

Newsletter

Issue No 23

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Patron: Joan Bakewell

£21,000 BOOST FOR FREEDOM PROGRAMME

Stockport Women's Centre's Freedom Programme has made a difference to the lives of many local women and their children by helping them to reappraise their lives and move on from a domestic abuse situation.

Now this vital work has been guaranteed until March 2010, thanks to a grant of £21,114 from the Stockport Strategic Parenting group. (More details on page 2). The award of this money recognises the Centre's expertise and professionalism in delivering this life-changing programme.

This expertise has been reflected in the Centre being approached to assist with a research study into domestic abuse by the University of Lancaster. Women from the Freedom Programme at the Centre have assisted with the study.

Changes

Over the past few months we have seen a number of changes. Pat Megram (Counselling and Psychotherapy Manager) and Sandra Evers (Volunteer and Activities Co-ordinator) have recently left the Centre's staff. (More details on page 3).

However, we are pleased to say that both posts have now been filled. Marina Skourteli and Amanda Dewson have replaced Pat and Sandra and both of them are already well known to many of our clients and volunteers.

Our counselling and psychotherapy services continue to be in demand, as do our holistic therapies. We also have a wide range of activities starting this month, with some new initiatives such as bibliotherapy and singing for health.

Stockport Women's Centre AGM 2009

This year's AGM will be held at Walthew House
on Monday, November 9th at 12.30pm.

Everybody welcome.



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Registered Charity No 1119969

Donations help fund our work

“Donations continue to be an important source of income and we have recently started a counselling and holistic therapies donations project, whereby women are asked to donate £0.50p when attending any of the sessions,” writes Stockport Women’s Centre Chair, Barbara Swann.

“It is anonymised and is **not** compulsory and we are pleased with the donations that we receive. Since June we have received £145 and we thank those women who have contributed. The bell-jar in the waiting room has also netted us £354.50.

“Finally the wedding guests of one of our supporters were asked to donate to the Centre rather than bring wedding gifts and this has so far raised over £400. This is an amazingly generous gesture and we are both proud and humbled to receive it.”



Huge “Thank You” to Offerton Women’s Club

A fantastic donation of £826 has been received from Offerton Women’s Club, who made the Centre their charity for 2008/09.

They raised the cash through raffles, sales and a sponsored walk.

When Barbara Swann received the cheque she was able to tell club members that the money would be used towards funding for the Freedom Programme.

For their part they were delighted that the money would be used for such an important programme at the Centre.

Major funding and grants

In addition to the funding from SMBC main grants of £8,000, we have also received a recurrent grant from the Health Innovations Programme of £1,080. This grant continues to support the Life Club/Spectrum Programme, a 12-week programme to support health and well-being.

We have also recently been awarded a grant of £21,114 from the ‘Think Family’ grant via Stockport’s Strategic Parenting Partnership group. This grant is to enable us to deliver six Freedom Programme courses in 2009 and until March 2010.

This is an enormous support for Stockport Women’s Centre to continue to offer the Freedom Programme to women who are – or have been affected by – domestic abuse. We continue to receive an annual grant from the Big Lottery Fund for the counselling psychotherapy and holistic therapy programmes, but January 2010 will find us in the final year of this grant programme. The next 18 months is therefore going to be extremely busy as we will be continuing to seek other funding for our services.”

Change in role for Louise

The trustees of the Centre have paid tribute to Louise Foster, a fellow trustee and secretary for the charity, as she stepped down from her role earlier this year.

We are enormously grateful for all the work that Louise has carried out in her role as trustee, especially her work in developing the Drop-in service as well as modernising and updating the Crèche room and her tremendous work in updating all of our health and safety policies. It is not a goodbye though, since Louise will carry on her voluntary work for Stockport Women’s Centre and will continue to play a leading role in developing the Drop-in service. Thank you, Louise.

Fond farewell to two familiar faces



Pat Megram, our Counselling and Psychotherapy Service Manager, is leaving her post in September.

One of the founders of our charity, she has given a huge amount of time and effort to developing the Centre and will be greatly missed.

Pat is moving on now to develop her private practice but, fortunately, will continue with us as a psychotherapist. Everyone involved at the Centre would like to thank Pat and wish her well in the future.

We are very pleased to announce that Marina Skourteli is Pat's replacement as Counselling and Psychotherapy Service Manager.

Sandra Evers, our Volunteer and Activities Co-ordinator, has also left us, having been lured by the opportunity of a permanent job at City College Manchester.

Sandra had been at the Centre for four years where she had played a major role in developing many of the activities at Stockport Women's Centre.

She will also be much missed and we all wish her well in her new employment.



Amanda takes over co-ordinating role



Amanda Dewson has now been appointed as Sandra Evers' replacement as Volunteer and Activities Manager.

A qualified social worker, Amanda first became involved with the Centre around three years ago when she undertook her final social work placement from the Manchester Metropolitan University.

Her activities at the Centre have included working with the Freedom Programme and Personal Development groups, the allotment project and parenting classes.

