

Women's Centres

The Advance Perspective

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About Advance

Advance is an innovative charity that supports women and girls to lead safe and equal lives for over 25 years.

Advance are a women's organisation, delivering systems change and trauma and gender-informed community-based support for women and girls affected by domestic abuse, including those in contact with the criminal justice system. We help women and girls who have experienced trauma through domestic abuse and the criminal justice system in their journey towards safety and justice.

Women and girls referred to Advance come from all age groups and backgrounds, and are often facing multiple challenges at once, such as with their safety, mental health, finances and housing. Our support puts their needs at the centre of everything we do, empowering women, enabling them to recover from the trauma of their experiences, and improve their confidence and self-esteem through groups, workshops and one-to-one sessions.

Much of this support is delivered within our dedicated women's centres in Kent, Hampshire, Essex, Berkshire and Hertfordshire, and North, East and West London. These are safe, women's only, private spaces where women and girls can access emotional support and practical help, meet with their keyworker and take part in a variety of activities.

Healing from abuse, trauma and time in prison can be a lonely and challenging experience. Our women's centres are designed to be a relaxed, welcoming place where women can be themselves, share their feelings, and meet others with similar experiences. Women's centres, however, are not always well-understood or fully resourced by policymakers and commissioners. It is for this reason that we have undertaken this research, to shine a light on the tangible, life-changing work that happens within women's centres.

Literature Overview

Background to Women's Centres

Women's Centres emerged in the 1970s as local hubs for activism, awareness-building, and offering support services like incest survivor groups and Rape Crisis Helplines. Today, there are approximately fifty such centres across England and Wales [i], with a strong emphasis on supporting the most disadvantaged women in their communities. Their mission is often rooted in addressing gender discrimination and all forms of inequality. A key goal of women's centres is to empower women by building their confidence and enhancing their self-belief, enabling them to make positive life changes. As noted in a 2010 report on co-production of women's community services by the New Economics Foundation [ii], "People's needs are better met when they are involved in an equal and reciprocal relationship with professionals and others, working together to get things done."

Women facing multiple disadvantages often navigate chaotic and complex lives. Mainstream service delivery, such as probation and drug and alcohol support, often fails to address the full scope of these complexities. To receive comprehensive support, women may need to engage with multiple, often

fragmented, services spread across various organisations and locations. These mainstream services will often not have staff who are trained to deeply understand the impacts of inequalities, violence, and abuse on women's lives. Research indicates that women facing multiple disadvantages require services that adhere to principles foundational to Women's Centres – this includes taking approaches that are values-driven, gender-sensitive, and trauma-informed. Women's Centres acknowledge that women's needs are different from men's, and that there is a demand for gender-specific support – evidence shows that women using these spaces value them highly and feel they are crucial to facilitating emotional and physical safety, especially for those who have experienced violence or abuse [iii]. For many women and girls, the trauma of abuse plays a significant role in their lives. This trauma isn't limited to experiencing violence firsthand; it can also stem from witnessing violence, facing stigma due to their gender, race, sexual orientation, experiencing poverty, or having been in contact with the criminal justice system.

The Approach and its Impact

The Women's Centre approach is grounded in a commitment to empowering women through holistic, participatory methods that recognise each woman as a whole person and address her diverse and individual needs. The European Institute for Gender Equality highlights key tools for empowering women and girls that align with the approaches and activities of women's centres, including education and training, awareness raising and self-confidence building [iv]. The tangible impact of these centres is vast, from improvements in mental health and relationships, to areas such as work, education, housing and finances [v]. Compared to male offenders, women are more likely to have caregiving responsibilities, so the support provided to them also benefits their children, who might otherwise risk being placed in care, disrupting their home and school life. Moreover, there is evidence that engagement with women's centres leads to a reduction in reoffending, as well as the demand on other services such as police, courts and probation services. Namely, a report by the Tavin Institute states women engaging with women's centres after prison release had a reoffending rate of less than 5%, compared to the national average of 26.5% [vi]. In 2019, there was a higher average number of reoffences per women who committed a crime compared to males, at 4.33 and 3.99, respectively [vii]. Therefore, the outcomes driven by women's centre attendance do not only predict positive future choices but can also have an indirect positive impact on children and family members of women attending the centres [viii].

