

Organisation Name		Reference code
Brighton Women's Centre		2024-05-YWG13
Organisation Address		
22 Richmond Place Brighton BN2 9NA		
Website Address		
<a href="https://womenscentre.org.uk/">https://womenscentre.org.uk/</a>		
Type of organisation? (tick all that apply and complete relevant details)		
Charity	Registered Charity Number	Date Registered
Yes	1003790	1991
Community Interest Company	Registered Companies House Number	Date Registered
No	2601210	
Social Enterprise	Social Enterprise Mark Awarded Yes/No	Date Awarded
No		
<b>Grant Summary</b>		
The grant would enable BWC to extend its highly successful Inspire project for women in the Criminal Justice System to 16 and 17 year olds, creating bespoke interventions to meet the specific needs of young women and girls aged 16-25. Funding would support us to consult, pilot and co-produce the project with young women.		
<b>Please describe the specific needs of the young women and girls you work with that this project will address</b>		
<p>The Inspiring Futures project* will target young women and girls aged 16-25 years who have already offended or are at high risk of doing so. The project will address the complex needs and circumstances that lead young women and girls to offend, many of which stem from Adverse Childhood Experiences and associated trauma. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical/emotional/sexual abuse - Up to 90% of girls in contact with the youth justice system have experienced abuse from a family member or someone they trusted, and 63% of young women &amp; girls serving community sentences have experienced rape or domestic abuse (Agenda Alliance);</li> <li>- Living with someone who abused drugs or alcohol or has severe mental health issues;</li> <li>- Losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment;</li> <li>- Experience of the care system - nearly two thirds of 16-21 year old women in custody are care experienced (Agenda Alliance);</li> <li>- Exposure to crime at a young age - a history of offending in the family and/or living with someone who has been to prison.</li> </ul> <p>Complex needs may result from the trauma of these life experiences which can lead to a range of issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mental health problems - girls are more likely to report mental health problems than boys but sadly the demand for CAMHS is so huge that they face long wait times to access support, in which time they may turn to substances to self-medicate and cope,</li> </ul>		

or find their issues have escalated;

- Lack of understanding about safe/healthy relationships and boundaries. Girls from disadvantaged backgrounds are at higher risk of abuse/exploitation and criminality resulting from coercive relationships;
- Difficulties within the education system - traumatic experiences with people in authority can lead to distrust and showing their trauma through behaviours that challenge. There is a lack of gender specific, trauma-informed support within the education system, and many schools are unable to cope with students presenting with complex needs. This may lead to girls unnecessarily being referred to specialist education settings such as Pupil Referral Units (where they represent just a quarter of the population), without the right support to meet their unique needs. This can lead to leaving education early and/or with little or no qualifications impacting on future employment prospects.
- Insecure housing - growing up in poverty, difficult family relationships and/or growing up in the care system mean young women may not have a stable place to call home - putting them at high risk of homelessness.

All of the above places young women and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds at higher risk of offending. The ages of 16-25 years can be particularly challenging for young women as they face multiple difficult transitions from child to adult services (leaving care, transition to adult health or housing services) without adequate support to address their needs. This leads to cliff-edges in support and further trauma, compounding feelings of abandonment. The transition from the Youth Justice System to the adult system at 18 can be particularly traumatic as there is very little support or planning around this transition. This can have a devastating impact on young women; evidence shows that self-harm rates for young women in prison are higher than in any other age group (Agenda Alliance).

Inspiring Futures will work to address these issues, ensuring young women have the support they need to address their underlying trauma, recognise and build on their strengths and turn away from crime.

\*Working title, as the project will be co-produced we would want to ensure that young women are involved with the naming and branding.

**What are the key outcomes that you will be seeking to achieve for young women and girls either at risk of offending or who are already caught up in the criminal justice system?**

Inspiring Futures aims to divert young women away from the criminal justice system and reduce reoffending from young women already in the criminal justice system.

The key outcomes we'll be working towards in pursuit of these aims are as follows. By the end of year 2 we hope that:

- 80% of young women have a better understanding of healthy relationships and setting boundaries
- 60% of young women recognise their strengths and resilience and are supported to develop further
- 80% of young women feel more optimistic for the future
- 70% of young women felt supported to use their problem-solving skills to find/explore alternative solutions to life's challenges
- 75% of young women have better access to information to understand their options and make informed choices
- 80% of young women are able to identify and address their underlying trauma so they can move forward positively with their life.
- 80% of young women have increased understanding of their trauma responses and

develop positive strategies to manage these

These targets are based on existing outcome data for the adult women (age 18+) who are currently accessing Inspire, but we have reduced these slightly in recognition of the fact that this is a new project working with a new cohort of young women aged 16 and 17, and may take time to establish.

**What are the key activities you will undertake with this funding to achieve this?**

The funding would enable BWC to employ a Young Women's Engagement Worker (YWEW) to consult with, co-produce and pilot interventions that young women feel would support them to turn away from crime.

