

**The Women's Workshop,
Cardiff Training Centre Ltd**

“ A stepping stone on a long journey”

**Final evaluation study of the
Women Get Fit Project**

Report

Monica Keeble
8th April 2010

The Women's Workshop, Cardiff Training Centre Ltd

Report on the final evaluation study of the Women Get Fit Project

Contents	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 Background	3
1.2 Aims	4
1.3 Methods	4
2 FINDINGS	5
2.1 Activities provided by Women Get Fit project April 2009-March 2010	5
2.2 Volunteering courses & activities provided as part of the project	7
2.3 Analysis of participants in user group activities	8
2.4 Analysis of participants in activities provided directly by Women's Workshop	9
2.5 Numbers attending activities provided by the Women's Workshop	10
2.6 Views of the project by stakeholders	11
3 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION	23
3.1 Conclusions	23
3.2 Issues for consideration for future projects	26
Appendix 1: Mid term evaluation study	31
Appendix 2: Action taken on areas for improvement identified in the mid term evaluation study	50

The Women's Workshop, Cardiff Training Centre Ltd

Report on the final evaluation study of the Women Get Fit Project

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Women's Workshop is a voluntary sector, not for profit women's training organisation which has been working with disadvantaged women to provide high quality training and support services since 1984.

In 2007, the Women's Workshop was awarded a People and Places Grant from the Big Lottery for the Women Get Fit project. The aims of the Women Get Fit project are to:

- create a new open space within the building for various community groups and activities
- deliver skills training that improves women's confidence and their future training and employment opportunities
- provide advice and guidance from other statutory and voluntary sector agencies
- raise awareness within the community of the importance of mental well being and the effects of mental ill health
- increase the number of people taking part in volunteering opportunities

The Women's Workshop asked Monica Keeble, an independent housing and community consultant, to carry out a two stage evaluation of the project. The first stage comprised a mid term evaluation study which was carried out in February and March 2009. The report on the mid term evaluation is included as **Appendix 1**.

The final evaluation study was carried out between February and March 2010.

1.2 Aims of the final evaluation

The aims of the final evaluation were to:

- assess the degree to which all project outcomes were met
- document the lessons learned
- examine the changes that resulted from doing the project
- provide an evidence base for future funding applications

1.3 Methods

The evaluation was carried out using the following methods:

- information was gathered on activities and skills training provided by groups and by the Women's Workshop
- an analysis was carried out of service users' ethnicity, age range, disability and geographical location
- consultation was carried out with a total of 43 stakeholders in the project. This was done by:
 - face to face discussions with service users taking part in 4 Women's Workshop classes
 - telephone interviews with referral agency representatives, Board members and user group organisers. Participants were sent the questions in advance of their interview which was pre-arranged for a day and at a time to suit them
 - face to face discussions with Women's Workshop tutors and staff who had been involved in the project

The following user groups took part in the evaluation:

- Mum's Matters
- Flying Start/Sure Start
- Bay Church

The following referral agencies took part in the evaluation:

- Genesis 2 Cymru
- Workers Educational Association
- Cardiff Women's Aid
- Hamadryad Centre (Community Mental Health Teams)

Table 2 below, shows numbers and types of stakeholder consulted during the evaluation.

Type of stakeholder	Number consulted	Method of consultation
Service users at IT class	7	Face to face
Service users at DIY class	7	Face to face
Service users at Health & Fitness class	6	Face to face
Service users at ESOL class	6	Face to face
Referral agency representatives	4	Telephone interview
User group organisers	3	Telephone interview
Women's Workshop tutors	5	Face to face
Women's Workshop Board members	2	Telephone interview
Women's Workshop staff	2	Face to face
Total:	42	

2 FINDINGS

Section 2 sets out the findings of the evaluation.

2.1 Activities provided by Women Get Fit project April 2009-March 2010

The Women Get Fit project currently provides 18 activities a week. Of these, 11 activities are provided by user groups and 7 activities are provided directly by the Women's Workshop.

The Workshop also provides a range of other activities in addition to those included in the Women Get Fit project.

Table 3 below, shows the regular activities provided by the Women Get Fit project, together with the times and days that they occur.

