

WOMEN'S WORK

STATEMENT OF INTENT

To provide a respite for women involved in substance abuse and prostitution, from the harsh realities of a life that few could comprehend. Never to judge, but to recognise the value and maintain the dignity, of every individual in our efforts to initiate change.

- *Reach out in friendship to all women involved in or exploited through prostitution.*
- *To offer support and guidance to those who wish to change their current lifestyle.*
- *To tackle drug addiction within the client group.*
- *To promote sexual health and personal well-being.*
- *To educate and inform women on how to stay safe.*
- *To offer a safe space within a caring and supportive environment.*
- *To liase with all members of the local community and relevant agencies to address the wider consequences of substance misuse.*

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INTRODUCTION

Women's Work was established in June 2003 from a partnership agreement between the Edge Project and Derby Women's Centre.

Funding for the Three-year project was granted by the SRB 6 fund to develop work with female drug dependant sex workers living and working in the Normanton and Peartree area of Derby City.

Similar was delivered by the Edge Project for a number of years but it was identified that The Edge Project would not have the capacity to develop services for women over the age of eighteen and that delivery of services to this group could be delivered more effectively by an independent project.

I came into post as Project Co-ordinator in January 2004 after a six-month period of temporary cover. The project is now fully staffed with two part-time outreach workers one part-time project worker and a part-time administrator. The project also has 11 volunteers whose help and support is invaluable to service delivery.

It has been an extremely busy few months within the project and there is also the challenge of finding a base for us to work from. This is vital to service delivery and development. The project currently operates from two venues with limited space and facilities.

The focus of the project is to engage with women involved in prostitution and substance misuse. Introducing tools and skills, which will enable them to contemplate, and action change as well as enabling service users to take responsibility and control of their lives. Many of the women that we work with have had few opportunities in a young life blighted by mental and sexual abuse, family breakdown, poor education, poverty, violence, ill health/mental health problems and parental drug abuse, all of which will predispose them to substance misuse. Coupled with low self esteem and self-confidence it will take time and many positive life experiences for these women to trust and accept help to deal with the past and move forward. Not all will successfully achieve this change in lifestyle but it is essential that projects like Women's Work are there for those who want to try and try and try again because sustaining change is an arduous ongoing process.

The project currently delivers two street outreach sessions at 10pm – 12am and three drop in sessions 8pm-10pm and 3pm – 6pm. During these sessions women involved in sex work as a means to funding drug addiction can access various services and information. The project is currently undertaking a research study to highlight the changing needs of the client group, which will be beneficial to all service providers in the city who work with these members of the community.

The project works closely with Addaction and the Sexual health clinic to deliver two of the more fundamental services, drug treatment and advice and sexual health advice to our client group. There are a host of other agencies that we work closely with such as the Police, Housing providers, The DAT, Primary Health Care, Banardos and Rehabilitation Centres who all play a vital role in the continuing care of our client group.

The vast majority of the women we work with struggle with substance addiction and Women's Work has been instrumental in the development of a new working forum in the city. The group recognises that a multidisciplinary approach to drug treatment is effective and aims to pull together all the agencies that come into contact with our client group. The Group known as (WWAG) Working Women's Advisory Group aim to improve and structure service delivery to ensure easier access to drug treatment and improve treatment outcomes by utilising existing support services that are an essential part of the treatment package.

Work has recently begun to establish better links with the local community to try and address some of the issues that are a consequence of the lifestyles of the clients we work with.

The issues and the client group that we deal with is one of the most complex and time intensive in support work. It is also extremely difficult as an organisation to balance the needs of the individuals that we work with and those of individuals who live in a community that is blighted with the aftermath of drug abuse, crime and prostitution. Unfortunately our data indicates increasing numbers of young women resorting to street prostitution, however I believe that with time and commitment from all involved with this project we can start to make a difference, which will be beneficial to all members of the local community.

Many individuals and organisations have been involved in the initial phase of development of this project and or work closely with us to develop service provision. I would like to take this opportunity to say a personal thank you to them all in appreciation of their continued support and commitment to this innovative project.