Cost-benefit of Women's Centres

As well as providing support in a way that is safe, empowering and outcome-focused, Women's Centres are also cost-effective. Women who offend represent a small demographic (and are about 5% of the prison population), yet they impose a disproportionately high cost on public funds due to their vulnerability, and, often, multiple disadvantages.

In 2015/16, women who committed crime cost the Government approximately £1.7 billion, and an estimated £1 billion in police expenses, with the annual average cost of a woman's prison place being almost £80,000 in 2022-23 [ix]. This does not include the wider social costs such as intergenerational offending and childcare. There is an enormous gap between the overall cost



of current provisions, **exceeding £1.7 billion**, and the one-time investment in prevention and general diversionary services of £6.5 million over two years (or £3.25 million per year) [x]. This disparity persists despite the Government's stated commitment to the women's centre model and its recognition of the model's effectiveness in preventing recidivism and reducing the burden on other services [xi].

Included in a report by the Women's Budget Group 'The Case for Sustainable Funding for Women's Centres' [xii], a cost-benefit analysis of the Women's Centre Mode [xiii] shows one centre making a saving of **£1.8 million over a 5-year period**; the return on investment is calculated as 4.68, which means that £4.68 is saved for every £1 invested in the project. The savings here are achieved through the sustained reduction in demand at a scale that allows some of the fixed costs to be cut (e.g. closing a prison wing). In theory, these savings could be translated into social value for the woman, her children and the state. Investing more into community-based approaches like Women's Centres, as opposed to prison-based approaches, shifts the focus more towards addressing women's complex needs at the root, and away from often unnecessary, costly and disruptive criminalisation.

The One Stop Shop Approach

A notable Women's Centre approach is the "one-stop shop" (OSS) model. An OSS approach, which provides a comprehensive range of support services, can have a profound impact. The idea is that women can access wraparound support all in one place – multiple agencies will be operating from the same space, whether this be regular, appointment-based visits or more ad-hoc drop-in sessions. According to a report by the Institute of Criminal Policy Research on women's community services for offenders [xiv], these services are highly valued by those who utilise them due to them receiving emotional and practical help, peer support and access to a range of services. Many women have transitioned from the supportive learning environment available within these the women's centre and OSS, into adult education, volunteer opportunities, and employment. The OSS therefore provided an alternative to the potential criminogenic cycles of social exclusion, substance misuse and committing crime.

The involvement of external partners in steering groups is particularly beneficial for aligning women's centres with local strategies for policing, housing, mental health, prison resettlement, and substance misuse services. The same can be said for those practitioners having access to experts in the field of supporting women, supporting the sharing of information and collaboration, resulting in an approach that is as trauma-informed and holistic as possible. Moreover, through building strategic relationships and having advocates within partner agencies, awareness and engagement from practitioners is enhanced, potentially leading to increased referrals and better information sharing. The following research will outline the Advance perspective on women's centres and touch on our OSS services and their impact.



Our Centres

At Advance, we support women and girls who have experienced domestic abuse or been in contact with the criminal justice system in their journey towards safety and justice. Women referred to Advance come from all age groups and backgrounds, and are often facing multiple challenges at once, such as with their and their children's safety, mental health, finances and housing. Our support puts their needs at the centre of everything we do, empowering women to be safer, to recover from the trauma of their experiences and improve their confidence and self-esteem, as well as providing groups, workshops and one-to-one sessions.

The Advance Women's Centres act as a sanctuary for the victim/survivors that Advance support to be themselves, as well as being a place for nurturing personal development and social connections. A woman supported by Advance could access the centre for many reasons, to access group work and activities at the centre, to meet keyworkers or other professionals for 1-1 appointments, to use the facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms and washing machines, and to access donations. There are also regular drop-ins, which may include legal clinics, financial sessions with an external professional or the centre co-ordinator, or a sexual health clinics. Regular group sessions are put on for the women supported by Advance, these include coffee mornings, creative workshops, singing and poetry, hair and makeup masterclasses, pamper sessions and wellbeing workshops. The presence and ongoing activities of the women's centres see to a range of client support needs, including social inclusion, emotional wellbeing, lifestyle, dependency and recovery, and finance, benefits and debt.



Advance's London centres are based in Hammersmith, Finsbury Park and Stratford. Our London centres are open to all of the women we support, although due to need, tend to be used more often by women working with our CJS (Criminal Justice Service) services. Groups aimed at women supported by our Domestic Abuse (DA) services are also run from the centres, for example, Woman's Trust, a mental health charity for victims/survivors of domestic abuse run regular sessions. Our other centres are in Kent, Thames Valley, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.



