



Women's Community Matters

Annual Report

April 2015 - March 2016

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

Award Honours

In March 2016 Women's Community Matters was awarded the High Sheriff of Cumbria Award in recognition of great and valuable service to the community.



We were runners up for a Howard League for Penal Reform Award and were happy to come second to our friends at Women's Community Projects Lancashire with their Avert Programme.

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An introduction from our Chair of Trustees, Caroline Green:



Welcome to our second Annual Report. This has been an exciting year during which we have been able to expand and develop our services. With the support of Barrow Borough Council, we have extended the Centre premises which has provided much needed additional space for the clothes bank as well as a dedicated project room for the Beautiful Women and Vision programmes, and for new activities. We have also made a successful Big Lottery bid which will fund a significant up-scaling of the range of services we provide. A number of new staff have been appointed to deliver the new programmes and will take up post over the next couple of months.

As ever, we remain indebted to the partners and funders who have supported our work this year, which I hope you enjoy reading about in the report. Thank you to the inspirational women who have agreed to share their journeys so openly.

Having had the privilege of being involved in the development of the Centre since its inception 5 years ago, I am standing aside as Chair of the Trustees and the role will be taken up by Ann Thomson, former mayor of Barrow. Ann is passionate about the work of Women's Community Matters and will do a tremendous job taking the charity forward into the next exciting phase of its development.

Finally, on behalf of the Board and on a personal note, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our remarkable team of staff - Rebecca, Katy, Rachael, Mary and Pearl - whose dedication knows no bounds.

Thank you.

Caroline Green

Outgoing Chair of the Trustees, June 2016

Headline figures

In the 12 months 1st April 2015-31st March 2016:

- we have received 8,245 visitors to the Centre
- volunteers gave 4,539.25 hours of their time to the charity
- 393 women and their children received 6,351 items of clothing from our clothes bank
- 326 different women accessed courses, activities and support at our Centre
- 23 different women carried out their unpaid work with us (Community Service ordered by the courts)

Summary Overview

For us, this second Annual Report represents another significant milestone. The organisation has moved from being a very small operation to one that has received 15,924 visits since its opening (as of 31st March 2016).

The organisation ended the year with 12 trustees, 5 members of staff and 27 volunteers with preparations for an additional 4 members of staff underway. The Centre has benefitted from 2 student Social Workers who have completed placements and 5 other young people who have completed their work experience/placements here at the women's centre. This year has seen the extension of our premises which has made a massive difference to the number of courses and activities on offer. We have launched a number of new courses including, Pause for Thought, our programme for young women aged 15-19.

Women in the Criminal Justice System

Vision Programme – this is an 8 week rolling programme for women in the Criminal Justice System. It delivers a programme of life skills within a group setting. The support on offer has increased during 2015 and 24 different women have taken part in the programme at the Centre. Similar opportunities are available to women across Cumbria and Lancashire through a number of organisations working together. Eight of the women who have completed the Vision Programme have gone on to access further courses at the Centre.

Unpaid Work – during 2015-16 23 different women completed their unpaid work at the Centre contributing 1,227 hours to the smooth running and organisation of the Centre. A number of these women have continued to volunteer once their unpaid work hours came to an end and continue to offer their time to support the Centre and its activities.

Women's Community Matters have been very proud this year to work with

The Bendrigg Trust to open up an opportunity to spend a week volunteering with them placement. The feedback from both the woman herself was very positive and she will start university in September in her chosen career with some positive work experience on her CV.