DIONNE REID
PROJECT COORDINATOR
WOMEN'S WORK

THANKS TO:

- SALLY HUGES (DAT)
- LOUISE WILLIAMS (SRB)
- MICHELLE TARGETT (SRB)
- SUE GEOFF (DERBY WOMENS CENTRE)
- CLAIRE DAWSON (THE EDGE PROJECT)
- NATALIE (THE EDGE PROJECT)
- ANNE JACKMAN (DERBY WOMENS CENTRE)
- DENA (DERBY WOMEN'S CENTRE)
- SUE BLUNDRED (ACOS)
- ORIGINATION
- LAURENS LINK
- DERBY PLAYHOUSE
- DERBYSHIRE CONSTABULARY
- DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY FUND
- MAKE IT HAPPEN CAMPAIGN
- DERBY WOMENS CENTRE
- THE EDGE PROJECT
- DERBY LIONS CLUB
- THE WILLIAM DONALDSON CLINIC
- ADDACTION
- THE ELMS CLINIC
- THE CO-OP
- BIRDS BAKERY
- DERBY CVS
- NACRO

A special thanks to the staff for their endless hard work and commitment to Women's Work and especially the volunteers without whom, service delivery would be severely impaired.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The project is currently managed by the Derby Women's Centre Board of Trustees. This arrangement was initially agreed in the partnership agreement between the Edge Project and Derby Women's Centre. However it is a longer-term objective that Women's Work develops the capacity to establish itself as an independent charitable organisation and we are in the process of recruiting interested parties to form our own independent management committee and we invite interested parties to contact the organisation for more information.

There are a few short-term objectives that have been set for the project over the proceeding twelve months and are as follows: -

- >To locate and establish a project base from which to deliver drop in services and act as office base.
- >To continue to improve and develop community links in the Normanton & Peartree area and work with residents affected by the knock-on effects of substance misuse.
- >Identify new and resourceful means to increase the take up of services offered to our client group by ourselves, and drug treatment agencies.
- >To identify and secure match funding to ensure that the project can complete the initial third year developmental stage fully resourced.
- >To establish an independent committee and apply for charitable status.
- >Restructure the organisation to accommodate growth and changes in fundamental project activities.

SUMMARY OF ON-GOING DEVELOPMENTS

VOLUNTEERS

We continue to build on this valuable resource by inducting and training individuals in various skills to help us deliver a quality service. This year has seen 10 new volunteers join the project.

OUTREACH

Pilot sessions have taken place at the weekend and we are about to undertake a day time foot patrol in the local area with an aim to increasing the opportunities of making contact with women that work outside the usual times.

DROP IN

The Addiction outreach team are now a regular presence at our Thursday night drop in session, which is well attended by women who want to address their drug problems. Other specialist service providers are likely to be utilised in the near future. The new Wednesday afternoon drop in is slowly becoming established and focuses on therapeutic, health and well-being themes.

RESIDENTIAL DRUG TREATMENT

We will continue to liaise with the Elms Clinic for residential rehabilitation applications, as well as independent providers of residential drug treatment programmes. This year Women's Work has assisted 4 women in making successful applications for residential programmes.

NEWSLETTER

The first issue of the Women's Work Newsletter was published in March 2004. It is a useful publication for the client group to keep themselves informed on a variety of issues such as, dangerous punters, health information, service provider's locality and operating times. It is also a useful communication tool in situations where clients have disengaged from services and for families or friends trying to locate missing persons where it is suspected that they are working and or living on the streets. We aim to develop this tool incorporating a wider range of information and contributors.

SEXUAL HEALTH

We are currently working with a health care worker to source funds to deliver a well-women clinic from our drop in. This will encompass testing and treating various ailments on site, and referral to other health care services where necessary.

BUILDING NETWORKS

The WWAG group has developed rapidly in the past few months with regular attendance at meetings by representatives from the Police, the Elms clinic, Restore, Arrest Referral Team, Housing Options and others. A post has been developed in response to work identified by WWAG. The post holder will eventually take over the development and co-ordination of the group. We will continue to liaise with various agencies in the local area especially the Police, who play a major role in development of referral procedures and the circulation of information that helps to keep our service users safe from harm whilst they work.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Evaluation and recording are essential not just for our funders, but to ensure we continue to meet our longer-term objectives and as the project develops help us to remain focused in our work.

SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT

We strive to encourage our service users to participate and contribute ideas for new developments within the project. Feedback is regularly sought about the success and value of activities we provide and women are encouraged to put forward ideas for what they want to be made available at our drop in sessions. We will aim to have an ex-service user representation at the decision making level within the organisation in the coming year.