In London, the Women's Centres can be used by our Young Women and Girls (YWG) services, hosting groups for those supported by our services. A lot of engagement with YWG happens externally, including sessions in schools on topics like healthy relationships and recognising signs of DA, as well as trips out, such as to makeup masterclasses at a MAC store. However, we recognised the need for a girls only space in the community, and in April 2025, Advance launched a youth-focused centre, the Bloom Hub, acting as a specific space for young women and girls.

Women supported through Advance's CJS services have previously had the opportunity to become peer mentors after completing support. This has meant that they can volunteer and support with 1-1 (emotional support) and group activities at the women's centres. This was an important role, as a peer with lived experience is someone who women can relate to and build trusted relationships with to support their recovery. Moving forward Advance will have an advisory board, where service users (Advance Champions/Ambassadors) can feed into conversations around our centres, activities and any potential gaps in service.

Specific, note-worthy centres:



Our Minerva services, supporting women who have had contact with the criminal justice system, operate across London and other regions, including the East of England probation region (Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Essex). Within these sub-regions, there is typically only one Women's Centre, which is insufficient for the size of the area; ideally, we'd have centres in every sub-region, but current funding makes this impossible. Additional funding in London allows for self-referrals into our Minerva service, meaning more women can access centre activities, which is not an offering currently available in our other regions. In addition to our own premises, we have hubs, which are spaces in which Advance have a partial foothold, for instance using the space one afternoon a week to support clients, but which are also used by many other services

throughout the week. It is important to have access to hubs as it brings a reciprocal benefit: we can offer OSS/centres in some communities, but where we can't, we work closely with the delivering organisation to ensure women have access to the right support in their local area. Building on this successful model, an Advance OSS approach could provide support across more areas of need, whilst retaining a foothold in the hubs to increase geographic coverage.

Another service of note is our One Stop Shop, that operates in the borough of Brent, London. This service is available to any women referred into any Advance service in the Brent and Ealing areas which are all rooted in supporting those experiencing domestic abuse. As well as being used as a base for keyworker appointments, the space is also occupied by a housing service, legal service and the Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC). AWRC provide more tailored support to ethnic minority groups, as well as immigration and so called 'honour-based' abuse support. The external services host appointment-based sessions, half a day, weekly or fortnightly. This can also be treated as a drop-in, but the appointments are in high demand and sessions are usually full, demonstrating just how keen women are to access more specialised support.



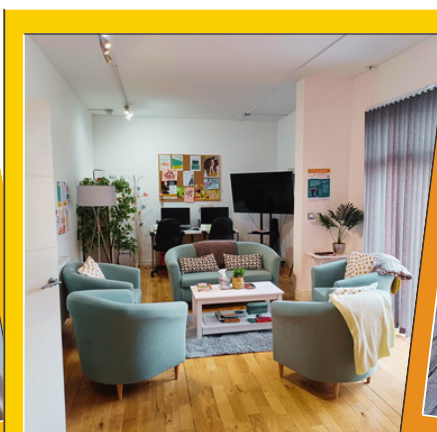
Our Women Centres can also be used to host other types of events such as Lunch & Learn sessions. These are a series of national events that Advance has launched to engage and empower local communities and professionals to raise awareness of issues facing women. Last year, sessions focused on the relationship between domestic abuse and women's contact with the criminal justice system; this year they will focus on the importance of safe spaces in the community. These Lunch & Learn sessions are delivered by Advance staff and attended by professionals and practitioners such as police, NHS/health staff and members of local councils, with around 70-80 professionals attending last year. These sessions increase understanding amongst professionals of the link between CJS and domestic abuse, raise awareness of our services and insights, as well as awareness of the spaces generally, which provides opportunities for said professionals to engage in drop-in services and provide support for the women attending our centres.

Advance Staff Experience of Women's Centres

Interviews were conducted with Women's Centre Coordinators [1] (WCC) to understand the operation of their respective centres, the successes and challenges that they experience. Where a WCC was not available or in post, a keyworker who uses their respective centre for engaging with clients was interviewed instead.