for one woman on a residential

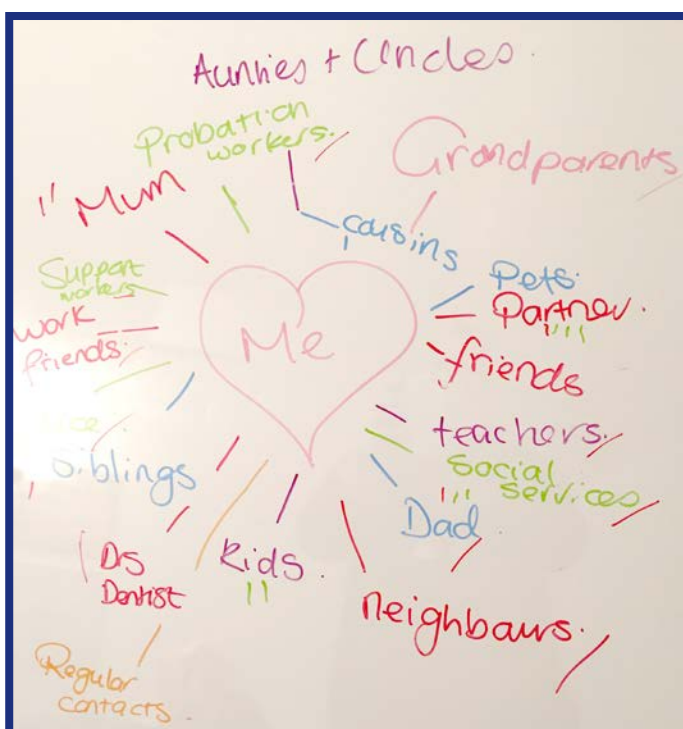
The Bendrigg Trust and in September in her chosen career with some positive work

"The Centre is great. It has given me the opportunity to show I can work hard, be reliable and learn new things. It will make it easier for me to get a job again and it means I can look my children in the eye and say I am doing something good."
Community Payback volunteer, 2016

"Thank you for giving me the chance to come here to do my hours. I know it is a privilege and I will make the most of my time here and work hard to show my family and friends that I have turned a corner."
Community Payback volunteer, 2015

"She took time to build trust and rapport with both the individual students and groups as a whole. She started conversations on a 1:1 basis but also addressed sub groups with guidance".

The woman herself had a great week and said in her placement debrief, "The main benefit is this experience has highlighted where my weaknesses are. I know what I need to work on next time. I am now ready and have what I need to start university in September."



Other courses and activities on offer during 2015-16

Happiness Inside and Out

18 women completed this course during the year. It was designed and delivered by Amethyst Training and was funded by Awards for All. The project aimed to tackle issues of low self-esteem, low confidence and low level mental health issues that prevent women from making positive changes in their lives. The focus was building on women's strengths, not identifying weaknesses following the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) model.

The women attending the course reported improvements in a number of areas of their lives including...

...an increase in resilience - "I have learned how to help myself to be happier and become more resilient", aged 26

...coping strategies - "I now have the skills to cope with things", aged 42

...perspective - "I have learned how to be more content with my life...I can accept that not every day is good but I am not quite as down as I was at the start", aged 61

...improved self-confidence and self-esteem - "I have learned to accept myself as I am. I am not perfect but I CAN be happy", aged 30

All of the 18 women who have completed the course have engaged with other parts of the service and they have all reported improvements in their mental wellbeing.



Cooking Together

This is a volunteer led course that ran each week during 2015-16 and was supported by the local Foodbank. Each week Nicola, one of our amazing volunteers demonstrated recipes that women could replicate at home. Recipes ranging from old favourites to new ones Nicola found trending on social media were prepared and cooked for an audience of 15-20+ women. Support from the Foodbank meant women were able to try out the recipes at home for their families and many shared photographs of happy children eating the results.

"Nicola is brilliant. I love coming each week and learning something new. Everyone at home looks forward to Wednesday night when I can cook something new and tasty thanks to the course."

Eat Well

Following on from the regular and popular Cooking Together course, Eat Well provided 6 weeks of input from Amethyst Training funded by Cumbria County Council with a Healthy Weight Grant. The course included support around emotional responses to food, providing healthy packed lunches, understanding food labelling and eating well on a budget and complimented the regular Cooking Together sessions.

I have learned..."Lots + Lots + Lots!"..."More healthy ways of eating, portion sizes and eating on a budget."

Action I will take as a result of attending the course..."to reduce unhealthy food and to prepare food from scratch..."Cook meals from scratch and also change my eating habits..."include children with helping cook and prepare meals."

