

Organisation Name		Reference code
The Women's Centre Cornwall		2025-10-YWG34
Organisation Address		
PO Box 39 Bodmin Cornwall PL31 1XF		
Website Address		
www.womenscentrecornwall.org.uk		
Please describe your organisation's purpose.		
The Women's Centre Cornwall is a women's charity with services across South West England. We offer empowering support to women and girls living with the impact of sexual and domestic abuse.		
Type of organisation? (tick all that apply and complete relevant details)		
Charity	Registered Charity Number	Date Registered
Yes	1099348	1996
Community Interest Company	Registered Companies House Number	Date Registered
No	04316197	2/11/2001
Social Enterprise	Social Enterprise Mark Awarded Yes/No	Date Awarded
No		
Grant Summary		
Young Empowered Women: We will proactively reach out to young women whose offending, or at risk behaviour, masks unresolved sexual abuse trauma. Our trauma stabilisation support will help them to understand the impact of abuse and to make positive changes preventing further harm to themselves and others.		
Please describe the specific needs of the young women and girls you work with that this project will address 4000		
<p>New University of Birmingham research indicates that 62.8% of adult women in the criminal justice system were subjected to childhood sexual abuse. Our project will provide expert sexual abuse support to girls and young women in or on the cusp of the criminal justice system, with an aim to get them access to support early and prevent their offending escalating. Sexual abuse trauma is an often overlooked root cause of offending. Survivors use harmful coping strategies including alcohol, drugs and carrying blades for self-harm. They may also be identified as vulnerable due to past trauma and targeted by abusers for criminal or sexual exploitation.</p> <p>In addition, emotional dysregulation, communication difficulties and lack of trust in professionals/authority figures can result in behaviour interpreted as aggressive or threatening. Neurodivergence can present additional difficulties in interactions with professionals. In our experience a common conviction among young adult women is assault on an emergency worker, often happening when they lash out at police during an arrest or domestic abuse incident. Young women are rarely given the benefit of understanding about abuse related trauma triggers.</p> <p>Sexual abuse and its related impacts significantly affect young women's health and</p>		

wellbeing, with problems including self-harm injuries, eating disorders (and related illicit drug use to reduce appetite/weight), alcohol/drug addiction and suicidal thoughts or attempts.

Their opportunities for individual development are often significantly impacted by their mental health, in particular anxiety and shame which can be debilitating, affecting self-confidence and self-efficacy. These young women often have little hope for the future.

Through one-to-one trauma stabilisation support our Young Empowered Women's project helps young women to understand that their emotional, physical and behavioural reactions are normal responses to trauma they have experienced. They learn techniques that reduce the impact of trauma on their day to day lives (eg panic attacks, flashbacks). Group support helps them realise they are not alone in what they have experienced, and reduces the stigma and shame they feel.

For example, as a young child M was raped by her father who also facilitated other men to rape her. She later had older 'boyfriends' who were violent and controlling and heavily involved with drug dealing and organised crime. These experiences resulted in significant mental and physical health issues including severe and repeated self harm. Without support she was at significant risk of being drawn further into organised crime and substance misuse, and experiencing further physical and sexual abuse. Through accessing support at the Women's Centre, she has increased understanding of her own self-worth, safety planning, healthy relationships and coping strategies to help her heal from the impact of the trauma.

Despite being known as a beautiful holiday destination, 22.9%) children and young people in Cornwall are growing up in relative poverty, the second highest level in the South West. In Cornwall 7% of 17-25 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET), higher than the national average of 5.4%. Our community safety plan identifies exploitation including trafficking, county lines and cuckooing as growing threats and 990 children were identified as having experienced/at risk of exploitation last year.

What are the key outcomes 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? How will you track the impact you are making?