Year 1 (March-May 2025) Networking and relationship building:

In the first three months, the YWEW will build relationships with local organisations/services in contact with girls who have offended or are at high risk of doing so (e.g. Youth Offending Services, PRUs, colleges, care homes). We aim to hire someone with existing links to these institutions to quickly establish the trust needed for effective consultation.

Year 1 (June-August 2025) Community Consultation:

The YWEW will consult with young women and girls to develop and co-produce interventions to prevent offending or reoffending. Solutions may include: peer-led preventative education in schools, specialist education settings, and youth offending services, or work to enhance trauma-informed practices in these settings to improve outcomes and reduce offending.

Consultation will consist of 1:1 interviews and focus groups in schools, specialist education settings, youth offending services etc to reach those most at risk of offending/reoffending. We'll target deprived areas in Sussex with the highest crime rates and work to reach young women from minority ethnic backgrounds and others facing intersectional disadvantage.

Additionally, the YWEW will complete desk-based research, compiling existing research and reports (e.g. from Agenda Alliance and others) and working with the National Women's Justice Coalition (NWJC) and other sector experts to identify good practice in this area and what interventions are shown to be effective in reducing offending amongst young women and girls.

Year 1 (September 2025-February 2026) Pilot recommendations and evaluation:

Following 6 months of consultation, we will pilot some of the recommendations with a small group of approx. 30 young women. We expect this will include a mixture of group activities and 1:1 support. In order to run a safe pilot, we'll initially work with young women aged 18 and over, so that we can continue to support them through our existing services (if needed) after the pilot has ended. Following the pilot we will complete an evaluation with recommendations for Year 2.

Year 2 (March 2026-February 2027) Inspiring Futures launches to 16 and 17 year olds:

In Year 2, with additional safeguarding measures in place, we will launch Inspiring Futures to 16 and 17 year olds. We will work with young women to develop and roll out the recommendations from the consultation and pilot. If needed, match funding will be sought to boost the team's capacity to support this work.

We will share the results of this project with Women's Centres and other charities nationally via the National Women's Justice Coalition and Clinks Women's Networking Forum, helping to influence change for young women and girls within the Criminal Justice System.

**Does your proposed project already exist or is this a new piece of work?**

Inspiring Futures will enhance BWC's existing, award-winning, highly successful holistic casework support for women in the Criminal Justice System, by extending our support to 16 and 17 year olds who are already caught up in the criminal justice system or at high risk of offending. It will enable us to offer support which is bespoke to the specific needs of young women and girls aged 16-25 who are experiencing complex transitions

to adulthood.

We know that young women experience unique challenges that require a different response from those over the age of 30. Neuroscience has shown that the brain continues to develop throughout adolescence and into the mid-to-late 20s, and evidence suggests that undergoing trauma at a young age may further delay brain development. The prefrontal cortex (responsible for skills like planning, prioritizing and making good decisions) is one of the last parts to mature. This means that girls and younger women are more likely to engage in risky behaviours which increases the likelihood of committing crime. Young women aged 16-25 therefore need a different approach when it comes to the interventions that may support them to turn away from crime.

Inspiring Futures will work with young women to co-produce the solutions that they feel would work for them to prevent offending or reduce reoffending.

Early intervention is key to our approach at BWC. This project presents an exciting opportunity to extend our support to 16 and 17 year olds, enabling us to reach girls before they offend, preventing further issues that result from a criminal conviction or prison sentence, and therefore reducing the need for further support from BWC (and others) later down the line.

**What expertise and track record do you have to be able to deliver this work successfully?**

BWC has a strong track record of 15 years supporting adult women (from age 18 upwards) in the Criminal Justice System through our Inspire project, which has been proven by the Justice Data Lab (2017) to reduce reoffending. Key to our approach is a highly successful model of holistic case work support, building supportive, trusting relationships between each woman and her case worker, so they can build their resilience and start to change their future.

Within our Inspire team we have a wealth of expertise and established relationships with Sussex Police and the Probation service. More about our expertise working across the Criminal Justice System is provided in the question relating to this below.

We also have significant experience in community consultation and co-production. With funding from the National Lottery over the last three years, we have been able to employ a Service User Engagement Officer to work with Service Users to co-produce and establish a bi-monthly Community Forum - a space for Service Users to have a voice and use their lived experience to influence the development and delivery of BWC services. This includes contributing to BWC's new Theory of Change.

Our Peer-to-Peer Service is the first within BWC to move to a co-production model where Service Users design and deliver the service. This is creating learnings for BWC as a whole, which will be used to develop our co-production strategy so that all our work is firmly rooted in, and produced by, women who are the experts of their experience (this is one of 5 key aims identified in our new Strategic Business Plan for the next five years).

As a Women's Centre, all of our services are specifically designed to offer gender specific support for self-identifying women. All are delivered in safe, women-only spaces across Sussex. Our staff, volunteers and trustees are all women, many of whom have lived experience of the issues we are working to address, including the specialist Domestic Violence and Abuse Practitioners based in our hubs. This means that no matter what their situation, women are met with understanding, kindness and respect.

