

Towards a Women Friendly Leeds: Achievements and learning from phase one of making Leeds a Women Friendly City

Di McNeish & Sara Scott
DMSS Research
August 2023



The Women & Girl's Alliance Leeds

To Leaders of Leeds from the various sectors: Statutory; Business; Private; Third; Community and Faith.

September 2023

Re: Call to Action.

Dear Partners,

As an Alliance of organisations working to improve the lives of women and girls in Leeds, we have been proud to have initiated and supported the Women's Lives Leeds VOICES Project which aimed to make Leeds the first United Nations Women Friendly City in the UK. The first phase of this ambitious initiative, funded by Comic Relief, has now come to an end and we welcome this Learning and Evaluation Report from DMSS Research. This report clearly demonstrates the wide-ranging impact that the project has had so far. It provides evidence of a growing movement for change among women and girls and their male allies, alongside an increasing recognition that violence against women and girls will not be tolerated in Leeds and that this city should be a place of safety and equality.

The report highlights the impact of the Women Friendly Leeds concept as a catalyst of change. It has shaped thinking, informed and developed relationships between partner agencies and is fundamentally making a difference for women and girls. The Women & Girls Alliance is proud to have worked with so many organisations in Leeds to increase the voices of women in influencing change.

We welcome the timely funding of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which is enabling some of the initiatives to continue into a second phase. However, by March 2025, the momentum will be lost unless partners work together now to plan for a sustainable future for a Women Friendly Leeds.

We are calling on all leaders of the City, from across all sectors, to continue this movement. We have "Five Key Asks" for you to:

1. Officially adopt the concept of Leeds becoming a Women Friendly City and to pledge to support the continuing development of the WFL movement.
2. Sign up to become Women Friendly Recruiters.
3. Formally link Women's Staff/Community Networks with Women Friendly Leeds.
4. Use your communication resources to promote Women Friendly Leeds activities.
5. Embed 'Switch on to Women's Safety' for men by enabling a cohort of staff to train as trainers and cascade the training across your workforce.

Please read the report and reflect on the change that has occurred over the last four years in terms of partnerships, the night-time economy, opportunities for women and girls, the implementation of health, wellbeing and employment initiatives, and the difference all these have made for women and girls.

Together we can continue to develop courageous, innovative and cost-effective ideas to make Leeds a truly Women Friendly City. But to do this, the Women Friendly Leeds initiative needs the support of all organisations both in terms of commitment and resourcing. Please show your commitment by completing a short 'pledging form' **(Click here to access the form)** pledging and holding you to account about HOW you will support the continuation of Women Friendly Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Women & Girls Alliance Leeds - namely:



Katie Russell - CEO of Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds



Nik Peasgood - CEO of Leeds Women's Aid



Rokaiya Khan - CEO of Together Women



Rachel Kelly - CEO of Women's Health Matters



Hannah Lewis - Director of Joanna Project



Flavia Doherty - CEO of Getaway Girls



Helen King - Centre Coordinator at ASHA



Moya Woolven - CEO of Basis Yorkshire



Ruth Davany - CEO of Behind Closed Doors



Nahid Rasool - CEO of Shantona Women's & Family Centre



Tessa Denham - CEO of Women's Counselling and Therapy Service Leeds



Jaspal Kaur Toor - Director of Nari Ekta

Towards a Women Friendly Leeds: Achievements and learning from phase one of making Leeds a Women Friendly City

In 2019, the Women's Lives Leeds Alliance obtained funding from Comic Relief for an initiative to help make Leeds a Women Friendly City (WFC). Over the past four years, Women's Lives Leeds (WLL)[1] and the Women Friendly Leeds (WFL) VOICES (Views, Opinions & Insights Consultation & Engagement Systems) team have worked with Leeds City Council, the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board, West Yorkshire Police, the Mayor of West Yorkshire and a wide range of other organisations, to develop and implement a strategy to make Leeds more women friendly. This report highlights what has been achieved and what has been learned.

Developing a strategy for Leeds to become a Women Friendly City

In March 2021, DMSS Research were commissioned by WLL to be the evaluation and learning partner to the WFL initiative. We began by working with the steering group and project team to reflect on the progress so far, and to set out the intended outcomes for the second half of the project's funding period. An initial workshop generated the following theory of change:

Women Friendly Leeds Theory of Change

The WLL VOICES Project aims to make Leeds the UK's first Women Friendly City (based on the UN definition). Driven by women and girls, the WFL movement's mission is to mobilise women and girls to have their voices heard, ensure that their needs are considered in all decision making and empower them to lead safer, healthier, equal and more fulfilled lives.

We believe that this can best be achieved by a dual approach that both builds a diverse, women-led movement for gender equality in Leeds and, at the same time, engages local decision-makers and business leaders to support and champion the concept of a women friendly city.

[1] Women's Lives Leeds is an alliance of 12 organisations which support women and girls in Leeds. These are: ASHA Neighbourhood Centre, Basis Yorkshire, Behind Closed Doors, Getaway Girls, Joanna Project, Leeds Women's Aid, Nari Ekta, SARSVL Support After Rape Sexual Violence Leeds, Shantona Women's Centre, Together Women, Women's Counselling Therapy Service, Women's Health Matters.

These two 'arms of influence' support each other: a strong, grassroots movement for change will encourage leaders to engage, while the support of high-profile local leaders will help to build public support for the WFC concept.

What is a Women Friendly City?

According to the United Nations, Women Friendly Cities are cities where women can access:

- Health, education and social services.
- Employment opportunities.
- High quality and comprehensive urban services (such as transportation, accommodation and security).
- Mechanisms that will guarantee their rights in the event they are subjected to violence.

Women Friendly Cities are cities where:

- Local government takes into account women's issues and perspectives in their planning and decision-making processes.
- Women are supported and encouraged to participate in all areas of urban life on an equal basis with men.



Embedded in this theory of change are two inter related strategic goals:

- The development of a strong movement for change, involving women from all communities across Leeds.
- The engagement and influence of decision-makers so that women's voices become an integral part of policy and planning.

In the following sections we discuss progress towards these goals.

Developing a women's movement for change

As the theory of change makes clear, the building of a strong grassroots movement was regarded as fundamental to the Women Friendly Leeds project.

The team believed that a grassroots movement was most likely to grow out of running campaigns on issues which women cared passionately about, by creating different ways in which women could participate and making access and involvement as easy, supportive and non-hierarchical as possible. Specific strategies devised at the outset included:

- The creation of 'Hubs' with regular meetings for women and girls to raise and discuss issues of concern and to set the priorities for campaigning.
- Recruiting 'Ambassadors': women who could use their personal and/or professional influence to advocate for WFL's goals.
- Encouraging men to commit their support as 'Allies' to WFL.
- Inviting individuals and organisations to make 'Pledges' – public commitments of what they would do to support the WFL agenda.
- The development of a multi-strand communications strategy including a website, e-newsletter and social media to reach as wide an audience as possible and to give women multiple ways to make their voices heard.