Outcome 1:

Individual development: Young women feel more empowered and have hopes for the future

Target: 70% of those accessing 1:2:1 support report an improvement

Outcome 2:

Health and wellbeing: Young women have a reduced impact of trauma on day-to-day life

Target: 70% of those accessing 1:2:1 support report an improvement

Outcome 3:

Social and community cohesion: Young women have an increased sense of belonging

Target: 70% of those accessing group activities report an increased sense of belonging

The primary tool for measuring project outcomes is distance travelled questionnaires, which includes statements which input into the 3 project outcomes. In 1:2:1 support, young women complete the questionnaire at the beginning, middle and end of support. In 8-week group work, they complete the questionnaire at the start and end of support.

At each point, young women are asked to rate a set of statements from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. An example of a statement is 'I am able to manage the challenges in my life'. Change is measured over the period of support to identify improvements and impacts of the project.

With both group work and 1:2:1 support, we also capture feedback through confidential feedback forms. These provide insight into what Young Women found useful in their support and also give them an opportunity to share ideas and raise complaints. We also provide opportunity in groups for feedback, and this also provides a space for young women reflect on their own support and to offer advice to service users that are starting with us. An example of this is "take your time, open up, you will feel better if you talk about it" and "don't be scared, we have all had to start at some point and have felt nervous, but we understand what you are going through."

Project workers use reflective practice throughout support to recognize the changes that aren't captured in the above approach. These may include 'increased ability to express feelings' to 'attendance at school has improved'

Throughout support, young women are given the space to explore their experiences and feelings through art, craft, film making and poetry. With consent, we use this creative work to understand their experiences of the service, promote the service, and display or use it in networking meetings to express the impact. We also use it to amplify young women's experiences in a variety of settings.

Young women shape the service, we meet regularly with our co production group to reflect on the success' and to feedback on improvements that could be made. Young women will contribute to the topics we explore in session as we recognise that they are the best to inform us on what is impacting them.

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

1. One-to-one support:

Our one to one sessions offer empowering, confidential support for 16-24 weeks. In these spaces, young women are given time the time they deserve to explore their feelings and the impact of their experiences. The sessions take place at our Centre in Bodmin or at the young woman's school, college or in the community. Our support is based on our empowerment model: we always follow the young woman's lead and listen to what she tells us she needs.

We use trauma stabilisation, a technique based on the first stage of Judith Herman's model of trauma healing:

1. Creating a safe and secure relationship (between practitioner and woman)
2. Establishing safety
3. Developing emotional regulation skills
4. Psychoeducation – building understanding of trauma.

Target: 12 young women.

2. Outreach and brief interventions:

Based on our experience of working with young women in the justice system, we know that it can take a long time to establish trust and engage in support. Young women face significant barriers that affect their ability to attend session including ongoing domestic abuse, homelessness, exploitation and drug/alcohol use. We use assertive outreach involving gentle persistence and flexibility. We know that some young women may not be able to attend longer term support for these reasons but will nonetheless benefit from brief interventions and multi-agency collaboration. We will proactively reach out to girls and young women in key 'at risk' groups through partner referrals from care leaver services, youth services, social care, pupil referral units, and those given out of court

resolutions.

Target: 30-40 young women

3. Group activities

We will offer a range of group activities, tailoring the activity to each individual/group. This will include our 8 week psycho-educational groupwork supporting healing from trauma, as well as informal activities in the community. These will build young women's confidence. "I cant put into words the sense of community I feel in the group. Every person here is a complex person going through their own types of pain and healing. It makes me feel accepting of myself to think the shame I feel, my darkest secret is communal."

Target: 12-15 young women.

4. Coproduction and involvement

Young women will have the opportunity to join lived experience groups and shape the future of both our services and the wider criminal justice system. For many young women speaking out about their experiences forms a big part of their recovery. This year one young woman we are supporting who is a care leaver with CJS experience is taking a leading role in speaking out at our Reclaim the Night event.

Our community engagement approach underlines all these activities, bringing in expertise of our DIVAS group of women with learning disabilities and neurodivergence to advise the project team, and doing joint outreach with our International Women's Group to reach refugees, asylum seekers and other migrant young women in Cornwall.

