

## Women & Girls Fund Impact Report

October 2023

Since its inception in 2013, the Women & Girls Fund has awarded **95 grants**, totalling **£95,505.62** and making a meaningful impact on **4999 beneficiaries**. A further 1643 people are expected to benefit from the more recent grants awarded.

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs)

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs or SDGs) were launched in 2015 following a UN General Assembly meeting and associated resolution, they replace and build upon the previous Millennium Development Goals. They underpin the aims of the UN to alleviate poverty and increase sustainability on a global scale and form the central part of the UN Resolution titled 2030 Agenda.

Suffolk Community Foundation has adopted these goals to show the impact to funders of how we are helping communities and within this report we have included which UNSDG has been reached with each funded project.

There are 17 SDGs which are designed to be integrated – acknowledging that action against one may contribute towards outcomes in others, the 17 are set out below:



## Grants awarded in February 2023

Organisation	Awarded	Project	Estimated beneficiaries
Bury Drop In	£2,000.00	Supporting 'Coffee and Chat' group drop in sessions.	25
GIRLGUIDING North West Suffolk Division	£900.00	Guide Summer Camp	42
Kernos Centre	£1,500.00	Safeguarding and empowering females counselling sessions.	510
Let's Talk Reading	£1,000.00	PEEP parents and babies groups	225
Lighthouse Women's Aid	£1,200.00	Funding for courses	60
Ormiston Families	£1,000.00	YouCanBe Suffolk	25
Rock Paper Scissors Arts CIC	£1,000.00	Therapeutic Arts Workshops for users of Lighthouse Womens Aid Refuge and Suffolk Rape Crisis	60
Suffolk Mind	£1,000.00	To run their Young Women's Anxiety Management Support Project	6
TOPCATS	£960.00	Pamper Project	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,560.00</b>		<b>993</b>

- End of grant monitoring due March 2024

## Grants awarded in May 2022

Organisation	Awarded	Project	Actual beneficiaries
29th Ipswich (All Hallows) Guide unit	£1,000.00	Supporting the 29th Ipswich Guide Unit with new camping and activity equipment.	54
Future Female Society	£1,000.00	Supporting the 9-5 Mentoring Project.	5
Future Inclusions Organisation	£880.00	Supporting the Newmarket Women's Project.	10
Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk	£993.63	Supporting the Young Women's Project.	24
Lowestoft and Waveney Breastfeeding Support	£1,000.00	Supporting the expansion of the Suffolk Breastfeeding Cafes.	500 (estimated)
Suffolk Libraries	£1,000.00	Supporting the Pride & Periods Project in Suffolk libraries.	86
Suffolk Rape Crisis	£1,000.00	Supporting the Suffolk Rape Crisis Counselling Service.	1
The Befriending Scheme	£1,000.00	Supporting a Women's Mindful Mondays Project.	31
The Mix Stowmarket	£975.15	Supporting the Diadem Project for young women.	8
Victorious Living	£1,000.00	To provide funding for the #foryou group.	8
Volunteering Matters	£1,000.00	WASSUP (Women Against Sexual exploitation and violence Speak UP).	395
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,848.78</b>		<b>1122</b>



## 29<sup>th</sup> Ipswich (All Hallows) Guide unit

29<sup>th</sup> Ipswich (All Hallows) Guide unit was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support them with the purchase of new camping and activity equipment.

The grant meant that the guide unit could purchase a variety of equipment to offer opportunities to learn new skills and try new things, for use during weekly meetings and summer camps. They purchased saws, knives, blankets, wellies, fire-lighting equipment, hammocks and tarps. Guides who could not afford wellies and camp blankets were provided with them to help them feel fully equipped for camp.

The grant has enabled the girls to spend quality time away from home and any pressure faced, in safe, friendly but sometimes challenging environments, while learning new skills and enjoying being out in nature. They have made new friendships, established deeper friendships, supported each other and worked in teams. They have gained a wide range of new skills, improved their confidence and self-esteem and broadened their horizons. Spending quality time away as a group has made a huge difference to how the girls engage and interact with each other, they have learnt how to work together, to support each other and have gained an understanding of what working as a team can achieve. They have learnt to share and solve problems, how to look after tents and equipment, how to store food to keep it fresh and how to budget and cook for a large group on an open fire. All these skills are transferable skills for their future and increase self-belief and aspirations.

The girls have had the opportunity to take part in two camps, activity evenings and days and wider Guiding activities giving them new experiences and helping them to gain confidence and improve their self-esteem.

The girls have had the opportunity to learn many new skills, including learning how to look after themselves in a camping environment, working as part of a team, as well as general camp skills, pushing themselves out of their comfort zones, and have had opportunities to share the skills they have learnt.

The girls have broadened their horizons, visited new places and met lots of new people. By spending quality time outside camping they have increased their environmental awareness, gained many new skills and a greater understanding of how to enjoy spending time in nature. The activities they have taken part in have increased their motivation to continue within Girlguiding, to embrace new opportunities and strive to be the best members that they can be.



### Case study

RCD aged 12 had been involved in a serious incident at school, which was a genuine mistake on her part. Unfortunately she was permanently excluded which had a massive negative impact on both her and her family. We supported her and her mum through this difficult period of about 6 months and put a wellbeing plan in place to ensure that she could still attend weekly Guide meetings and camps. Initially R was very withdrawn, hiding behind a mask and a hood and did not engage with the other girls in the unit. R gradually settled in after a period of time and started interacting with some of the other girls. Last summer R attended our unit camp at Hallowtree, sharing a tent with three other girls who she felt safe with. During this camp R began to bond with a wider circle of girls from the unit and said that she felt safe and not judged within the unit. R was quick to learn how to use the camp knives and saws and helped other Guides to use them safely to produce useful items. All the Guides learnt how to erect hammocks and tarps and R was one of only 3 Guides who spent the night sleeping in a hammock, . This helped her to continue to improve her confidence and self-esteem and she was very proud of herself. In March this year R attended a Suffolk County Adventure with just two other guides from the unit, meeting up with 17 other guides from all over Suffolk. R managed to positively engage with the group, spend a night in a room with girls she'd only just met and she was confident to share her fire-lighting, saw and knife skills with the other guides during activities. In addition to leading the way when erecting tarps and hammock. During a very difficult and unsettling time for R last year, Girlguiding was the one place where she felt safe, not judged and able to be herself. R continues attending Guides and hopes to achieve her Gold award before moving on to Rangers.



### Thank you

We are very thankful for the funding we have received through the Women & Girls fund, it enables us to make a huge difference to girls lives.



## Future Female Society

Future Female Society (FFS) was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support their 9-5 mentoring project.