Beautiful Women

Beautiful Women is part 1 of our Personal Development course. It aims to support women to build their confidence and self-esteem in a safe, trusting and women only environment. Women feel enabled to begin the process of self-acceptance; have space to challenge the discrimination and prejudice in society; and experience being listened to and understood as part of their personal growth.



"It has been a great help to me. I have firstly enjoyed the company of other women, but also I have learned things about myself and realised that I can cope with more than I thought I could. You have all given me strength. I am feeling as though I can change things for the better. I am not lonely anymore."

Beautiful Women, 41-years-old

"Inspirational. It has filled me with hope and encouraged me to trust in myself more. It has enabled me to leave my home, given me purpose and opened up my communication abilities. I no longer feel quite so alone in my recovery."

Beautiful Women, 49 years old



"Beautiful Women has been emotional, empowering and wonderful! It's been inspiring. I feel different now the course is over. I feel stronger, more empathic, more resilient. It has given me a safe space in which to reach out to other women, nowhere else would have done that.

I can't say how grateful I am! It's been so, so amazing!"

Beautiful Women, 30 years old

Beautiful Me is part 2 of our Personal Development course. As well as supporting women to further develop their self-confidence, it also supports women to increase their own self-awareness. During the 6 week programme, women encourage each other to reflect on their thoughts, feelings and behaviour; women are able to recognise and name their own emotions; and are able to build on their own levels of empathy and emotional intelligence.

"Beautiful Me was a roller coaster ride. I don't think I have laughed or cried as much in my life. I am more outgoing and have opened up to people, which has allowed me to understand why I suffer from depression. I am learning to accept myself, warts and all."
Beautiful Me, 51 years old

"Honestly, the best! It has been very challenging being part of a group but I'm so glad I didn't do what I would have once done & ran. It's that old saying "do what you've always done and you'll get what you always got." The responsibility of change lies with me."
Beautiful Me, 39 years old

Beautiful Me



Being, Feeling, Keeping Safe

Being, Feeling, Keeping Safe is a programme of support funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for 3 years. 2015-16 is year 2 of the programme. Being, Feeling, Keeping Safe brings together Beautiful Women, Beautiful Me and several other courses and activities to offer a holistic package of support for vulnerable women. Women who engage in an amount of the programme are invited to become part of an Event Planning Team where they plan and organise their own Graduation Event. All the events to date have been a huge success and there has not been a dry eye in the building whilst the women bravely share their stories and their journeys with the audience.

Some of our courses/activities:

**MY SAFETY
AND ME**

Chinwaggers

HEART START

SELF-DEFENCE

Thought for a Day

My Relationships and Me

Several very courageous women have recorded their stories and they are available to watch online at:

www.beautifulwomenuk.com



Dreaming Someone Else's Dream

by Terri-Ann McGill

There's a dark stranger looking back at me,
From the mirror in my mind.
I'm always asking simple questions
The answers I search to find.
"Is this really how it has to be?"
And I often ask, along with...
"Have I lost my way?"
Is this true or just a myth?
Am I living someone else's life,
Dreaming someone else's dream,
Feeling someone else's pain
That is slowly hurting me?
Now I thought I knew myself
Knew who I was, I once believed in me,
But now that's gone, I can't go on
Dreaming someone else's dream.

Now there are times, I see a different possibility,
There's a change on the horizon.
With great thanks to a women's community,
The real me is rising.
I've managed to change direction
Be the person that I'm meant to be,
It's never too late
You never truly seal your fate.
No longer living someone else's life,
Dreaming someone else's dream,
Feeling someone else's pain
That was slowly hurting me.
Now I really know myself,
Know who I am, I even believe in me,
The mirror's gone, I won't go on
Dreaming someone else's dream.

I'm now dreaming my own dream.

Pause, for Thought

This personal development course for young women aged 15-19 was developed over the course of the year with the financial support of Cumbria County Council Local Committee and is being funded for further development and delivery for the next 3 years by Francis C Scott Charitable Trust.

