



Women's Community Matters  
**Annual Report**

April 2014 - March 2015

Charity Number: 1156492

## Women's Community Matters is established to carry out the following for the benefit of women:

- ❖ Promoting, protecting and improving the safety of vulnerable women
- ❖ Advancing education in relation to the issues affecting women (including but not limited to) the areas of criminal justice, addiction, domestic violence, financial poverty and poverty of opportunity
- ❖ Preventing or relieving sickness, disease or suffering in women in the area of benefit (whether emotional, mental or physical)
- ❖ Promoting equality and diversity for the public benefit by, for example:
  - ❖ Eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or religion
  - ❖ Advancing education and raising awareness and equality and diversity
  - ❖ Promoting activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds
  - ❖ Conducting or commissioning research on equality and diversity issues and publishing the results to the public
  - ❖ Cultivating a sentiment in favour of equality and diversity
- ❖ Furthering such other purposes which may be charitable according to the law of England and Wales as the Trustees see fit.

### Love Barrow Awards

In March 2015 Women's Community Matters was given a Love Barrow Award having been shortlisted in the Community Business of the Year category. You can see our video on the blog page of our website.



We are also proud to have been shortlisted for a Howard League for Penal Reform national award. Winners will be announced at a ceremony in July.

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## An introduction from our Chair of Trustees, Caroline Green:



I am delighted to introduce the first Annual Report of Women's Community Matters. Since our Centre opened in Barrow in November 2013, a huge amount has been achieved to deliver our vision of providing responsive and effective services which make a difference to the lives of women. The value of these services is most powerfully expressed in the feedback and comments from the women themselves, a selection of which have been included in the report. Women who access the Centre play a pivotal role in shaping and developing the service we offer and in supporting each other in their individual journeys. Their courage, resilience and determination are a continual source of inspiration to all of us who have the privilege of being involved in the Centre.

During the last year, we have been extraordinarily fortunate to have received tremendous support from a range of funders and partners. Without them, nothing that has been achieved would have been possible and we are extremely grateful to all the organisations and individuals who have given so generously of their resources, time and expertise.

The driving force of our Centre is our fantastic team of staff and volunteers. Their unstinting commitment to improving the lives of women has been truly remarkable. I would particularly like to pay tribute to our Centre Manager, Rebecca Rawlings, whose dedication, creativity, dynamism and compassion has made Women's Community Matters what it is - a safe haven and life line for so many women.

I hope you find this Report interesting and informative. Whilst we are proud of what we have achieved, we are determined to develop, improve and expand the services we offer both in Barrow and beyond. We are an open, inclusive and forward thinking organisation and new perspectives and ideas are always welcome, so please do feel free to contact us.

More information about our services are available on our website and we look forward to welcoming many more women to our Centre during the coming year.

Caroline Green, Chair of the Board of Trustees, June 2015

### Headline figures

In the 12 months 1st April  
2014-31st March 2015:

we have received 5,770  
visitors to the Centre

volunteers gave 4,143.75  
hours of their time to the  
organisation

315 women and their  
families received 4,357 free  
items of clothing from our  
clothes bank

285 different women  
attended courses/  
activities/received support  
at our centre

21 women carried out  
their unpaid work with  
us (Community Service  
ordered by the courts)

### Summary Overview

Women's Community Matters opened its Women's Centre on 25th November 2013. We had 5 trustees, one staff member seconded to the organisation part time, and 20 volunteers who had completed their initial training. 160 people came to support us at the opening, including the Police & Crime Commissioner, our MP, a variety of organisations, and a great many ordinary men and women of the area. In less than eighteen months we have 12 trustees, 4 staff members, 26 active volunteers who have completed a variety of training sessions and an additional 8 who are part way through their training/induction. We have had 3 student Social Workers on placement, 1 student studying Youth and Community Development, 8 student Health Visitors for the day, (4 of whom also accessed our DV training), 3 students on work experience from school, 1 student on placement from college and 1 police officer who spent a week with us as part of her training.