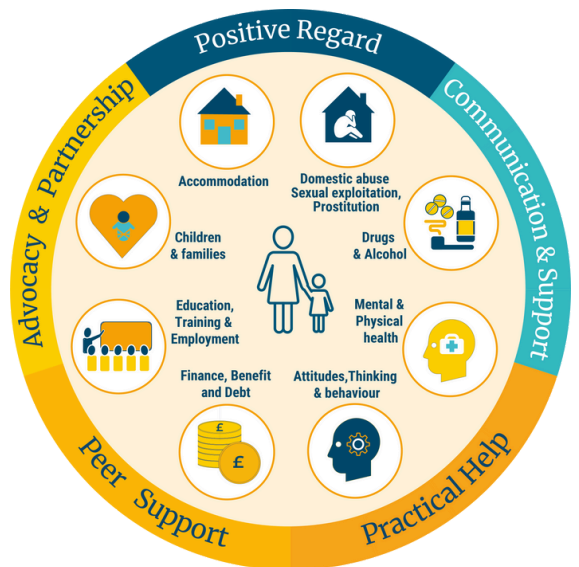
Layout and atmosphere

Advance's Women's Centres are conveniently located near public transport. The layout typically includes group rooms that are homely, welcoming, and often decorated with client artwork and comfortable seating; clients frequently describe the centres as a calm, safe, and relaxing environments. Kitchens are well-stocked with tea, coffee, and snacks. Bathroom facilities are available in all locations, including washing machines in the Hammersmith centre. Donations of clothing, toiletries, and other essential items are a key feature, though there is often a demand for a wider variety of sizes and seasonal items, which is limited. There is literature available at the centres which provides information on available services and upcoming group activities. Despite some challenges with accessibility and size of shared spaces, the centres are considered to be a supportive and welcoming refuge for the women and girls that use them.



Pathways into the centres

Clients are typically introduced to the centres through keyworker appointments. This could either be being told about the centres and groups during initial appointments or any other 1-1 session with their keyworker. It is understood that seeing the space alongside a keyworker appointment helps women feel more comfortable and interested in attending. Staff are prompted by the centre co-ordinators to invite their clients to the centre's activities. Posters and flyers are created for upcoming events by the coordinators within the centres, and keyworkers use text messaging to remind their clients of groups and activities.



Women have expressed that they are attracted to the variety of sessions on offer, as well as being able to access the donations of food and other supplies without having to attend a food bank. Centres have partnerships with organisations like Beauty Bank, who distribute personal care and hygiene products to those in need and receive large donations from them every few months. Moreover, the supportive, women-only environment fosters a sense of community, with clients often making new friends through the centres' groups.

Activities available

The women's centres offer a variety of activities tailored to the needs and interests of the clients. Regular sessions include a creative weekly sessions, focusing on arts and crafts, and a monthly hair and nails session. These activities are carried out by staff who are aware of clients' complex backgrounds, recognising how trauma impacts health, thoughts, feelings, behaviours, communications, and relationships, and provide women with time, space and opportunities for self-care, which according to the WCC's, they greatly appreciate. There are also creative writing workshops run by partners like Clean Break, a theatre company hosting workshops for women in prison or are at risk of entering prison, and a six-week therapy course offered by Heart and Mind. The centres host various drop-ins, such as local drug and alcohol services, sexual health services, and legal advice, allowing women to access additional support while attending other activities. Partnerships with organizations like PACT (Prison and Advice Care Trust) in London and Thames Valley and Rising Sun (domestic abuse support service) in Kent enhance the centres' offerings, providing further resources like employment support, counselling, and coffee mornings. Special events, such as motivational speaker sessions on mental health, and social events like Christmas parties and museum trips, are well-received and provide opportunity for socialising. They are organised by the WCC to give women a safe space to enjoy activities outside of the centre – for example, there was a museum trip in celebration of International Women's Day to an exhibition focused on empowering women. Additionally, the centres provide practical support, including access to office supplies and hot food, however funding limitations unfortunately impact the frequency with which these types of sessions can be run.

Advance's women's centres bridge the gap between our support services and statutory services. There is a strong relationship between our Hammersmith centre and a Mental Health Treatment Requirements team (NHS) with multiple psychologists visiting a week. Similarly, we have had sexual health professionals (NHS) provide group sessions. Overall, the centres provide a mix of activities from both statutory and charity services that focus on creativity, self-care, and social connection, with the flexibility to engage with external services as needed.