The course seeks to support young women to build their self-confidence and self-worth in a safe, women only environment through activities and discussion. It allows young women to begin the process of self-acceptance within a non-judgemental space; to explore their individual identity; to connect with other young women who may have had similar experiences; to understand and challenge prejudice; to understand what constitutes sexual consent; and to explore the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

The course has been developed with the support, guidance and input of young women aged 13 to 20 and will continue to develop and evolve as more young women take part and leave their contribution for the women coming after them.

"Really enjoyed the discussions and hope I can make friends here"
18 years old, involved with the criminal justice system

"I liked the music in the room as I feel anxious in the quiet," 15 years old.

"It was amazing tonight, the room was calming and everyone was kind. I didn't feel uncomfortable talking and didn't feel embarrassed. I loved the topics we talked about and I'm excited for the next session," 19 years old and a survivor of rape.

"The session was relaxing and accepting, I really enjoy coming here," 19 years old and a survivor of rape as a child.

"I felt very comfortable in today's session because I got to know a little bit about everyone else. It was very interesting learning about Malala and what she actually achieved, it really shocked me

because it just shows what we are capable of doing," 17 years old, a care leaver and a mum.



"I learnt a lot from this session about different people and how we judge people. I've enjoyed it," 17 years old and currently living in care.

New Lives

In 2015 we began working in partnership with Barrow Borough Council to provide accommodation and support for women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence. The project received its initial funding via an application to the Home Office by the local council and it means women fleeing abusive situations can be supported to move to safety. One woman described her temporary accommodation as a 'safe haven'.

The project is still in its infancy but other areas are already interested in replicating this collaborative way of working for the benefit of vulnerable women and their families in their localities. During 2016-17 we will be working towards ensuring the project is sustainable in the longer term and will continue to improve and amend the project as a result of feedback from the women and their children who benefit from the support.



Changing the World Together

This group brings together many women, predominately those who have experienced Women's Community Matters services. They are compassionate and passionate; caring and ferocious; and seek to do nothing less than change the world. During 2015-16 they looked at what makes a good service with an independent facilitator; worked with the local Citizens Advice Bureau on the Moneywise project; and continued their work on healthy relationships as a way of reducing incidents of domestic violence. 2016-17 will see the group take on many new challenges including carrying out more research and consultation; producing a creative product to encourage other women to begin their journey; and to act as a reference group and driving force to improve and develop our services.

Changing the World Together

by Sam Exley

Me and you are changing the world together,
We bring forth our dreams whatever the weather,
We build on love and father, a meeting of minds,
A bundle of hope, creativity and rhymes,
A collection of changes we want to see take place,
Changes that will wipe the tears from your face,
Changes that will benefit us, one and all...
Changes that are big and ones that are small,
Come hold our hands and stand in our line,
Watch us move the mountains one at a time,
Yes... you and me... always, forever...
Let us begin by changing the world together.



Our New Project Room

During 2015 we worked with Barrow Borough Council and Cumbria County Council to extend our Centre. The Centre had run out of room and the number of visitors to the Centre were showing a 50% increase on numbers for the previous year. We were developing more courses and activities and there were more women seeking support. Barrow Borough Council identified additional space next to our Centre and funded part of the extension. Cumbria County Council approved an application for a grant to cover another portion of the costs and we also received some very generous donations from individuals and groups. By December 2015 Women's Community Matters had two additional rooms: one a new and much improved Clothes Bank and the other a beautiful new Project Room. The room is a very welcome addition as it offers a warm, welcoming and private space which is separate from the main area and is ideal for groups, courses and activities.





The Tree of Life

Katy, our Development Worker, and Adele, who has enjoyed a number of the courses at the Centre, designed, created and produced the wonderful tree you can see in the photo (left). It is the focal point of the Project Room and leaving a thumbprint has, for many of the women, already proved to signify a particularly positive point in their journey. By this time next year we hope our tree will be full of thumbprints left by the many women who will take part in the courses and activities here at the Centre and who are experiencing their own journeys.