RESEARCH

One of our volunteers has kindly taken on a research project with an aim to updating the data we have regarding the client group. This information once collated will be useful for all local agencies working with the group to determine levels of need and when planning service provision.

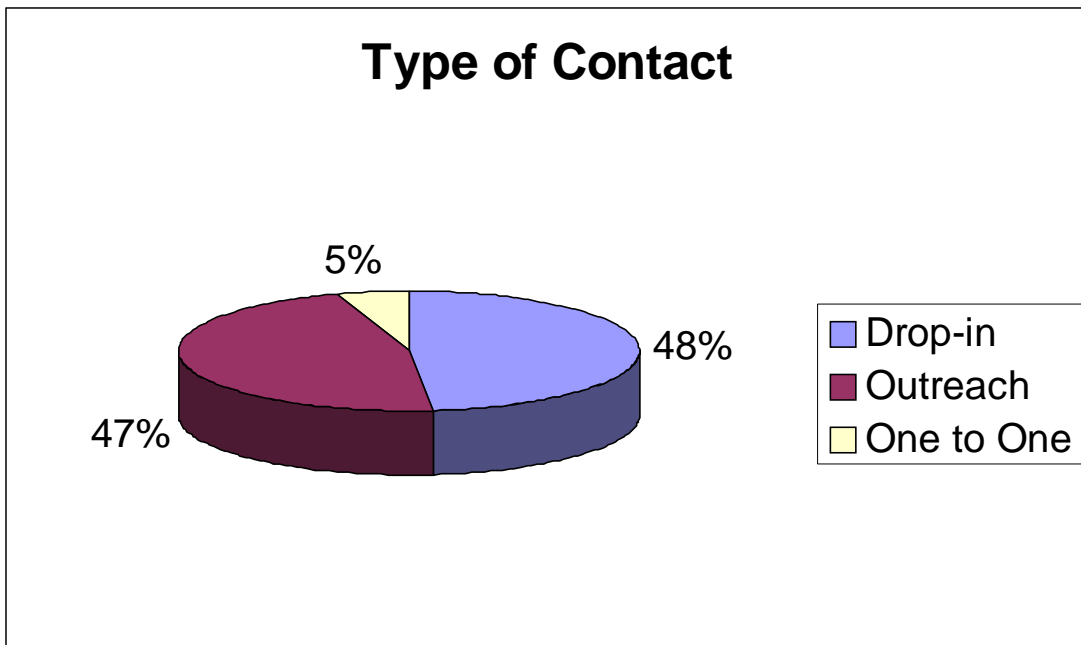
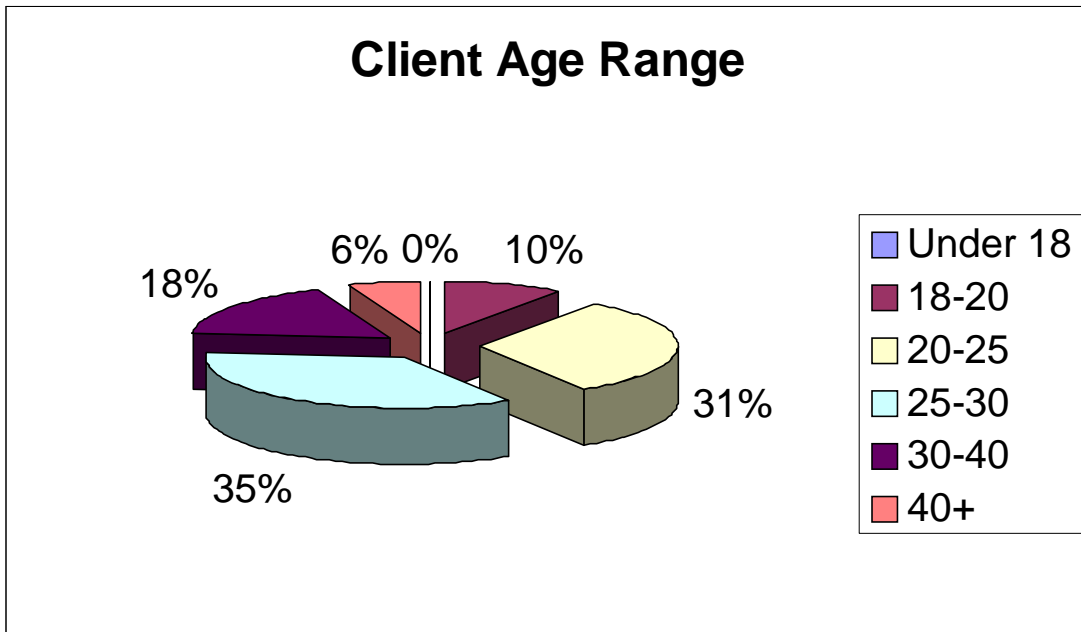
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This area of development has been slow in comparison to other areas, but links have been tentatively developed and work is in progressing to initiate more involvement from the community in directing the project.