This funding has enabled FFS to support 5 women and girls with mentoring support. This pilot project has proved incredibly successful, the 121 sessions providing the opportunity to explore the women and girl's needs, aims and aspirations. The mentoring project was set up to provide support weekly for 4-6 weeks depending on the needs of the individual. The mentor individualised the sessions for the mentees, ensuring that the sessions were adapted to their needs and the time was used effectively. After the mentoring sessions were complete, all 5 women went on to employment, further training or volunteering. Also 2 of those mentees were also supported to access help with their mental health. On completion of the 121 mentoring support, there was also training given to 3 of the women to then become volunteer mentors for Future Female Society. The volunteer mentors on completion of their mentoring training and Safeguarding training, will now be able to go on to support women on the More than Mum and Girls Where You At? Projects. All of the women came away with a clear plan and idea of what they would like to do in the future and took steps towards that future.

### Case study

Participant A is a girl who came to the mentoring sessions without much thought about her next steps. She was unemployed and had been suffering with quite severe anxiety issues. On the first session we spoke about her past but more importantly we focused on her present and future. By the end of this session, we discovered together that her ambition was to gain employment working with animals. There were however also underlying mental health concerns which the mentor discussed with participant A. With the support of the mentor, she then accessed Suffolk Wellbeing Service and attended courses with them to address these concerns. It was important that these mental health concerns were being addressed simultaneously with the search for employment, to ensure that Participant A would be in a good position to commence employment.

With the support of the mentor, Participant A gained a volunteering position with a local dog kennels. She was supported throughout the entire process, from the application to interview to commencement. Participant A commented that she was incredibly happy within the placement and engaged with this position incredibly positively.





## Future Inclusions Organisation

Future Inclusions Organisation (FIO) was awarded a grant of £880.00 to support the Newmarket Women's project.

This funding enabled Future Inclusions Organisation to deliver a women's health and wellbeing project aimed at raising awareness of women's health issues. They delivered 6 week workshops looking at weight management, health checks, mental health/depression, breast screening, cervical screening and Tai Chi.

Many of the women who attended this project lived in deprived areas of Newmarket, are socially isolated, have English as a second language and have no access to behaviour change information. This project enabled vulnerable women to come together, be given a safe environment to talk about taboo health issues such as depression and work out how to navigate some provisions of the NHS. This grant has given participants the ability to understand the importance of attending screening appointments and to also be able to contact specific professionals to ask any questions they may have. Many of the participants had never attended workshops before, so being part of this project enabled them to hear and receive information on behaviour change for the first time. The lives of beneficiaries were improved because they received information about various NHS services (demystification of service provision), were given an opportunity to understand these provisions and to also ask questions about accessing these services.

Friendship circles were also formed because the women realised that they had quite a lot in common, such as children going to the same schools, husbands working for the same racing organisations and they started talking about the formation of a Women's Group in Newmarket.

### Case study

Yasmin (not her real name) contacted Future Inclusions Organisation because she was concerned that there was no central point of contact for people from Asian, black and minority ethnic communities in Newmarket. Our link from one of the Asian outlets signposted her to us to enable us to talk about what we could do to address this situation. This project enabled Yasmin to inform the community of this project happening in the local area and the importance of the community coming together to support it and each other.

Yasmin is now seen as a resource, a leader for Asian women within the community and is linked with us so that she is updated with any new projects we may deliver in the future.

## Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk



Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk was awarded a grant of £993.63 to support the Young Women's project.

The funding was used to support young mums under the age of 25 who are living in Acorn House, Bury St Edmunds, who come under the umbrella of being homeless. They delivered their Birth and Beyond project (called Acorn House Crafts) within the centre and supported these families to access other community services. This helped to support parents who were feeling isolated and/or experiencing mental health issues, supporting them with parenting skills and helping them to learn about their child's needs for healthy development. Crafts within the weekly sessions were specifically designed to promote parent-child interactions, enhance child development, and be easy for parents to replicate and continue with their children at home. The Acorn House Crafts project was conceived through consultation with the Acorn House residents since they had asked for activities to support their baby and young children's learning. These mums are very isolated and many struggle with parenting their children as they have not always had the best start in life themselves, and we even received some referrals from mums in the last few weeks of their pregnancy.

The grant enabled Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk to improve the lives of the beneficiaries by achieving the following outcomes:

1- The well-being of the parents/young mums at Acorn House has improved through engagement with the weekly group and Family Coordinator, and has empowered the young mums to meet their children's needs and develop a better understanding of how their mental health impacts family life, especially the lives of their children.

2 - The weekly group has reduced parents sense of isolation and the Family Coordinator worked hard, with assistance from Acorn House staff, to promote the group, encourage attendance and create a welcoming group environment which allowed open discussion and advice about accessing services in the community.

3- Through weekly crafts and behavioural modelling from the Family Coordinator regarding ways to encourage positive child development and parent-child interactions, parents have developed a healthy attachment to their children, and demonstrated their active involvement in their children's learning /development and socialisation.

Of the 11 families/mothers who attended Acorn Crafts with their children, 7 received Home-Visiting (HV) from Families Together Suffolk as a direct result of the Family Coordinator facilitating this support. Some HV support is ongoing and one mum decided that she didn't need HV after the initial visit, but of the Triangle Star data we have obtained from the HV families, 67% reported significant improvements to their emotional wellbeing since receiving HV support.

In addition, together with working with residents to develop positive relationships each other, the Family Coordinator has also assisted in obtaining several hardship grants/food vouchers for residents, together with food parcels and free furniture from local charities.

### Case study

One story of change the Family Coordinator has shared involves a new mum who was brought down to the Acorn House Craft session by one of the Acorn House support staff.

"Initially she was reluctant to join in with the group activities and mostly sat on her phone while her baby slept in the pram. We were doing the activity and I asked her if she would like to join in as we were making ribbon hoops for the babies, she declined. I made an extra one and offered it to the Mum near the end of the session, she was very pleased and said it looked really hard, I demonstrated it was a simple but effective craft and she asked to make her own, She came to sit at the table with the others, we all chatted about their children and their situations and the Mum got involved in the discussion, it was the first time she interacted with the other tenants.

Each week it was a struggle to get Mum to engage at first but we always won her over and she seemed to be enjoying herself. She was the last to leave one week so we had a chat about how she ended up in Acorn House, she told me about her DV (domestic violence) relationship and how she was finding it hard being on her own. I told her about home visiting and offered her some support 1:1. She accepted and was assigned a Coordinator. Week by week she became so much more confident and eventually started attending our Chill, Chat & Play and family groups too [both based in Bury St Edmunds]. She has now moved onto independent living and is a happy, confident parent."

### Suffolk Libraries



Suffolk Libraries was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support the Pride & Periods project in Suffolk Libraries.

This funding was used to purchase a total of 86 reusable period products. These products were split between Bungay, Hadleigh, Haverhill, Chantry, and Ipswich County Libraries. As of present, all 86 items have been distributed to customers.

Reusable period products last for several years, providing the beneficiaries with a cost-effective alternative to repeatedly purchase single-use items. As Suffolk Libraries provided these items free-of-charge, they expect that this will make a noticeable impact on the beneficiaries' disposable income by reducing their spend on essential menstrual products. For people who were/are experiencing poverty, this will also improve their mental health and wellbeing.





