

**BWC**

50 years on:

**Building  
With  
Conviction**

# 50 years of BWC

Run for women by women, BWC places each woman at the heart of her support, recognising she is the expert of her own experience. Through our diverse services, including our onsite Ofsted Registered nursery, awarded Outstanding (July 2023), we support women who are homeless or insecurely housed, involved in the criminal justice system, survivors of abuse and discrimination, women on low incomes, living in poverty and those with long-term mental and physical health conditions. In 2023 – 2024, we supported 868 women and 14 children.


## An opening message from our Chair of Trustees, *Melissa Drayson*

This year at BWC, we are celebrating our 50th Birthday, making us one of the oldest women's centres in the UK. That's 50 years of supporting self-identifying women in Sussex.

Since our last Business Plan was published in 2018, it has been a challenging period, but one that BWC has navigated with the same resilience and flexibility that has seen us through the last five decades.

BWC has seen demand for our services increase: we have risen to meet this need, and BWC now has a staff team of nearly 40 employees and the invaluable support of over 30 volunteers.

This Strategic Business Plan is the result of a collaborative consultation period over several months involving staff, trustees, volunteers and our Community Forum. We are excited to take this plan forward, and to continue to be a place that women in Sussex and Kent can be truly heard.



“The whole ethos on looking after women is what stands out [in BWC’S mission] for me. There isn’t really anything for us, there are no services out there specifically for women. We need to be where somebody is looking after that need ... that’s what stands out for me.”

A woman using BWC’s services

## Our Mission Statements

### **The Need:**

Women are adversely affected by social and economic inequality, which means they aren't always able to live a full and rewarding life.

### **Our Vision:**

An equal and fair society where every woman can live a full and rewarding life.

### **Our Purpose:**

To work holistically with women in trauma-informed, inclusive, safe spaces to enable them to thrive.

### **Our Impact:**

Women recognise and use our individual and collective strengths so we can live full and rewarding lives.

## Our Values



# Openness

We approach every woman with an open mind and an open heart. We build trusting relationships where every woman can be completely herself.



# Strength

Our team must be strong, to fight the inequality we see around us. And we need to help women build their own inner strength, so that they can go on to live independent, rewarding and happy lives. This also strengthens the people and the society around them.



# Equality

We care equally about every woman, and every team member. And we believe passionately in building a society where every individual is treated equally, regardless of their gender.

As an accredited trauma-informed organisation, we ensure the Trauma-Informed Core Values are informing every area of our work. These are:

**Trust, Choice, Collaboration,  
Safety and Empowerment.**



# Theory of Change

## What we bring

*For women & society*

- Relationships with women
- People, partnerships and networks
- Inclusive safe spaces
- Expertise, learning, investment in staff
- Media and communications
- Agile, creative innovative approach
- Collective unified feminist ethos, values, principles

## What we do

*For women*

Help women with:

- accommodation, health and well-being, finances, childcare and early years education, social connections

Through:

- casework, drop-ins, outreach, group work, 1 to 1 support, referrals and signposting, working with women in a trauma-informed way

*For society*

- Raise awareness of trauma-informed work
- Create and participate in strategic partnerships
- Celebrate the work of women's centres

## What this means

*For women & society*

### Heard:

Women feel heard, and that their journey is recognised, supported and understood

### Held:

Women are more connected to supportive communities

### Happier:


Women have greater self-compassion, self-worth and are living safer lives

### Hopeful:

Women have a more positive outlook about their future, and there are increased collective and connected opportunities for individual and societal change

## Our impact

*For women & society*



**We recognise our individual and collective strengths so we can live full and rewarding lives**



A live illustration capturing how BWC staff and volunteers feel about our strategy.

# LIVING *our* VISION

**VALUES + STRATEGY**

**A TIME for BEING BRAVE**

**"WE WILL BRING NEW IDEAS, GET THINGS DONE, INPUT STRUCTURES, GIVE ATTENTION to DETAIL WHILST WORKING IN a WAY THAT WELCOMES PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTIONS, AMPLIFIES BWC'S VOICE & CARES SINCERELY about INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE, THEIR WORKING LIVES & THEIR WORKING ENVIRONMENT"**