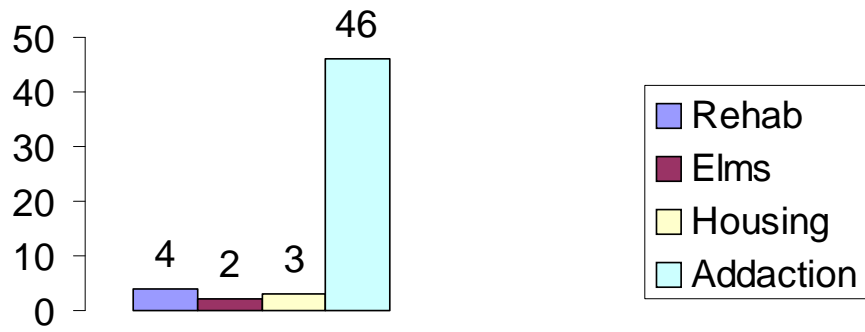
STAFF DEVELOPMENT

All the staff and most of the volunteers have undertaken drug training courses with Addaction and will go on to take further specialist courses with them in the coming months. Staff have also completed training in counselling skills and continue to access more specific training relevant to individual roles. Women's Work will endeavour to continue the investment it makes in staff that will, in due course, ensure efficiency and the highest standards in service delivery.

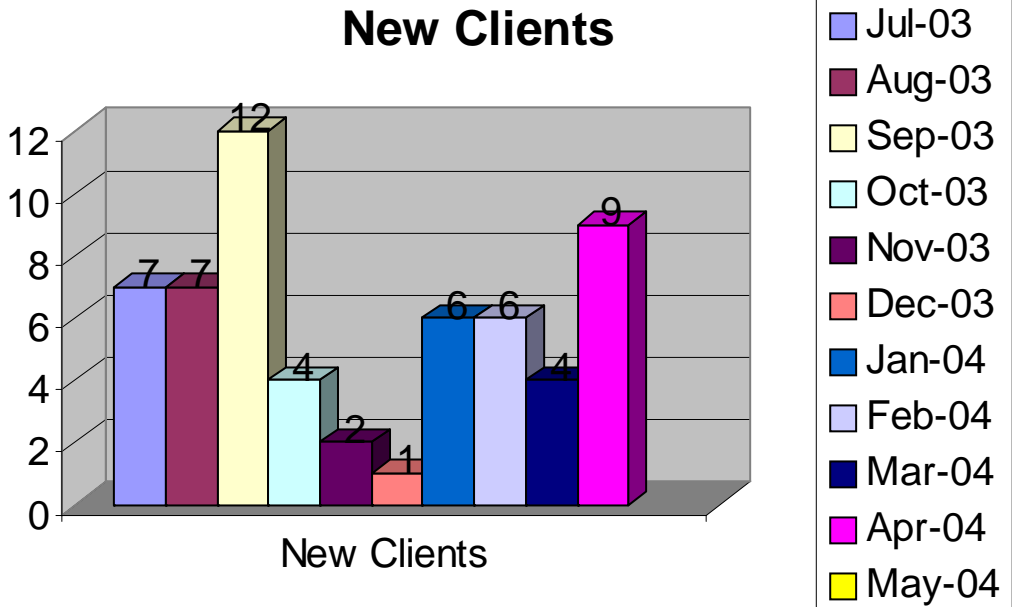
PROJECT STATISTICS



Referrals to Other Agencies



New Clients



WORKER REPORTS

SESSIONAL OUTREACH WORKER 12HRS

Street Outreach sessions take place on Monday and Wednesday nights between the hours of 10:00pm – 12:00 midnight. The outreach team comprises of two female workers normally a member of staff and a volunteer. We work in the Normanton and Peartree areas of Derby.