Does your proposed project already exist or is this a new piece of work? If this project is already operating, please describe to us how you will use this as an opportunity to build on what you have achieved to date. If this is a new piece of work, please explain what this funding will enable you to do differently.

This is a significant development to our current work with girls and young women, and adults in the justice system. While we work with many young adults in the justice system (18-25 year olds), we only reach very small numbers of under 18s who are offending or at risk.

Our Young Empowered Women's project already exists and has been providing specialist support to young women with experience of sexual abuse for over 20 years. It already supports small numbers of girls in or at risk of entering the justice system.

The new activity this grant will support is targeted outreach to many more young women under 18 years old who are offending or at high risk of offending. It will open up new referral pathways for under 18s (with flexibility for referrals up to age 21). It will bring together the expertise of our adult criminal justice service with our young women's project. There will be new collaboration between our adult lived experience group (women with experience of prison and probation) and our YEW Grads young women's lived experience group. We will provide new opportunities for young women with justice experience to have their voice heard in our young women's group.

This grant is a very exciting opportunity for us to bring two sides of our work together to meet the needs of young women much earlier and prevent further harm from being caused by being caught up in offending and the criminal justice system. We hope it will prevent some young women from going to prison by providing support earlier, and it will also provide more intensive wraparound support to those young adult women who are already involved in more serious offending or have already been to prison.

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

successfully? Please specifically mention your expertise linked to gender and trauma informed approaches.

Being trauma-informed and shame sensitive is at the very heart of what we do. In 2021 TWCC became one of the first organisations in the country to achieve the One Small Thing Trauma Quality Mark focused on trauma-informed services for women in the criminal justice system. This evidences that the 5-core trauma-informed values of Safety, Trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration and Empowerment are implemented across the whole organisations culture, practice and environment.

In practice our trauma-informed approach means that all frontline staff have clinical supervision and regular vicarious trauma checks with their line manager. We hold staff and volunteer wellbeing days to encourage self-care and peer support, with activities to suit a range of preferences including cold water swimming, cooking, sound therapy, crafts, walking. Staff and volunteer support ensures that there is a compassionate and warm response in all interactions with service users. Young women have fed back that they value the staff commitment: "All the women who work here are so dedicated to their jobs. There's no one here who hates their job or is half-arsed." (service user feedback, 2023)

Our support model has always been based upon our understanding that experiencing sexual violence and abuse is deep trauma and that survivors react in fairly predictable ways in order to cope. Very often, the key issue that survivors are facing when they engage with us is that the coping mechanisms which they employed so effectively to deal with the trauma initially have now become problematic in themselves – for example numbing and dissociation, alcohol and drugs, self-harm and agoraphobia.

As an organisation run by women, for women, we take a gender-informed approach to all our work. We understand violence and abuse to be a cause and consequence of gender inequality. We have years of experience helping women to navigate a criminal justice system designed by and for men. We are one of 7 organisations chosen by University of Birmingham and Jabbs foundation to roll out the Women's Risk Needs Assessment, a gender-specific, trauma-informed assessment designed for women in the CJS.

Our Community Engagement model means we use coproduction and partnership work to proactively reach those that face the biggest barriers to support. Our DIVAS group is part of our community engagement project. The DIVAS are a group of women with Learning Disabilities, Neurodiversity and Autism who fight to be treated fairly and with respect. And get their voices heard.

All our staff undertake cultural competency training delivered by one of our partners, the Olive Project, a local organisation led by and for black and minoritised women. We also work in partnership with the Olive Project to offer specialist support for black and minoritised survivors of sexual violence in Cornwall.