## Suffolk Rape Crisis

Suffolk Rape Crisis (SRC) was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support the Suffolk Rape Crisis Counselling Service.

The funding was used to deliver 25 weekly sessions of specialist, client-led counselling to a survivor of sexual violence. The counselling was delivered by one of SRC's counsellors who have specialist experience and training in working with sexual violence and trauma. The fund was also used to deliver specialist, VAWG clinical group supervision for a counsellor. SRC's supervisors have a wealth of experience and training in the VAWG sector and offer high quality supervision for counsellors to help ensure safe and ethical practice. SRC's Counselling Service receives positive feedback from survivors, 100% of survivors who provided feedback after they accessed counselling agreed/strongly agreed they 'felt less alone or isolated'.

The grant enabled Suffolk Rape Crisis to achieve the following outcomes:

Women and girls who have survived sexual violence and abuse report better mental health and well-being outcomes as a result of counselling with SRC. 100% of survivors who provided feedback after accessing counselling with SRC agreed/strongly agreed that they 'use new ways to look after their mental health'.

Women and girls who have survived sexual violence and abuse feel more able to assert themselves as a result of accessing counselling with SRC. 88% of survivors who provided feedback following counselling with SRC agreed/strongly agreed they are 'able to deal with abusive people/behaviour if they choose to'.

Women and girls who have survived sexual violence and abuse feel more able to take back power and control as a result of accessing counselling with SRC. 92% of survivors who provided feedback after having accessed counselling with SRC said they felt 'able to press their rights if they wanted to'.

### Case study

SRC provides a safe and confidential space for women to explore the impact of sexual abuse and access client-led work which follows the survivor's personal goals and needs for therapy. Twenty-five sessions allows space for safe and effective work. For one survivor, this provided a space for them to disclose their experience of sexual abuse after many years without re-traumatisation. The survivor said: 'I felt a strong connection with my counsellor and completely safe throughout the sessions, she was able to stop me panicking when I was talking about my past for the first time in 42 years.' This led to improved mental health outcomes on their after counselling evaluation.

### Thank you

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the Women & Girls fund for their support of SRC, allowing us to carry out our vital work supporting survivors of sexual violence in Suffolk.

## The Befriending Scheme



The Befriending Scheme was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support a Women's Mindfulness Mondays project.

The grant enabled The Befriending Scheme to deliver weekly sessions for women experiencing ongoing mental health issues. Providing a safe space for women to come together and support each other, to get involved with real and meaningful activities around the farm. It also offered a vital network of peer support and helped the women develop friendships. This led them to report feeling more connected and more positive about their lives.

The grant enabled The Befriending Scheme to achieve the following outcomes:

Increased self confidence - Women reported feeling more confident, evidence of this can be seen in the fact that the group have met several times outside of the farm. Many members regularly get together at each others houses or go for coffee in town. Some have had the confidence to begin attending other groups. More ownership has been taken of the group by the women.

Less reliance on statutory services - Many of the women attending the group had often talked about how they did not often see their mental health team support workers and often felt isolated, many talked about attending GP surgeries often when they felt panicked or unsure. As time went on many have reported feeling less of a need to speak to the mental health team, they feel that they get support from their peers within the group. All said that they did not visit their GP as often with regard to mental health issues since starting the group.

Progression - Out of the women attending the group 6 have joined TBS as volunteers, one of the women has gone on to be a paid member of staff within the organisation. Three women have gone back into employment (one with their old employer and two with new employers) 6 women have reported that they are actively looking for work because they feel confident enough and well enough to consider it now.

### Case study

One of the women had to leave her employment several years ago after becoming extremely unwell with her mental health. She struggled to attend the group initially but over time found friendship within the group and her confidence grew. She attended every week and became a volunteer helping out with other groups throughout the week. She recently spoke to her old employer who said they would be glad to take her back. She has been supported by her peers to find her confidence in travelling to and from London again (they went on a few day trips together) she is now due to start back on a part time basis in September. She said that the group has given her the confidence not only to go back to work but to be really open with her employer about her mental health experiences.



## The Mix Stowmarket

The Mix Stowmarket was awarded a grant of £975.15 to support the Diadem Project for young women.

The grant enabled The Mix to run their Diadem project, which lasted for 6 weeks, with 1 x 2 hour session every week. The project explored a range of themes and was led by the participants on the course. The topics covered included healthy friendships, activities to help young people understand the fine line between banter/bullying, romantic relationships, including resources around spotting the signs of toxic relationships and consent and body image.

They also spent time focussing on self-esteem and general confidence, supporting young people to truly know and celebrate their personalities and their gifts, and to be bold with their differences, enabling and empowering them to look towards their future and what decisions they can take control over to ensure a more confident and happier lifestyle for them.

### Case study

Leonie was referred to us by the Emotional Wellbeing Hub after an abusive relationship had left her struggling with overwhelming negative feelings and struggling to attend school full time. Leonie's mental health had been deteriorating and she described reduced self-esteem and self-confidence, a history of self-harm, significant mood swings and only being able to attend half days at school as a result of the abusive relationship. Leonie was initially signed up to our Diadem programme and was invited for a 121 session with a Youth Worker prior to this for some key relationship building.

In this meeting, it became clear that Leonie's abusive relationship was much more significant than she had shared with anybody else before and she was at acute risk from his behaviours and intentions; both emotionally and physically. A couple of nights before our first meeting, Leonie shared that she had run away from home in the middle of the night without a phone or money in a bid to get as far away from him as possible. As a result of the details she shared, we referred Leonie to SCC in order to get the family a Social Worker who could help them manage the risk of this relationship and protect Leonie. Leonie's Mum was worried that she was 'beyond' the help that we could give her but we encouraged her that we could help make steps to improve. At this time, Leonie was not allocated a Social Worker but we kept her on our wait list for Diadem.

As a result of our further referral Leonie was assigned a Family Support Practitioner. Leonie worked with us in Diadem, and when necessary in 121s, and met regularly with her FSP. With this support around her, Leonie felt brave enough and strong enough to leave the relationship for a final time and has been equipped with the tools to do this successfully and safely. Leonie's Mum said that the work we did was the '*best thing*' that could have happened for Leonie and she was very grateful for it. Her Mum said that she felt for the first time like people were on her side and fighting their corner and that it is amazing to know how much other people care about her daughter.

Leonie has just finished Diadem with us and has now returned back to school full time with the necessary support she needs to be able to do this. She has stated '*I feel like a weight has been lifted*' and is much more confident, courageous and happy now that she has escaped his abuse. Leonie is also partaking in Escape the Trap, a relationships programme we referred her to which will help her spot the signs earlier in the future. Leonie is now EET, much happier and describes herself as back to the person she used to be before the abusive relationship and has said she feels like she has got her life back. Further to this, Leonie has now applied for a place at College studying Hair & Beauty next year despite only a month ago feeling like there was no hope for her own future.

## Victorious Living



Victorious Living was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support the #foryou group.

