



Diving into the  
**Women and Girls  
Initiative**





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Information in this report is drawn from the Women and Girls Initiative, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. It is supporting 62 projects with funds raised from the National Lottery.



*“It’s really important  
that the challenges we face  
are understood. This money  
can make a huge difference  
to women if used in  
the right way.”*

Partnership Manager



# Introduction

## The context for the report

The [National Lottery Community Fund](#) is the largest community activity funder in the UK, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players. The Fund created the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) in 2016 in order to invest in services for women and girls. In January 2018, the WGI Learning and Impact Services contract was awarded to the [Tavistock Institute of Human Relations \(TIHR\)](#), [DMSS Research \(DMSS\)](#) and the [Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit \(CWASU\)](#) – the partners.

The partners are delivering a programme to help projects better record and share their learning and through this create a stronger community of services that has greater influence on decision making structures across the country. Following consultation with the funded projects, this programme includes:

- One-to-one support for grant holders
- An online learning hub to enable collective conversations
- Action Learning Sets
- Msterclasses and workshops
- Regularly published blogs, reports and briefings
- A national conference in 2020, to showcase and share project achievements and learning.

This report is the second public output produced by the partners from the WGI, following on from the [blog by CWASU's Liz Kelly](#) (published in August 2018).

A range of public documents will be produced over the lifespan of the WGI, up until 2022, to bring together learning and build on the practice based knowledge within projects.

More detail of these plans can be found on [Page 20](#).

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*'The consultative process, an ongoing conversation, with the Fund, is helpful.'*

Business Development Manager

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## Purpose of the report

This report provides a starting point from which outcomes, achievements and learning generated through WGI, can be better understood. It provides a snapshot of

- What the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) comprises;
- What the Fund hoped to achieve through the WGI;
- Who it has supported and why;
- A summary of early achievements and challenges;
- Upcoming public outputs and where to find them.

Throughout this document are short case studies that describe a small number of the projects funded through the WGI, what they hoped to achieve and some of their early successes. Later reports will highlight the work of other projects.

## The information in this report has been drawn from the following sources:

- Grant holder funding applications to the Fund
- Year 1 monitoring reports from grant holders (covering 2016-2017 activity)
- The Fund's WGI guidance to grant holders and information database
- A progress review, undertaken with 61 of the funded projects, in early 2018
- More recent project updates shared with the partners (up to October 2018).

**This report will be useful to those wishing to gain a better understanding of the WGI and what it was set up to achieve.**

.....  
Basic information about the WGI  
.....

The difference this funding is hoping to make for women and girls across England  
.....

Some of the lessons so far  
.....

Plans for future reports.  
.....

# What is the WGI?

The Fund has invested £44.7million from the National Lottery in 62 projects across England to support and empower women and girls facing a wide range of issues such as violence, abuse, exploitation and multiple and complex needs.

## The National Lottery Community Fund aims for the WGI

The Fund saw WGI funding as a route to enable a stronger women and girls sector through:

- increased provision of holistic, person-centred approaches for women and girls;
- increased role and voice for women and girls in co-producing services;
- a greater number of women and girls being supported through the provision of improved specialist support;
- better quality of evidence for what works in empowering women and girls.

## Which projects were funded?

The Fund wanted to support projects that could help women and girls achieve their potential through specialist and tailored work. Grant funding was made available for projects to support women and girls through one-to-one and group-based activities, including:

- advice and advocacy;
- refuge provision;
- counselling;
- training and skills development;
- peer designed and led activities, including mentoring.

Table 1 (see page 9) shows the range of support offered by the funded projects, with many offering multiple forms of support.

£44.7 million has been awarded to 62 projects for up to five years.