The Evolution of the Hubs

The development of hubs for both women and girls was a core plank of WFL's strategy from the beginning. The initial staff team, who were in post by March 2020, included a Women's Hub Development Worker and two part-time girl's Hub workers (attached to WLL partner organisation, Getaway Girls). By June 2020, there were 107 women's Hub members, and 40 girls were involved in the girls Hub, which they re-named 'Vocal Girls'. Initially the quarterly face to face meetings brought together between 35 and 45 women on each occasion. But then COVID-19 struck, and the meetings moved on-line.



Meetings were shorter but more frequent - monthly for the main Hub meetings plus weekly 'Friday Hubs' to help keep women connected. The number of participants varied e.g., Friday Hubs held between March and July 2021 attracted between 4 and 14 participants.

On-line meetings had the advantage of being more accessible to some women and provided an opportunity for women to stay connected during a difficult and, for many, a very isolating period. A downside was that it was much more difficult to keep a consistent group of members who could build relationships with each other, and active participation, co-creation and co-ownership were harder to achieve. Women's increasing roles and responsibilities due to COVID-19 also affected participation with many women juggling multiple roles such as caring for others, home schooling and employment. Evidence of this additional pressure on women emerged from the team's COVID-19 women's survey responded to by almost 1000 women.

However, the main goal during COVID-19 was to maintain the momentum of the Hubs and this was achieved. As one woman put it:



A hub doesn't have to be big. It can be small with a lot of spokes. That's what keeps the wheels turning!



At the same time, there was so much work being done by the core team that meetings tended to be dominated by information giving: 'one-way' communication. They often ran out of time and discussion had to be curtailed. Even when face to face meetings resumed it was sometimes difficult to avoid this tendency. As the initiative entered its second year, thought was already being given to ways of increasing and diversifying participation in the Hubs:



Engagement in both the women and girls' hubs are steady but we recognise that numbers are quite low. They are good for some Voice and Influence work, but we recognise we need to be more grass roots based and that the movement needs to build more community awareness and support and to build the movement on local issues through voice and influence.



From end of year report to Comic Relief, September 2021

Once face to face meetings were again possible, it was decided to offer alternate face to face and online meetings to meet the needs of a range of women with different preferences.

A Culturally Diverse Women's Hub was also developed with a focus on the issues affecting women from culturally diverse backgrounds. This became very successful with over 40 members and a strong core group of about ten. The women involved have been diverse in terms of age, culture and experience: as workers, artists, mothers and refugees. The WFL core team have reflected on what has made this Hub a success:

I think the Culturally Diverse Women's Hub has been so good because the members have set the agenda. It's been all about the things they cared about: maternal mortality, mental health and women's safety – and the safety of their children - in their own communities.

It's been led by women with a strong reputation as independent activists. They are a known resource and trusted in the community.

A lot of culturally diverse women see the women's movement as just for white, middle-class women – and women's meetings as places where they wouldn't be heard or wouldn't speak because they were afraid that what they wanted to say would upset people! Here we can speak our minds because we share the experiences of racism as well as sexism. Women won't shut up even after two-hour meetings. They have so much to say....

...But also they are proud of being part of Women's Lives Leeds. Women are enthusiastic about getting involved in sub-groups. They tell their daughters about initiatives and are behind things like Ask for Angela. Some older women recognise that they have sometimes separated themselves off from the city and that it's a generational thing that's different for their daughters. And they are still happy to be consulted and to hear about what's going on.

From WFL Team Members

Culturally Diverse Safety Event

7th July, 11am-1pm

Bangladesh Centre, LS8 5AN

We are holding an event to highlight the support and services on offer for women from culturally diverse backgrounds in Leeds.

There will be a market place with stalls from community organisations that support women with their personal safety, neighbourhood safety, and other issues.

Join us for lunch and find out more about community organisations in the city.



**WOMEN
LIVES
LEEDS**





Additionally, Vocal Girls identified that women aged 18 – 25 were a cohort of voices that were missing from the movement. Consequently, during year 2, a new hub was started for them to share their voices and opinions in monthly thematic meetings, as well as maintaining the hub for girls aged 13-17. By year 3, the women's hub consisted of a number of different hubs that met: the main hub (monthly), the Culturally Diverse women's hub (fortnightly), and a menopause meet-up (monthly) as well as Vocal Girls. Different methods of engagement were being tried, such as online, face-to-face, meeting based, event based, and different times of day and evening.

There was an indication that face-to-face events were the best way of engaging women, but numbers attending the main women's hub, particularly, remained low. In response, the new team member appointed to co-ordinate the hubs moved the focus more towards 'Community Conversations' to engage women in their communities at a more local level.

By meeting regularly with women and women's groups, this worker identified that confidence was often a barrier to attending hub meetings, as well as some lack of clarity about what meetings would be about. In response, the team began to offer Hub themed events, starting with a Winter Warmer event in December 2022 which offered warm food, warm gifts, activities, and a chance for women to access information on support available in the city for the cost-of-living crisis. This event was a success with around 40 women attending, and some great opportunities for conversations and access to support. It was noted that many women from the WLL alliance partner projects attended, which was an indication that events may be easier to access than Hub meetings.



Ambassadors and Allies

From the start of the WFL initiative, one of the strategies to build a movement and to achieve influence was to harness the power and commitment of women ambassadors to promote the goals of WFL.

This strategy started well in year one with the very first ambassador being the then Leader of the Council who committed herself to endorsing the work and pledging to act as a keynote speaker at events. This undoubtedly helped the team to develop good relationships with other councillors and senior leaders within the local authority including the Director of Public Health, a CCG Commissioner for women's health and maternity and the 'Women's Voice' leader within the council, all of whom became early Ambassadors.

The number of women signing up as Ambassadors has increased steadily over the lifetime of the initiative: between years 1 and 2 the number grew from 43 to 101, then to 155 in year 3. During year 4 it grew further to 273, these numbers being boosted by the recruitment of 96 student Ambassadors due to some specific targeting of work in the universities and colleges of Leeds.

An ambassadors' survey circulated in 2022 explored why women had signed up and their expectations of the role. The 20 women who responded were clearly committed and wanted to play an active part:



'The role of a WFL Ambassador is to advise, promote, volunteer, plan, facilitate, co-produce, advocate, network, raise profile, make connections, identify opportunities and 'be the public face of WFL'.