## Women in the Criminal Justice System

Unpaid Work – as of 31st March 2015, 16 women had completed their unpaid work with us providing the Centre with 1,019.5 hours of their time. 5 further women had completed 95 hours of their unpaid work with a number still to complete. These 21 women contributed 1,114.5 hours to the running of the Centre during 2014-15.

Vision Programme – this is a 10 week life skills rolling programme which started in October 2014. 6 women have completed the full programme to date with 6 women part way through the programme and another 2 about to start. Women can join at any week and it provides an immediate start for women referred to us from Probation Services. We also work alongside other organisations to provide advice, assistance and support for women as they leave prison.

"You will never know how grateful I am that you gave me the opportunity to carry out my CP at WCM...I do hope you continue to offer women ex-offenders the chance to come here because you really have changed my life"

Community Payback volunteer, 2014

"Thank you for giving me the chance & opportunity to become part of the Women's Centre. I'll miss you guys from today but I will be back"

Community Payback volunteer, 2014



Volunteers at work





## Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

Being, Feeling, Keeping Safe – this is a comprehensive programme of support offering 35+ sessions to women who have experienced the criminal justice system, are a victim of domestic violence or who are vulnerable for another reason. This programme is funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for 3 years and includes an intention to provide some of the programme in other areas of the county during years 2 and 3.

In its current form, the programme began in January 2015 with 41 women already completing various parts of the programme. The programme is made up of a number of different elements focusing on supporting women in different aspects of their lives.

Beautiful Women is the name of the 6 week course focusing on increasing self-confidence and self-esteem. This course was developed and piloted during 2014. Feedback from the first four courses has been used to inform the future delivery of the follow on course - Beautiful Me – available to those women wishing to further challenge and develop themselves.



Ladies who recently attended the Beautiful Me workshop



*"I have the confidence to be strong for me and my children now. I won't let him hurt us anymore."*

Paige\*, 25, completed Beautiful Women in summer 2014

*"When I look at the old photo of me I have noticed how much I have changed emotionally."*

Susan\*, 26, with a diagnosis of autism, attended Beautiful Me.

## More Being, Feeling, Keeping Safe...

Alternative Futures is the part of the programme looking at moving back into work, volunteering and training. There are currently 10 women engaging with this part of the programme, with 16 completing it the first time round. The final session will look at the development of the Timebank in Barrow and will offer opportunities for women to be credited for hours of their time they are able to volunteer. We are working alongside Inspiring Barrow, Love Barrow Families and Ramsden Infants School on this.

There are also a number of other elements to the programme including Heartstart delivered by the Fire Service; self-defence and break away techniques delivered by a local organisation who have also provided Conflict Resolution training to staff and key volunteers; a Protective Behaviours course delivered by the Birchall Trust looking at trust; a number of sessions looking at safety online, in the home and when out and about; and a number of other key topics aimed at particular issues identified by participants. At the end of each programme (35+ sessions) there is the opportunity for the women to develop and host a celebration event. A group of women worked on the first Celebration Event which took place on 10th July 2015, 12.30-3pm where the Police & Crime Commissioner was the guest of honour. Participants will also be encouraged to join a reference group which will look at different issues in the community and this will enable them to inform the practice of the Centre and other organisations and agencies based on their own experiences and learning.

*Being*



20 years old, survivor of sexual crime

**FEELING**

*Keeping*

**SAFE**

A blue speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. Inside, the text reads: "I have learnt not to let people walk all over me and respect myself."

"I have learnt not to let people walk all over me and respect myself."

25 years old, experiences of domestic abuse

## Cooking Together

This is inspired by conversations with the local Foodbank who reported that a number of people collecting food were unsure how to make best use of what they were given and how to make use of the additional items on offer. One of our Social Work students ran the first 6 week programme using typical Foodbank parcel products to produce family meals. With additional funding from the County Council, BAE Give As You Earn scheme and the Keswick2Barrow, we were able to buy a limited amount of equipment to give to those who needed it. 21 different women attended some or all of these sessions.