"Nice to be able to attend a group where you can talk freely about feelings/circumstances without judgement"

"Being in Probation is not something that I feel proud of, but the fact that the women at the Centre were going through similar circumstances, made me feel like a person, and not a criminal. I am very grateful for the support received"

"I love it, I've really come out my shell when coming to the centre"



Groups in the Women's Centres

This data is reflective of the 18-month period of Feb 23 – Jul 24.

Captured data shows that our groups have supported 212 individual women, across our CJS and VAWG services.

There have been 68 different groups that have occurred across multiple settings, such as our core Women's Centres, Chrysalis One-Stop-Stop and Young Women and Girls services within schools and youth clubs. The data also reflects one off social events like Christmas parties and Pancake day, as well as groups that were hosted virtually.

Our in-person sessions took place in 28 different locations across England, which shows the broad reach we have and how many women are being supported by our groups and centres.

What this data does not capture is some of the 1-1 appointments and drop-in sessions from external organisations such as Clean Break, Better Lives, Working Chance, Women's Trust and the Mental Health Treatment Requirement (MHTR) professionals.

121
Individual women

68
Different groups

28
Different locations

Feedback on Group Sessions

The following feedback was retrieved over the same 18-month period of Feb 2023 to July 2024. We have been able to gather feedback from 191 attendees over 20+ different groups. Women value the group sessions and have reported a real sense of connection.

191
Attendees
20+
Different groups

85%

Rated the session 5/5

84%

Found the session useful

98%

Likely to recommend

98%

Likely to return

"This has been a brilliant thing to get me away from problems, to create. I carry the heart I made during the group in my bag"

"Fun time, positive, engaging. Helps me connect with other women in a safe place under no pressure"

"I really enjoyed being vulnerable and knowing I was safe and comforted"

"I found the session extremely enjoyable and very relaxing to the point where I was able to disconnect from everything and appreciate being in the moment"



Suggestions from the Women we support

A further survey was conducted to understand women's awareness of our centres, any barriers and what could encourage attendance. These were completed with key workers and open to all clients.

Reported Barriers to Attendance:

- ▶ *Distance and Travel Costs:* The cost and distance of travel were significant barriers, particularly for those outside of London. Our centres partially address this issue by covering travel costs up to £9. Additional funding would allow us to cover more travel costs or invest in more incentives (i.e. consistently providing lunch) to encourage engagement.
- ▶ *Mental and Physical Health:* Health issues were another major barrier preventing women from attending the centres, with women typically reporting anxiety about a new place or new people. Additional funding would allow us to establish relevant partnerships to ensure we are providing comprehensive mental health support, as well as invest in mental health and wellbeing take-home resources.
- ▶ *Childcare:* Childcare emerged as a barrier even when women had planned to attend. Advance are currently exploring options for dedicated sessions for mothers and children, in hope to somewhat overcome this barrier. Additional funding would allow us to bring in a childcare professional to be present, as well as invest in child-friendly activities (games, books, toys, instruments). This would also foster an environment where mothers can spend quality time with their children, away from their otherwise often complex lives.

Factors That Would Increase Attendance:

Food Bank Items:

- ▶ Over two thirds of women asked indicated that the availability of food bank items (food, toiletries, and household items) would increase their likelihood of attending the centres. Our Hampshire centre is currently offering food donations, but the WCC has stated this to be limited compared to clothes and toiletries available. Additional funding would allow us to expand the range and quantity of food bank items across all centres, ensuring consistent access to essential supplies.

"If we provided hot food, I think that would be huge. And I've had some feedback recently about plus size clothing that we don't have any plus size clothing and like, I mean it's, I just get what we're donated. So it's not always the easiest thing to control, but the fact that we don't have that, it's not super accessible for loads of women"

– London WCC on facilities

Specific Support Services:

- ▶ Women predominantly expressed a strong interest in having access to legal advisors, financial advisors, housing advisors, immigration specialists, and tailored support for women from ethnic minority backgrounds through by and for organisations. Additional funding would allow us to engage a wider range of specialist advisors and partner organisations to provide more consistent and culturally appropriate support.

Substance Abuse Support:

- ▶ Some women highlighted the need for specific substance abuse support. Although Turning Point currently hosts monthly drop-in sessions at the Hammersmith centre, an increase in this type of support would be appreciated. Additional funding would allow us to increase the frequency and scope of substance abuse support sessions and resources to better meet the needs of service users.