The grant enabled Victorious Living to run a 5 week course during the school holidays for young women aged 10-14 in Lowestoft and Oulton. The course covered the following themes: Social skills, mental health, hobbies, relaxation, coping strategies and social media. The project was set up to eradicate issues of digital exclusion and isolation and was run in this area due to socio-economic factors, such as low income, low aspiration, low self-esteem and poor physical and mental health.

The young woman who participated in this course all reported back that they were given some useful tools and strategies in helping them now and in the future with life skills that can be used to help them day to day. They all wanted to return again for the term time courses and as a result all found a new hobby that they had not explored before that they are now interested in. The girls said that they were not aware of the amount of concentration they actually had until this course.

### Case study

One of the young women that attended the sessions had been regularly self-harming, running away and attempting suicide. This was a weekly occurrence however during the time she was attending the sessions, she had not self-harmed or attempted suicide once. She explained to me that she felt valued and heard and that the topics we discussed helped her to be more grounded and deal with situations.

## Volunteering Matters



Volunteering Matters was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 towards their WASSUP (Women Against Sexual exploitation and violence Speak UP) project.

With the support of Women & Girls Fund, Volunteering Matters have been able to continue to support the young volunteers to carry out youth social action around issues of trauma (violence, consent, sexual exploitation, etc.) through their WASSUP programme in Ipswich.

Over the last year young volunteers have delivered numerous campaigns, workshops, and exhibitions across community spaces in Suffolk, targeting other young people. This includes a workshop delivered by 10 volunteers to over 300 young people from 20 different schools across Suffolk at their Youth Conference. These workshops look at various subjects such as Activism, Strive not Survive, Unconscious Bias and Health and Well-being. They have also continued supporting Crucial Crew run by Ipswich Borough Council's Community Safety Team by delivering the Astra toolkit (which takes participants on a young person's journey as they navigate a challenging adolescence) to all Year 6 children across Ipswich.

Alongside the workshops, Volunteering Matters have launched numerous campaigns for issues relevant to the young people during national campaigns including the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, White Ribbon Day 2022, Black History Month, and more. The young people

have advocated and raised awareness of these issues and signposted where to go for support. They've achieved this through social media campaigning on Twitter and Instagram, talks at local events, interviews with the media, and physical stalls/booths in community institutions such as the University of Suffolk. At these events, they have engaged young people, adults and community leaders including the Mayor of Ipswich.

### Case study

Elisabetta was a volunteer for our Youth Social Action projects including WASSUP. Throughout Elisabetta's time with us, she got involved in a range of different ways including putting together and running workshops for young people on different issues including trauma, consent, etc. She joined us while she was on a placement from Europe and has shared some amazing thoughts about her experiences and what she has learnt throughout her time as a volunteer:

"I started volunteering in Ipswich for Volunteering Matters, and I joined the Youth Social Action team. Thanks to this experience I learned a lot and I gained new knowledge and skills.

I have much more confidence in public speaking and delivering workshops now. I am also keen on taking initiative or leading on an activity. I won't be waiting anymore for the right moment, but I will just do it. I learned that even in our small section, much can be achieved and done. What is needed is perseverance and willingness.

One of the core values of the Youth Social Action team is focusing on empowering the young people, which is amazing because they are usually the last to be listened to. The journey some young people have started with Volunteering Matters is impressive, it changes them and makes them believe that they matter. It gives a great impact on everyone's life and future as well. I was changed for the better. It's never too late to see the world with different eyes."



## Grants awarded in June 2021

Organisation	Awarded	Project	Actual beneficiaries
2nd Mildenhall Guides	£1,000.00	To support an Outdoor Activity Day for members of Girlguides.	50
Alumah CIO	£1,000.00	Supporting victims and raising awareness of domestic abuse.	18
Family First	£1,000.00	Supporting core running costs for Family First.	150
Green Light Trust	£1,000.00	To support the Women's Woodland Wellbeing programme.	25
Home-Start in Suffolk	£898.00	To support a peri-natal support group: Virtual and "Time to Talk".	40
Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk	£1,000.00	Supporting the Lakenheath Parents Group.	71
Lighthouse Women's Aid	£1,000.00	Supporting essential updates to the Lighthouse Women's' Aid website.	150
Ormiston Families	£1,000.00	Towards YouCanBe Lowestoft.	23
PHOEBE	£1,000.00	Supporting self-esteem workshops for girls.	87
Re-engage	£1,000.00	Supporting telephone befriending and tea parties for older people living alone in Suffolk.	100
Suffolk Babies	£499.00	Digitally enabled education and support to help new parents understand their babies and adapt to the demands of early parenthood.	50 (estimated)
Suffolk Libraries	£1,000.00	To support Me Myself and Baby in the Waveney area.	208
Suffolk Rape Crisis	£1,000.00	Towards delivering counselling sessions to victims of abuse.	405
The Seagull Lowestoft CIC	£1,000.00	Supporting the Girls' Confidence and Wellbeing group at the Seagull Theatre.	48
Wednesday's Child	£1,000.00	Supporting core costs for an eating disorder organisation.	100 (estimated)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£14,397</b>		<b>1525</b>

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Mildenhall Guides



2<sup>nd</sup> Mildenhall Guides was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support an Activity Day for members of Girl Guides.

The grant enabled the girls to access activities they would not otherwise have been able to access.

## Alumah CIO



Alumah CIO was awarded a grant of £1,000 to support victims and raise awareness of domestic abuse.

The grant enabled Alumah CIO to support young women and girls going through relationship abuse by running an educational and support programme educating young women on the immediate and long-term effects of experiencing relationship abuse. Many of the young people have gained more awareness and knowledge about what abuse is and how it impacts their lives now and in the future even when the relationship is over.

Many young people did not realise the extent that their relationship was abusive, educating them on what abuse is has giving them more insight. Many of the young people have understood that abuse comes in many different forms and that it can be very subtle and the desire of the perpetrator is control. This is how so many victims find it extremely hard to walk away from the relationship. Armed with the information and support many of the young people realised the the abuse started very early on in the relationship and that when the physical and aggressive abuse started they had no power to leave the relationship. Alumah CIO met the educational needs of the young people and supported their mental health and well-being, through the delivery of the programme. They have opened the programme up to everyone without discrimination but also ensuring that the perpetrator was not in the same sessions as the victim if they were in a same sex relationship.

### Case study

L, came to us after experiencing a sexual assault and then an abusive relationship, she was terrified of meeting any one new or going to places that she didn't know. The first time I met with her (with her other support worker) she couldn't even speak for herself as her self-esteem and confidence was nearly non-existent. She felt that she could not cope in a group and couldn't see herself opening up and speaking in front of other women/girls who may have had similar experiences to her. We started the programme face to face on a 1-1 basis, she found it very difficult to open up to begin with. She didn't want to trust anyone with any of her feelings and experience for fear of judgement, but she kept going with the course. Slowly she could see that what had happened wasn't her fault and that there wasn't any judgement, just understanding, empathy and support, she started to open up and understand her own feelings and take back what had been taken from her.