We are committed to embedding trauma informed practice into everything we do. We have already achieved Bronze accreditation from One Small Thing and will be working towards achieving Silver accreditation by September 2025, with the aim of beginning the process to apply for Gold by the end of 2026. As part of our new Strategic Business Plan, we've recently appointed two senior staff members as Head of Trauma Informed Practice to lead this work, embedding the principles of Trauma Informed Practice

across all teams, services and processes.
<b>Explain how the grant will be spent</b>
<b>Who will be responsible for overseeing and delivering this work?</b>
The Young Women's Engagement worker will be responsible for delivering this project. They would work within the Inspire Team and be line-managed by the Inspire Service Manager.
<b>How do you plan to continue this work once the grant ends?</b>
We will seek additional funding to support Inspiring Futures after the grant ends. From Year 2 we will aim to secure match funding for your grant in order to boost our capacity to roll out the recommendations from the pilot. We will seek to secure multi-year funding for a minimum of three years in order to establish this work, with a view to this becoming an ongoing strand of our work with women in the Criminal Justice System in the future. Working with young women under the age of 18 would open up new funding opportunities to us including those focussed on young people who we have previously been ineligible to apply for (e.g. Paul Hamlyn Foundation). Alongside grants from charitable trusts and foundations, we will seek out and tender for any relevant contracts in this field.
<b>Does your organisation only work with women and girls?</b>
Yes - with the exception of ToyBox, our onsite nursery/crèche which supports pre-school children of the women accessing our services, including boys.
<b>Does your organisation have existing knowledge and expertise working across the criminal justice system?</b>
BWC has extensive knowledge working with women in the criminal justice system. Our Inspire project (which launched in 2009) is a multi-agency partnership lead by BWC, supporting women with multiple vulnerabilities at all stages of involvement in the Criminal Justice System. We work closely with Sussex Police and the probation service to support women at risk of reoffending to divert them away from crime. We work with women in the community pre and post-release from prison. We know that the Criminal Justice System is in the main set up by and for men, although women with complex needs often get involved in it. We use our extensive experience in getting to the root causes of complex needs to support women going through the Criminal Justice System to access the support they need when they need it. We understand that every woman has strengths and abilities, and we help her to build on those strengths, increase her feelings of self-worth and build up her resilience so she can start to change her future. The relationship between each woman and her skilled and experienced women's support worker is at the heart of our approach. This allows each woman to build a relationship based on trust, which helps her feel safe. Service users repeatedly tell us that it is the relationship with their caseworker that has been instrumental in them being able to bring about change in their lives. "I wouldn't have got to where I am today without my caseworker and the Women's Centre. Without the Women's Centre, I wouldn't have been able to look forward and I can now think about my needs when I couldn't before and reach out for support when I need it." - Service User We know that feeling safe, physically and psychologically, is essential for women who are vulnerable, and that the Criminal Justice System's standard provision can be very hard for women to deal with. Fighting for social justice and advocating for gender equality, we identify what needs to change. Being able to go to a safe women-only environment where you will be supported is essential for women to start the process of change. Inspire's work in developing women-only hubs across Sussex supports women to access many different services.

<p>A study by the Justice Data Lab in 2017 found that Inspire's women-centred work was effective in reducing the frequency of offending.  We have extensive outcome data to support this. In the last year, of the women that accessed Inspire:  90% stated the support they received was 'hugely significant' in enabling them to build a positive future.  89% said they felt more able to deal with their problems well  85% felt more optimistic for the future  82% felt they could think more clearly  79% felt more able to make up their own mind about things  75% had improved physical/mental/sexual health  60% had improved their alcohol/drug use  60% had improved relationships with their children and family  52% had improved their accommodation situation</p>	
<p><b>Will you be receiving funding from any other sources for this project?</b></p>	
<p>For year one, no. For year two, we are likely to apply for matched funding to support the delivery of the project, this would be based on the results of the consultation and pilot.</p>	
<p><b>Do all staff have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks? If no please state why.</b></p>	
<p>Yes</p>	
<p><b>Reason why not all staff have DBS checks.</b></p>	
<p><b>Total funding requested in this application (£10,000 to £80,000 with a maximum of £40,000 in one year)</b></p>	
<p>£79567</p>	
<p><b>Proposed grant start date</b></p>	<p><b>Proposed grant duration in months</b></p>
<p>3/1/2025</p>	<p>24</p>
<p><b>How much funding is required each year?</b></p>	
<p><b>Year 1</b></p>	<p><b>Year 2</b></p>
<p>£39567</p>	<p>£40000</p>
<p><b>What was your organisation's expenditure in the most recent financial year?</b></p>	<p><b>What was your organisation's annual income in the most recent financial year?</b></p>
<p>£906552</p>	<p>£912363</p>
<p><b>What value of unrestricted reserves did your organisation have at the end of the most recent financial year?</b></p>	
<p>£276960</p>	