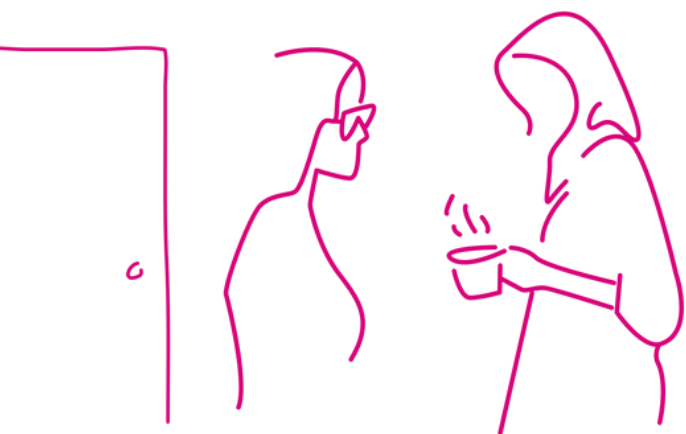
Ambassador survey respondent





The motivation behind signing up was clear. While a couple had done so because they saw it as part of their day-job or were intending to represent their organisation, all the rest had become Ambassadors because they were passionate about gender equality/ feminism/ women's empowerment and they wanted to be part of something, to meet others who share their passion and work with them to do something to achieve change. Several saw WFL as a potential channel for their political energy and made suggestions about how they thought Ambassadors could be more actively utilised to help build a movement for change including:

- Establishing working groups with specific tasks/targets and regular meetings.
- Producing regular short 'calls to action' emails, with bullet points of clear messages to be shared/actions to be taken.
- Providing opportunities to volunteer by asking: 'Can anyone help with....?'



Learning from the survey was quickly acted upon and each of these suggestions was implemented in the following months.

Ambassadors have engaged with WFL in a number of ways. Relatively few have been regular attenders at the 6 weekly ambassador network meetings (these have usually been attended by 12-15 women at each meeting), but others have got involved in projects where they have had a particular interest or have

responded to specific calls to action e.g. helping to promote Ask for Angela or working on the leaflet for newly arrived women in Leeds.

Over the past year, a new worker has enabled the WFL to give more capacity to developing the Ambassadors network and to engage with younger women. Leeds has a large student population, and the team has succeeded in getting more students to sign up. A student Ambassadors' group has taken up the issue of 'spiking' as a campaign issue.

Some Ambassadors have been particularly active in their role, especially when being an Ambassador has had a good fit with their professional and personal lives.

For example, one Ambassador described the evolution of her role from initial contact, participating in the network and collaborating with the WFL team over relevant issues in her workplace:

'I've been attending network meetings for about a year and have found it good to hear what other ambassadors are doing. I see my role as an ambassador as being about spreading the word and raising the profile of the work. I've been able to get WFL information out through my networks and a few colleagues have signed up as ambassadors now too. I have the WFL logo on my email signature. A WFL team member has worked with me over stuff at my workplace and it feels nice to know that there are things happening and it's not just us working in isolation as individuals'.

From an Ambassador

Often, the main challenge for the WFL team is to keep the involvement of Ambassadors once initial enthusiasm has waned and the team is continuing to explore ways of sustaining active engagement:

They tend to be keen at the start then fall away so I'm trying to keep up personal conversations outside the meetings to maintain involvement... At network meetings I ask them to present something they are working on and this encourages networking amongst them. A couple got involved with the Arts and Activism work. I try to get them involved with what I'm doing – 3 to 4 have offered to help with editing the newly arrived women leaflet...

When people sign up as Ambassadors they tend to interpret it as they want. I'm keen to set up an action plan for ambassadors: 3 steps we ask you to take: Speak to a friend, share something on your social media, email me about one issue that concerns you. I think they are looking for more direction.

WFL team member



An Ambassadors' Journey

Frances' described her involvement with Women Friendly Leeds like this:

"I started by following WFL on Twitter. I went to an event for International Women's Day with poems, rap and music. I didn't understand a lot of what was going on but the atmosphere was so warming. I joined in the Reclaim the Streets meeting in the park and met Alison Lowe, Emily and Paulette. They are all so active, so inspiring. Then I attended Art and Activism and the conversations were amazing. Every city should have a WFL – women supporting women is what it's all about.

WFL made me part of a network and it's such a diverse network of women – so many cultures and so passionate. Lived experience drives it and that fits with me."

Alongside the recruitment of Ambassadors, an early intention was to engage men as Allies of the WFL movement. This is an area of work which the team has had little capacity to develop so the number of Allies remains quite low. However, there has been a successful project undertaken in partnership with a group of male Allies developing training for men on women's safety (see below for more details). More recently the Culturally Diverse Women's Hub has made a call for male allies to submit a picture of themselves along with a quote about why women's safety is important to them.

Creative Engagement Projects

Engaging women through creative activities has become an increasingly important strategy as the WFL initiative has evolved and the team has learned that creative projects can be a particularly effective way of drawing women into the movement. Many of the Hub events have included a creative element, but there have also been some specific projects very much centered on creative activities. Art & Activism and Recipes for Life are two examples.

Art and Activism is described in more detail below. Recipes for Life is an ongoing project being developed in partnership with Space2. The product will be a booklet featuring women and women's groups who have been supporters or contributors to Women Friendly Leeds. Each contribution will include an interesting and inspiring biography and picture, and a recipe provided by the individual woman or women's group. These can be for anything: food, a beauty product, a recipe for activism, wellbeing, fitness, or confidence, for example.

The idea is that women from communities, women leaders, well known women and unknown women, all from Leeds, will sit alongside each other, sharing their wisdom and creativity in sisterhood on an equal basis, showing the strength of the movement, what it's achieved and some of the faces involved. Already the Recipes for Life project is capturing imaginations and engaging women who might not otherwise get involved:

"Recipes for Life has been particularly fantastic for engaging women in the partner projects. It's a way in and through that they find out about all the rest of WFL. It also means workers get out and about and meet women where they are at: student women, women at Asha and Nari Ekta, or the other week we met with 35 Sikh women. Women love the concept. The idea of being in a book really engages and empowers them. They work on their contributions week by week and really want their 'recipes', their ideas to be in there. Art and Activism works the same. It pulls you in through creativity to express yourself."

- WFL team member



Art created by women who participated in Art & Activism Sessions

This view was echoed by other interviewees. For example, a WLL alliance member commented:

'Our women didn't like the Hub meetings at first – going along just to talk, they didn't get the point. But now there's a changed structure so there's a thing you're doing like art and while you're there you do the talking as well. The meetings engage more people on that basis'.

- WLL alliance member



Achieving Voice and Influence

In developing its priorities for influence, the project team consulted with women to identify the issues which most concerned them. This led to the generation of two campaigns: 'Shining a Light on Women's Inequalities' and 'Switch on to Women's Safety'. The main strands of the Women's Inequalities campaign have been health and wellbeing, and employability. Safety has been a particularly strong focus of WFL's work, both because it was identified as a key concern for women in Leeds and because the considerable national publicity and policy interest following the series of high-profile murders of women made it a particularly timely issue to pursue. Integral to all these has been the aim of increasing the voice and influence of women.

