and encouragement from the counselling and the support groups enabled me to recognise the cycle of abuse and the signs and symptoms that are associated with domestic abuse. It then became a lifelong determination and passion of mine to give something back to the organisation that bought me and my children back to life.

I now volunteer for The Her Centre, as the chair of the borough wide steering group and giving any help, time or support to the organisation.

I will now give everything I have to ensuring other women acknowledge, know and engage with an organisation that literally saves lives and fight against domestic abuse. Thank you for all you have done for myself, the other women and our children.

*A Her Centre service user*

**Right:**  
English lesson



# GIVING

‘Every contribution, however big or small, will make a real difference’

## Fundraising

Diversifying our funding continues to be a major focus for us in the year ahead. We are grateful for all the financial support provided by the Royal Borough of Greenwich and our other key funders, which include The Big Lottery, Lloyds Foundation & Henry Smith Charity. We will continue to deliver value to our funders by meeting and often exceeding our targets, while providing real and measurable impact within our community. We wish to say thank you for all the fundraising support provided by volunteers and friends of the Her Centre. Thank you to all those who have donated to us directly, be it via our text giving service or via our fundraising events, which have included everything from face painting to buckets in Tesco's. Every penny raised has and will make a huge difference. This year we have managed to fundraise £11,660, through a combination of one off and on going donations and appeals. We will continue to look for effective and fun ways to raise donations to help us continue our work to empower women in Greenwich.

### 1. Donate

#### Donate Monthly

Supporting the Her Centre with a regular gift is the best way you can help us achieve our long-term goals. You can donate anything from £5 - £100 a month, which can be set up via our website using our Virgin Money giving service.

#### One off text donation

If you cannot commit to a regular gift you can still make a one off donation today, give anything from £1 - £30. To donate £5 now text HERS11£5 to 70070.

All donations will be used to help us continue our work, every contribution however big or small will make a real difference.

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by  **vodafone**

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**ways to  
the Her**

#### Contact us

E: [info@hercentre.org.uk](mailto:info@hercentre.org.uk)

T: 020 3260 7715

# £100

funds specialist in-court support for a victim of abuse. Or seven hours of risk assessment and safety planning for a woman experiencing domestic abuse. Or a day working in the police station providing support to women who report being raped or beaten.

## 2. Give your time

We are always looking for volunteers to help support our work, be it joining our board of trustees, running a stall at a fundraising event or donating your skills.

# £20

provides an emergency phone for an abused woman whose phone has been submitted as police evidence.

# £10

pays for a woman to attend our motivational group, empowering women to take control and move on from an abusive relationship.

# £5

buys materials for one of our English language classes helping to reduce isolation for women from minority ethnic communities.

Where your money goes

## 3. Fundraising events

If you are interested in fundraising for us, volunteering at our next fundraiser or you wish to be contacted about upcoming events then please get in touch.