Please explain how the grant will be spent

Year 1:

YEW Project Worker (22.5 hours per week, including external supervision) £20,472.23

YEW Co-Ordinator (5 hours per week)	£4,795.77
Support Services Manager (2 hours per week)	£2,367.01
Travel (service users, staff and volunteer)	£2,200.00
Staff IT & Telephone Costs	£516.72
Activity Costs including Group Sessions	£4,000.00

Organisational Costs (insurance, premises, HR, governance, staff training etc.) £5,152.76	
Year 1 Total: 39,504.49	
Year 2:	
YEW Project Worker (22.5 hours per week, including external supervision) £20,984.03	
YEW Co-Ordinator (5 hours per week)	£4,915.66
Support Services Manager (2 hours per week)	£2,426.19
Travel (service users, staff and volunteer)	£2,100.00
Staff IT & Telephone Costs	£516.72
Activity Costs including Group Sessions	£3,800.00
Organisational Costs (insurance, premises, HR, governance etc.)	£5,211.39
Year 2 total:	
£39,953.99	
Total grant: £79,458.48	
Who will be responsible for overseeing and delivering this work?	
<p>Vanessa is the Support Services Manager at the Women's Centre, Cornwall. She is a trained Independent Sexual Violence Advisor and has an MSc in Psychology with a research focus on Developmental Psychology. She has 14 years' experience in the domestic abuse and sexual violence sector as a practitioner, group facilitator, team lead and manager. She has 3 years' experience managing outreach services supporting women facing multiple disadvantages including homelessness, substance use, exploitation and involvement in the criminal justice process. More recently she has been managing the support services at the Women Centre which include peer support, specialist support work, and outreach trauma stabilisation projects.</p> <p>Vanessa is currently part of the CSA Practice Leads programme which is run for the Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. Her chosen development area is improving our reach and outcomes for underserved and hidden girls and young women. Vanessa will hold overall responsibility for the delivery of the project and safeguarding.</p> <p>Eve, our Young Empowered Women service Coordinator has been with us for 5 years. Eve is a qualified Youth Worker with extensive experience in education, prevention and community work. Eve has been instrumental in supporting young women to find their voices and campaign for change. Eve will line manage the project worker and volunteers, co-facilitate groups and provide operational support around referrals and assessments.</p> <p>Project Worker Kirsty, is also a qualified youth worker, most recently working with young people experiencing complex issues including criminal justice involvement, abuse, care leavers and substance misuse. Kirsty has strong networks across Cornwall and a treasure trove of techniques for engaging disenfranchised and dysregulated young people. Most recently she has led a coproduction initiative empowering young people to speak up about services that affect them. She has established contacts within care-experienced/leavers services, youth service, youth justice, 'foyer' accommodation and victim care services.</p>	
How do you plan to continue this work once the grant ends?	
The Young Empowered Women's project has been running since the early 2000s and we are committed to continuing this work with 11-18 year olds. The impact of this grant will be felt long after the funding ends because it will strengthen our referral pathways	

<p>with youth justice, police and pupil referral units. We will pursue potential commissioning</p> <p>We have recently won a 5 year contract which partially funds the Young Empowered Women's project and although it does not fund the post covered through this grant, it does provide some sustainability beyond the 2 years which we can build upon to secure other funding to continue the support worker role covered by Triangle Trust.</p> <p>We are fully committed to continuing this work beyond the end of the grant, and continually inspired by the incredible progress young women can make with the right support.</p> <p>This young woman who is care-experienced and has faced criminal and sexual exploitation and contact with the CJS explains the difference the Women's Centre has made to her:</p> <p>everything was dark it was like I couldn't see there was nobody there but me me, alone with my thoughts alone with the pain alone with the blame</p> <p>the day I contacted the women's centre was the day that all changed I was greeted with warmth and love I had never felt before I felt like I had a place in this world</p> <p>I'm no longer alone I'm surrounded by incredible women who put their heart and soul into what they do I truly would not be who I am today if it wasn't for that day I made contact I've been involved with the women's centre for 2 years now the feeling of connection, trust, and love has not gone away it has only got stronger</p> <p>the pain and trauma is still there nothing can take that away but at least I'm not healing alone anymore I'm healing with the support of the angels at the women's centre I'm healing in a place where im wanted and needed no more silence, I'm healing out loud, because that's what they encourage the women's centre has given me with a light because of them there is a light in the darkness</p> <p>With Triangle Trust's support we can significantly increase the number of young women like her we reach in the next two years, and we are deeply committed to continuing to develop this work in the future.</p>
<p>Is your organisation led by women and are at least 80% of your organisation's total beneficiaries women and girls? Please provide a breakdown of your beneficiary numbers for the last two years to show this.*</p> <p>100% of our beneficiaries are women and girls. 2023/24 total women supported 1055, of which 33 were 11-18 years old. 2024/25 total women supported 1161, of which 20 were 11-18 years old.</p>
<p>Does your organisation have existing knowledge and expertise working across</p>