This had been a challenging time navigating through lockdowns and isolation, we supported her with weekly drop in calls to keep the support going and try to lessen the isolation that had been a part of her abusive relationship. As the completion of the programme got closer Leah has able to openly see her self confidence improve, recently this has helped her record two interviews one of which was for the Channel 4 news and was aired earlier this year, she wanted to speak out able the police handling of her attack and how it had affected her and that the process was not a pleasant experience for her and the fact that she had to relive it over and over again, that she wasn't able to have her one phone back for years and there process need fixing so that victims do feel like the perpetrator or an annoyance to the police. She now encourages others to speak up and speak out and get support from caring experienced professionals.

## Family First



Family First was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support core running costs.

The grant enabled Family First to continue their work with families supporting their mental health and well-being and improving their self esteem in order to better manage family life. They received referrals from 60 families during the duration of the grant. They have seen an improvement in family relationships, better engagement with schooling and families feel more supported and able to manage day to day life. The work provided by Family First is long term and can last for up to a year. Parents set goals around areas such as: loneliness and isolation, low self esteem and confidence, mental health and well-being or parents/children and Family First work with them to achieve these goals.

Family First asked for feedback before and after they worked with families to see the improvement due to the support they offer. Out of the 60 families they worked with in the year those who have completed their work and evaluations showed an average 9 point increase in overall well-being (scale 0-35) and an average 4 point increase in self esteem (scale of 0-30). For families still open to Family First who have completed a review they have so far seen an average increase of 6 points in self esteem and 10 points in overall well-being. Family First know that feeling better about yourself and having higher self esteem has a direct impact on your ability to parent and manage family life and therefore leads to an overall improvement in the quality of life for everyone in the family. They also see improved relationships within extended networks - relationships with family members, schools etc.

### Case study

Grandma was primary carer for her teenage grandson as agreed with social care (mum had had several children removed). She had very low self-esteem and struggled to get out or engage well with others - this was partly due to problems with neighbours. Grandson has issues with school including poor attendance. This made it harder for grandma as she often had him at home. Grandma had a son who was in prison and was very worried grandson would end up the same way). We matched grandma with a more mature volunteer who she was able to relate to well. We worked well alongside the professional workers involved and the volunteer attended some meetings to support grandma. Goals were set around improving Grandma's self confidence, getting her/them out of the house and getting child back into school. Family also wanted to move to a new area to be closer to family where they would feel more supported. Through regular visits and building a relationship the volunteer supported Grandma in her understanding of the importance of meeting her own needs as well supporting her family. She encouraged her out of the property both alone and to engage the young person in activities such as Lego club at the library. She supported with housing applications and worked with school and other professionals. Our work came to an end when family were successfully moved to the area they had hoped for. At the end of our time Grandma's overall well-being had improved by 32% and her self-esteem score had risen from a low of 14 (low self-esteem) to 19 (normal range). Our volunteer went to the handover meeting in the new town to ensure that families views and needs were recognised by new people who would be involved and correct support would be put in place.

## Green Light Trust

Green Light Trust (GLT) was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support the Women's Woodland Well-being programme.

The grant enabled Green Light Trust to deliver 3 x 6 week woodland courses to vulnerable women who were struggling with their mental health and life progression; primarily due to a history of abuse or offending. 2 trained and experienced members of GLT staff ran woodland sessions, one day per week for each course, immersing women in well-being, confidence and skills-building activities in a supportive and safe woodland space. Participant Engagement Coordinators (PECs) also supported the women through recruitment to 'next steps' stage, with some women progressing to be able to attend mixed gender courses with GLT. Individual personal outcomes and feedback from the women participants was overwhelmingly positive. Specifically they welcomed the opportunity to be in a safe space in the woodland with other women and to feel part of a close-knit group. They enjoyed the immersive activities and the well-being and self-care activities, and participants valued the support they received from the professional volunteer counsellor.

### Case study

S. "I have found the programme very helpful; I am able to say no now, and I am learning to love myself. Being with positive people has helped me to feel positive. When I first arrived, I was very nervous, and I did not find it easy to start to talk in the group. The facilitators helped with this, and I began to see that good relationships were possible for me to have. The presence of a counsellor on the course has helped me to feel safe."

J. I was referred by my work coach at the Job centre, I needed to overcome extreme loneliness. I was nervous at first, the support I got from other members of the group and the facilitators was what I needed. We had a situation that was common for us all, at the same time there was respect for our differences too. The whole thing has helped my general loneliness, my mental health has improved, and I am looking at my next steps. This has been just the thing I needed to help me move on.



## Home-Start in Suffolk

Home-Start in Suffolk was awarded a grant of £898.00 to support a virtual peri-natal support group and 'Time to Talk'.

The grant enabled Home-Start in Suffolk to work with 18 families across the year. The sessions were run in 6 week blocks and gave the mothers the chance to meet with people in the same situation, which was particularly important during covid lockdowns when they were unable to attend groups face to face.

The group enabled mothers to explore their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, work on coping strategies to assist them as they negotiated new experiences and deal with future life events. This boosted their confidence and allowed them to engage positively and play an active part in their family life and work towards integrating into the wider community. The mothers also benefited greatly from the support of their peers, with friendships forged having both immediate and longstanding impact. Similarly, the mothers have gained simply from understanding that they are not 'alone' and this reduction in feeling of isolation offered the ongoing improvement in mental health. Attendees have seen an improvement in socialisation skills for their babies and young children. The experienced group leaders have been able to pick up on parental concerns using links with professionals such as peri natal mental health workers and Health visitors. The group has been a stepping-stone for new mothers into pre-school groups and promoted their access to health and community facilities and helped families develop long term sustainable changes to their lives to prevent future escalation to statutory services as well as improving their family management, parenting skills and social mobility.

Of the families that attended the group, the majority had not been to any other groups with their child before, several of the mums were very concerned by how their baby/child would react to being with people they don't know and how they would behave; for many of them it was the first opportunity to mix with people who had children of a similar age. The group therefore gave them the opportunity to relax and realise they can socialise with other families. The mums commented that their babies were now happier to be played with by people outside of the family and more relaxed in the company of others. The mobile babies gradually grew in confidence as the sessions went on; those initially clingy, even after only a couple of sessions would go straight to other adults or children and interact with them; demonstrating what they wanted to do in an age appropriate manner. The first-time mums commented that being able to talk to other people that were going through things at a similar time was really useful and at every session at least one mum would ask the advice of the others on an issue related to their baby. They all commented that they hardly ever saw a health visitor and some were very unsure of where else they could seek advice.



## Case study

Caroline, a disabled student expecting her first baby, lived independently in an adapted bungalow; anxious how she could manage without family or friends support; community midwifery referred her to HSIS for practical and emotional support in the last few antenatal and early postnatal weeks.