Some of our partners...

Adult Education – Community Learning Support provide qualified tutors who offer a course of Art Classes here at the Centre as well as a course in Yoga and Mindfulness.

Connecting Mums – this regular Tuesday morning session is offered by Ulverston MIND and continues to promote and support pre & post-natal wellbeing.

Focus Families – A DWP worker seconded to their team continues to offer appointments to women at the Centre. These are popular appointments where women are offered 'better off calculations', benefit checks and guidance around which benefits they can claim.

Legal Clinic – Mrs Suleman of Holden's Solicitors, Lancaster offers free 30 minute appointments to women at the Centre. Mrs Suleman is able to offer advice on family matters including those relating to domestic violence and Children's Services interventions.

Local Area Co-ordinators – our local co-ordinator meets women here on regular mornings each week. She is able to offer individualised support to women she works with and can introduce them to the many courses and activities on offer.

Oaklea Trust – offered support around maintaining tenancies and housing related issues, included homelessness one morning per week. This has now come to an end and a different provider will be working with us in 2016-17 to offer this support.

Probation Services – they continue to use the Centre for appointments, enabling them to offer support in a women only environment. In this way, women are also introduced to the other activities and support available at the Centre.

Specialist Domestic Violence Services – we continue to work alongside Letgo and Victim Support to support victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Women's Network – hold English classes for women whose first language is not English here at the Centre each week.

Other support and public sector organisations regularly refer clients to us, often bringing them to their initial appointment or to one of our drop-in sessions.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

FOR

WOMENS COMMUNITY MATTERS

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT TO

WOMENS COMMUNITY MATTERS

In accordance with instructions given to us we have prepared without carrying out an audit the annexed financial statements from the accounting records of Womens Community Matters and from information and explanations supplied to us.

MBE Accountancy Ltd
Chartered Certified Accountants
10 High Street
Windermere
Cumbria
LA231AF

Date: 14 July 2016

WOMENS COMMUNITY MATTERS

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

	£	£
Income		
Tudor Trust	20,000	
Cumbria County Council, Healthy Weight Grant	2,769	
Cumbria County Council, Barrow Local Committee	5,000	
Office of the Police and Crime Committee	32,400	
University of Cumbria	3,050	
Cumbria County Council, 0 – 19 Grant	5,000	
Lancashire Women's Community Project	10,000	
Donations and Fundraising	2,045	
Donations – Crisis Fund	2,008	
Grants – Crisis Fund	2,383	
Bank Interest	62	
Barrow Borough Council, Home Office Project	41,499	
		126,216

Expenditure		
Accountancy	1,850	
Activities Expenses	1,307	
BFK Safe Expenses	4,714	
Buildings	2,221	
Cleaning	311	
Client Expenses	363	
Cooking Together Expenses	312	
Crisis Fund Out	4,521	
Eat Well Expenses	2,038	
Equipment	2,007	
Event Expenses	29	
Happiness Inside & Out Expense	5,487	
Insurance	828	
Miscellaneous	775	
New Lives Expenses	8,484	
Printing, Stationery & Postage	2,942	
Rent & Rates	1,301	
Repairs & Maintenance	2,193	
Staff Costs	79,274	
Staff Training & Expenses	950	
Telephone & Internet	2,771	
Trustee Training & Expenses	452	
Utilities	509	
Volunteer Training & Expenses	599	
		<u>126,238</u>
INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		<u>(22)</u>

WOMENS COMMUNITY MATTERS

BALANCE SHEET

31 March 2016

	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Trade debtors	1,667	
Bank balance	73,540	
Crisis fund balance	64	
Cash in hand	<u>72</u>	
	75,343	
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade creditors	<u>3,447</u>	
		<u>71,896</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>71,896</u>
FINANCED BY		
RETAINED SURPLUS		
Allocated Funds		33,602
Crisis Fund		5,946
Unallocated Funds		32,348
		<u>71,896</u>

RESERVES POLICY

The trustees consider, in line with sector recommended best practice, the most appropriate level of unallocated funds should at least be equivalent to 6 months operating costs. At the end of 2015-16 an appropriate level would be £63,119. At the end of 2015-16 unallocated funds are currently £32,347.58 equivalent to just over 3 months operating costs.