**Amplify BWC**

**CELEBRATE our WINS!**

**MEASURED BY TARGETS**

**MEANINGFUL WORK RELATIONSHIPS**

**THE RIGHT BALANCE: RISK OPPORTUNITY**

**EVERYONE LEADING in THEIR OWN WAY LEADERSHIP CAN BE a PROCESS**

**What we love about BWC**

- SENSE OF TEAM
- ACCOUNTABLE
- WOMAN FOCUSED
- KIND
- ETHOS
- EMPOWERED
- COMMUNITY BASED
- DIVERSE
- INTERSECTIONAL
- DOING THINGS THAT MATTER
- AUTHENTIC
- EMPATHY SKILLED ACTION
- EVIDENCE BASED RESPONSE
- TRAUMA-INFORMED

**STRENGTH**

**VULNERABILITY**

**OPTIMISM**

**Asking the questions others don't ask!**

**Making space for our PERSONAL VALUES**

**the WHOLE is GREATER THAN THE PARTS:**

**CREATING a UNIQUE APPROACH**

**INTEGRITY**

**KEEPING the PASSION**

**UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING RISK**

**EVERY CONTRIBUTION HAS AN IMPORTANT PART to PLAY**

**WORK**

**VALUES**

**WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

**WINS!**

**HEARD**

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**HELD**

**HAPPY**

**HAPPYER**

**HOPEFUL**

**LIVE ILLUSTRATION Sophia for Katiechappell.com**



# Our Five Strategic Aims

To build a future-proofed organisation that supports growth and change.

BWC is in an exciting period of growth and change. This year, for the first time, BWC's turnover will be over one million pounds and the team has grown by more than 50% in the last year alone. We want to be equipped and resourced to harness the opportunities that arise from this growth, and ensure that our own team is Heard, Held, Happier and Hopeful, in order to be best placed to support in creating these outcomes for our community of women.

## 1. Premises

Through a review of our estates, we will grow into improved and more accessible premises in the city.

## 2. Procedures

We will streamline infrastructure and build central support services to ensure safe, robust and supportive structures and processes for all who engage with us.

## 3. People and Culture

We will restructure management support to reflect a growing organisation, modelled on BWC trauma-informed and feminist values.

To grow the resilience of our services, ensuring they are robust, consistent, and high-quality.

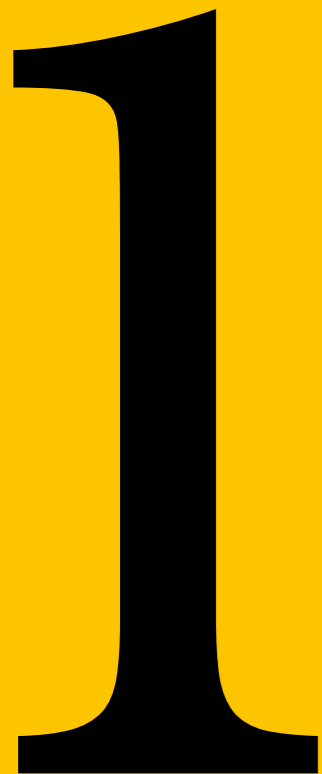
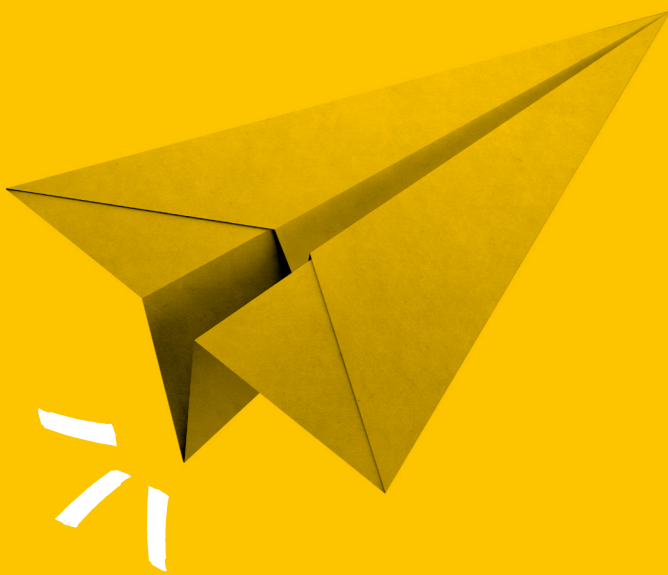
This new three-year Strategic Business Plan will signal a period of stabilisation for the organisation. Feedback from our team illustrated the need for, and importance of, building contingency into our services, so that we continue to hold ourselves accountable to the highest quality while demand grows.