Switching onto Women's Safety

The WFL team has made the most of the increased interest in women's safety to develop and implement a campaign strategy across Leeds and the wider region. A core element of this was a Safety Survey carried out during May 2021. This achieved 1,371 responses from women across the city, providing a vital source of local and up to date information about women's experiences. The project was already developing key partnerships with the local authority, the police and other third sector organisations, so that when the survey findings were published there were several interested audiences.

The report of the safety survey was launched in September 2021 by a lunchtime briefing presentation attended by 30 people, including the Deputy Mayor of West Yorkshire. The presentation has also been delivered to a range of influential partners and continues to be widely shared. The report proved to be an effective springboard from which to influence a series of policy developments and to help generate new funding, notably via West Yorkshire's bids to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund.





'That survey was so insightful. Great timing and it fast-tracked safety up the political priority list. It wasn't there before, and it was so important that it came from the social movement...women being the voice. Otherwise, we wouldn't be where we are now, and the survey opened doors to get funding from elsewhere.'

- Council interviewee



WFL's 16 days of action on women's safety in November 2021 helped to galvanise activity. Innovative approaches to awareness raising included the use of bin trucks emblazoned with the campaign message – 30 wards across Leeds sponsored these and they remain a visible reminder driving around Leeds today.

There are numerous examples of WFL having an influence on the development of women's safety initiatives, including:

Ask For Angela

One of the recommendations of the safety report was for Leeds to fully implement the Ask for Angela scheme whereby venues in the night-time economy commit to supporting women if they are being harassed or feeling uncomfortable (the scheme has the strapline 'If something doesn't feel right, Ask for Angela'). Venue staff may, for example, help a woman to exit the venue safely to get out of an uncomfortable situation. Prior to the safety survey, Leeds already had an Ask for Angela scheme, but it was widely acknowledged to need a redesign and to be re-invigorated after COVID in the context of the newly booming night-time economy in Leeds.

"In relation to Ask for Angela we'd been talking about it but the response had been a bit lukewarm. The survey added convincing information that it was needed and really gave it a boost."

- Council interviewee

The partnership, involving Safer Leeds, West Yorkshire Police and Women Friendly Leeds put considerable effort into publicising the re-launch of the scheme with great success, with 610 premises now signed up.



Ask for Angela artwork designed by feminist artist Bobbi Rae

The WFL team has played a key role in this initiative. A senior interviewee from the local authority told us:



We bid for monies, and we relaunched in November '21 through the lens of Women Friendly Leeds. We had a feminist artist design it so it wouldn't be corporate. We now have 610 premises signed up and have good awareness and training behind that to reflect the level of staff turnover. We've signed up all the council leisure centres and aim to develop the whole hospitality sector. The evidence from the survey meant we could work with the Licensing Committee to develop incentives for premises who had signed up, trained their staff and put up Ask for Angela publicity.



The WFL team continue to support the initiative and have helped recruit a worker to develop it further. This worker is now supporting venues that are already signed up to the scheme, looking at the detail of how it's working and offering training and support to maintain the awareness and confidence of staff e.g. a training video so that that staff can watch it on their phones. The aim is to encourage venues to see the use of Ask for Angela as a positive thing and not to think that it reflects badly on the venue if it is used. Similarly, the worker wants to encourage women to use the scheme in any situation where they feel uncomfortable and to allay their anxieties about what may happen if they use it. Over time, the plan is to expand it to other venues such as the transport hubs and shopping centres.

In essence, Women Friendly Cities are those cities where everyone is safe, supported and able to access financial, social and political opportunities. The only way to make this possible is to establish mechanisms to enable a participatory model at local level, to include women in planning and decision-making processes and to enhance dialogue and cooperation between women's organisations and local administrations. The first step of creating a women friendly city is to get to know the women and girls living in the city and analyse their needs, concerns and opportunities. The second step is creating gender sensitive strategic plans and budgeting to support those plans.

Women's Night Safe Space

Another recommendation from the women's safety survey was the development of a safe space for women in Leeds City Centre. The partnership of Women's Lives Leeds and Safer Leeds with support from Bevan Healthcare secured funding from the Safer Streets bid to pilot the Women's Night Safe Space (WNSS) over three weekends in March 2022. The pilot, located on a bus parked in the city centre, aimed to create a non-judgmental safe space to support women to feel and be safe providing somewhere for women to go if, for example, they get separated from their friends, need to wait for a taxi or want to be put in touch with the police.

The support offered by the pilot encompassed safety support, including the presence of a trained female security staff member, links to venue security staff on the ground and the Police. Specialist health support was provided through the partnership with Bevan Healthcare. Other support included help for women to get home via taxi, a warm, safe environment for women to wait for transport or friends, information to enable women to be signposted to other sources of support and practical support including phone charging, water and snacks.

During the pilot the WNSS supported 48 individuals (40 women and 8 men), including 'Donna' whose case story below illustrates the value of the WNSS.

'Donna'

Donna passed by the bus at approximately 21:30 and reported to staff she felt unsafe and scared as a man unknown to her was following her. She was very drunk, unable to walk safely, and could not communicate much more with staff. She carried on down the road and went into a pub with no door staff. Night Safe staff radioed using the BACIL radio to request Pub Watch identified the male and put a camera on him. They were successful in identifying him and Women's Night Safe staff went to speak to the Donna in the pub and reassure her and encourage her to come to the bus and access a safe way home. Donna agreed and the male left. At the bus the Night Safe staff were able to get in contact with Donna's sister, charge her phone and give her some water then make sure she was put safely in a taxi to get home.

Feedback gathered from 57 women during the pilot period provided further support for the initiative. All the women interviewed said they would use the Women's Night Safe Space if they felt unwell or unsafe on a night out, and many said they felt safer knowing there was somewhere safe and non-judgmental they could go if there were any problems:



Knowing it is there if needed, and especially if you are being followed or getting unwanted attention, you can go to the van and feel safe in public.



Knowing I could meet my friends there if we got lost from each other. Knowing it was there would make it more likely we would have a night out in Leeds.



Following the success of the pilot, further funding was obtained from round four of the Safer Streets Fund to pay for a further 57 sessions over a 12 month period. A Women's Night Safe Coordinator took up post in October 2022 and sessional support staff were recruited to create a multi-disciplinary team with Bevan Health Care and Gough and Kelly Security. Over the past 6 months the WNSS has operated every Saturday night, with additional slots provided over Christmas and New Year and at specific events. Feedback from the pilot was used to decide the best location which is now at the Corn Exchange, a good location for visibility and access as well as enabling a quiet space.