The aim of outreach work is to initiate first contact with women who are involved in street prostitution. Once a potential contact has been sighted on an outreach session we then cautiously approach them. We will then introduce ourselves and inform them of the projects activities. Hot and cold refreshments are made available as a tool to encourage engagement. Once initial contact has been made we endeavour to build upon this and build a positive relationship with the women. We offer information and advice about drug treatment options, harm minimisation practices, sexual health, general health and well-being, we also endeavour to increase awareness of safer working practices among street sex workers.

Outreach staff inform contacts about the Drop-in service provided by Women's Work, that they could access if they want further assistance to deal with some of the issues that has led to them working on the street. Opening times and details of what is available are provided. We also inform contacts of other agencies we network with in Derby, e.g. Addaction, The Elms, Action-Housing and make referrals where necessary.

Many of the women we see on the outreach sessions are desperate for lifestyle change, however, they say they do not know how or who to access to start the process. We at Women's Work can give them support, information and contact numbers to get them on the first step of this ladder and support them through the process, which is often quite long and daunting. April has seen the first weekend outreach sessions; these pilot sessions are to observe the need for a permanent weekend outreach. The Women's Work outreach team are also considering the viability of a daytime outreach session, we feel this less informal approach will increase opportunities to access women we do not encounter later on in the evening.

*Lyndsey Rook, Outreach
Worker*

OUTREACH / PROJECT WORKER 18.5HRS

I started my employment with Women's Work in mid January 2004. My first outreach session was on a very cold night and the women I met looked so sad and extremely cold, they were very appreciative of the hot drinks we provided. It soon became obvious to me that there was a real need for the women to have a base where they could access information to help them tackle the many issues which had led to their drug taking and involvement in prostitution.

The drop-in sessions fulfil that need, and surpass it. The drop-in sessions were introduced in September 2001 by the Edge Project to provide an amenity for working women over the age of 18, to address issues that could not be addressed during the outreach sessions. Although it took a short while for the women to feel confident enough to access the service it soon took off and the women found the service approachable and friendly. It provides not only a safe, warm and non-judgmental environment with the provision of refreshments and condoms, but also a place where the women can support each other with regards to informing themselves and us about dodgy punters and reporting incidents to us that they do not want to, or feel unable to report to the police.

My first impression of the drop-in was how comfortable the women appeared to be with regards to talking to staff and volunteers about their problems. Sometimes that is what they want most- just to be able to talk without being judged. Sometimes they want help in moving on. Often the women are not ready to move on and all they want is a listening ear and advice on how to keep as safe as possible whilst they are doing what they feel they have to do to support their drug habit. Some just want someone to share their experiences with. Some are ready to take their first step and that might be changing from injecting to smoking drugs. This might appear to be a small step but it is one that can reduce the harm they are doing to themselves, and we are always hopeful that one small step will lead to another. The women we work with may have chosen to take drugs and to work in prostitution to pay for their drugs, but when you listen to their experiences it is obvious that these choices were not informed choices. We are here to let these women know that they still have choices.

In February 04 an afternoon Drop-in session was introduced with a therapeutic/relaxation theme. These sessions aim to help the women start to change their routine and add dimension to their lives, monthly outings are another addition to activities for the afternoon drop-in and the first one was a trip to Megabowl, in March.

Although, I am qualified and experienced in many areas of health and social care, I have never worked with this client group before, therefore I would like to say a personal thank you to all who are involved with The Edge Project, Derby Women's Centre and Women's Work for their help and support during my first months. A special thank you goes to the women who use our service for sharing their knowledge and experiences to enable us to help them and other working women to try to find a way out of the cycle of drugs and prostitution.

Trudy White
Outreach/Project Worker

ADMINISTRATOR 10HRS

I joined Women's Work in August 2003 as the project administrator. Initially the post was for 10 hours per week. However, as the project has grown, the workload has inevitably increased. In response to this an additional two volunteer admin workers have been taken on.

A filing system of all clients' information has been established, with each regular client having their own personal file. These files contain information such as referrals, application forms, communications made on the clients behalf and an assessment form detailing clients housing situation, drug use, relevant medical information, and clients needs, aims and hopes for the future.

We maintain a regularly updated database containing details of all the clients we have made contact with and what type of contact we have had with them. This database is also used for collating statistics regarding the ages, ethnicity, as well as being able to tell us what services our clients are utilising.