Initial telephone contact allowed Caroline to establish a relationship with her matched volunteer, Marion; talking through worries and exploring ways to resolve issues. Support continued through weekly home visits after the birth of Ivy, helping Caroline to develop daily routines. The visits, gave her time to shower, talk through her week, prepare bottles, do the washing and prepare meals for herself. Caroline additionally attended the HSIS weekly virtual baby group, reducing her isolation and helping her recognise that all parents face challenges, becoming less embarrassed about the things she was struggling with and recognising the things that she was doing well. Caroline worked hard to establish routines and Ivy was happy, content and feeding well. Marion was able to help Caroline cope with bathing Ivy, something that she had been very nervous about doing alone. With the support of HSIS, Caroline was able to enjoy her experience of parenthood despite her disability challenges; learning to take Ivy out on her mobility scooter using a baby sling was important, giving Caroline the opportunity of getting out of the house, central in maintaining her own mental health and well-being.

When the virtual group evolved into a face to face meet up, Caroline was confident to participate, making peer friendships, even meeting up between sessions. She knows that without the groups she would have been isolated with Ivy at home, her mental health would have been affected, impacting on her relationship with Ivy and her ability to interact and care for her.

Caroline believes that she would have not been able to give Ivy such a positive growing environment without the support of her volunteer and the HSIS groups. In her own words, Caroline messaged HSIS after a home visit 'Thank you so much for everything. I had the best day ever with Marion, we got so much sorted'.

## Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk



Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support the Lakenheath Parents Group.

The grant enabled Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk to run their Lakenheath Family Group over an 8 week. A total of 28 families attended during this time - including 43 children. Each session ran for 90 minutes and included free play and carefully planned craft activities to promote development and interaction between adults and their children. The sessions provided an opportunity for parents to meet up with others, relax, have a chat and share any worries whilst also providing them with the opportunity to spend some quality time engaged with their child in a fun learning activity. Children had the opportunity to socialise with other children their age and enjoy age appropriate activities such as crafts to develop fine motor skills. Any parents that indicated that they would benefit from a higher level of support than that provided at the group would be referred into their home visiting support service. During the 8 week period one family required additional support and they were referred to home visiting for 1:1 bespoke support from one of Home-Start's coordinators.

Recent evaluation forms returned show that 90% of parents believe that attending the group has helped them feel less isolated and more involved in their local community. Parents have made connections and friendships with others and widened their social network - making them feel more supported by their community and giving them a greater sense of confidence and well-being. This has a knock on effect for the whole family as children can also make social connections and friendships too. Evaluation forms also indicate that parents feel their child is benefiting from the group and activities - helping them to gain skills necessary for nursery and school such as sharing/turn taking and sitting down to concentrate at story time. These simple school readiness skills stand the children in good stead and help to enable a smooth transition from home to nursery or school which has a positive impact on children's happiness and educational outcomes. Parents also report that they are more engaged with their children at home - using ideas from group to extend into activities that can be done together at home - something they would not have done previously.

### Case study

When E first came to group with B she had very low mood and was suffering with depression. She did not know anyone and was struggling with how to be a mother to her premature baby. E lacked confidence but always listened to our praise and advice. She soon became a more confident parent and we helped her to make friendships with the other parents with similar age babies.

B's behaviour regressed after lockdown and E did not know what to do. E's depression was creeping back in; she was scared she would end up losing B due to her mental health. Her own mother had regular mental health problems throughout her childhood which made her worry she would be the same. E had regular support conversations within group and via phone outside of groups; we referred her for the home visiting service to give her a more constant support with B's behaviour and her mental health.

E came back to groups when we re-opened indoors following a third lockdown and was so happy to be out as she was isolated, not having many friends or family around her.

E was nervous to come back to see how B would react around others and she was concerned the other parents would not talk to her as she had not kept in touch during the pandemic. I spoke to a parent and explained E was coming this week and would love a catch up, the other parent was happy to see her and they spent the morning chatting in a small group; it was lovely to see. B's behaviour was age appropriate, he played nicely alongside the other children and had a wonderful time.

E & B attended group every week and made a good circle of friends. E has now joined the committee for the other village playgroup and helps to run it each week.

E & B have really become part of the village and B has now started preschool with confidence, giving E time to build a little business supported by her friends in the village.

### Thank you

We are grateful to have received the £1000 grant from the women and Girls Fund to enable us to continue to offer our group in Lakenheath for a period of 8 weeks.

## Lighthouse Women's Aid



Lighthouse Women's Aid was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 towards essential updates to the Lighthouse Women's Aid website.

The grant enabled Lighthouse Women's Aid to redesign and update their website. This work was required as during covid lockdowns they had a rise of women coming forwards from around the county. They wanted to maximise the website to its full potential and so have used a website designer and also they wanted to ensure that those with learning difficulties could use it. They have made it a lot simpler to use for both those using their service and professionals who refer into it. Referrals are a key part of their work and it is now far easier to make a referral. The form is on the front page and can be easily completed and submitted. The information about what they offer is up to date and highlights any new services. The images now used give a clearer picture of what they offer. Previously beneficiaries struggled to find the relevant information, this is now clearer. There is also a translation tab for those who do not have English as their first language. There is also a clear Easy Read page which outlines the services provided with simple language and pictorially for those with learning difficulties.

## Ormiston Families



Ormiston Families were awarded a grant of £1,000.00 towards their YouCanBe project in Lowestoft.

The grant enabled Ormiston Families (OF) to work with 23 women through this service, providing weekly or fortnightly interventions as required by each service user. As a result of the support offered, 11 women have made sufficient progress against their goals and have improved their wellbeing to the point that support from OF is no longer required and their cases have been closed. 11 of the women worked with have reported significant improvements in their self-esteem as measured using the Rosenberg scale. The remaining women are still working towards this and their other personal goals. Many of the women worked with have never experienced a consistent, healthy, trusting relationship, and so have developed issues around trust. In addition to this, many of them have developed unhealthy coping mechanisms and negative behaviours to help them overcome the trauma of their past. The service benefits them by first modelling a positive, consistent, and trusting relationship. From there, OF can help the women to take charge of their own lives and wellbeing by supporting them to identify and then work towards goals that they set themselves. This ownership over their own growth and development greatly increases the women's self-esteem, helps them develop life-skills and builds their resilience, making them much more likely to go on to live healthier, more autonomous and fulfilling lives.

## Case study

Claire's childhood was full of fear and insecurity. She had witnessed and was a survivor of domestic abuse and had had to move multiple times, losing contact with family, friends, and familiar surroundings, leaving Claire feeling like she did not belong anywhere. On top of this, Claire's mother also struggled with mental health problems, meaning she had been unable to manage her children's feelings and behaviours, or to effectively teach them to cope with their emotions. Thus, Claire and her siblings found their own, often unhealthy ways, of dealing with their trauma.