By the end of January 2023, a further 67 women had been supported by the WNSS including help to get home safely, healthcare and emotional support. The team responded to several safeguarding incidents including women who had been assaulted, a homeless woman, two missing young women, and women in very vulnerable situations, as illustrated by the case story of 'Sarah':

'Sarah'

Two young women who had walked past the Women's Night Safe Space earlier that night came to ask for help for Sarah, the two young women were in distress themselves from trying to help, but remembered walking past the bus earlier so came to find us. Sarah was found alone sitting on the pavement crying with no clothes on under her coat which didn't do up. Staff were able to support her onto the bus where she was able to have a hot drink, get emotional support for how she was feeling, charge her phone to get in touch with her children who she was worried about because they did not know where she was. She had no money on her and was saying to staff she was going to walk home- this was deemed extremely unsafe, so the team used their taxi account service to get her home safely. Sarah was extremely grateful for the support and took away signposting information and guidance if she needed to report or disclose anything that had happened on the night as in that moment she couldn't remember.

Alongside providing this kind of direct support to women, the WNSS team have put considerable effort into publicising the space, both through media outlets and, importantly, by engaging with staff working in the nighttime economy. This is vital, as a worker explained:

 **Staff have been very receptive – we do walkabouts when not busy on the bus to raise awareness and cement relationships with door staff on their bit of pavement. We want to add value to their role, not disempower staff, but they could sometimes support a woman to get to us a bit earlier and we can sometimes identify that in reflecting with them on an incident. If we can be called in early, we can often de-escalate situations and reduce potential harm.**

- WNSS worker



Key learning so far includes the importance of maintaining these positive relationships with staff in the nighttime economy. Consistency of delivery times and location is also proving to be important in developing the service. But the style of delivery also matters in order to be a welcoming place for women who are on a night out:



We deliver with big smiles, fun and lots of affection – not overly serious or emphasizing vulnerability.

- WNSS worker



As the current round of funding approaches its end, the partnership is keen for it to continue and give it a sustainable future.

Work with West Yorkshire Police

Positive dialogue has been established with the police over their communications and approach to Violence Against Women and Girls. For example, a meeting was facilitated between the Deputy Mayor and women survivors. The report from the meeting prompted the police to meet themselves with women to hear about their concerns. Feedback from WFL on the police's planned social media communications to women resulted in significant changes to the imagery and messaging.

In early December 2022, during the 16 days of action to End violence Against Women and Girls, WFL ran a Q&A session between women and the West Yorkshire Police lead for VAWG. This included the display of a large-scale art exhibition with works by Women Friendly Leeds supporters on the theme of Women and Girls Safety, developed in partnership with Leeds Arts University. The event was a great success, particularly for one woman who was able to speak directly to the police and have her case revisited.



Photo from Q+A with Detective Superintendent Vanessa Rolfe at the Women Friendly Leeds Speak up! Art Exhibition and Q&A event.

Workshops with Men and Boys

A recurring theme in the safety survey findings was the call from women for men to take more responsibility for male behaviour and to become stronger allies in combating misogyny. An important strand of the project's work has been the development of a partnership with Men's Health Unlocked to develop a workshop for men and boys on contributing to women's safety.

Workshops with Men's Health Unlocked

Using the key messages from the safety survey, a partnership between WFL and Men's Health Unlocked developed a workshop, designed for men who want to be supportive of women's safety. The initiative involved a core group of men from a variety of organisations, including Humansbeing, Touchstone and the Jewish Housing Association who together with the WFL team developed the training pack. Safer Streets funding was used to pilot six 'train the trainer' workshops with men in a variety of settings, with the initial aim of getting 60 men trained, who would use the training to have constructive conversations and/or run sessions with other men.

The workshops have used material directly from the safety survey to raise men's awareness of women's experiences and have included clips of actors speaking some of the quotes from the survey findings. The training also uses scenarios to help men consider the range of steps they can take in different situations.

The experience so far suggests that the workshops can be effective not only in raising the awareness of participants but also increasing men's confidence to be more positive 'upstanders' for women. For example, an early session was run with a group of men who were initially sceptical about the need for the initiative. The group were encouraged to go and talk to the women in their own lives about how safe they felt. This promoted conversations that hadn't happened before, and some were shocked and surprised at the experiences their wives, sisters and women friends recounted.

The workshops recognise the anxieties many men have about 'getting it wrong' with women and their fears for their own safety if they end up in confrontation. The workshops explore the range of diversionary tactics men can use. For example, in week two, one of the men told the group that he'd been standing near a woman at a bus stop who was being subjected to sexual comments from a group of young men. He stood between the group and the woman and spoke loudly on his mobile to signal to her that he was there to be supportive. This is one practical example of how men can support women without getting into confrontational situations or placing themselves at risk.

Up to now over 100 men have participated in train the trainer sessions – including taxi drivers, Leeds City college, Leeds Beckett University, Public Health and Voluntary Action Leeds. Sessions are proving very popular, as the following feedback illustrates:

"Thought provoking - makes you understand how you can support women in various situations, especially being aware of how little actions can have a positive impact on the culture of men. We are going to run the sessions with sports clubs at the university."

"Incredibly informative and thought-provoking session. I now feel empowered to deliver a session myself and be an active bystander."

"Really good training. Helped me think of things from another perspective. We're planning to deliver the workshop to influential men in the community."

Funding has been allocated to run a further 10 workshops and there are also discussions taking place about the development of a workshop for young men and boys in partnership with Gipton based youth organisation Gipsyl.

None of this would have happened without the Voices project. Men's Health Unlocked acknowledge that it isn't an issue which they'd initially identified as a priority for them, but that the partnership with the Voices project has been incredibly positive and progressive.

Safer Parks and Public Spaces

The Safety survey found that 85% of respondents had experienced VAWG crimes and around half of those incidents had taken place in parks and other open spaces and on public transport. This provided important evidence for the bid to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund and its focus on reclaiming parks and public spaces for women and girls and making those spaces safer. The bid recognised that while there is an argument for empowering girls to feel more comfortable using such spaces it is also important to look at how changes to the design of parks and their facilities might better enable girls and women to enjoy them. The successful bid proposed work that would provide insight into why women and girls use (or don't use) parks, what would make them use a park more and what would make them feel safer; increase women and girls sense of ownership of parks through funding local clean-up operations to improve the look and feel of these spaces; increase the use of parks through organised activities, creating greater feeling of safety through increased use, building girls' and women's confidence in using parks and public spaces; provide training for parks and street scene staff and volunteers to help them recognise and combat VAWG.