o help  
Centre

# NUMBERS



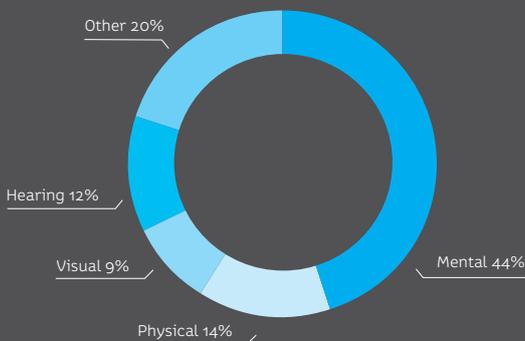
523

Women made safe

## Client distribution by religion



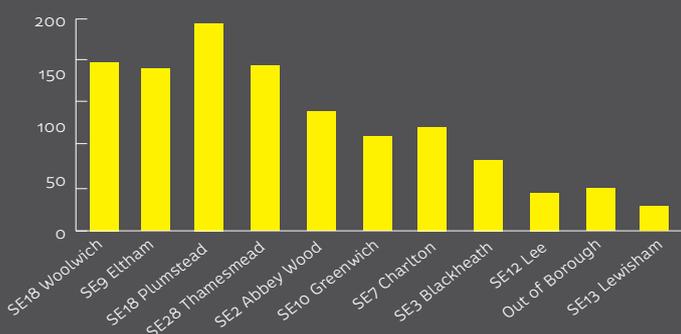
## Client distribution by disability



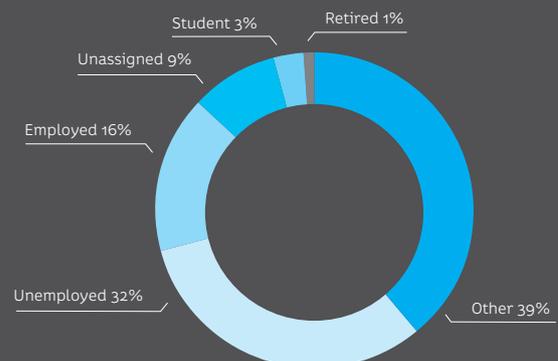
109

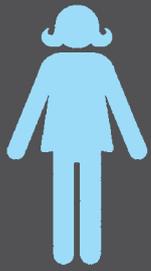
Counselling clients

## Client distribution by postcode



## Client distribution by employment

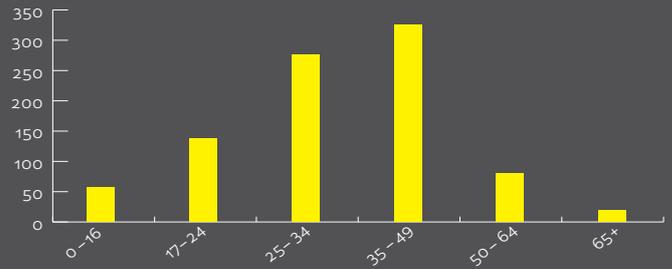




# 692

Domestic violence referrals

## Client distribution by age



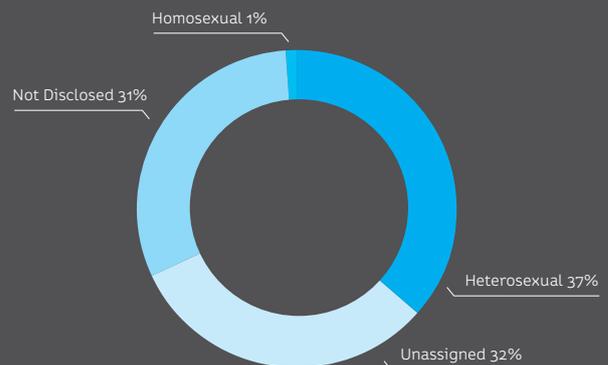
## Client distribution by ethnicity



# 209

Women helped with general advice

## Client distribution by sexuality





**103**

**English training attendees**

## Her Centre Board of Trustees

**Mariam Lolavar**  
Chair

**Petra Galloway**  
Secretary

**Faye Lawson**  
Vice Chair and policy,  
personnel & services

**Sinead Mandlik**  
Treasurer and finance & facilities  
sub-committee chair

**Samantha Woodgate**  
Fundraising sub-committee co-chair

**Roxana Bucur**  
Fundraising sub-committee co-chair

**Elly Virgo**  
Joined November 2014

**Joanna Edwards**  
Joined April 2015

**Chau Woeste**  
Joined April 2015

**Vicky Creed**  
Joined June 2015

**Zabrina Smith**  
Joined June 2015

**Claudette Lawrence**  
Co-chair (Resigned November 14)

**Atia Malik**  
Resigned November 2014

**Gina Aston**  
Resigned April 2015

### Contact us:

Her Centre Ltd.  
Island Business Centre  
18–36 Wellington Street  
London SE18 6PF

T: 020 3260 7715  
E: [info@hercentre.org](mailto:info@hercentre.org)

 @HERCentre

 Her Centre

## Our thanks to our funders and our supporters and volunteers

Royal Borough of Greenwich, Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, Lloyds Foundation, Henry Smith Charity, and City Bridge Trust. We would also like to thank Bloomberg for their donation and to all those who regularly give to Her Centre for their ongoing support.

Thanks to our English teaching volunteers Liz Fairclough, Leana Mover, and Leona Ellis, our law student volunteers Diamante Mellano, Nistha Sharma, Rachel Lynch, Marta Mroczo, and Pauline Czentyrycka, our steering group members Cassie Taylor (chair), Claire Wheeler, Claire Platt, Laila Nasery, Benedicte Ogunmefun and Anne Marie Eigbe, and to Rose Wairega, our volunteer therapist.

## Our thanks to our partners

We would also like to thank our partners for their ongoing and valuable support: Little Fish Theatre Company, Tryangle Project 2011, The Met Police Community Safety Unit, Walpole Residents Association, The SCD2 Unit, Brookhill Children's Centre, The Point, Metro Centre, Greenwich Association of Disabled People, Greenwich Inclusion Project, Greenwich Housing Rights, Homestart, Plumstead Law Centre, Meridian Money Advice, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, Pilot Light

### Individual thanks to:

Adelle Banks from Hudgell & Partners, Councillor Jackie Smith, Rt Hon Teresa Pearse MP.



Left: Esol  
certificate day



**Her Centre Ltd.**

Island Business Centre  
18-36 Wellington Street  
London SE18 6PF

**T:** 020 3260 7715

**E:** [info@hercentre.org](mailto:info@hercentre.org)

The HER Centre supports women in crisis, empowering them to move forward with their lives. Help us continue our work, donate £5 now by texting HERS11£5 to 70070

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Registered Company Limited No. 03451379

**Donate £5  
now, text  
HERS11£5  
to 70070**