Organisation providing activity	Description of activity	Date activity started	Day and time of activity
Bay Church Friends Group	ESOL and craft activities group/creche	Jan '08	Tues 10-12
Mums Matters	Parent and toddler group with educational activities/creche	Sept '07	Fri 9.30-12.30
Sure Start/ Flying Start	Stay and play parent and toddler group (a.m.) Parent nurturing training programme (p.m.)/creche	Sept '07	Weds 9-4
Somali Integration Society	ESOL/creche	Oct '08	Mon and Weds 10-2.30
Workers Educational Association	ESOL Cookery IT	Sept '08	Tues and Thurs 10-12.30 Thurs 10-12 Mon 10-12
Nova Scarman Trust	Community engagement project/ creche	Jan 10	Mon 10-12
Women's Workshop	IT	May 07	Tues 10-12 Wed 12.30-2.30
Women's Workshop	Health & Fitness	May 07	Mon 10-12 Wed 10-12
Women's Workshop	DIY	May 07	Mon 12.30-2.30
Women's Workshop	ESOL	May 07	Thurs 10-12
Women's Workshop	Numeracy	May 07	Tues 12.30-2.30

2.2 Volunteering activities provided by the Women’s Workshop as part of the project

The Women Get Fit project has worked to raise levels of awareness of volunteering opportunities, and to encourage and provide opportunities for service users to volunteer, both within the Women’s Workshop and with external organisations.

2.2.1 Courses on volunteering

In addition to the regular weekly courses, the Workshop has provided 3 courses on volunteering during the course of the project. These were attended by a total of 24 ex learners and current learners.

Table 4 below shows the dates of courses and numbers attending.

Date of volunteering course	Number attending
14-16 July 2008	8
16-17 March 2009	8
29 January 2010	8
Total:	24

All those attending had identified mental health needs. Some examples of these include:

- 3 service users had been bereaved in tragic circumstances and were having difficulty adjusting
- 1 service user had suffered a long period of depression
- 1 service user was living in supported housing where she received ongoing support
- 1 service user had severely disabling anxiety
- 1 service user suffered from depression and was a recovering heroin addict

The courses have been popular with service users, the vast majority of whom have gone on to engage in a range of volunteering activities.

Table 5 below, shows the volunteering activities and numbers taking part as a result of the first 2 courses. Information on outcomes of the 3rd course is not yet available.

Volunteering activity	Numbers
Member of Workshop user group forum	3

Undertaking makeover of Workshop garden	3
Helping write articles and produce Workshop newsletter	3
Volunteering as IT classroom support for 2 workshop classes	1
Volunteering at the Christian Lightship in Cardiff Bay	1
Volunteering with Pedal Power, a Cardiff based charity aimed at increasing cycling	1
Volunteering at a local charity shop	1
Working towards becoming a volunteer with Women's Aid	1

2.2.2 Other volunteering activities

In addition to encouraging volunteering by past and current service users, the Workshop has supported, encouraged and advised a variety of volunteer-led user groups which have held regular sessions in the building as part of the project. These include supporting volunteer organisers from the following groups:

- Mum's Matters
- Bay Church
- Fitness for Somali Women
- Sakenah Tots

2.3 Analysis of participants in user group activities

Participants in the activities provided by user groups were asked to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form as part of the evaluation. A total of 22 forms were completed by participants in 3 groups.

Table 6 below, sets out the results of the monitoring

Ethnic origin	Numbers
White British	10
White Welsh	3
Other White Background	2
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2
Other Asian background	1
Libyan	1
Yemani	1
Other mixed background	1

Religion or Belief	
Christian	13
Muslim	4
None	2
Hindu	1
Age range	
16-24	1
25-34	10
35-45	8
46-60	1
60+	1
Disability	
No	23
Yes	–
Area lived in	
Grangetown	9
Butetown	7
Birchgrove	2
Heath	1
Penarth	1
Rhiwbina	1

Note: **Section 2.3** of the Mid Term Evaluation study included as **Appendix 1** contains additional equal opportunities monitoring of participants in user group activities in 2009.

2.4 Analysis of participants in activities provided directly by Women's Workshop

Table 7 below, sets out the results of equal opportunities monitoring of participants in activities run directly by the Women's Workshop during the course of the project.

Ethnic origin	Total
Asian or Asian British	61
Other	56
White British	33
Black/Black British	29
Other White Background	18

Not given	11
Mixed - White/Asian	7
Mixed - White/Black	6
Prefer not to say	4
Mixed – other	3
Chinese Tibetan	1
Chinese	1
Age range	
24-50	159
19-24	40
50+	23
16-18	5
Not given	3
Disability	
Yes	27

2.5 Numbers attending activities provided by the Women’s Workshop

Table 8 below, sets out the numbers of participants attending each activity run directly by the Women’s Workshop during the course of the project. It should be noted that these figures are incomplete. This is because figures for the final quarter of Year 3 are not yet available since the project does not complete until the end of March 2010.