The second programme of Cooking Together was then led by one of our volunteers. The average attendance at these sessions was 14 women with most attending every session. The sessions are based on easy to make, cheap meals for the family including treats such as the one bowl seven minute chocolate cake...this is very popular! Moving on, the volunteer has demonstrated a number of one pot meals using a slow cooker. This too is very popular. One woman who attends the sessions has a medical condition which means she is unable to use hot pans to cook food. She has been able to make use of the recipes and the slow cooker we were able to provide. A number of women have brought cakes they have made using the recipes and encouragement they have been given, and many more have shown photos and told stories of their successes.

*"I have loved attending the cooking at the Centre...I am more confident about choosing what to cook. It has made me feel like I CAN COOK! Thank you Nicola you are BRILLIANT xxx"*



*"I am so proud of the fact that I have cooked my first meal for my children. They loved it too and are looking forward to me coming next week so I can learn how to cook more meals for us to eat together"*

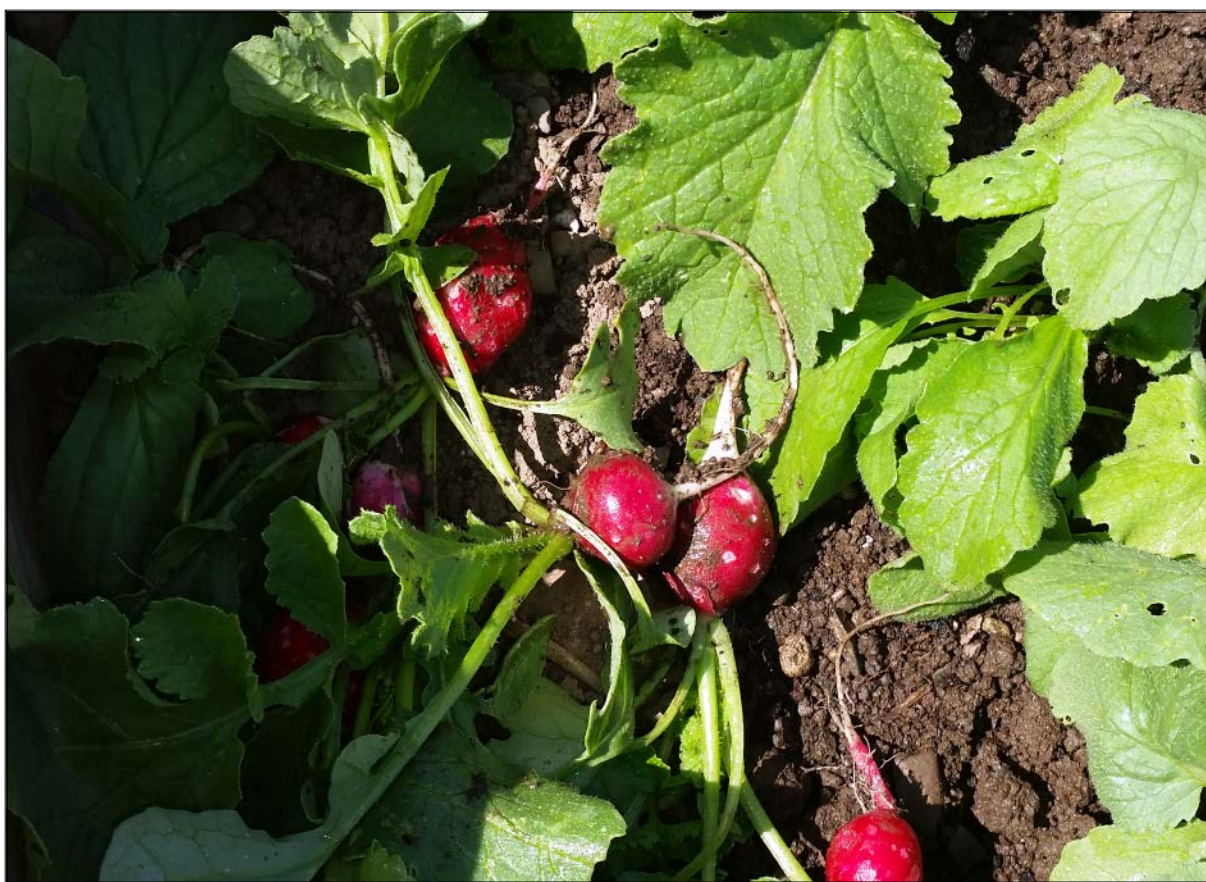
a mum of two



## Growing Together

This project began with funding from the Sir John Fisher Foundation and involved a number of sessions delivered by a horticulturalist including a Seed Bombing session and Guerrilla Gardening. These sessions helped us to develop our