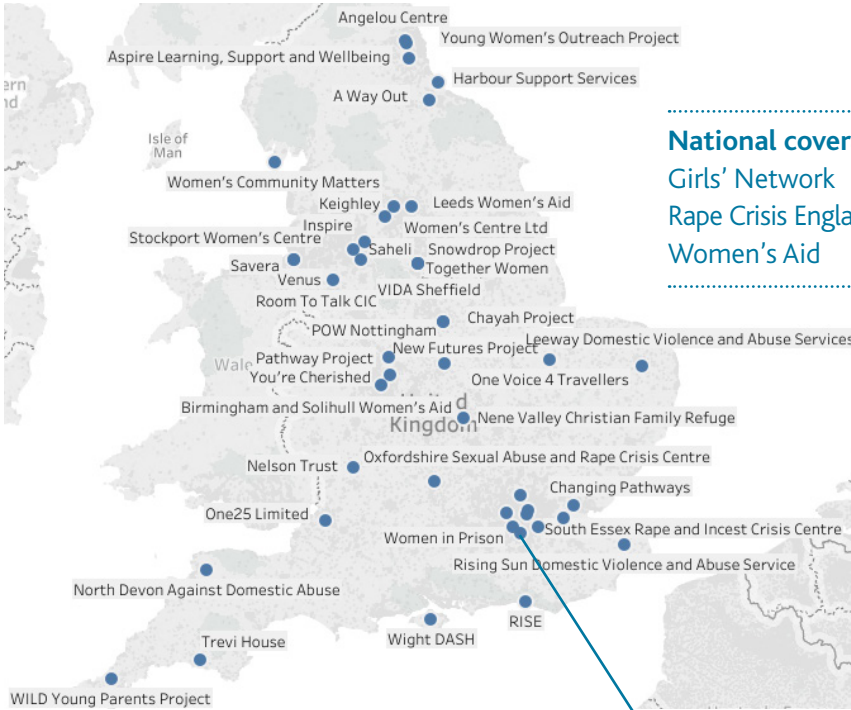
*'We really value the creativity provided by the [WGI] funding.'*

Project Worker

*'There was a real need for this [...]. It has meant that we can provide a much more holistic service.'*

Grant holder Chief Executive

This map shows the location of the 62 projects in England (named by the main grant holder). Projects may involve other partners which are not named here.



**National coverage**  
 Girls' Network  
 Rape Crisis England and Wales  
 Women's Aid



# Saheli: Maya project

Saheli is the lead partner of eight organisations delivering the Maya project: Saheli, Ananna, Wai Yin Society, Himmat, Women's Voices, Wonderfully Made Woman, CDMUK and Bauer Academy. The partners came together for the first time through the WGI to combine their different specialisms and experience – such as delivering projects led by and for Asian women; supporting women experiencing domestic violence; working with informal carers and their families; providing accessible and creative learning opportunities; helping people gain paid work.

The Maya project aims to support and empower black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee (BAMER) women and girls throughout Manchester, who may face a combination of economic, social and cultural barriers. It is focused on helping women to make positive changes in their lives by building skills and confidence. It involves a pathway approach, which women can enter and exit at whichever stage is relevant to them.

## CRISIS / SUPPORT / REBUILD / DEVELOP / INSPIRE

The holistic support on offer includes access to safe accommodation needed because of domestic violence; skills-based activities such as arts, parenting or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses; one-to-one support; drop-in sessions; volunteering, employment and business development opportunities and the option to become an advocate for other women.

The partners have worked intensively together and with a large number of women to develop the Maya project. In the process, existing links have strengthened, including with other agencies. Partners have learned from and inspired each other and better identified how they could collectively support some of the city's most disadvantaged women. Having run for two years, the Maya project has been busy delivering over 32 services a week across the city, with over 2000 women supported in its first year. Its growing success was recognised through winning a Spirit of Manchester Award for Partnership and Collaboration in October 2018.



Table 1

Funded activity includes:	Number of projects
One-to-One support	57
Group work	48
Mentoring/peer-support	37
Training	27
Refuge/accommodation services	10

### Who is being supported?

Women and girls' specialist organisations, from local to national charities have received funding from the WGI, with fifteen of the grants being awarded to partnerships or consortia of organisations. Each project has been funded since 2016 for between three and five years. The smallest grant awarded was £150,000 and the largest grant was £5,750,733.

Some projects have set up new activities or services with the funding, such as [Changing Pathways'](#) independent stalking and advocacy service. Others have increased, extended or developed existing services. For example, [Greater Manchester Women's Support Alliance](#) was funded to help integrate existing and new support services for women offenders and those at risk of offending. These include one-to-one emotional and practical support, with increased staffing for casework with women. [Ashiana Network](#) maintained specialist refuge services for black and minority ethnic (BME) women that might otherwise have been lost due to local commissioning changes, whilst also extending their services to include wider BME communities.

*'Lives are potentially being saved. We would have struggled to continue services without this funding.'*

Grant holder Chief Executive

# Rape Crisis England & Wales: Weaving the Web

Weaving the Web was designed to extend and improve access to specialist sexual violence support services for women and girls across England. It is creating a national web platform that will provide new online services and improve online access to existing services. During 2017, 766 women, girls and specialist partners were involved in co-producing the platform through a range of online and offline events. This work took place working with the national Rape Crisis Network and other partner agencies, including those who work specifically with black and minority ethnic women, disabled women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, older women, women from working class backgrounds and young women.