Timescale	ESOL	IT	Health & Fitness	Maths	DIY	Total per year	Attendance - numbers & percentages
Year 1 <i>Sept 07 to Mar 08</i>	23	48	44		19	134	77 (57%)
Year 2 <i>Apr 08 to Mar 09</i>	32	64	119	24	22	239	157 (60%)
Year 3 <i>Apr 09 to Dec 09</i>	20	38	46	11	19	134	75 (55%)
Total	75	150	209	35	60	507	309 (57%)

2.6 Views of the project by stakeholders

This section sets out the views of the service users, tutors, referral organisations, user groups and Women's Workshop Board members and staff, who were asked how successful the project has been in achieving its aims.

2.6.1 Links with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies

Staff and Board members say they are particularly pleased with the numbers of other groups that have used the building during the course of the project. It is generally felt that the project has helped to develop strong and successful links with a large number of other statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

"Thanks to the project we have never been more integrated into organisations in the local community. We have become part of an array of provision, integrated into the overall strategies set by WAG, the Council and other local organisations" (Board member)

"Having other groups using the building added value for us. If we can't offer something ourselves, someone else can. It was the biggest change for us with this project. We will go on hosting the groups" (staff member)

Referral agencies and user groups say that the Workshop communicates well with their organisations and provides good verbal and written information.

"When I ring the Workshop, I always get the information I need". (referral agency)

"There's always notices and fliers for us to pick up. Women's Workshop staff pop into our sessions and tell us what else is going on in the building". (user group organiser)

"The Women's Workshop always communicate well. Their promotions and fliers are very good. They are informal, keen on partnership and forging working links." (referral agency)

"I had a meeting with a staff member. She took us through the programmes and gave us literature. Its very helpful, I use it a lot in the community with people I meet." (referral agency)

"We have a good relationship with staff. We both buy into each other's ethos". (referral agency)

Referral agencies are happy with the Workshop’s responsiveness to their requests and issues raised.

“They always phone back quickly if the right person isn’t there”.
(referral agency)

The WW are on top of things, they iron out any problems if they arise. For example we were going to do a photography course and at the last minute the tutor couldn’t do it. The workshop came up with another tutor”. (referral agency)

They always get in touch when they say they’re going to. They do what they say, you get whats on the tin” (referral agency)

Referral organisations are appreciative of the informal and friendly atmosphere and the fact that they are welcome to accompany women to activities to build their confidence.

“They’re very accommodating, they always offer for me to bring a woman in for a visit and a chat before they decide on attending a course. They’re not scary, always friendly.” (referral agency)

“They’re fabulous. When I phone up enquiring about courses and spaces I always get a nice warm welcome.” (referral agency)

Group organisers and Workshop staff attend a regular user group forum which gives user groups the opportunity to raise any issues, and to receive information about other activities and courses.

Increasing skills

Throughout the project, individual evaluations were carried out with service users at the end of each course they attended. The majority of service users completed the evaluations. The percentages shown in **Table 9** below are based on the results of the completed evaluations.

Evaluation statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I learnt something new in the class	93%	7%		
The class was useful to me	92%	8%		
I enjoyed the class	95%	5%		
The class was what I expected	85%	14%		

All service users say they are pleased with the increase in their skills.

"I can now email my nephew in Australia. I've seen pictures of his baby...I never liked computers but now I really enjoy it" (IT service users)

"Self defence is really good. We practice at home on our husbands and brothers – they are amazed that they can't get out of the hold we use!" (Health & Fitness service users)

"I have no trust in builders. If they see you're on your own their quotes are high. Now I can ask the right questions. (DIY service user)

Service users in all the classes say that they are pleased with the way they are being taught.

"The teacher is good at explaining.....she's not patronising....she gives me confidence...we work at our own pace". (service users)

Several service users say that they value the supportive atmosphere of the classes.

"The class feels very comfortable. There's no pressure. Its informal but we're learning....It's a very supportive group....It's friendly, warm and welcoming....Nobody here talks bad or criticises" (service users)

Increasing confidence

A number of user group organisers and referral agencies draw attention to the very low starting point in the confidence of some service users attending activities.