plan to work an allotment and have planters on the Green Heart Den. The vegetables and fruit we have grown has been well received and encouraged a number of families to start growing things at home. We planted a number of seeds in the Centre which once they were strong enough, were taken home and planted out by some of our families. 10 workshops have been delivered as part of the initial programme. There were 86 attendances at these workshops by 18 different women. 6 women continue to visit the allotment and the Green Heart Den. 7 of the women have also accessed other courses provided by the Green Heart Den. The youngest was 16 and the oldest was 71. There has been an even spread of women across the age ranges.

6 of the women were at risk of re-offending. None of these 6 have re-offended to date and continue to engage fully with services.



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“Being involved with the gardening project has given me my confidence and self-respect back. It has helped me spend more time with my family instead of drinking and spending time with the police”

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Susan aged 45 years



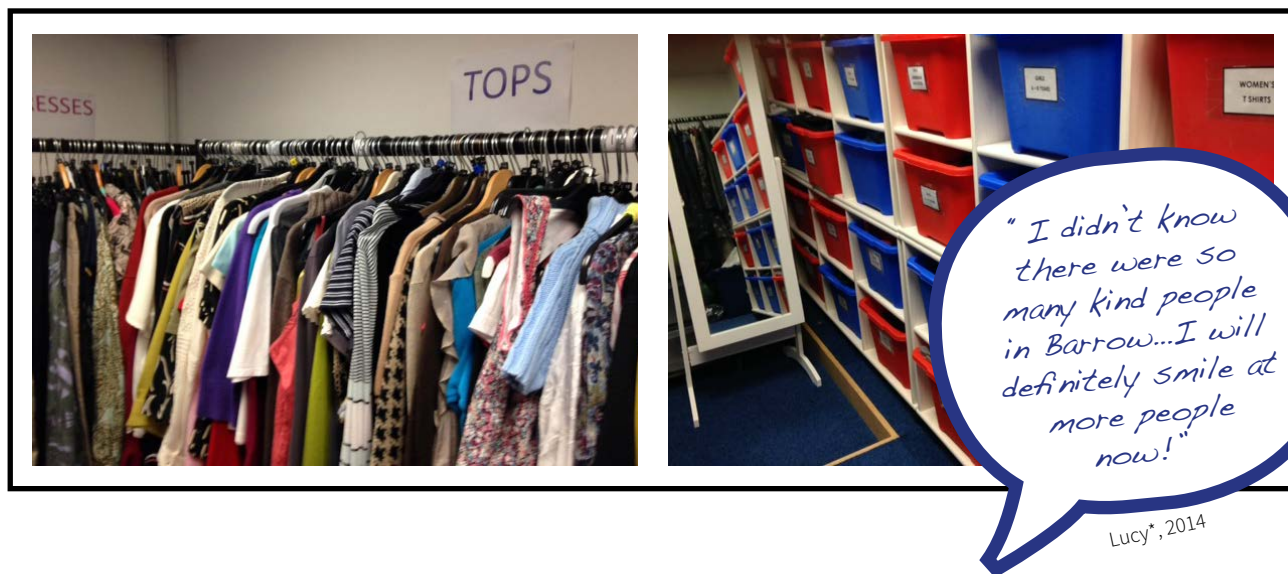


## Clothes Bank

A small team of volunteers led by one of our trustees has been organising and running the clothes bank since we opened. All the clothes donated to us are sorted, washed, ironed and displayed according to age and size. 4,357 items have been given out to 315 women and their families.