The WFL and Vocal Girls team contributed to this work via the conduct of six focus group discussions with women and girls focusing on Holbeck and Woodhouse Moor parks. These voices contributed to a report produced by Leeds University, and the WFL team went on to work in partnership with the university, Keep Britain Tidy, Green Flag and Make Space for Girls, along with the West Yorkshire combined authority, to develop safer parks guidance. This guidance, launched at a national conference in May 2023, has already been influential both nationally and locally. In Leeds, the guidance was produced at just the right time to influence plans for a redevelopment of Lewisham Park in Morley. Other local authorities have taken up the guidance and a representative of the WFL team has been invited to join a steering group for parks development in Bristol. It has even attracted international interest.

The Shared Prosperity Fund is helping to continue this work in Leeds, where partners are keen not only to make parks safer and more accessible to women and girls, but also to apply the same principles to public spaces generally. For example, further consultation is planned with women and girls in Morley about how to make access routes (e.g., to the station) feel safer and more useable.



Work with Women Artists

A city's public art is one very visible symbol of whether a city is women friendly. If all the public art is of men and by men, then it suggests a city has a long way to go! In Leeds the local authority has made a commitment to increase the diversity and accessibility of its public art. This has provided an opportunity for the WFL project to support initiatives for new art which reflect the priorities of women.



Art from the Art & Activism sessions displayed at the 'Speak Up! Art Exhibition & Police Q+A' Event.

"Art & activism sessions were so important to the women involved. They had the chance to turn something that was very negative into something very positive and empowering. It really enriched people's lives. Women felt heard and part of something: process matters."

- Council interviewee

Art & Activism

The Ask for Angela character was deliberately commissioned and created as an 'activist Angela' by local feminist artist, Bobby Ray. It's one of a whole series of artistic collaborations involving women artists in the endeavor to make Leeds a more women friendly city.

Money left over from the 'Welcome Back post Covid fund' was used to create a women friendly artistic space in the city centre. Merrion Gardens has had a difficult reputation and the intention is to deliberately flip that on its head and build a different place through lots of engagement with different groups of young women including Vocal Girls.

At the same time Headingley Rhinos ginnel has been redecorated by female street artists – and women only street art sessions have been hosted. The aim of both projects is to enable women to reclaim public space: visually state their right to inhabit it and to do so without fear. These initiatives are all about engagement and women getting involved in making things happen and enacting a solution to a problem for themselves – rather than the council just painting out graffiti or using vandal proof paint. The results have been well-received:

"The mural is great. It was an international artist who trained in Leeds and co-produced it with a real range of young women. It was turned round in 3 months!! It has really sparked conversations." Local authority interviewee

Leeds City Council is committed to making public art in the city diverse, accessible and more representative of both local communities and local artists. A senior local authority officer told us:

"keep my ear to the ground for opportunities to put people together and make things happen. Emily and Paulette have been brilliant to work with: you have to be reactive to opportunities and they are 'yes' people so we've been able to make fantastic things happen....I'm a fan of the physical reclaiming of spaces and addressing imbalances by doing something about them. Intersectionality, inclusivity and allyship are core to the kind of representation that the city needs."

Young Women's Safety

The safety survey obtained some responses from younger women, but the response rate was low from under 18's, so it was recognised that different approaches are required to reach younger women and girls. An earlier initiative led by Vocal Girls was the 'Protective not possessive Campaign' which was created to highlight the issue of unhealthy relationships. This included an Instagram page of Valentines' cards which had messages such as "love, not control" and shared a story of an unhealthy relationship.



Following the safety survey, Vocal Girls had a plan to develop a safety exhibition for young women to use creative ways of getting younger women's views on safety issues. Initially, because of staff changes and the reintroduction of COVID restrictions during 2021 this work didn't take place. However, in 2022 groups of girls were brought together at an event on Woodhouse Moor including art activities focused on a range of topics including safety for girls and girls have been very much involved in the art and activism initiatives. This artwork has gone on to tour venues around the city, mainly the higher education settings, and continues to do so, including an exhibition at Leeds Playhouse for International Women's Day.

WalkSafe App

The most recent development within the women's safety campaign is the soon to be launched 'WalkSafe' app. This app enables users to notify a friend or family member of their intended route e.g. if they're planning to walk home after a night out. The friend will be notified if the user goes off their planned route. This is a bespoke Leeds version which also identifies safe spaces near to the user's route. The new app is to be launched in September when 90,000 students arrive in Leeds.



Shining a Light on Women's Inequalities

This strand of campaigning was informed by the clear evidence of inequalities faced by women in relation to health, wellbeing and employment, with the priorities for action developed through an ongoing process of consultation and dialogue with women involved in the Hubs, as Ambassadors and through other fora.

Many of these priorities were also highlighted in the findings of a report on women's health (2019) and a survey on the impact of COVID carried out by the project in the summer of 2020. With responses from over 1000 women, the survey revealed the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on women's wellbeing as they juggled the numerous responsibilities in their lives. As well as many being on the frontline as key workers, women frequently found themselves taking on the majority of home education, childcare, other caring responsibilities, the emotional burden of COVID and the greater share of household tasks. For some women, there was a considerable impact on their employment situation, their financial stability and their mental health and well-being, reinforcing the importance of raising awareness of and taking action about women's inequalities.

Some highlights of this campaign include:

Healthcare: WFL is an ongoing member of the Leeds Health and Wellbeing board 'Allyship' programme, providing a pathway to raise issues of concern to women, raise the profile of women's healthcare issues and discuss ways to better get women's needs met. Work has included:

- Advocating for better and more sensitive gynaecological services including more flexible options for cervical screening through pop up clinics in trusted women's spaces. The aim is for these to be drop-ins in non-clinical places where women don't have to make an appointment.
- Campaigning for every GP practice in Leeds to sign up to the free nationally available menopause training and asking for funding for a menopause webinar to be recorded for women and healthcare professionals.



- In response to the concerns of women, the project has given space for the discussion of the issues facing women experiencing the menopause via regular 'menopause meet ups'.
- The project also supported the development of Women Only COVID vaccine clinics in Leeds:

Women Only Covid Vaccine Clinics

The Voices project has been a key partner in a multi-agency initiative to develop a women-only vaccination clinic to improve women's access and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination.

By spring 2021, public health data indicated that women from culturally diverse groups in Leeds were less likely to get vaccinated, with uptake 24% per cent lower among ethnic minority women compared to white women. Several factors were identified as barriers. Making appointments on-line or by phone requires access to digital skills and equipment as well as literacy in English; getting to the clinics requires transport and even when women overcome these barriers, the clinics themselves sometimes lack cultural sensitivity e.g. they are often large, open spaces with little privacy.