Welcome Packs and Inductions:

- ▶ Several women mentioned that welcome packs and induction sessions would be beneficial for new attendees. In response to this feedback, this has already been implemented at the Hammersmith centre.

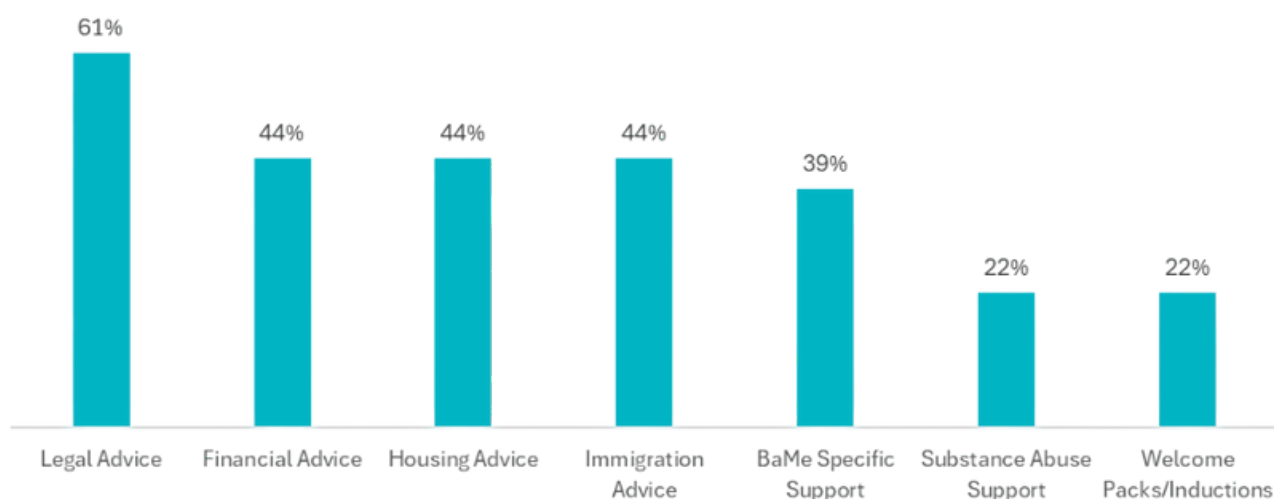
“It can be quite daunting I guess for a lot of clients. So I think just making it as easy as possible... it can make a difference when they’re first introduced in one of their first introductory meetings at the Women’s Centre or have one-to-one appointments here. I think we’ve had quite a few drop in on groups who have just finished their appointment and would just ask “what’s going on in the group room?” And then you know, just join for a bit, have a chat and be like ‘oh groups are actually quite nice’ and have come back. So I think it’s just ... establishing more communication”

– London WCC on the referral process

Improved Facilities:

- ▶ Women suggested that upgraded bathroom facilities would enhance their experience. This includes having washing machines and showers in more centres, which are currently only available in one of our centres. The women also suggested more advanced kitchen facilities to make more substantial food; however, installing an oven or hob would come with safeguarding concerns. One solution to this is partnering with a local food vendor or takeaway service such as Pret or Greggs to provide food at our group sessions. Additional funding would allow us to upgrade essential facilities and explore sustainable food partnerships to improve the overall experience at our centres.

% of women reporting these as factors that would increase attendance



Opportunities According to Women's Centre Coordinators

Based on interviews with WCCs/keyworkers across all centres, speaking for themselves but also on behalf of the women they support.

Improved Facilities and Resources:

- ▶ More funding is needed for better facilities, including more washing machines, plus-size clothing, community laptops for form filling, and additional private rooms for keyworker appointments. Women's Centre Coordinators are given a limited budget each month to put on activities, they have expressed that this isn't adequate to run the groups that they would like to.

Group Sessions Availability:

- ▶ Running group sessions on more days would accommodate women with busy schedules and various commitments like probation appointments. In terms of drop-ins, our OSS in Brent has a system where the external partner holds half a day for appointments and drop ins (1.5 hours of appointments and 1.5 hours of drop-ins) which makes support more accessible with women having varied schedules.

Addressing Barriers to Attendance:

- ▶ Financial barriers like travel costs and the distance to the centres, as well as mental health issues such as anxiety, are significant obstacles. Reimbursing travel costs across all regions and providing wraparound support services within the centres could help to make it feel more worthwhile for the women.