PROJECT WORKER 18.5 HRS

Since joining Women's Work in August last year as part time administrator, I have also taken on the role of project worker combining the two roles working 28.5 hours per week.

I am responsible for the drugs side of our service. I attended a substance awareness course run by Addaction to improve my working knowledge of the subject and have forged solid working relationships with several other professionals in the field including staff at The Elms Clinic, Addaction, Phoenix House Rehab, Centenary House D&A unit and Nottingham City Hospital. I have also completed a counselling course at Derby College. This has been beneficial in improving my communication skills, providing me with confidence that I am responding to clients appropriately and offering the right advice and support. This has been particularly evident by the success I have experienced in conducting one to ones with clients.

I have also been active in the work of the Working Women's Advisory Group, where I have made particular headway with improving relations with Derby Police's Divisional Intelligence Unit, with a view to improving the safety of working women and encouraging the women to report crimes committed against them. A big step in this was the production of a bi-monthly newsletter that includes "dodgy punter" reports and advice from the police.

Louise Howells
Project Worker/Administrator

VOLUNTEER REPORTS

I began working for Women's Work in March of this year and I can honestly say that I've never looked back. I feel that I have learnt so much in such a short time, not only about what the job entails, but also about myself.

I remember my first drop in session and how I felt overwhelmingly saddened by the number of woman and older girls whose lives were embroiled in drugs. But it soon became clear to me that by being involved with Women's Work, I could help try to make their lives a little better. Many of the women that I have met since working with the organisation have completely shattered my personal stereotypes of how a sex worker looks, dresses, behaves etc. It has been such a positive experience for me to meet these women as I feel as though I have been 're-educated' in the way I perceive others.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the job is the outreach work that we do. I feel that by meeting the women in their own environment we can see for ourselves not only the hardships that they endure, but also the areas that we need to assist them in. I also find that whilst on an outreach I able to learn a lot from the workers that I am on with as there is time to discuss our own experiences of the job.

I believe that the work that the organisation does here in Derby is vital and I hope to continue being part of such a worthy cause.

*Natalie Bryan
Volunteer*

As a new volunteer for Women's Work, I currently work alongside many different project workers providing outreach on the streets. I began working as a volunteer at the beginning of March, the women that I have met on the street so far have been quite pleasant and communicative, despite the problems they may be experiencing.

I have learnt that the drug dependence can change a person and is both physically and psychologically addictive. I don't think I will ever truly understand the true nature of such an addiction and with no reluctance to say what is on my mind I don't want to find out what it is like, maybe then I could see how easily I could become that person unable to inhibit drug use. I have been taught that a heroin user feels pain and discomfort when they cease using the drug. Repeated use can stop that agony and relieve the pain, yet the "right" choice would be to continue with that pain, possibly for years until it fades. Within that moment what would you choose? An answer could be indeed be a "quick fix now" with the intention to sort it out at some point in the future. Within such a thought, the future could then so easily turn into a life of continuous drug addiction.

I believe many of these women are trapped within their situation for many different reasons. The majority of women I have met, although very vulnerable, seem to have a seed of desire to improve their lives, I wish to honour that that desire. Although it is sometimes difficult to empathise, despite the amount of times they may seem to waste an opportunity, I believe these women will need several chances then a few more.

I feel that this process may be slow and frustrating for both the street workers, volunteers and project workers. I hope to keep my determination despite such frustrations. Over the next few months I intend to do some drugs training with Addaction, I will also begin to conduct some research concerning the backgrounds of these young women, I hope this will provide valuable information on the women and also, the patterns of drug use and behaviour in the fight against addiction.

I feel I still have much to learn in order to confidently help women whom are comforted by the support offered by the street outreach programme. Thank you to everyone for making me feel very welcome here and a part of the team, I consider my time at the Women's centre to be a valuable experience.

Rosheen Hopwell
Volunteer

CASE STUDIES

Jane age 40

I first met Jane on an outreach session last September. She started attending our drop-ins on a regular basis and in March she approached me requesting support to tackle her heroin and alcohol addiction and in finding somewhere to live.

At the time Jane was sleeping on her daughters' settee but they were becoming discontented with the situation and wanted her to leave. I referred Jane to The Elms Clinic and Phoenix House Rehab in Sheffield and accompanied her to her assessment meetings. I also took Jane to Centenary House to enquire about the possibility of getting accommodation there, and luckily she was offered a place the following day.