We have suits and formal wear available for women to take for interviews, meetings and court appearances. We have a rail of coats and dresses and a selection of fancy dress outfits for children which mums find really helpful when their children need to dress up for activity days at school.

62 items were also given to 4 men who were struggling and were identified by local agencies. These 4 men are now champions for our service.



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"Thank you so very much for the clothes for myself and my children. We have had a difficult few months and I have not been in a position to buy new clothes to fit the children. They have grown out of everything! I haven't bought anything for myself in about 10 years and the lovely things you have given me will make all the difference to how I feel when I pick the children up from school. Thank you from the bottom of my heart"

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Sharon\* 2014

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"My little girl has not taken off the Tinkerbell nightie since she got it. It made me so happy to see her smiling and dancing around. She hasn't done that for ages and she deserves to be happy and think about fairies instead of all the bad stuff she has seen and the things she shouldn't have to worry about"

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Julie\* 2014

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"Please say thank you to whoever gave you these clothes. I have not always made the right choices in my life and these smart clothes will make me feel much better when I face the things I need to next week and start the next chapter in my life...a future for me and my son."

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Jessica\* 2014

## Some of our partners...

Barrow Citizen's Advice– Since 2015 one of their workers has been offering appointments at the Centre one morning per week.

Connecting Mums – this regular session is supported by Ulverston MIND and promotes and supports pre & post-natal wellbeing.

Focus Families – In 2015 a DWP worker began offering appointments to women at the Centre. She is able to offer 'Better off calculations', benefit checks and guidance around which benefits to claim.

Legal Clinic – Holden's Solicitors from Lancaster offer free 30 minute appointments to women offering advice on family matters including those relating to domestic violence and Children's Services interventions.

Local Area Co-ordinators – our local co-ordinator meets clients here on regular mornings each week. We have been able to work closely with Paula for the benefit of mutual clients as well as referring clients between each of our services.

Oaklea Trust –offer support around maintaining tenancies and housing related issues and met clients at the Centre on a Friday morning.

Probation services – the Cumbria and Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company continue to use the Centre for appointments with women on one afternoon per week. In this way new clients are introduced to the services on offer and a number have become volunteers.

Specialist Domestic Violence Services – we work alongside Letgo and Victim Support to support victims of domestic violence/abuse. They meet some of their clients at the Centre, particularly those who are difficult to engage. We provide a 'safe haven' as many clients have described the Centre, to those who are struggling. The additional support and services the Centre has to offer are almost always accessed by clients who meet the DV workers from other services at the Centre.

## Other support organisations,

including People First, Creative Support and Croftlands Trust regularly refer clients to us often bringing them for an initial appointment or to one of our drop-in sessions. Access to the Centre can form part of the women's longer term plan to keep safe and to continue to grow.

Public sector organisations including Health Visitors, Midwives, Police Officers, Council staff and Children's Services refer women to our service, particularly for those experiencing domestic violence or for those with domestic violence in their past.

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"Being able to come here for more advice and support around health issues would be good. I feel safe here and would want to listen to what you had to say about how we can all improve our health and wellbeing"

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Client of the Centre, March 2014

## Future Plans...

Women's Wellbeing Matters - this is a programme we are currently developing which focuses on women's health and wellbeing. We held an event for our health partners in March and continue to gather feedback from stakeholders. The plan is to offer a programme of activity similar to the Being, Feeling, Keeping Safe programme. Happiness Inside and Out – this project is funded by Awards for All and 2 courses will each run over 8 weeks enabling women to make positive changes to their lives. We use the Asset Based Community Development philosophy that believes in building on women's strengths as opposed to identifying weaknesses and trying to 'fix' them.