Increased Space and Accessibility:

- ▶ Additional funding could allow centres to remain open and be staffed outside of current working hours. This would expand the opportunity for women and girls to drop-in and access support when they need it. Expanding/rearranging the space in certain centres would cater to larger groups and provide more room for private meetings. Ensuring accessibility for women with disabilities or injuries is also important. The Kent Women's Centre is in the process of moving location to alleviate these kind of barriers.

Donation Availability:

- ▶ Seasonal donations, toiletries, and essential items like nappies and children's clothing remain in high demand. Ensuring these are available year-round is important for client support.

Overall, these changes would significantly enhance the support and experience provided by the women's centres, making them more accessible, welcoming, and effective in meeting the needs of their clients. Additional funding for our centres would enable these changes to be made.

Making Women's Centres Work

Reducing barriers

Women's Centres should be as easy to access as possible, including reimbursement for travel, considering the locations of the centres or the use of collaborative hubs where geographical areas are vast or difficult to journey around. By easing any anxieties about visiting the centres, either through transport support or introductory sessions and information packs, we can provide women with practical help so that they can maintain their involvement in the centre or programme. Centre coordinators should maintain regular communication with the women attending their centre, for instance sending out activity timetables and session reminders.

Collaborative spaces with partners

Using women's centres as an alternative to other offices where women have appointments can provide a more familiar, comfortable and private environment, rather than a more clinical space. Additionally, this provides an opportunity for three-way support between centre staff, the external party and the service user, and partnership building opportunities more generally

One Stop Shop model

To effectively provide the support that a woman needs in a women's centre, an OSS approach can offer varied and tailored support and advice to women through drop-in and booked sessions. Ideally a successful OSS model would include housing, legal, immigration, and finance advice, as well as by-and-for services which are culturally competent and appropriate, to provide additional support and guidance. Providing access to varied support in one place, can speed up the support a woman can access.

Facilities and services

The more that is available at a women's centre, the more cost effective it is for that woman to travel to the centre. Kitchen facilities, washing machines and showers may be a particular draw for those women who are in unstable accommodation. In addition, donation stations - including clothing in a variety of sizes, sanitary items, blankets, and items for children as well as foodbank items are frequently used, or have been asked for, by women.

Long-term sustainable funding

To effectively deliver the above, long-term sustainable funding is required. Short-term and uncertain funding creates instability and additional work for the Women's Centre, where instead of focussing on delivery, a significant portion of time must be spent on seeking out new funding, writing applications and dealing with short-term lets. Funders should prioritise multi-year funding models that recognise the long-term nature of the issues women face, including trauma recovery, financial insecurity, and social reintegration.

Reduced restrictions on who can use the space

Specific stipulations around who can access centres through funding also limit the wider impact that the centres can have. For example, if women are only allowed to use the centre if they are engaging with another service, then it reduces opportunity to provide step down or one-off support to women who have finished keywork, potentially leaving a gap in their support and social inclusion. These restrictions risk creating a gap for women who have finished their probation but still require informal, step-down, or ad-hoc support. A trauma-informed and woman-centred approach demands flexibility and open access, especially for those in transition or with fluctuating needs. Funding should support the holistic function of centres as open, safe community spaces — not just as service delivery points.

In line with Advance's 2024 Manifesto recommendations, the Government must:

Recognise the vital role played by women's centres as safe spaces to offer long-term, holistic support to women, wherever they are in the country. [xv]



Increase flexible funding for and set a statutory footing for community-based specialist services for women.

We know that women's centres are lifelines for some women during the most difficult points in their life, but we need to fund them to ensure that we make the most of this effective low-level support and intervention, to reduce greater social and financial cost of interventions at a more acute point, as well as personal cost to the women at the centre of our work. Investing in this low-cost, high-impact support could reduce the demand on services such as A&E, housing crisis teams, social care, and the prison system.

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End Notes

- [1] Advance's Women's Centre Coordinators are the first point of contact for women accessing the service via the Advance Centre(s). They are responsible for ensuring that the Women's Centre space provides an environment that is welcoming and accessible. They also help to manage the referrals and allocation process by inputting information onto the case management system. (Taken from the Women's Centre Coordinator JD, <https://www.advancecharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Womens-Centre-Coordinator-London-June-2021.pdf>).

