



## **Case study: Diversification of funding**

### **Interview with WomenCentre – Calderdale and Kirklees**

2009

#### **Summary**

WomenCentre (Calderdale and Kirklees) is a good example of a women's organisation that has successfully diversified its income streams over the past 13 years. This case study outlines the centre's present situation and how it has got to where it is today. It then sets out their keys to success, some of the challenges they have faced and learnt from, and their future plans.

#### **About WomenCentre**

WomenCentre – Calderdale and Kirklees provide a variety of specialist services for women and children from their two centres in Halifax and Huddersfield and through outreach support services. Their services include learning and skills, emotional and practical support on issues such as debt, benefits, mental or physical health, domestic violence, women offender services and counselling.

They currently own their building in Halifax. They have a good mix of income sources which include 15-18 different contracts and grants, for example contracts with the Probation Service and Ministry of Justice and grants from various trusts and foundations. They also earn some income from renting out space at the centre and doing specialist consultancy work around women's issues.

Finances have been tight since a large core grant ran out in 2007; although the centre has a good mix of income sources they have struggled to replace this funding completely. However, they are always alert and ready to seize new opportunities and remain positive about the future.

They currently have:

- 51 paid staff across 2 sites – Calderdale and Kirklees

- 70 volunteers
- 10 active board Members
- Approx 100 Members

### **History of how they got to where they are today**

Originally known as Calderdale Well Woman Centre, the centre was set up in 1985 by a group of local women who came together to discuss what local women needed. Very quickly one of their main focuses became women's health issues.

Their first £15,000 core grant came from the local health authority which paid for a part time project worker to address local women's health issues. The project worker, together with dedicated volunteers, built up a comprehensive health and social care service for women including a resource library which was drawn on by a variety of professionals. In 1996 their core funding was increased, which enabled them to employ an additional part time centre manager.,

In 1996, Clare Hyde joined the centre as Centre Manager and she identified the need to diversify the work they were doing and their income sources. Clare started investing time in networking and building relations with relevant stakeholders. At the same time, the community safety partnership (a partnership between probation services, police, and local authority) set up a Domestic Violence Support Project. They seconded a probation officer, Angela Everson, to lead and develop both the project and a new multi agency domestic violence forum.

In 1999, they brought the domestic violence project into the Calderdale Women's Centre which created even stronger links with the probation services and with the police. This enabled a partnership approach to develop a multi agency response to domestic violence, including piloting the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences.

### **2001-2002**

By 2001 they started to diversify their areas of work more significantly into learning and skills and developed high quality accredited training for volunteers. They were also awarded a quality assurance mark by the legal services commission for their general advice and case work with women.

It was at this point that they started to put more focus on developing the capacity of the organisation internally. They overhauled their administrative systems, took on new management approaches and developed a better understanding of the external environment.

In 2002 the Department of Health (DoH) consulted with women's organisations before publishing its Women's Mental Health – Into the Mainstream guidance. Calderdale Women's Centre was flagged up within this report as a case study of good practice of providing holistic, women centred provision. In this way the organisation was beginning to build relationships with policy makers at a national level.

Clare Hyde was watching government related activity and in 2002 she saw the opportunity for accessing Healthy Living Centre money. They decided to take a risk and ploughed a lot of energy into writing the Healthy Living Centre bid to New Opportunities Fund (NOF).

They were successful with the bid and were able to buy and refurbish the 4 storey ex-council building they are in today. They were also able to pay for some key members of staff for 3 years, CEO, Deputy Director post and Team Managers. This enabled them to put in place good management structures, which fed into the structure they have in place today, with more formalised recruitment, appraisal, disciplinary and financial processes and procedures.

### **2003-2004**

They managed to use the NOF money to get match funding from the European URBAN funding for a project around leaning and employment for women. At this time the organisation placed importance upon the Deputy Directors (two part time posts) and CEO having a presence on all the relevant forums and strategic boards, so they could build relationships with a wide range of statutory partners. One example of this is the relationship built with the Chief Superintendent of Police who became an important local champion for their Domestic Violence (DV) work.

### **2006**

They were approached by Huddersfield women's organisation, Womenspace, which was struggling to keep its services open. In 2007 the two organisations joined together in a challenging but successful merger. This enabled women services to continue to run in the Kirklees area and improved chances of success in local commissioning activity.

### **2007-present**

In 2007 the NOF funding ended and as a result there was a lot of emphasis internally on diversifying their different income streams. They got a lot of advice on different trading ideas, and decided to focus on renting out space in the building and doing consultancy work for statutory agencies around women's issues.

*'Where we can earn money off the back of something else is always the bottom line.'* – Clare Jones (Joint Chief Executive)

In 2007 WomenCentre were successful with securing significant grant funding to demonstrate their Women Offender Project, Evolve. This has since been continued through the Ministry of Justice Women's One Stop Shop Grants and through a Probation contract.