the criminal justice system?
<p>We have been working with women in the criminal justice system for 13 years, and supporting girls and young women living with the impact of sexual abuse for over 20 years. In 2012 we worked in partnership with the Probation Trust to pilot the first 'Female Offender Specified Activity Requirements' providing a community-based alternative to custody. We now hold an HMPPS contract to deliver the Commissioned Rehabilitative Service with women on probation and in prison. Since 2021 we have had two staff based inside HMP Eastwood Park, the In 2024-5 we supported 20 girls age 11-18 and 153 young adults 18-25. Of the young adults, 36% were in contact with the criminal justice system (mainly on probation or in prison) and 7% were at risk of entering the CJS.</p> <p>We have supported J, a young woman in her early 20s in prison this year. She told us she likes the way taking drugs makes her feel as she has suffered with her mental health since she was assaulted when she was younger. We took her to an approved premises on release from prison, but she was picked up by a much older man and taken back to Cornwall. She has been living with 'friends' including a man on the sex offenders register, and while we have helped her access Clare's Law information, she is currently still associated with these older men. We will continue to offer support to J and work with other agencies to improve her safety. However we would like to reach women like J much earlier on.</p> <p>The aim of this project is to proactively identify young women like J much earlier on in their journeys, preventing future harm both to themselves and others who may be affected by their offending. As set out in our strategic plan, we have learnt that whilst abuse and its related trauma are leading root causes for women experiencing homelessness, sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol issues and involvement in the criminal justice system, women are very unlikely to recognise this and proactively seek support, particularly in relation to historic childhood sexual abuse.</p> <p>In addition to our operational experience we have very good strategic links. We are voluntary sector representative on the Local Criminal Justice Board and Safer Cornwall (community safety partnership). We have a lived experience group of women with CJS experience and earlier this year submitted a response to the Sentencing Review based on their experiences.</p> <p>"Arguably the most valuable service I have found to be available is the Women's Centre Cornwall. Many of the women we deal with have experienced, or are experiencing family and or domestic abuse issues. My go to referral is the Women's Centre Mentors service. The Women's Centre Cornwall walk on water, they have been real life changers for some of the women I have referred to them. The only shame is that there is no service quite like this out there to provide the same level of support for men."</p> <p>Keyworker from the Devon & Cornwall Police Pathfinder Deferred Charge Scheme Keyworker</p>
Will you be receiving funding from any other sources for this project?
<p>Yes. Our Young Empowered Women's project is part funded by our new 5 year grant for sexual abuse support from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. However this covers work with all victims of sexual violence and abuse and the Triangle Trust grant would help us expand the project to target support at young women who have offended or are at high risk and would make a big difference to us in enabling us to focus support of the YEW project on girls who are offending or at risk of offending, reaching more girls and young women in care, excluded/not attending school, already arrested by the police, involved or at risk of trafficking/county lines.</p>
Do all staff have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks? If no please state why.
Yes
Reason why not all staff have DBS checks.
Total funding requested in this application (£10,000 to £80,000 with a maximum of £40,000 in one year)
£79,458.48

Proposed grant start date	Proposed grant duration in months
1/4/26	24 months
How much funding is required each year?	
Year 1	Year 2
£39,504.49	£39,953.99
What was your organisation's expenditure in the most recent financial year?	What was your organisation's annual income in the most recent financial year?
2024-5 Expenditure: £2,476,869	2024-5 Income: £2,720,492
What value of unrestricted reserves did your organisation have at the end of the most recent financial year?	
Unrestricted Reserves: £785,723	