Since Jane moved out of her daughters' home, their relationship has vastly improved. She has now been taking methadone for almost a month and is hoping to reduce from 70mls to 50mls in the next 4 weeks so that she can complete her detox at Porchester a detoxification ward in Nottingham. Once her detox is complete she will be going straight to Phoenix House where she is expecting to stay for up to 18 months to complete her rehabilitation. I will continue to support her throughout and after

completion of the programme. Jane often says how grateful she is of the support she gets from the project and that she could not have come this far without us.

Sam age 22

We first met Sam through our Street Outreach sessions 9 months ago. It was through that initial contact with her she began accessing the Women's Work drop-in facility. Sam has a chaotic lifestyle due to her drug habit and the subsequent need of having to fund it. She has been injecting heroin for the past two years and has had to sell sex on the streets to support her habit. Sam has talked of growing up in a house with 'no love' and cannot remember ever being 'hugged or kissed'. Her dad was an alcoholic who walked-out on them when Sam was three years old, her mother began drinking heavily soon after. Sam has two very young children, the eldest is living with an aunt; this arrangement was made through intervention by the Social Services Department. She also has a newborn baby who is living with Sam.

Throughout her recent pregnancy Jane has only had prostitution as a method of 'earning' money. We gave Sam information on how to remain as safe as possible while 'working' and always made it a priority to look for her while we delivered our outreach service. She was encouraged by Women's Work staff to engage with other service providers who could help her with the multitude of issues she has. She has now been prescribed methadone, so there is no longer a need to 'earn' money and is accessing the Elms Clinic as part of a home-detoxification programme. The Social Services team at the Derby City Hospital are helping to find a more permanent accommodation for Sam and her child. She says she is going to try really hard this time to 'get clean' and be a good mother. She pictures the future with both her daughter and baby living with her in a 'safe and loving' environment. If she continues to welcome the support given to her there is much hope for Sam and her young family.

WHAT THE WOMEN SAY

The Drop-in-centre is a
Very safe Place For Women
they can come and be open
with the staff

I have recieved alot of help 'n' support
from the volunteerz regarding my
housing. I have also left here feelin
much more better about myself
as the ~~time~~ volunteerz make such
an effort to cheer me up n bump
up the atmosphere! Thankyou
Galz ♡

A Great big thankx to all the
Lady's here. as I am made to
feel at home, wanted, cared
about and helped in all aspects
in my life. I'd be lost without
them as its the only family I
have.
Love & Respect
Nicky
😊

I have been calling round the centre where they hold womens work drop-in sessions I first meet the women on the out-reach I like the fact that I can call in and have a chat in a friendly atmosphere They have helped me do so much. As Louise always picks me up to go. They really have helped me loads. Helen

I have been very impressed with the women's work. The facilities offered. The work they do and the staff themselves. It's a very relaxed atmosphere we being with friends, with helps people to behave and speak much more openly, rather than feeling you're with some condescending person, who considers themselves to be one of your peers, which obviously doesn't encourage a particularly good atmosphere. I nice to think someone is doing something for your sake rather than for their own sake, and their own personal self-gratification. Of which most of the so called help seems to fall in them categories. But not W.W. I'm glad to meet.

Justin Hill (a true fan!)

PAUSE
FOR THOUGHT

*Do we see the woman inside?
Do we understand her plight?*

*How did she come to be working on the street?
Was she homeless?
Was she in debt?
Was she a runaway?
Was she lured into it by the need for money?
Was she conned into it by the man she loved?
Was her self-respect so low she just didn't care?
Was it an escape route out of her life of misery?*

*Or was there some other reason?
Each woman has a reason that was valid to her at that time.*

*Next time you see a woman working on the street
Spare a thought for the life that she thought she chose to lead
If you had been in her shoes what would you have done
Please remember that the life of a prostitute is very rarely fun*

*What they need to help them is empathy and love
And choices to help them see that there still is hope*

*Please try to see the person inside
Please try to understand her plight*

*We all have choices to make in our life
Be thankful that the ones you made were right*

*WOMEN'S
WORK
TURNING A NEW LEAF*

*13 CHARNWOOD STREET
DERBY
DE1 2GT*

TEL: 01332 242525

FAX: 01332 242626

E:mail derbywomenswork@hotmail.com

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