Weaving the Web has also been offering training for workers from Rape Crisis centres in delivering on-line support. The platform is due to go online in 2018/2019. It will provide a new national resource, at a time when demand for services and people's use of online technologies are increasing.

## Inspiring Futures Partnership CiC (Inspire Women Oldham)

Inspire Women Oldham was funded by the WGI to enable women to become shapers and leaders, co-designing the development and delivery of a Women's Centre that is based on a co-operative rather than hierarchical model. Inspire has created an environment that moves away from traditional forms of consultation and engagement and offers a more participative, inclusive culture focusing on women's strengths and assets.

Collectively they have developed a 'pathway' approach that enables women to have a voice, re-discovering their gifts. Through an 'associate' model, the funding supports women to build the capacity of others, campaign and become part of influencing agendas that matter to them. Since opening, over 400 women have accessed services, with 6000 hours gifted by women to run the centre. However, it is through the stories of and social connections between the women, that the organisation is building its reputation, growing its services and winning awards, such as the Pride in Oldham Award.

# Initial programme achievements and challenges

## Early achievements

All projects have, at the time of writing this report, been funded for approximately two years. The Learning and Impact Services partners (TIHR, DMSS and CWASU) are gathering data and insights from individual projects and programme-wide events. These will contribute to a report summarising achievements and learning from Years 1 and 2 of the WGI, due for publication later in 2019. In the meantime, we offer a brief summary of what project leaders told us about how projects were getting on up to mid-2018.

Although over half of all projects experienced some form of delay when starting delivery, for instance whilst new staff were being recruited, most (78%) had made the progress or achieved more than they had hoped for at the programme's beginning.

When asked what had gone particularly well, projects most frequently cited:

- individual case work with women and girls;
- engagement of women and girls in the services on offer;
- partnership and multi-agency working.

.....  
*'[There has been] much higher demand than anticipated – we aimed to have 20 referrals in the first year, but [have] had 108.'*

Service Development Manager  
.....

.....  
*'It's amazing to see what we are achieving, the project was really needed.'*

Business Development Manager  
.....

# Harbour Support Services: The Recovery Project

Harbour Support Services, based in North East England, has been using WGI funding to extend the help it provides to women and girls who have experienced domestic abuse. Local authority and other contracts often only fund short-term work, usually between six to 10 weeks. Harbour found that some women referred to it had previously accessed its contracted services, but these stopped too early and were not enough to sustain positive life changes. Additional longer-term support is now on offer to women and girls in a range of different ways through The Recovery Project.

Harbour has set up informal and formal group work, one-to-one support, regular sessions and intermittent 'check-ins'. For instance, the Survivors groups that were developed in 2016/17 have been running weekly or bi-weekly in six different locations across the North East. The Recovery Project is also training and offering peer mentors for women needing ongoing support. This might be practical, around specific issues, or more in-depth and therapeutic. It is complementing and following on from the short-term work funded through local authority contracts. Therefore, Harbour is able to provide help beyond crises so that women can achieve and sustain the long-term, positive change they want.

# RAHAB

RAHAB has been funded to extend its core services in London, offering needs-led support for women affected by prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It helps women facing a range of risks, exploitation and vulnerability, including those who have no recourse to public funds or statutory support. The core work of RAHAB was previously delivered mainly through outreach. Now the project is able to also offer advocacy, counselling and safe housing for predominantly migrant women affected by prostitution.

Since receiving funding, the numbers of women supported has more than doubled. It came into contact with over 400 women between 2016 and 2018, and provided one-to-one case work support to 89 individuals. The philosophy underpinning their work is relational connection, ensuring each woman is valued, respected and treated with dignity. Through advocacy they have also been enabling an especially marginalised group of women to access statutory services and exercise the rights that they are entitled to.

## Early challenges

As with any new programme of work, projects inevitably experienced some unexpected challenges and barriers in either the set-up or early delivery of projects. These were often unique to specific circumstances, but there were some common challenges – the main one having been identified as staffing. Just over 100 different responses were given about challenges faced, and nearly one third (29) of these were about staffing difficulties – whether delayed recruitment; subsequent staff changes; staff capacity or skill sets. Additionally, project successes presented their own challenges in some cases. For instance, seven projects spoke of challenges related to high demand and another seven identified partnership working as a challenge. A further common concern for projects was related to evaluation and data recording. It is anticipated that whilst capturing learning over the life of WGI, we will find out how some of these challenges have been addressed by projects.

# Women in Prison: Health Matters

Women in Prison has used WGI funding to design Health Matters, a new health advocacy, advice, and information service within custodial settings and the community. It aims to create systemic change around how the healthcare needs of women within the criminal justice system are met. Two new health advocates have been recruited and are working within HMP Bronzefield, HMP Downview, and in community settings with women who have been released from custody. The advocates receive referrals from prison healthcare staff as well as direct sign-ups from women who are in or about to leave prison. They then provide both one-to-one and group support related to different health issues and needs.