"I took ladies (to the Workshop) with no previous experience of getting involved in anything outside the home. It raised their self esteem, reduced their isolation, improved their health and mental health" (referral agency)

"We are happy with the programme as our service users are still doing the course. Its very important to start off in a place which is supportive and encourages them to want to continue" (referral agency)

"Success can be in the simplest things, like finding out what buses to catch to get to classes" (referral agency)

"The benefit has been to get women with chaotic lifestyles into a routine, learning timekeeping, basic life skills" (referral agency)

All referral agencies, user group organisers and tutors say that their service users have increased in confidence by attending the Women Get Fit activities and classes.

“The increase in confidence is the biggest thing. The change in some of the women is incredible. Our initial contact with them, where we sit with them in their home seems a million miles away. Now they have the confidence to get out by themselves, catch buses.” (referral agency)

“Increasing confidence is a big thing. Some have never been on a bus on their own before. We take them out, explain how to get tickets. They have confidence to go out on their own now”. (user group)

“It’s (increasing confidence) the biggest benefit of all. Once they’ve been here and feel safe, they are able to go on to other things. Its always the first time that’s scary. Sometimes a woman might come with their support worker to start with until they’re ready to come alone” (tutor)

Service users confirm this:

“I couldn’t get on a bus before...now I’m more confident” (service user)

“I was stuck in my flat, I suffer from anxiety and depression. Taking part with a group of people has really helped my confidence” (service user)

“I had anxiety in a group of people. Now I’m more confident” (service user)

The importance of a women-only venue

All service users agree that it is important for them that the venue is women-only and say that they feel more confident because of this. Many Muslim service users say that they feel more comfortable in a women-only environment and would not attend if it were a mixed venue.

“I wouldn’t go to the gym if men were there. I wouldn’t feel comfortable” (service user)

“It being women-only makes you more at ease. There’s no need to cover up. It builds your confidence.” (service user)

One service user says that a women only venue is a big advantage for women who have experienced previous abusive relationships with men.

“Having all women is good, its important. You feel safer” (service user)

User group organisers and tutors agree:

“A lot of Muslim mums come. They feel secure in a women-only building” (user group organiser)

Helping to overcome isolation

For many service users, attending the Women’s Workshop is the first time they have attended an activity outside their house.

“I was stuck in my house for years. It has given me a life coming here. It’s changed my life” (service user)

“It takes you out of the house if you have nowhere else to go” (service user)

“Its different from being at home. It makes you feel active. You have conversations” (service user)

Service users said that they enjoy being part of their groups, and many said that they have made new friends as a result of attending.

“I enjoy being in a nice group. We all get on....I’ve made friends...We chat about our problems....I look forward to coming. I don’t know where I’d be without the course” (service users).

User group organisers, referral agencies and tutors agree:

“We know the women meet outside the group. They go for coffee in each other’s houses. They go to other mother and toddler groups together” (user group organiser)

“The group has led to women making some really good lasting friendships and meeting up outside the group” (user group organiser)

“(our service users) are often isolated with no families around, so it’s a good way to make friends, see that other things are available in the community. We signpost women to other facilities” (user group organiser)

“In the majority of cases people are really isolated with nothing going on in their lives. Every time they attend a WW course they are in a totally different learning environment. Its all about supporting each other. They can sit down together and have lunch, mix socially. It’s a massive part of their overall journey” (referral agency)

“Women and children attending the Workshop get a real sense of community, it’s very important when you have just come into an alien country and have to start again” (referral agency)

“We always do a ‘getting to know you’ session at the first one. People realise that they have the same problems. A lot have been behind closed doors for many years, completely isolated. Now they realise its time they integrated they all bond together. It carries on outside the sessions” (tutor)

Promoting social cohesion

All service users agree that coming to the activities has increased their understanding of different cultures.

“It’s a good thing meeting people from different cultures. We learn to listen to each other” (service user)

“We meet and respect everybody’s different cultures...get more understanding” (service user)

“Everyone is very accepting. We live in a multicultural community but coming here strengthens that acceptance” (service user)

“We discuss and respect different things, are tolerant of difference” (service user)

User group organisers agree that activities help to promote social cohesion, and give some examples of this.

“We cook each other’s national dishes, bring in photos of where we come from, talk about our cultures and home countries” (user group organiser)

“We are a mixed bunch – Welsh, Danish, Somali, Asian, Pakistani, USA, South American – we all share stories of each other’s lives” (user group organiser)

“The different nationalities in the group have a huge impact on women, and children and on the staff too. We learn to understand and respect other people’s cultures. We try different types of food, talk about differences in dress and habits, try on saris, learn basic words of each other’s language” (user group organiser)

Referral organisations and tutors agree:

“There’s a big mix of cultures. There’s the opportunity to meet up and to mix over lunch. If they’re using the creche, they have a common interest” (referral organisation)

“We have fundamental Muslims and radical lesbians all getting on and supporting each other.... A mix of cultures, religions and sexuality works really well....they understand they have the same issues” (tutor)

Raising awareness of the importance of mental wellbeing and the effects of mental health

Service users are very clear that attending the activities have both raised their awareness of the importance of their mental wellbeing and helped those with mental health problems.