LOTTERY FUNDED

## Womens Community Matters

Income and Expenditure Account for the period ended 31 March 2015

|                                      | 2014<br>£ | 2014<br>£      |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Income</b>                        |           |                |
| Banking Belles                       |           | 1,500          |
| BFK Safe                             |           | 32,400         |
| Centre Manager Salary                |           | 44,750         |
| Changing The World Together          |           | 7,000          |
| Clothes Bank                         |           | 2,276          |
| Cooking Together                     |           | 600            |
| Crisis Fund                          |           | 3,224          |
| Eating Well                          |           | 5,596          |
| Cumbria County Council               |           | 8,000          |
| Francis C Scott                      |           | 20,000         |
| Furness Lions Donations              |           | 200            |
| Growing Together                     |           | 4,960          |
| Knit & Natter, Coffee & Craft        |           | 500            |
| NRF - Training                       |           | 1,809          |
| Other Revenue                        |           | 5,819          |
| Vision Project                       |           | 7,500          |
| Volunteer Co-ordinator Post          |           | 11,000         |
| Work Placements                      |           | 2,800          |
| <b>Other Income</b>                  |           |                |
| Interest Income                      | 78        | 78             |
| <b>Total income for the year</b>     |           | <b>160,012</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                   |           |                |
| Accountancy Fees                     | 200       |                |
| Activities Expenses                  | 100       |                |
| Advertising                          | 314       |                |
| Beautiful Women Expenses             | 245       |                |
| BFK Safe Expenses                    | 8,844     |                |
| Centre Manager Expenses              | 250       |                |
| Centre Refreshments                  | 817       |                |
| Changing The World Together Expenses | 4,961     |                |
| Cleaning                             | 152       |                |
| Clothes Bank Expenses                | 1,633     |                |
| Cooking Together Expenses            | 734       |                |
| Crisis Fund Out                      | 2,161     |                |
| Employers National Insurance         | 1,630     |                |
| Equipment                            | 4,198     |                |
| Furness Lions - Childrens Area       | 185       |                |
| General Expenses Pot                 | 2,374     |                |
| Growing Together Expenses            | 1,051     |                |
| Insurance                            | 1,276     |                |
| IT Software and Consumables          | 276       |                |
| Knitting & Craft Expenses            | 48        |                |
| Legal Expenses                       | 475       |                |
| Light, Power, Heating                | 257       |                |
| Motor Vehicle Expenses               | 86        |                |
| NRF Training Expenses                | 540       |                |



|                                       |        |                   |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Postage, Freight & Courier            | 82     |                   |
| Printing & Stationery                 | 1,507  |                   |
| Rates                                 | 4,478  |                   |
| Repairs & Maintenance                 | 1,408  |                   |
| Salary                                | 43,036 |                   |
| Staff Training                        | 941    |                   |
| Telephone & Internet                  | 1,937  |                   |
| Travel - National                     | 46     |                   |
| Trustee Day Expenses                  | 621    |                   |
| Vision Expenses                       | 562    |                   |
| Volunteer Expenses                    | 668    |                   |
|                                       | <hr/>  | 88094             |
| <b>Total expenditure for the year</b> |        | <hr/> <hr/> 88094 |
| <b>Surplus for the period</b>         |        | <hr/> <hr/> 71918 |

|      |      |
|------|------|
| 2014 | 2014 |
| £    | £    |

**Current assets**

|                     |       |       |
|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Cash in hand        | 180   |       |
| Cash at bank        | 61121 |       |
| Accounts receivable | 11699 |       |
|                     | <hr/> | 73000 |

**Current liabilities**

|                 |       |      |
|-----------------|-------|------|
| Trade Creditors | 882   |      |
| Accruals        | 200   |      |
|                 | <hr/> | 1082 |

**Net Assets**


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71918
**Represented by:****Surplus for the period**

|                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Allocated Funds   | 38655             |
| Unallocated Funds | 33263             |
|                   | <hr/> <hr/> 71918 |

## Reserves Policy

The trustees consider the most appropriate level of unallocated funds should be at least equivalent to 6 months operating costs. This is to cover the payment of salaries and overheads in future periods whilst funds are being raised to cover these expenses. At the end of the financial year 2014-15 an appropriate level would be £55,000. Unallocated funds currently stand at £33,263 with £10,735 designated to running costs and £5,583 designated to development costs for 2015-16. This leaves £16,945 undesignated funds.