The multi-agency partnership involving Leeds City Council, the NHS and Women's Lives Leeds provided the WFL project with a key opportunity to shape a more women-friendly approach to vaccinations. The result was an agreement to run a series of women-only clinics, based on women-friendly principles which meant that women could:

- **go to a local, trusted venue without a prior appointment**
- **talk through any anxieties about having the vaccination with the support of translators if needed**
- **be greeted by women volunteers and security staff**
- **receive their vaccinations from a female vaccinator in a private area with space for them to take their children, pram etc**
- **have access to other information and support, including domestic violence support, debt advice and social prescribers.**

As well as being proactive in promoting these women-friendly principles, the WFL project played a key role in supporting the public communications about the initiative by designing information to help engage communities and by making use of Women's Lives Leeds extensive networks and social media reach.

The success of the initial pilot in Chapeltown led to similar clinics being held in other parts of the city. The experience also informed other developments including women-friendly pop-up clinics at venues such as food banks and ante-natal settings.

Feedback from women using the clinic illustrate just how important it has been:

"Such a lovely and inclusive way to do this. Really wonderful and so important. Today I feel a little safer, a little more accepted in the world."

"I took my friend who lives in Harehills to the clinic because she was really nervous and had been vaccine hesitant for some time. Her priority though was seeing her family and keeping the community safe, so she made the brave decision to have her vaccine. She was treated with huge respect and patience, and we were alone with the lady who was giving the vaccine in a private booth. I honestly don't think she would have ever had the vaccine if she had needed to book and find a location that wasn't near to her house. It gave her an easily accessible option and there was a very positive, happy vibe there, and... my friend can come back to the same place for her 2nd vaccine."

There is growing recognition that designing clinics based on women-friendly principles is not just good for women, but it's good for everyone and should be 'business as usual.' The initiative led to the council developing a set of principles on how to make vaccination clinics generally more women-friendly – an initiative which the WFL project supported effectively by enabling helpful and timely feedback from their ambassadors and alliance members.

Are you a **women friendly vaccine clinic?**

We want to make sure women feel safe and supported when attending for vaccinations. Can your clinic...

Have a woman vaccinator available



Provide other resources such as information on domestic violence and abuse



Provide a family friendly space i.e. to accommodate prams and young children



Have either a private room or screens available to create a private space

Consider how safe your clinic feels i.e. good signage, security (incl. female security), well-lit entrance and exits, plans to address security concerns

Provide advice and guidance regarding fertility, pregnancy and breastfeeding and vaccines



Accommodate walk ins



Be sensitive to women's needs such as health matters, cultural needs, clothing worn and translation support

In addition, could your clinic..?

Offer a women's only hour or session



Offer a publicised walk in clinic

If you would like any advice and guidance regarding being a women friendly clinic or running a women's only session please contact leedsccg.comms@nhs.net



WOMEN'S LIVES LEEDS
Empowering Women and Girls in Leeds



Wellbeing

WFL contributed to the Leeds Mental Health Strategy 2020-2025 with evidence and testimony from the COVID-19 women's survey; have Linked with Trust Leeds to look at ways the project can support women to set up self-reliant groups and have participated in workshops by Leeds Adult Mental Health Community Based Support Review, to provide a women's perspective.

The project sent out over 300 women's wellbeing packs to support women as Covid restrictions ease. This initiative is in response to the reporting of new emerging mental health issues, women's feelings of stress, isolation and loneliness.

Employability

The WFL team worked in partnership with Smartworks to develop a women friendly recruiter checklist. This was launched at an event in May 2022 where companies and organisations were asked to sign up to these guidelines to be more women friendly employers. The event also provided a 'marketplace' for all women looking at ways of accessing work with a view to getting wider engagement from different groups of women. This included some stalls of different types of employers/access to work routes as well as round-table discussions on a range of topics such as confidence for women in different circumstances e.g., returning to work after a gap.



By March 2023, the Women Friendly Recruiter checklist had 22 sign ups and a range of work has been carried out to relaunch and build interest in the checklist. WFL have developed resources, a webpage and a presentation about how it works and its benefits, in order to attract more organisations and businesses to sign up. The Recruiter checklist is also one of WFL's key asks to Leeds City Council.



**WOMEN
FRIENDLY
RECRUITER**

Women Friendly Recruiter Checklist

PLEDGE

We are committed to becoming a visible Women Friendly Recruiter and will adopt the checklist in our recruitment process



FLEXIBLE WORKING

Practices include flexi-time, working from home or hybrid working, part-time roles or job shares and compressed work weeks. Flexible working can increase productivity, promote a healthy work-life balance, improve job satisfaction and attract top talent.



JOB SHARE

Advertising for job shares can attract more candidates and job shares have been shown to improve productivity, flexibility and job satisfaction.



CAREER HISTORY

Encouraging candidates to recognise and demonstrate the positive aspects of gaps in career histories and non-work experiences on their application forms can attract a wider range of applicants who have the skills you need and promotes a healthy work/life balance.





PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Explicitly encourage non-working experiences to be included on CV's or application forms. Recognising these skills as transferable and relevant can attract talent. Encourage your recruiting managers to concentrate on potential.



WOMEN FRIENDLY BENEFITS & POLICIES

Encourage women to join and stay with your organisation by adopting a robust maternity policy, covering family planning and pre-natal care, and policies that recognise menopause and other women's issues. Promote these and a zero-tolerance gender discrimination policy during the application process.



WOMEN'S WORKPLACE CHAMPION

Appointing a women's workplace champion or developing a women's network offers gender focused advice and support for employees, and can increase female employees' confidence and help them to reach their full potential. These schemes also demonstrate your commitment as an inclusive employer.

By signing up to be a Women Friendly Recruiter, we state these points on job adverts and application forms. This will increase the confidence of candidates, boost numbers of applicants and maximise the pool of skilled candidates applying for jobs. We also demonstrate we are an inclusive employer who is actively encouraging women and others to join our organisation or business, and that we consider their needs.



labyrinth
project

SMART
WORKS

WOMEN'S LIVES LEEDS
Empowering Women and Girls in Leeds

As a result of the profile achieved by the employers' checklist, the WFL team were contacted by Maltesers to be part of their launch of the #MotherLovers campaign. WFL supported this launch in Parliament and spoke to MPs about the WF recruiter's checklist. In turn, Maltesers have gone on to support WFL on their website, promoting WFL and providing chocolate for women on WNSS and events. The link has led to a wide range of discussions with them on the issue of employability for women, in particular ways in which women, men, partners, employees and bosses can support working mums.

The WFL journey so far: key achievements and learning



'WFL has been a complete bridge and enabler for things to happen. The consultations with women have not just been short term or one-off campaigns but ongoing. The whole WFL team feels its accountable to the women they've had feedback from. Partnership with statutory services has been vital but WFL have not only acted as a 'push' for things like the safety bus to happen they've also shaped how they've happened. For example, there are night safety initiatives in other places, but they are run quite differently - by the police for example and they have a totally different feel.'