“I haven’t had a spell of mental illness since I came on the course. I can’t believe the change in me” (service user)

“I feel better in my life doing more things” (service user)

“It gives a structure to my week. Gets me out” (service user)

“Activity makes you feel physically and emotionally better. It stops depression, is something to look forward to.” (service user)

“We learn the importance of healthy eating. Exercise makes us feel good. Getting out, meeting friends makes us less isolated” (service user)

“I have seen an improvement mentally...in everyday coping with things” (service user)

Referral agencies and user groups agree:

“Women often do nothing day after day except wait in to talk to their support worker. Activities get them out, they see the benefits of being physically active even if its just a walk from the house to the building they notice they feel much better and more positive. One lady gets to the workshop really early now so that she can be first in the gym”. (referral agency)

“We’ve had a few women with mental health issues. It takes a while to encourage people to come, and some need support. We have a lady who comes regularly with a support worker. We’ll offer to go and call for someone and walk with them to the group if they need it.” (user group organiser)

“Women learn the need for them to look after their own well being, the importance of being in a good place themselves has an impact on their parenting, how they relate to their children, give them self esteem”. (user group organiser)

Helping towards future volunteering and training opportunities

Service users say that attending activities at the Women's Workshop makes them want to become more active in their communities.

"Coming here makes you want to do more" (service user)

Referral agencies and user groups say that they work with service users to look at other training and volunteering opportunities once their courses are completed.

"One of our ladies is on another programme at the Workshop. We look at other training and volunteering opportunities" (referral agency)

The 3 courses on volunteering which have been provided by the Workshop have been popular and well attended, and have led to service users taking part in a range of volunteering opportunities both within the Workshop and with external organisations.

Most user groups and referral agencies say that there is a cross over from their groups by women who join other activities at the workshop.

"Our women go on to do other things at the Women's Workshop....We've had women go on the IT course, the print course" (user group organisers)

"People I've introduced there have kept on going, it's a very positive thing...taking small steps and regularly engaging. They tend to move on and carry on doing things when the course ends. ." (referral agency)

"ESOL women are coming to other WEA courses outside the WW at other community venues" (referral agency)

Groups give examples of how they actively encourage and support service users to access further training.

"We talk about opportunities and raise awareness of what's here. This is especially important for women from other countries" (user group organiser)

"A lot of parents want to find work in childcare. We give them advice on NVQ's, help them fill in forms, get creche places, make phone calls" (user group organiser)

Section 2.2 of this report provides more detailed information about volunteering courses and activities taking place during the project.

Employment

The majority of referral agencies and user groups agree that getting into employment is often not appropriate or an immediate priority for service users.

“It often takes up to five years to get our users ready for the labour market. It’s not just about academic skills, its about taking the first steps” (referral agency)

“We are preparing women for work by laying foundations for a lot of women who have never been in the workforce before” (Board member)

“They’re not ready to go to work yet. We invite Careers Wales in sometimes. Its not the aim of this course though.” (tutor)

User groups and Women’s Workshop staff emphasis the low starting point for many service users and the barriers to accessing employment.

“The women we have tried to attract to this project are very far back from employment.” (staff member)

“We are a stepping stone on a long journey for women. Some have not been in any education in this country or since school.” (staff member)

“Our women don’t ask much about employment as their children are so young. Also some are only here for a limited time while their partners are in university or working here temporarily. Or their culture does not encourage them to work outside the home.” (user group organiser)

However one group gives examples of women who have obtained employment:

“One person has gone on to work in IT. Our previous group leader is now employed by the Women’s Workshop. One member who was volunteering with Home Start is now employed by them full time” (user group organiser)

2.6.2 Issues and problems

Participants in the evaluation identify the following issues and problems.

Restricted childcare

Participants from all stakeholders identify problems with lack of childcare provision for some activities.

Some user groups are able to provide creche facilities for their participants. However the unavailability of funding for provision of creche facilities has meant that the Women's Workshop is not able to provide childcare for most of the activities and classes.

