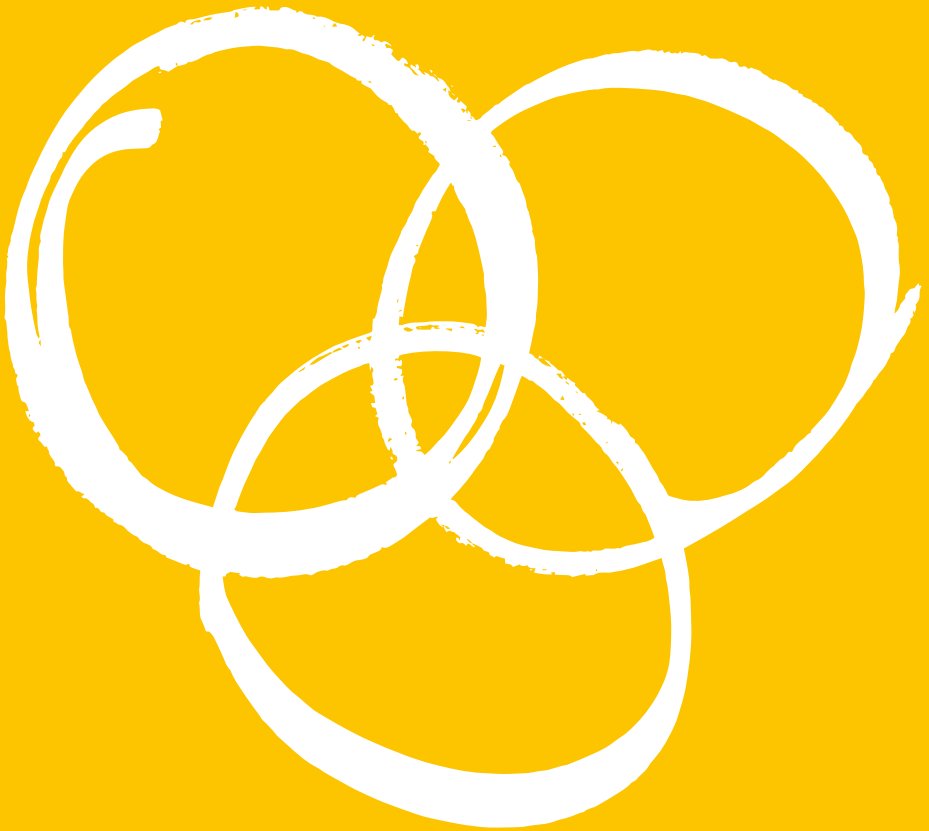




Annual report 2021–2022



A year of
connection

Brighton Women's Centre
Empowering women since 1974

womenscentre.org

At Brighton Women's Centre we recognise that each woman is an individual, with her own history, her own challenges, her own hopes.

We create a safe space where a woman can be herself. Through our holistic and connected services, we work to improve all parts of her life.

In 2021 – 2022 we supported 703 women and 30 children face-to-face, online and by phone. This was a 32% increase on the previous year.



703

women supported



30

children supported



↑ 32%

increase on previous year

Support Services

The services were constantly adapted to meet the needs of service users as the pandemic restrictions evolved. The Support and Information Phone Line was maintained through the year providing emotional support, practical information, access into other BWC services (e.g. foodbank, peer groups, counselling, accommodation support), signposting to specialist support services, support with domestic abuse, harassment, accessing benefits and applying for emergency grants.

The Women's Well-being Hub at Preston Park Recovery Centre reopened in October 2021 providing fortnightly face-to-face support similar to the phone line service.

The foodbank ran weekly, distributing 901 parcels of food (including fresh fruit and vegetables), toiletries and menstrual products. A delivery driver was recruited to reach a new cohort of clinically vulnerable/housebound women.

“

The staff and volunteers are very kind and helpful. I use the foodbank which helps me a lot. And I go to the 50+ group which is great for making friends.

237

women supported

78%

of women who used our Volunteer supported services, including our foodbank and helpline, said the services helped them to feel less isolated

80%

of women felt that using the service helped them to feel more positive

Inspire

The Inspire model delivers a trauma-informed, women-centred, holistic service for women caught up in the Criminal Justice System across Sussex, and in partnership with Advance in Kent. The aim is to reduce reoffending by addressing multiple areas of need that bring women to the criminal justice system.

Recruitment for three new service contracts starting in the first and second quarters was challenging due to Covid-19 restrictions and each project worked hard to overcome them.

The first year of the From Court to Support project saw remote working during the pandemic. This moved to a blended remote and in-person service, working via telephone and in the community at Breakfast Clubs, Hubs and Courts across Sussex, to give a flexible service to women depending on their needs.

“

My case worker has been the most consistent support that I have received. She is always there for me and works tirelessly to sort the many problems I face.