Future Plans...

Women's Community Matters is very pleased to have secured £734,000 as part of the Big Lottery's Women and Girls' Initiative.

This money will be used to support the activities of the charity over the next 5 years. It doesn't represent all the funding we will need but it certainly represents a significant proportion. Alongside funding from the Tudor Trust, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Francis C Scott Charitable Trust, we will be able to further develop and expand the range of services and support on offer to more women in our area.



Trustee Board

Caroline Green – *Chair*

Anne Burns – *Vice Chair*

Tracy Irwin – *Treasurer*

Ali Dufty

Ann Thomson

Ashley Gibson

Georgie Lofthouse

Julia White

Liz Williams

Lynn Beach

Margaret Burrow

Zoe Guest

Volunteers

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

Many of our wonderful volunteers at the volunteer celebration event



“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.”

Staff Team

Rebecca Rawlings - *Centre Manager*

Rachael Hoggarth - *Project Worker*

Katy Scott - *Development Worker*

Mary Horner - *Business Administrator*

Pearl Collins - *Project Worker: Women's Support*

In Conclusion

Reflecting on the past 12 months, I am humbled and honoured to have met and worked with so many brave and courageous women. Working alongside women at Women's Community Matters is a real privilege and I know the rest of the staff team feel the same..

We have had a busy and exciting 12 months in terms of the development and growth of the Centre and what I am most proud of is that women continue to tell us that they feel safe when they visit. At the Centre, we have held onto the key things women told us about from the outset and continue to remind us about: warmth, kindness, care and acceptance in a women-only space. The Centre has grown in physical size, increasing the number of women who are here at any one time, but we have worked hard to maintain feelings of warmth and safety. All of the hundreds of women who are part of the Centre contribute to this for the benefit of those around them and for the benefit of the women yet to visit.

A number of the women who have accessed the groups and services at the Centre have been developing a booklet to share their stories and journeys to inspire others. I am looking forward to seeing this printed later in the year as it shows a level of bravery and courage I can barely comprehend. They are part of the Changing the World Team and they are doing just that. I am proud to stand alongside these women and all of those who visit, volunteer and work here every day.

I hope this report has given you a flavour of what happens at Women's Community Matters where we work alongside women with love, care, compassion and kindness, and where women change their own lives.

Rebecca Rawlings, Centre Manager, 31st March 2016

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 LA14 1HH

By telephone: 01229 311102

By e-mail: reception@womenscommunitymatters.org

Using a contact form on our website: 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	Francis C Scott Charitable Trust
Awards for All	Furness Rotary Club
Barrow Foodbank	Holden's Solicitors
Barrow Health Visitor Team	Home Office
Barrow Library	Inspira
BAE employees Give As You Earn Scheme	Keswick2Barrow
Barrow Borough Council	Lancashire Women's Centres
Barrow Borough Council Housing Department	Letgo
Barrow Citizen's Advice	Local Area Co-ordinators
Barrow Community Foundation	Love Barrow Families
Barrow Credit Union	Local GPs
Barrow Inner Wheel	Murrays Pharmacies
Barrow Market Traders	Nuffield Health Barrow
Barrow Rotary Club	Oaklea Trust
Birchall Trust	Sexual Health Clinic Barrow
Cumbria Constabulary	Soroptimists International Barrow
Cumbria County Council – Barrow Local Committee	Soroptimists International Grange & Windermere
Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group	Tudor Trust
Cumbria & Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company	Ulverston MIND
Cumbria CVS	Unity
Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service	University of Central Lancashire
Cumbria High Sheriff	University of Cumbria
Cumbria Police & Crime Commissioner	University of Lancaster
Dandy's Furniture Store	Victim Support
Focus Families	Women's Institute



Women's Community Matters



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www.womenscommunitymatters.org