"Cutbacks on childcare funding and increasing conditions attached to setting up childcare schemes make it more and more difficult to provide" (Board member)

Referral agencies, tutors and service users all say that they would like childcare available for classes.

"I need childcare as I can't come to some activities where there isn't any" (service user)

"Childcare is a huge issue. All the women ask for it, there would be much less drop out if it was provided." (tutor)

One referral agency agrees, saying that they are however, able to pay for their service users to use a local private nursery while they attend the classes.

"It would be good to provide childcare for all the courses. It hasn't stopped our women going as we can provide funds for childcare. But it would stop others not working with us" (referral agency)

Limited spaces on courses

Some referral agencies and user groups are concerned about the limited spaces available on courses, which can result in many women having to go on a waiting list.

"Courses are not frequent enough and there are limited spaces available. We find suitable people and get them geared up for training, but they have to wait for a course and they go off the boil. We don't want courses shortened though, and don't want bigger groups." (referral agency)

Tutors also highlight the problem of oversubscribed courses:

"Follow on courses are often full, so I sometimes feel guilty completing women's individual learning plans at the end of the course, as we know there aren't many places available here". (tutor)

Drop out rate

Tutors and Board members identify the drop out rate from classes and activities as frustrating. While it is acknowledged that drop outs are unsurprising and inevitable when seeking to engage with 'hard to reach'

service users, concern is expressed by some that this means that some spaces may be wasted in classes which have a waiting list.

“Attendance is not always great, but getting people to turn up is an achievement in itself when you have a chaotic life or complications at home. This achievement is often not recognised” (Board member)

“People taking part are hard to reach and have issues – mental health, childcare problems, go back to their home countries, are single mothers”. (tutor)

Lack of accreditation

Some tutors say that the lack of accreditation for Women Get Fit classes may act as a disincentive for some service users. However, it is acknowledged that the project aims to attract women taking a first step towards attending activities outside the home, and who may have had no experience of learning for many years. Once they have gained in confidence they can access accredited courses run at the Workshop.

“No accreditation is an issue but we are able to pass women on to other groups which run accredited courses. A mix of both is ideal.” (tutor)

Limited timescale for project and lack of continuity funding

Many participants in the evaluation say that they regret the limited timescale for funding of the project and the lack of availability of funding to enable it to continue. Service users are unhappy that the classes and activities that they value highly will not be able to continue at the end of the project period. Staff, referral agencies and tutors express regret that a successful and popular project is having to come to an end.

“It is frustrating that we get women through the door, get them engaged with us and their communities and then the project ends. We have 60 names for after Easter and no money to put activities on” (staff member)

2.6.3 Ideas for improvements or changes to future projects

Participants in the evaluation put forward the following ideas for improvements or changes to future projects.

Hold classes more frequently and provide more courses

Service users in all groups say that they would like their classes to be run more often, with extra sessions held each week.

Service users in most groups say that they would like additional courses in other subjects, for example higher levels of ESOL, and childcare level 2.

Provide a creche for all activities

Service users in all groups say that they would welcome a creche for their classes.

Tutors and referral agencies agree, saying that more childcare facilities would be welcomed, especially for pre-school age children.

Explore ways to reduce drop out

Tutors say that they would like to explore ways of reducing drop out by participants. Suggestions include making a small charge for activities and classes, and providing a certificate of attendance at the end of each course as an incentive.

More support and advice available during courses

Some service users say that they would like to have advisers available at the Women's Workshop to help participants who need help or support with things outside the classes. Suggestions include having advice available to:

- help women find jobs
- help with problems in their lives
- tell women about their rights
- advise women on benefits entitlement

One referral organisation would like to see more emphasis placed on accessing further education opportunities once the service users' courses at the Workshop are finished.

"There should be more emphasis on developing partnership working with organisations providing vocational training, eg with the Job Centre, Adult and Further Education, Remploy, the university"
(referral agency)

Some tutors also say that there should be more support available to women at the end of their course, to help them take the next step. They point to the need for a course to help women progress to more training:

"We need an inbetween course. It's a big jump to go from 2 hours a week to 5 days. (tutor)

Service user support network and forum

One referral agency suggests that the Women's Workshop sets up a network of existing service users who are able to support new users who are less confident, and encourage them to go out in their communities.

Extend opening hours

A user group say that they would welcome activities and courses in the evenings and at weekends, and that that would help with problems over childcare.

“It would be good to have evening and weekend courses too when family or friends might be more available to look after children so women can attend more easily” (user group)

A Board and staff member agree, saying that there have been some requests for weekend opening from groups.