89

women supported

71%

of women experienced an improvement to their mental health

82%

of women supported through the From Court to Support service reported having an increased awareness of support and opportunities available to them

Women's Accommodation Support Service

The Eastbourne Women's Hub reopened in November 2021 at a new, larger venue enabling us to welcome more women and to better accommodate the combination of support and peer social space with individual appointments with staff from BWC, Probation and other organisations.

The Hub, in partnership with the Seaview Project, returned to face-face delivery in their St Leonard's Centre from May 2021 and we began preparation for the re-opening of our Women's Hub in Worthing in partnership with Turning Tides later in 2022.

156

women supported

92%

of insecurely housed women were helped to secure accommodation

87%

of women reported an improved sense of well-being from coming to the women's hubs

“

You have saved my life from being something very different – I'm paying my bills, having a bath, doing my washing ... I won the lottery, it's like that anyway. It's overwhelming moving into a flat, having my baby and keeping him, and having my family back. I am so grateful.

”

Women's Therapy Service

The service provided one-to-one sessions for talking therapy and also Dance Movement Psychotherapy. In addition to this Music Therapy groups have been run in partnership with Belltree Music Therapy.

The Women's Therapy service stayed open to clients despite Covid-19 restrictions, offering a blend of remote delivery and in-person sessions when this became possible. An increase in demand resulted in an increased waiting list of up to four months to allow for additional therapists to be recruited.

38
women started therapy

92%
of clients said they felt better able to cope and optimistic about the future

86%
of women reported a positive improvement in feeling anxious or nervous

“

They've been absolutely amazing. It's really reduced my anxiety and relieved stress. It's brought my body into the equation. I've been doing things in sessions that I want to do with myself.

Musculoskeletal Support

The Musculoskeletal (MSK) support service offers emotional and practical support for women living with MSK conditions such as fibromyalgia and chronic pain. Most of the support is remote via telephone. Areas covered include housing, benefits, relationships, children and family, debt, mental health and well-being.

Since October 2021 the referral area has been extended outside of Brighton & Hove to include women based in Crawley, Horsham and mid-Sussex CCG.

45
women supported

84%
of women were enabled to feel a positive change in their ability to access support services

74%
of women reported a positive change in feeling life was more worthwhile

“

Thank you for your help. Without you and my GP I would never get PIP (Personal Independence Payment). Now I will wait for their letter and send it for my blue badge, and bus pass. Thank you so much.

“

The peer group service has been wonderful. Before I joined, I was lonely and isolated. The group facilitators and members were kind and welcoming. I look forward to my group meetings now.

”

Peer to Peer Support

Three peer groups were held each week, with the weekly online movement session and the fortnightly 50+ peer group continuing.

The Peer to Peer Support service received three-year funding from The National Lottery in November 2021. The funding is to expand the groups into East and West Sussex and set-up an organisational wide Service User Forum. The peer groups will be supplemented through workshops and course programmes as well as more consolidated employment, education and volunteering opportunity pathways.

The Peer to Peer Support service became part of the Sussex Network of Peer Support (Principled Ways of Working) and participated in both the Loneliness Coalition and the Changing Futures initial work.

The 50+ group is funded through Ageing Well.

74

women supported

100%

of women using the peer groups said they had gained greater social connection

90%

felt their sense of belonging and their skills and knowledge (generally) had increased

U-OK Mental Health Community Engagement Worker

The Community Engagement Worker (CEW) was a part of the Community Roots partnership of local organisations working on mental health and well-being in Brighton & Hove (later renamed U-OK). Women were referred to the CEW for holistic support with their well-being and practical support to access relevant services.

18

women referred

14

women reported increased financial inclusion

11

women reported having increased access to housing advice

“

Coming to BWC helped me get a confirmed diagnosis of ADHD and I now have a much better understanding of my thought processes and how to approach anxiety provoking situations.

ToyBox Early Years

ToyBox offered remote support to families until January 2022 due to the pandemic. Since reopening an abundance of new families have joined us and the service began to reach capacity.

ToyBox have developed ongoing partnerships with BHCC, PACEY, Next Steps and the Met college, enabling parents and carers to attend courses and workshops helping them to gain confidence to return to employment.

Families were referred for additional support including Pelican Parcels to help with clothing, shoes, school uniform and toys.

21

women/families supported

10

women used ToyBox to access other services such as court hearings, mental health appointments, employability training

“

I cannot thank you enough for all you have done for me and my child. With your support I didn't feel alone, and I was able to access the help I needed. My child is settled and happy at ToyBox.

Our work during the pandemic supporting women living with multiple disadvantages was made possible by the generous support of our partners and funders.

We will continue to build strong and supportive relationships, giving each and every woman the security she needs to pick up the pieces, put her life back together and take the next steps towards a more complete life.

We gratefully thank all of our partners and funders.



Brighton Women's Centre

22 Richmond Place,
Brighton, BN2 9NA

T: 01273 698036

E: admin@womenscentre.org.uk

W: womenscentre.org.uk

Ofsted Registration No: EY466433

Registered Charity No: 1003790

Company Limited by Guarantee No: 2601210