Peer facilitators have also received training, in order to run activities and make referrals for further support. Advice, guidance and activities are developed based on the expressed needs and wishes of women receiving services. Women in Prison is sharing the learning, from their direct casework, with the prison service and other relevant agencies, to improve how healthcare needs of women in the system are met longer-term.

AVA (Against Violence and Abuse) have been undertaking an external evaluation of Health Matters. AVA's interim evaluation reported that women supported by the health advocates were feeling listened to, cared for and valued. There were also positive signs that 'Health Matters' has built a strong presence in both prisons, with potential for influencing at a systemic level.



# Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Services: Project Liberty

Project Liberty is a partnership project between Rising Sun and Swale Action to End Domestic Abuse (SATEDA). Based in Kent, it was designed to empower adolescent girls and young women to be free from abuse and coercive relationships, through building positive life chances and aspirations. Developed from previous successful activity, Project Liberty offers one-to-one mentoring, group-based social activities, and accredited training for peer mentors. The project works with young women who have previous experience of abusive relationships, to be able to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships, rebuild relationships with their mothers/female carers as needed, and help shape the project's development through participatory focus groups.

During the first year of WGI funding, Project Liberty supported 118 young women and girls, with demand higher than had been anticipated. Over 90% of those accessing help reported that they had increased self-esteem, confidence and understanding of what constitutes safe, non-coercive relationships.

## Learning activities

In the first year of the WGI Learning and Impact Services, a range of learning activities have been taking place.

### Individual support for projects

We have been providing projects with one-to-one support on evaluation, including advice on commissioning external evaluators; developing Theories of Change and reviewing evaluation methods and tools. Work has taken place with 37 projects between June and November 2018. Individual staff, project teams and consortium members (where relevant) have accessed support.

### Online learning hub

An online learning hub has been set up on the Basecamp platform, for groups to communicate outside of meetings, share conversations and resources. Over 100 individuals have been signed up and over 30 projects have actively engaged within the first five months of it launching.

### *M*Sterclasses

Two *M*Sterclasses took place in 2018 on the subject of influencing for change. These involved a mix of keynote speakers, interactive activities and breakout workshops, with 31 projects attending. Responses from event attendees demonstrated the value of being able to get together, have time out from projects to hear from other's experiences, share and reflect on what was being learnt so far from delivering WGI activity.

## Action Learning Sets

One of the longer term activities established with the projects has been to create action learning sets (ALSs). ALSs generally meet three times, to think together, share their learning and experiences. The first three ALSs set up were based on the following themes: projects led by and for black, Asian and minority ethnic women; working with young women; and Women's Centres. Each group will publish their learning in 2019, for sharing with other WGI projects and beyond. During 2018, 20 projects worked in ALSs.

## Evaluation activities

We are working with the grant holders to understand what it is about their services that make a difference in the lives of women and girls. For instance, is it because WGI-funded case work can be needs led and for as long as women and girls require it? To better understand if this is the case, some of our evaluation questions include the following.

- What is a 'holistic' approach (to working with women and girls)?
- How is it different from mainstream interventions?
- What difference does working holistically and long-term make for women and girls?

We will offer some answers to these questions, through synthesising evaluation and learning from across the WGI, in future publications.

Together, with the 62 WGI grant holders and the women and girls they work with, the partners will also be exploring how the sector can better demonstrate its impact, raise its voice and increase its influence for the long-term benefit of women and girls.



## Future WGI publications

Future publications will share learning in a variety of formats, including blogs, briefings and thematic reports. These will be aimed at different audiences, from local to national policy-makers, funders and commissioners, the wider women and girls sector, through to the general public.

One upcoming output will be 'Catching the Wave: Women influencing change'. This summary document will draw together learning from recent *M*sterclasses about how WGI projects can increase their influence on the commissioning process and the use of research and evaluation as part of an influencing strategy. Also, and soon to be published, is an evidence briefing on how Women's Centres meet the needs of women in their communities.

Later in 2019, a synthesis report will be produced, bringing together learning from across the first two years of the 62 funded projects. The publications from WGI are intended to increase awareness of women and girls organisations' work locally and nationally, so that:

- more people understand the issues facing women and girls;
- services can continue and develop through showing their effectiveness and thereby having greater influence.

Publications will be made available via the [project page](#). If you sign up to the [Tavistock Institute newsletter](#), you will also be informed when they are released.