Emergency first aider

Tutors say that it would be beneficial to have a trained emergency mental health first aider available, to help to deal with crisis situations. The project co-ordinator has been on a 4 day mental health first aid at work course.

Expand and upgrade facilities

A Board member says that she would like to see space the Workshop uses expanded and upgraded in the future as the present building restricts activities because of its age and design.

“Looking ahead, I would like more space and a more appropriate building for our needs.” (Board member)

3 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Conclusions

The outcomes of the final evaluation show that the Women Get Fit project has been very successful. This is evidenced by the findings of the consultation with all stakeholders, and the analysis of the information and statistics gathered during the project.

3.1.1 Aim 1: to create a new open space within the building for various community groups and activities

The building has been well and regularly used throughout the period of the project by local user groups. A wide range of activities and classes have been provided both directly by the Women’s Workshop and by user groups themselves. 309 women have taken part in the project so far. This far exceeds the original project target of 160, and does not include numbers for the final quarter of the project.

Both user groups and service users are very positive about the space and activities provided and the help and assistance available from Women's Workshop staff.

3.1.2 Aim 2: to deliver skills training that improves women's confidence and their future training and employment opportunities

All stakeholders taking part in the evaluation agree that the classes and activities produced by the project have had a major impact on improving women's confidence and self esteem, and therefore their future training and employment opportunities.

Many referral agencies, user groups, tutors and staff highlight the very low starting point of service users, many of whom have spent years in isolation, with no previous experience of involvement in any activities outside the home. The opportunity to attend classes and activities in a women-only environment, in classes which are supportive, non threatening and friendly, has been of huge benefit to the confidence of service users who go on to take part in many other activities both within the Workshop and in their communities.

3.1.3 Aim 3: to provide advice and guidance from other statutory and voluntary sector agencies

One of the major successes of the project has been the building of strong and positive links with other voluntary and statutory agencies in the area.

The project has contributed towards the aims and objectives of other agencies who are all very positive about their experiences of the project and its beneficial effects on their service users. There are good working relationships between referral agencies, user groups and Women's Workshop staff. The Workshop provides good information for outside organisations and for service users,

In addition, the project has contributed to Cardiff City Council's strategic objectives as set out in their community strategy "*Proud Capital Vision*", in particular to the Council's following key commitments:

- tackling economic inactivity through skill provision
- planning community education which will draw on the needs and aspirations of users
- supporting the work of voluntary and strategic equality bodies which promote the interests and rights of diverse groups and communities
- working in partnership to tackle obesity and improve the health and well being of people living in Cardiff

3.1.4 *Aim 4: to raise awareness within the community of the importance of mental well being and the effects of mental ill health*

The project has been successful in raising awareness of the importance of mental well being and the effects of mental ill health. Both service users, tutors and referral agencies give examples of how service users with mental ill health have benefited from attending classes and activities. Taking part in the project has increased service users' confidence, raised self esteem, reduced isolation, and raised awareness of the benefits to their mental well being of taking part in activities and physical exercise.

There are many examples of service users making lasting friendships and engaging together in activities outside the Workshop, supporting each other to attend events and groups within their communities.

3.1.5 *Aim 5: to increase the number of people taking part in volunteering opportunities.*

The 3 courses on volunteering were well attended by ex and current service users and have had very positive outcomes in increasing the numbers of people taking part in volunteering opportunities.

This is especially impressive since service users attending the activities and classes are acknowledged by all to be at a very low starting point. The Women Get Fit project has provided a first step for many women who have not previously taken part in any activity outside their home, and may have spent many years in isolation. Many also have other constraints on their time such as childcare commitments and cultural traditions and expectations

Attending the classes and activities gives service users the opportunity not only to increase their confidence and self esteem but also provides them with information on other activities taking place in their areas, and friends and contacts within the community. There is no doubt that the project has increased service users' involvement both in volunteering, and as active citizens within their communities.

3.2 Issues for consideration for future projects

Some lessons have been learnt from the Women Get Fit project which the Women's Workshop may wish to consider when planning future projects.

3.2.1 *Extend numbers and types of classes*

Service users are keen that classes should be provided more often, and that there are classes in more topics and at more levels. In particular, Health and Fitness, IT and DIY class service users say that they would welcome at least 3 sessions a week. Service users would also welcome higher levels of ESOL and Childcare courses.

Referral agencies and tutors express concern that there are often not enough places on courses, requiring women to go on a waiting list and perhaps lose motivation to attend.