Due to the unhealthy behaviours and relationship dynamics she had witnessed, Claire struggled to form healthy relationships with peers or romantic partners, and struggled with authority figures like school teachers and staff. She also felt unsafe and unhappy at home, particularly around her brother, who had begun to replicate abusive actions he had witnessed in childhood. After a referral at 19 by the supported housing unit where she lived, Claire engaged well with Ormiston Families, meeting her practitioner Mel on a fortnightly basis. Mel supported Claire to create a life-story timeline, enabling her to reflect upon and process the traumas she had experienced, which in turn enabled her to move forward. Mel did tailored relationship work with Claire, helping her to define and create healthy boundaries in her relationships. She was also supported to go onto the contraceptive pill.

Mel worked collaboratively with other agencies and supported Claire to access the Waves service at Suffolk Mind, following a Borderline Personality Disorder diagnosis, and to undertake some family work alongside her mum and brother through Restitute. Through the work with Restitute, the whole family dynamic has improved, and Claire's brother's and Mum's behaviours have positively changed. This has meant that Claire has a positive family network of support which was not previously there.

Claire is now attending college, where she has made and maintained healthy friendships. She is now much more confident, resilient, and able to deal with difficulties in an adult way. Claire's self-esteem has greatly improved because of all these changes to her sense of self.

## PHOEBE



PHOEBE was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support self-esteem workshops for girls.

The enabled P.H.O.E.B.E to develop their self-esteem workshops and reach more young girls in the schools. The project was centred around delivering weekly self-esteem workshops in local schools and at PHOEBE's centre for girls aged 5 to 19. The workshops were delivered by qualified workers and focused principally on engaging the girls in activities to help them understand what self-esteem and body confidence meant, the effects that advertisements and the media have on teenage girls in today's society and focused on the improvement of their personal self-esteem skills and body confidence. Each week they focused on a different topic, for example: Safe use of Social Media, Healthy relationships, Reframing Negative Talk and How Beauty is Defined. The workshops gave the girls a chance to express their feelings and emotions in a safe space surrounded by girls of a similar age and supportive leaders. Each workshop included different interactive activities involving drawing, group discussions/reflections, presentations, etc. During the

During the funding period they delivered self-esteem workshops at Northgate High Schools, Ranelagh Primary, Cedarwood Primary and St. Helens Primary, alongside a weekly session at their centre.

The overall development of this work has allowed PHOEBE to work towards reaching their main goal of reducing gender-based violence, and improve their mental health, and resilience.

### Case study

One young person began attending our sessions with an extremely negative view towards men and young boys. This in turn, resulted in negativity within other aspects of their life, for example a lack of support and kindness during school activities. Kindness towards others has been shown to boost our self-esteem, as it challenges the notion that we aren't valuable. When we try to look out for one another and do nice things for them, it allows us to see that you can provide joy, meaning, love, positivity and friendship to others.

We noticed this negative viewpoint through comments made, which highlighted a sense of competition, and dislike. This became particularly evident in workshops centred around supporting one another, such as 'Friendship'. Through delivering the workshops, we hope to challenge negative views to other people and rather develop a sense of support, encouragement and understanding to all their peers through the workshops.

Through the promotion of feminist principles, gender equality and empowerment we were able to see a decrease in the bias towards men. Providing education surrounding how we can support one another, and how we are all equal to one another, allowed the young person to re-consider their views and develop a sense of empathy among the young girl. The development of empathy included an understanding of both themselves and others around them.

As a result, educating the girls about topics concerning self-esteem allowed the young girl to develop their level of empathy and support to their fellow classmates and friends. The workshop allowed them to learn how to accept others for who they are, to think about how we can help and support others and develop a greater understanding of their own empathy and personality. This positive effect, in turn promoted the development of positive self-esteem.

### Re-engage



Re-engage was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support telephone befriending and tea parties for older people living alone in Suffolk.

The grant has improved the lives of 100 people aged 75 and over living in Suffolk. Call companions is Re-engage's telephone befriending service through which isolated and lonely people over the age of 75 in Suffolk, have been kept connected with the outside world through weekly calls. Their social groups, most commonly monthly tea parties hosted in the homes of local volunteers, have brought vital intergenerational companionship to these older people. Sadly, face-to-face meetings of their tea party groups were suspended in March 2020. Whilst groups were closed, volunteers continued to support their guests through phone calls, cards, door-stop deliveries and outdoor visits (when allowed).



Re-engage received the following feedback from beneficiaries of their call companions and tea parties

- 88% of older people agreed they are treated with respect and as equals by Re-engage volunteers and staff
- 82% rated their services as good or excellent
- 85% felt Re-engage had had a positive impact on their lives.

As a result of joining Re-engage:

- 67% reported making friends with the volunteers
- 73% felt happier
- 75% felt less lonely.

These outcomes have been achieved despite a 44% increase nationally in those reporting feeling lonely often during the pandemic (ONS).

Feedback from the survey includes: 'I am extremely grateful to Re-engage for their intuitive understanding of what we as human beings need to give us more fulfilment in our lives and hopefully for us also to give fulfilment to others.' and 'It is good to have organisations like yours for single people like myself who as they advance in years find themselves somewhat forgotten and isolated.'

Re-engage's volunteers frequently tell of the positive impact volunteering has on their own lives as well as the older people:

- 58% report feeling happier as a result of volunteering
- 77% report making friends with older guests
- 76% report being more aware of the issues facing older people and having a greater understanding of loneliness and social isolation.



## Case study

Sylvia, who is 82, was matched with her call companion Nicola, who is 25, in January this year and from the minute they first spoke, they got on like a house on fire. Sylvia's husband died six years ago and today she has a rescue German Shepherd and a rescue cat for company. She and Nicola speak for an hour every week and have become very close since they were first matched. Sylvia and Nicola talk about their weekly chats that opened the door to a lasting friendship.

Sylvia: "Nicola and I just hit it off. She's such a lovely girl."

Sylvia says "When Re-engage told me that they were going to match me up with someone with similar interests, I thought they'd have quite a challenge on their hands. I have so many different interests it would be hard to know where to start. But Nicola and I just hit it off. She's such a lovely girl. She's forthright, just like me, and we really enjoy each other's company."

Sylvia ran a fish shop with her husband for 48 years before going on to run a local slimming club for five years.

"We're both trying to lose weight and so we have our own little weigh in every week. Last week she beat me by half a pound! We like to support each other. If the other call companions are anything like Nicola, then I'd recommend Re-engage to anyone. I've been lucky during lockdown because I have marvellous neighbours who keep an eye out for me, but my calls with Nicola have given me something to look forward to every week."

Nicola: "It's such a good feeling hearing the excitement in someone's voice and knowing they're happy to hear from you."

"I thought about those who were isolated and alone throughout the pandemic and how difficult it must be to be cut off from all social contact. I like to think that, if I were in the same situation, someone would be there for me."

## Suffolk Libraries



Suffolk Libraries was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support Me, Myself and Baby in the Waveney area.