## 1. Planning

We will ensure all services have the resilience to meet the increasing demand by implementing robust Service Plans and ensuring an organisation wide Volunteer Strategy.

## 2. Evaluation and Quality Assurance

We will co-produce an evaluation framework from our Theory of Change and progress our Trauma-Informed Quality Assurance work.



To amplify, centre and honour the voices and experiences of women so that we can influence systems change.

The whole team will play a crucial role in creating spaces for women to have their voices heard, where patterns and needs for systemic and structural responses can be identified. As one staff member said at our 2023 Away Day, 'every day our work is political'.

**1. Collating Key Messages**

We will align our monitoring and evaluation systems and processes to provide a clear evidence base for our agreed messages.

**2. Communicating Key Messages**

We will develop a strategic and integrated communications and influencing plan with clearly identified audiences and key messaging for each audience.

**3. A Voice at Key Levels**

We will work actively with the NWJC and others to articulate, champion and demonstrate the systemic change we want to see for women and influence the way services for women living with multiple disadvantages are commissioned and delivered.



To meaningfully integrate Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging into everything we do.

At BWC, equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are integral to our ethos. Our work recognises the complexity and the individuality of each woman's story, while also acknowledging the societal and intersectional barriers, challenges and often trauma faced because of discriminatory and historically oppressive systems and structures. For this reason, we know we always have more to learn, to walk alongside any woman who walks through our door.

**1. Communicating and Embedding our Vision**

We will deliver consistent leadership and organisational support to BWC's Anti-Racism and Cultural Competency Working Group (ARCC) to develop an organisational Anti-Racism manifesto and work to improve service accessibility for all.

**2. Recruitment, Retention and Belonging**

We will implement specialist roles to build capacity in reviewing recruitment processes, to actively attract, retain and ensure a sense of belonging for women from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences so that our staff reflect the women we serve.

**3. Staff Upskilling and Cultural Competency**

We will review our staff training plan to ensure it provides more specialised and intersectional training for staff on focused areas identified by staff and trial a staff champion scheme.



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.

Co-production is about us as a service provider and the women who use our services working together to help shape the services they use. It recognises lived experience and women's assets and acknowledges them as equal partners by sharing power, with a view to having equal influence on the design, development, and delivery of services.

This aim is important for BWC to make progress on, but it is also important for us to start as we mean to go on. For this reason, our objectives are broad and flexible as the specifics are to be developed in the true spirit of co-production with the women who use our services over the lifetime of the Strategic Business Plan.

**1. Consultation:**

We will ensure resourcing and capacity building to support the Community Forum, where we can explore how we embark on a more co-produced organisational path.

**2. Development:**

The Peer to Peer Service, with support from local networks, will co-design a framework to embed co-production in their service, the learnings from which will facilitate development of frameworks to pilot in all services.

**3. Strategy:**

By the end of this strategic business plan, we will have produced a BWC Co-production strategy, and created a consultation roadmap for women who use our services to develop the 2027 Business Plan.



## A final word from our Director, *Lisa Dando*

It's been a journey! Over 50 years, BWC has weathered many storms and encountered many highs and lows, much like the lives of many of the women we meet.

As a team of self-identifying women, we all bring an understanding of what is meaningful in women's lives. Being the experts of our own experiences, we stand to hear and hold women and, in doing so, make a real difference to lives where we are hopeful and happier.

Whenever I'm asked about BWC, I describe our longevity as bittersweet. We've been successful in surviving the last 50 years, and we celebrate that we are still here for women.

But I don't think our founders in 1974, who created this safe space for women, would ever have dreamed we would still be needed to help fight for equality 50 years on! Nonetheless, thanks to our incredible forebears and the brilliance of the women around me today, we continue to champion women by hoping together for a better and more equal future for women.

As we look ahead, we stand firm in our roots of centering women's voices, co-producing solutions and living our values. At this key milestone, our Strategic Business Plan will allow us to take stock of where we have come from and build with conviction our ambitions for a fairer and more equal society.

Here's to the next 50 years, and here's to not needing us!

“Self-worth, self-compassion underpin a lot of other things, and you know if you start with self-worth then it's something you can really build on.”

A woman using BWC's services



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