

CHARITY

Spotting women 'below the radar'



ALY WALSH

P: 01332 253053
E: awalsh@
derbytelegraph.co.uk
T: @AlyWalsh1



Dionne Reid, of Women's Work, said the Below the Radar project would allow the charity to reach more women.

A CITY charity has been awarded almost £500,000 to work with vulnerable women in the city.

Women's Work will receive £498,376 from the Big Lottery Fund over the next four years for a new project, called Below the Radar.

The charity was set up in 2003 to provide respite, advice and support to women with drug and alcohol addictions - specifically targeting those involved in street sex work.

It now also supports women, and their families, affected by domestic abuse.

Dionne Reid, chief executive of the charity, said the new project comes out of their philosophy not to turn away any woman.

She said: "This project is for vulnerable women with complex needs. We have found that some of our distinct projects which we have run have excluded women who didn't fit into the boxes.

"But we have women who come in who don't have drug or alcohol problems, they are not street workers and they are not affected by domestic violence. They may not have a family and are probably very isol-

ated, with low-level mental health problems."

She said Below the Radar would offer these women learning opportunities, workshops, counselling and a chance to develop their self-esteem and confidence and "to feel part of a community of women with similar issues".

However, she said the charity would continue its work with "extremely vulnerable groups".

Ms Reid said the new grant would go towards paying overheads and staffing costs. The charity also wants to recruit two new members of staff.

One woman whom the charity has supported is a 30-year-old called Rachel, who did not wish to be identified. She said Women's Work had helped turn her life around.

Her first involvement with the charity was about 10 years ago and, about four years ago, Rachel started attending the charity's base in Normanton, attending drop-ins and workshops.

Rachel said: "When I first started going, I was a state - I was very underweight, I had no social skills, I was in a very abusive relationship and I was committing a lot of crime.

"By going to the odd drop-in session, I was able to build relationships with them and started to trust them - they all delivered what they promised."