Amanda has worked predominantly with individuals living with mental health issues and learning difficulties in both day-care and residential settings. Her last role was at the Stockport Well Being Centre where she co-ordinated and developed a team of volunteers, providing supervision and delivering training workshops.

During this employment, and throughout her training, Amanda has developed problem-solving and leadership skills which she will bring to her new post.

Changes, Challenges and Congratulations

Heather Politi, one of our counsellors, has now gone on maternity leave. Congratulations are due to Karole Thomas, counsellor, who has gained her MA in counselling.

Niamh Buckley has completed a CBT accredited course and Cath Fitchett has gained a position at the Roby Centre in Manchester counselling French speaking refugees and asylum seekers, though she will continue as a volunteer at the Centre.

Sadly, we have lost Gill Adey, Sarah Lekhi and Sophie O'Donnell but we are grateful for all the work they have done at Stockport Women's Centre and wish them well in the future.

Our existing teams of complementary therapists, counsellors and psychotherapists continue to deliver excellent services which are in constant demand.

Centre pilots new assessment process



As part of our Big Lottery Reaching Out to Communities Grant Project, our Counselling and Psychotherapy Service continues to be extremely busy, with 104 referrals received since April.

We have been piloting a new assessment process with the help of Pat Megram and Cathy MacKay, so that we can comply with the requirements of the NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) guidance.

Having agreed a way forward, the counsellors and psychotherapists are undergoing training so that our clients can receive the most appropriate help, whether it is bibliotherapy, counselling or accessing any other of the services offered at the Centre.

New placements

Finally, our most exciting news is that we will be participating in the second wave of the IAPT Project being rolled out in the NHS through Stockport NHS (PCT). This involves us providing two placements for low intensity workers studying the one year course at John Moores University, Liverpool.

These students will be starting their placement at the Centre in September/October and we will be updating on this project in our next newsletter.



Enthusiastic response to Community Art Project

A rich vein of artistic talent has been uncovered at the Centre, with groups of women working with two established local community artists to produce some stunning work.

The project started in March. Morning sessions took place with Charlotte Brown, where the women produced wonderful collages of many of Stockport's heritage buildings.

The afternoon group, working with Adrienne Brown, produced exotic silk paintings.

"I thoroughly enjoyed working with the women at the Women's Centre on our silk painting project," said

Adrienne. "The enthusiasm and joy they expressed as they discovered the beauty and challenges of painting on silk was very real.

"The brilliant colours of the dyes flowing across the silk captivated everyone and created a working atmosphere of intense concentration.

"In the short time we worked together the women quickly became confident in many silk painting techniques and used them to best advantage in the work they produced."

The art work, which was commissioned by Community Health Stockport, will now be displayed in the town centre building called the Choices Centre which is the new centre of excellence for Contraceptive and Sexual Health Services.

Happy Feet, Happy You...

Many of the women who use Stockport Women's Centre take advantage of the holistic therapies on offer and find them extremely beneficial to their health and well-being. In this edition of the newsletter, practitioner Kamey MacNamara explains the benefits of Reflexology.

“Reflexology is a Complementary Therapy that has been practised for a long, long time. It can be done on the feet or hands, but is mainly done on the feet.

“Each foot has over 7,000 nerve endings and reflex points relating to all the different parts of the body. Simple and gentle pressure is applied to the reflex points by massaging them, which stimulate the connecting areas of your body.

The benefits of reflexology include:

- release of tension and stress
- easing aches and pains, such as headaches or arthritis
- to help the body balance itself
- relaxation
- improved circulation
- elimination of toxins
- improving the blood supply and nerve functioning throughout the body
- improving general health and well-being

“The sessions are done in a very relaxed atmosphere at the Women’s Centre and women are entitled to four sessions. Voluntary donations can be given after the sessions to help support the Centre.”

Anyone with any questions or who would like some advice about Reflexology, please contact Stockport Women's Centre on 0161 355 4455.

There will be details of other therapies in future editions of the Newsletter.

Centre's volunteers shine

Members of Stockport Women's Centre's team of volunteers were invited to a reception at Edgeley Park in June, hosted by Stockport CVS, to mark volunteers' week 2009.

Pictured above (left to right) are: Michele Sorrell, Ann Pearce, Ella Clarke and Shirley Hody.



New research into domestic abuse

Stockport Women's Centre recently participated in an important new research study into domestic violence, organised by the University of Central Lancashire.

Run by Jemma Hill, an MSc student in Psychology at the University, the study examined decision-making in domestic violence situations and its consequences on women's health, specifically in terms of mental well-being.

Twelve women from the Centre's Freedom Programme took part in the study which involved completing some questionnaires, a computer task and an interview.

"The research is aimed at getting a better understanding of the difficult decision process made by women; what is important to them when thinking about leaving or staying; and what barriers they face when making the decision," says Jemma.

Complex process

"Understanding what we know to be such a complex process is invaluable, specifically in terms of interventions. If we can find out what's important to women, where they think they need support the most, this can be fed into the appropriate community programmes to try and help other women facing similar situations."

Stockport Women's Centre is one of nine domestic violence support organisations across Lancashire and Manchester taking part. Jemma is currently analysing the results and writing up the study for completion in early October.