## Trustee Board

Caroline Green – *Chair, Appointed 4th February 2015*

Anne Burns – *Vice Chair*

Ali Dufty

Liz Williams

Tracy Irwin – *Treasurer*

Margaret Burrow

Ann Thomson

Mandy Telford – *Chair, Resigned 26th November 2014*

Lin Weathers – *Resigned 4th February 2015*

## Volunteers



We thank each and every one of you for giving your time, care, compassion and kindness to make the Centre the wonderful place it is.

*"Volunteers are chosen for their warm and caring nature, their ability to contribute to the feeling of warmth and safety, and most importantly, because they are each a beautiful woman." August 2013*

## Staff Team

Rebecca Rawlings - *Centre Manager*

Rachael Hoggarth - *Project Worker*

Katy Scott - *Development Worker*

Kelly Harker - *Business Administrator Apprentice*

## In Conclusion

We feel privileged to play a role, sometimes very small and sometimes a little larger, in the journeys and lives of the women who visit and have visited our Centre over the last 15 months. We have collected a number of stories and case studies in that time and have learned a great deal about how our service should grow and develop. We continue to grow the number of other services and organisations we are working with and continue to seek the views of those who use our service. In this way, we hope to ensure we continue to grow in the way that best supports the needs of vulnerable women in our community and stay alongside them as they make positive changes in their lives.

Rebecca Rawlings, June 2015

## Feedback

We are always interested to hear what you think about our service, how you think we could do better, what you like or don't like, and anything else you would like us to know. There are lots of ways to do this:

In person at the Centre: Suite 1, 22a Duke Street, Barrow

By telephone: 01229 311102

By e-mail: [reception@womenscommunitymatters.org](mailto:reception@womenscommunitymatters.org)

Using a contact form on our website: [www.womenscommunitymatters.org](http://www.womenscommunitymatters.org)

Via comments on our Facebook page: search for Women's Community Matters

We are also on Twitter: @WCMBarrow if you want to retweet our posts

Women's Community Matters, where Every Woman Matters and services are delivered with care, compassion, love and kindness







## Thank You

*We are deeply grateful to the following funders and supporters who have enabled us to make it all happen.*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Asda  | Furness Lions                                  |
| Awards for All  | Furness Rotary Club                            |
| BAE employees via the Give as You Earn Scheme         | Garfield Weston                                |
| Barrow Borough Council                                | Holden's Solicitors                            |
| Barrow Citizens Advice Bureau                         | Inspira  |
| Barrow Community Foundation                           | Keswick2Barrow                                 |
| Barrow Community Safety Partnership                   | Lancashire Women's Centres                     |
| Barrow Credit Union                                   | Letgo  |
| Barrow Inner Wheel                                    | Local Area Co-ordinators                       |
| Barrow Market Traders                                 | Morrison's                                     |
| Birchall Trust  | New Look                                       |
| Central & Hindpool Neighbourhood Management Team      | Northern Rock Foundation                       |
| The Child Poverty Group                               | Oaklea Trust                                   |
| The Clinical Commissioning Group                      | Santander Foundation                           |
| Cumbria Constabulary                                  | Sir John Fisher Foundation                     |
| Cumbria County Council – Barrow Local Committee       | Soroptimists International Barrow              |
| Cumbria & Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company | Soroptimists International Grange & Windermere |
| Cumbria CVS   | Tesco  |
| Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service                         | Tudor Trust                                    |
| Cumbria Police & Crime Commissioner                   | Ulverston MIND                                 |
| Cumbria Probation Trust                               | Unity  |
| Cumbria Sewing & Craft Centre                         | Victim Support                                 |
| Dandy's Furniture Store                               | Wilkinsons                                     |
| Francis C Scott Charitable Trust                      |  |



Women's Community Matters



@WCM Barrow



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