This funding was used to complete one Mums Matter course and counselling sessions for 15 parents, delivered by Suffolk Mind. The funds also helped to provide library staff with Perinatal Mental Health Awareness training, delivered by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. This training enabled staff to support, signpost and facilitate Stay and Play groups for parents. It has also given them more confidence to interact with parents and have conversations around parenting, which can often be difficult. This funding provided resources, for preschool sessions, to 5 libraries across the Waveney area. With this they were able to provide a further two Stay & Play groups in this area (Lowestoft and Kessingland Libraries), along with the groups at Beccles and Bungay Library.

In the 'Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool' a total score of less than 3 indicates the lowest chance of loneliness. Registered members of MMB had an average total of 2.4, showing they are within the least lonely group. An average score of more than 1 indicates meeting needs well in the Emotional Needs Audit. Registered members of MMB had an average score of 1.76, showing they are meeting their needs very well. Post Mum's Matter course questionnaires show a reduction of anxiety with 100% of respondents being classed as 'unlikely to be anxious' by the GAD-9 measure. The PHQ-9 measure also showed 75% of respondents would be classed as having 'mild to no

depression' post attendance. 100% of respondents would be classed as having good availability of social support by the SPS. The NPS showed 75%. Meaning 75% of people would recommend the Mums Matter course to a friend, family member or colleague.

Post counselling questionnaires showed that counsellors provided a safe and trusting environment and felt their counsellor listened to them effectively. Of those who responded, 67% feel any changes that have occurred because of counselling have been positive and welcomed. 67% agree their counsellor helped them with the issues that originally led them to counselling.

The Stay and Play sessions have a Net Promoter Score of 91%, meaning 91% of attendees would recommend the sessions to a friend or family member. As a result of the sessions, 88% of respondents agree that they feel calmer and in control, 86% of respondents agree that they feel more capable and respected, and 93% of respondents agree that they feel more connected.

### Feedback from beneficiaries

Below is some feedback from different elements of the MMB project.

#### Stay and Play:

- I love that I can bring my 9-month-old and three-year-old to the same session and they both love it. They love the songs and it's such a nice session - we look forward to it every week!
- Lovely, inclusive environment.
- Very good for mums and little ones.
- Such a lovely, local, free group to attend with friends.

This video shows how our Stay & Play groups help connect parents and improve wellbeing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AzOKCRodiY>

#### Mums Matter:

- It has been a very helpful and encouraging course, it has made me feel understood and supported. The breathing exercises were great and have been useful when facing stressful/anxiety-inducing moments in everyday life.
- Good overall if you have not had counselling before. More depth would have been useful for people that are already familiar with some of the techniques.
- Thank you very much for a great course!

#### Counselling:

- Flashbacks have dramatically reduced. Been able to talk about experience to others rather than avoiding
- It was really helpful while it was happening.
- I am much more aware of triggers and have some new methods to hope when I feel I overwhelmed.

Case Study: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdUEWJE2Ap4>

## Suffolk Rape Crisis

Suffolk Rape Crisis (SRC) was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 towards delivering counselling sessions to victims of abuse.

The Women and girls fund has contributed to the running of SRC's counselling service, which has supported 405 survivors through 2524 counselling sessions during 21-22. They also received a total of 241 new referrals for counselling. Their dedicated team of volunteers have also continued to call women on waiting lists for support calls, with a total of 1236 calls made during the year.

SRC have provided support for women and girls aged 14 and above who have experienced any form of sexual violence. This includes rape, sexual abuse, childhood sexual abuse, prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, child sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, so-called honour-based violence, forced marriage and incest. The support offered is needs-led and tailored to support individual survivors. 25 free sessions of specialist counselling are offered to survivors, delivered by counsellors who have trained to work within the VAWG sector. Counselling has been available to women and girls across Suffolk, delivered from SRC's centres in Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds, and remotely via telephone and their secure online platform.

The specialist, trauma informed counselling supports survivors of sexual abuse and rape to process what they have experienced and the often long term affects of sexual violence in a safe environment. For some survivors, they may use their counselling to discuss how sexual violence has directly impacted them, or perhaps what is going on for them at that point in their life; survivors are empowered to access the support for whatever they feel best. Counselling offers a non-judgemental space for survivors, and helps improve a number of outcomes, including mental health and well-being, confidence, family and day to day life.

Monitoring and evaluation of the counselling service demonstrated:

- 90% of women and girls felt more in control of their lives
- 100% better understood what had happened and how it had affected them
- 89% valued being in a women-only environment
- 100% felt the support was sensitive to their needs and situation

### Case study

N lives in Bury St Edmunds and was referred into SRC counselling services by a psychologist. N had previously accessed counselling but now required specialist therapy to process the trauma of sexual violence. N had experienced sexual abuse and exploitation from a young age and domestic violence in adulthood, causing PTSD symptoms such as flashbacks and panic attacks which required careful therapeutic intervention to avoid re-traumatisation. N started face-to-face counselling in April 2021, they were offered 25 sessions and their counsellor worked in a needs-led way, following N's own pace and decisions about what to bring to counselling and how to work together towards her personal goals. N has mobility issues and SRC were able to offer a downstairs room with disabled access at our Bury St Edmunds centre, N attended every planned session. N's counselling completed in November 2021. N reported feeling stronger as a result of accessing counselling at SRC

## Thank you

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the Women & Girls fund for their continued support of SRC, allowing us to carry out our vital work supporting survivors in Suffolk.

## The Seagull Lowestoft CIC



The Seagull Lowestoft CIC was awarded a grant of £1,000.00 to support the Girls' Confidence and Well-being group at the Seagull Theatre.

The grant enabled The Seagull Lowestoft CIC to provide 8 sets of the Girls Group course - providing support to 48 vulnerable young people. Each course lasted 6 weeks and provided weekly positive activities and support for the girls in the group.

100% of the participants reported improved well-being, a stronger sense of self and a growth in confidence. The young peoples families/ care givers reported that their young person exhibited greater confidence and that their underlying issues with anxiety and / or school phobia / underachievement had improved.

The girls involved in the group formed new friendships and gained important conflict resolution skills. In many cases they were better able to manage their own well-being and learnt self care skills.

A significant proportion of the young people were signposted for further support with issues such as substance misuse, eating disorders, domestic violence and in one case sexual abuse. Each of these young people had not accessed such support prior to attending the group. The relationships they built within the group allowed them to more openly discuss their challenges and receive appropriate support.

## Case study

Lucy (not real name) came to the third group we ran and was initially dropped off by a social worker each week. Lucy was very withdrawn to begin with and did not want to say much in the group talking sessions. However she really enjoyed the activities and showed a real artistic flair. Over the course of the sessions Lucy began to feel more comfortable and began to talk more about her challenges and about the domestic violence she experienced in her home. Details of some of this were passed on to appropriate authorities for action. Lucy grew in confidence over the course and asked if she could attend a second course. Instead we asked Lucy to act as a volunteer on the second course and Lucy helped to organise and support the groups. This allowed Lucy to have further contact with the group leaders and receive more support whilst also benefitting the other participants. Lucy continued to be involved for over 6 months in which time she was supported to apply for a college place and begin her course. Her home situation was managed by other agencies - but also improved in this time.