## **Successes and the Keys to these Successes**

### **1. Securing the community safety partnership and DV forum being brought within the centre**

- Built up a strong relationship and level of trust with the probation services and police over the years
- Had a key champion within the probation service (the probation officer who was seconded to the centre) who understood the value of what they were doing and supported them
- Leadership of the organisation was strong and so was their vision
- Staff within the organisation had worked in the public sector and on multi agency partnerships in the past and had a core understanding of how things worked. This gave their statutory partners confidence and also helped them know how to make people listen
- Understanding the public sector and multi agency partnerships meant that they didn't let things slip and were very proactive in lobbying the relevant statutory bodies:
  - They pulled together professional meetings between for example social services, criminal justice partnership, legal services and probation service and forced them to listen to what was going on, on the ground.
  - They built up local evidence and case studies of women's lives and used these to lobby and challenge the relevant bodies

### **2. Developing the organisation into a high quality, well organised and effective women's centre, which has been used as an example of best practice by DoH and Ministry of Justice**

- Investing early on in the management structure
- Investing in a capital asset when the opportunity arose which gave them a certain amount of security
- A committed senior management team with different skills and approaches
- Two Deputy Directors who job share – this works well as they bring different perspectives, styles, strengths and experience which compliment each other

- Encouraging a wide variety of complementary management skills, styles and approaches
- Consistency of staff and their passion and commitment
- Staff give over and above what is expected
- Investing a lot in training, particularly around management and leadership
- Taking a solutions-focussed approach to the challenges faced
- Recruitment of a highly skilled finance manager who had experience working in bigger organisations and was ruthless with their finances
- Always looking outwards towards the beneficiaries
- Investing in Quality Marks
- Commitment to quality and listening e.g. always follow up on complaints

### **3. Diversifying their income streams to include grants, contracts and earned income**

- Always have feelers out for funding – most funding comes from the development of relationships with funders.
- Committed leadership – the CEO and two deputy directors are very focused on looking for, and ready to grasp, new opportunities
- Prepared to be flexible and balance strategic planning with opportunities as they arise e.g. optimising window of opportunity with NOF funding and taking a risk to invest time and resources into securing a valuable asset – their building
- An active board:
  - They are strategic and willing to be innovative.
  - They meet once per month
  - The Chair and CEO meet every six weeks separately from board meetings
  - There is a very good relationship between the Chair and the CEO
  - The board is divided into active subgroups
  - They have invested heavily in structures and ways of working and are always looking at ways to improve
  - The board keeps the organisation driven by its values
  - They are very much on board with the organisation and each service makes a presentation to them once a year
- Experienced managers with inside experience of statutory organisations helped with influencing
- Invested time to identify champions within statutory bodies
- Are confident to speak as equals on relevant strategic boards
- Prepared to work tirelessly against mainstream opinions

- Using strategic partnership structures to build individual relationships with key champions.
- Never get to a comfy place – always looking forward to what needs to be done

### **Challenges faced and lessons learnt**

- The premises they took over from the local authority should have been managed by specialists – at one point they lost money employing an unsatisfactory building firm.
- Relationships with people – If you have built up a relationship with one person, it can be lost when they move on. However if you build good relations, if they move on they can continue to be your champion
- Monitoring is project specific which can make reporting systems complicated and time consuming. They know that they need to try to streamline it as much as possible and are intending to integrate monitoring into their IT system
- Each team runs differently with its own systems and specialisms, so contracts which run across different teams can be difficult to manage. They therefore need to manage the tension between managers being specialists in their field and the need for them to be more generalist. It is an ongoing challenge to manage this balance in a way that is healthy for all
- Much management is crisis management. They can't afford to let other things get in the way and they are used to not getting exactly what they want.

*'We need to be pragmatic about what we can get – we try not to be precious about things'* Clare Jones (Joint Chief Executive)

- Although they have worked a lot with some specific statutory agencies, they can still do more to publicise themselves amongst other statutory agencies
- Merging with another organisation can be fraught with difficulties:
  - It is a big job that takes a lot of time, effort and good will
  - It is important to have mutual respect for both organisations
  - It is important to learn from each others strengths and weaknesses
  - It is important to have a compelling reasons for the merger

### **Future Plans**

- Continually looking out for new opportunities for funding
- Getting timing right in relationship with funders, so as not to miss out on funding opportunities.
- Investing in some new areas:

- Research partners to build evidence of need and impact
- Developing systems internally e.g. remote IT systems, personnel
- Investing more in their consultancy service
- Do whatever is needed to adapt to the changing environment –
  - May need to re-model services
  - May have to take on specialist services more regularly
- Develop relationships with other women's centres e.g. they have started building relations with Wakefield and Blackburn Women's Centre's
- Relationship building with stakeholders around women's health and meeting the needs of women in the criminal justice system
- Looking at partnerships cautiously, but with an open mind, each time they are requested
- Need to focus on consolidation for the moment - not so interested in growth in its own right but not closed to growth that is helpful, appropriate and supportive to the women they serve
- Championing women-only services and gender specific services

### **Eight actions that can be drawn from this case study to help you diversify your income**

1. Invest time and resources in your strategic planning. Once you are clear about what you want to achieve and how you are going to do it you will be in a better position to know what funding you should be securing or generating and from what sources
2. Develop good relationships with your potential funders. Whether they are grant funders, statutory or individual try to engage them in different ways
3. Invest time in finding out about and attending the most relevant strategic boards and forums
4. Invest time in identifying and developing champions within the relevant bodies. Any inside knowledge about how things work within certain bodies is also very valuable
5. Invest in the internal development of your organisation, including management structures, policies and procedures and quality marks
6. Invest in your financial systems and management and use strict financial controls
7. Invest time in getting your trustees on board and preferably driving diversification forward
8. Keep an active eye out for opportunities and be ready to jump at them when they arise

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