Read Yourself Well at Stockport Women's Centre

A new form of therapy – bibliotherapy – starts at Stockport Women's Centre this month. Read Yourself Well reading groups offer people the chance to read and explore literature.

The groups are part of the Self Health Services that Stockport Libraries provide in conjunction with Stockport Primary Care Trust.

Bibliotherapy has been shown to have some very positive effects including improving people's social skills and providing a form of relaxation. It also enables people to explore human experiences and reflect on the lives of others and this can be helpful in gaining understanding of their own issues.

In small and informal groups, we will read short stories, poems and extracts from novels and discuss them. This involves reading the pieces out loud, so the whole group shares the literature together. The group leader is happy to read out loud to the group, so there is no pressure for people to do so if they don't feel comfortable doing this.

Reading group members have no preparation beforehand as there is no background reading and all materials are provided. The experience of reading together stimulates conversation on how the texts relate to personal lives and how it makes the reader feel.

Read Yourself Well will be held every Monday from 1.00 – 2.30, starting September 21. Call the Centre on 0161 355 4455 for details.

Singing for health and happiness!

Did you know that singing is good for you in so many ways, including:



- Boosting your immune system
- Releasing tension and stress
- Improving your breathing
- Helping the memory
- Developing and strengthening your voice
- A creative outlet
- Improving confidence and self-esteem
- Lifting your mood
- Improving posture

Group singing will be starting at Stockport Women's Centre at the end of September on Thursdays from 1.00pm. Led by a qualified and experienced singing teacher, you will have the choice to learn:

- How to use and develop your voice
- Songs from around the world
- Singing with other people
- Harmony singing
- Breathing Techniques
- Expressing yourself through singing

No singing experience or knowledge of music is needed to join in with the singing sessions, just enthusiasm and willingness to sing. The sessions will be lots of fun in a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere at the Women's Centre. You will have the opportunity to find and use your voice, meet new people, develop your singing skills and sing lots of songs.

Contact the Centre on 0161 355 4455 for details.

Part of an impressive organisation ...

Nikki Guy reflects on her first three months at the Centre

"In 2006/07 it had been an objective of the Trustees to employ the services of a Business manager and, in May 2009, I took up that position. I found myself part of an organisation that is not only well established but is highly respected within the local community.

"One of my priorities is to ensure that we have the funding to sustain the work of the centre once the Big Lottery Fund contract comes to an end in January 2011. I feel confident that this will be achieved, not only because the work that is carried out at the Centre is essential for Stockport women, but because of the dedication that is apparent from all involved with the Centre.

Commitment

"I have been amazed by the commitment of the Centre's supporters. From the volunteers whom, without their support, we would be unable to offer the range of high quality services that we do.....to a 'couple' who were getting married and asked their guests to donate money to the Centre instead of receiving wedding gifts.

"Over the past ten years the Centre has always responded to growing demands and I am looking forward to not only ensuring that we continue to meet the needs and demands on the current service, but also be part of the planning to extend the current services and develop new provision for Stockport women in the years ahead."

Stockport Women's Centre

Services and Activities

September – December 2009

Apart from all the activities detailed below, throughout the week the Centre offers a

Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

Appointments are available during the day and in the evenings.

Monday

- 9.30 – 12.30 Massage
- 1.00 – 3.15 Reflexology/Swedish massage/Aromatherapy
- 1.00 – 2.30 Bibliotherapy – Read Yourself Well (starts 21.9.09, 10 weeks)

Tuesday

- 10.00 – 12.00 Freedom Programme (starts 15.9.09, 12 weeks)
(For women who have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic abuse.)
- 10.00 – 1.00 Natural Healing
- 1.00 – 6.00 Reflexology/Swedish massage/Aromatherapy

Wednesday

- 10.00 – 12.00 Skills for Life (Literacy/Numeracy) starts 16.9.09
- 10.00 – 12.00 Drop In (starts 16.9.09)
- 10.00 – 12.00 Legal Advice Service (1st and 3rd Wednesdays, by appointment)
- 10.00 – 12.00 Art & Craft Group (Drop In) starts 16.9.09
- 10.00 – 12.00 Emotional Freedom Technique
- 10.00 – 12.00 Indian Head massage
- 10.00 – 12.00 Reiki
- 1.00 – 4.00 Natural Healing
- 1.00 – 3.00 Indian Head Massage
- 1.00 – 2.45 Spectrum Programme (2 x 6 weeks, starts 23.9.09 and 3.11.09)
- 1.30 – 3.00 Art Group (Drop-In) starts 16.9.09
- 6.30 – 8.30 Freedom Programme (starts 16.9.09, 12 weeks)

Thursday

- 1.00 – 2.30 Singing Therapy (starts 24.9.09, ongoing)
- 5.00 – 7.00 Reflexology

Friday

- 9.30 – 12.30 Massage
 - 12.00 – 2.00 Natural Healing/Reiki
 - 1.30 – 2.30 Visualisation and Relaxation (starts October 09)
 - 3.00 – 4.00 Visualisation and Relaxation (starts October 09)
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