- Ambassador



Key achievements

As is clear from the previous sections of this report that WFL has had some very significant achievements:

- Engaging hundreds of women in the Women Friendly Leeds project in a variety of ways as Hub members, Ambassadors, participants in creative projects or as consultees on a wide range of issues.
- The involvement of women of diverse backgrounds and experience including amplifying the voices of women who are seldom listened to.

- Making the issue of women's safety in public space visible and engaging a range of partners – including Leeds businesses – in developing responses.
- Making a vital contribution to some major safety developments: Ask for Angela, the Women's Night Safe Space
- Embedding women's voices in the development of policy and planning in the city.
- Delivering a highly successful safety campaign alongside progressing a broader agenda addressing other aspects of gender inequality. These have included tangible outcomes for women, including women-only vaccine clinics and employers signing up to a recruiters' checklist.
- Generating regional, national and international interest in the concept of Women Friendly movement building. Examples include contacts made with other cities such as Cardiff and London boroughs, and a major contribution to a global conference in Nepal where along with 17 other global, feminist movement-based projects, the WFL team shared learning and explored feminist principles for movement building.

The ingredients of this success have included:

- The pre-existence of an Alliance of women's organisations provided some solid foundations of trust with partners who felt confident in empowering the WFL team to get on with the job.
- Adopting a strategy combining movement building with campaigning - this has given the initiative considerable legitimacy. Campaign asks are harder to ignore if they very evidently come from a coherent collection of women's voices.
 - WFL's ability to mobilise diverse women around issues they felt strongly about has enabled them to become the 'go-to place' to access women's views.
 - A small core team of skilled and passionate individuals, based in Leeds Women's Aid and well supported by the host organisation has been able to be adaptive and 'light on its feet' in responding
 - to opportunities as they arise.



The Learning from Building a Movement

Over the four years of Comic Relief funding considerable energy has gone into building a movement to underpin the creation of a Women Friendly Leeds. In the process, a lot has been learned about the challenges of movement building. This has included a growing understanding that creating a movement involves a good deal of time and energy being spent on internal processes, two-way communication and building networks of relationships: it involves power sharing and allowing for de-centered decisions and developments. Movement building is all about process, is frequently slow and sometimes frustrating. Movement building is diffuse and there's a lot of trust involved. When opportunities for influence come up at short notice (as they often do), it's often more effective and efficient in the short-term to keep the decision-making and actions within a small, centralized team. That way you get things done. But over the longer term, sustained change involves taking people with you, enabling others to take on the influencing. An ongoing dilemma for the WFL team has been balancing the need to capitalise on opportunities swiftly with the need to build a longer-term movement for change.

So, what have been the main lessons for what works when it comes to movement building?

It's very resource intensive. Engaging women and keeping them engaged requires a lot of staff time and skill. These skills include both interpersonal and the technical skill e.g. not only the skills required to bring women together and enable communication, but also the skills to keep getting the comms out to a wide audience via social media and a website. The WFL team have been successful in having staff with these skills but juggling all the requirements within such a small team has been challenging. For example, WFL social media only became successful when the team were able to commit dedicated time to it. Some initial ideas such as pledges failed to take off in the way that was hoped because the team did not have the time to follow them through.



Movement building occurs in stages over time. At the outset engagement is the key task but is only the first chapter of the story. Enabling and empowering women to generate ideas and take action is a whole other phase:



We recognise that a key part of our work is increasing confidence in women and girls so they can believe they can do it for themselves. ...and support the building of relationships between women.

- Extract from WFL report to Comic Relief



Creative engagement projects have been particularly effective as initial gateways to involvement in the WFL project. Some strategies have been more successful than others. Some have been very labour intensive and in retrospect not always a good use of limited team resources. However, some individuals and groups recruited early in the project remain involved and have gained connections, skills and knowledge for future organising and campaigning.

The Learning from Campaigning and Influence

Probably the key lesson from the WFL initiative is the fact that success in this context has been based on the inter-relationship between movement building and campaigning and influence. The campaigns have been as successful as they have been because they have had the legitimacy of the movement behind them:



'The Ambassadors network and community groups have been important – a great source for consultation. An Intersectionality focus comes through strongly in everything they do. Women and girls' voices now have to be considered – that's a policy change. The Deputy Leader of the Council advocated to make this happen – for example, any new Parks or design developments have to consider impact for women and girls'.

- Council interviewee



At the same time the fact that WFL has campaigned on issues women care passionately about has drawn women in and helped to develop the momentum of the movement.

Timing is all. At the outset women's safety was not on the initiative's list of campaigns on which they might focus. However, women's response to the tragic death of Sarah Everard highlighted the importance of safety in public space to women and girls' lives. In addition, WFL was able to capitalise on the fact that women's safety was becoming high on the agenda in the city and the West Yorkshire Mayor and deputy Mayor had identified violence against women and girls as a priority issue.

Campaigning is often seen to be concerned with securing big policy changes or new initiatives, but it can be equally important to influence day-to-day processes and affect how decision makers go about their business:



'The safety survey helped to support a lot of new initiatives but also the nuts and bolts of managing a city. For example, planning panels now include a discussion about how safe new developments are. It was absolutely vital that the information was local. Just having general information doesn't do it.'

- Council Interviewee



Finally, partnership is important. Relationships of equality and respect have been forged with both powerful players and grassroots groups – with both types of organisations being enabled to share ownership of strategies and a sense of achievement when changes occur.



'Emily and the team are fantastic – they are pragmatic, put women at the centre of everything and challenge appropriately all the statutory partners.'

- Council interviewee



Conclusions

There is little doubt that huge progress has been made towards the strategic goals of WFL. With the development of a strong movement for change, involving women from all communities across Leeds, and with the engagement and influence of decision-makers, women's voices are clearly becoming a more integrated feature of policy and planning in the City.

The team's plans for work over the next few months include disseminating the learning so far – including organising a UK conference; publication of the Recipes for Life book as an outcome of, and inspiration for, movement building; promotion of the Leeds Women Friendly Recruiter Checklist to businesses and organisations; ongoing support for safety initiatives including Ask for Angela and Women's Night Safe Space and holding a city-wide event for women and girls with the theme of Menstruation to Menopause.

However, all this is the very beginning of a journey and not the final destination. At the project's outset the WFL team identified the following ambitious outcomes it hoped might have resulted by August 2023:

- The City of Leeds has adopted the concept of becoming a Women Friendly City.
- Women's voices, including those whose views are seldom heard, are having influence at every level of decision-making,
- Women views are always sought when policy decisions are being made and this is reflected in the policies and strategies that are adopted.
- Women Friendly Leeds has the same level of support as Child Friendly Leeds – it is seen as the norm and has the backing of all key agencies.
- There is a strong alliance of women's organisations and groups across the city.
- There is a high level of public awareness in Leeds of the equal rights of women and girls.
- Leeds has developed a reputation as a Beacon city for promoting positive change for women and is having influence on other cities.