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider:

- taking into account service users' feedback on preferences for frequency of classes and ranges of activities when planning future projects
- running the same courses in parallel, so that each course starts on a half termly cycle, to reduce waiting list times for classes

3.2.2 Extend creche facilities

Service users, tutors and referral agencies all highlight the need for creche facilities to accompany all classes so that no woman is prevented from attending because of childcare commitments.

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider:

- further exploring external funding opportunities for creche provision to accompany classes
- discussing with referral agencies and user groups whether there is scope for joint working and/or funding arrangements to develop and provide creche facilities for Women's Workshop activities
- exploring the possibility of running a creche as part of an accredited course on childcare, on which service users could work as volunteers to assist a qualified creche worker

3.2.3 Extend opening hours

Some groups would welcome the Workshop's facilities being open in the evenings at weekends. This is also an issue which was raised by service users and user groups taking part in the mid term evaluation study (see **Appendix 1, para 3.2.1**)

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider:

- making application for additional funding to enable the building to extend its opening hours

3.2.4 Provide additional support during and at end of courses

Several service users and tutors highlight the need for additional support for service users with problems during their courses, and at the end of courses to help service users plan their next steps.

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider making application for additional funding to employ a support and development worker to:

- work with Women's Workshop tutors to:
 - identify the practical, emotional and mental health support needs of service users
 - agree and develop joint working protocols for making sure that the needs of service users are met
- work with existing service users to:
 - provide advice and support with problems such as children, families, domestic abuse, schools etc.
 - provide emergency mental health first aid for any service users who need this during classes or activities (see **3.2.5 below**)
 - provide information to women about their rights
 - provide debt counselling and advice on benefits entitlement
 - signpost women to specialist organisations that can help
- work with service users who are completing their courses to:
 - plan their next steps
 - provide information about volunteering, training and employment opportunities
 - provide practice help and support with writing cvs, making phone calls, completing application forms etc.
- work with statutory and voluntary organisations providing vocational training to:
 - build links and develop partnership working
 - gather information on opportunities available for service users

3.2.5 Increase training in emergency mental health first aid

Tutors taking part in the evaluation say that they would like to have a trained emergency mental health first aider available, to help to deal with crisis situations which occasionally occur during classes and activities. To assist with this, a staff member has been on a 4 day mental health first aid at work course.

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider:

- providing additional training in emergency mental health first aid for the support and development worker (see **3.2.4**), tutors, and/or other staff members who would like to undertake this
- developing an 'on call' rota system to ensure that there is a mental health first aider available during all classes and activities, so that service users' needs can be addressed in an emergency

3.2.6 Encourage more attendance at the user forum by ex and current service users

Service users taking part in the evaluation express their ideas and views about courses and preferences for frequency and content. The Women's Workshop currently undertakes an evaluation with each service user at the end of each course. In addition, service users are invited to attend the service user forum which meets every term. However, few service users attend this.

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider:

- Encouraging more attendance at the user forum by ex and current service users by raising awareness of the purpose and role of the forum by talking about the forum during classes and activities and by providing service users with individual invitations to attend
- providing some added incentives to attend, for example a free lunch, a raffle and a creche
- combining the forum with an 'added value' event which gives people a chance to socialise afterwards, and take part in an activity to be decided by the group (some ideas might include taster sessions in salsa dancing, tai chi, indian head massage, jewellery making, children's clothes swap, etc.)
- by consultation at the forum, more clearly defining its role and remit with service users. For example, providing the opportunity for:

- service users to give feedback on existing courses
- service users to provide views and ideas for future activities
- the workshop to tell service users about new classes and plans for the future
- service users from different activities to meet and socialise
- longer standing service users to offer support to new service users
- service users from different activities to meet different tutors and find out about other classes
- outside guest speakers to visit to talk about volunteering, training and employment opportunities

3.2.7 Explore ways of securing core revenue funding to provide a sustainable and consistent service

Many stakeholders taking part in the evaluation express their frustration that the Women Get Fit project is having to end due to funding constraints, at a time when it is at the height of its popularity and success. This is seen as particularly disappointing by staff who have worked hard to be responsive to feedback on the project, changing and improving things as the project progressed, so that it is now fully fit for purpose. Service users are keen that the project continues. The Workshop have received some funding from the Welsh Assembly Government's Equality and Diversity Division towards continuing the project. However this is nowhere near enough to enable the project to be maintained in its present form.

Because of the nature of current funding regimes which generally focus on time limited projects, it is difficult for projects to become sustainable. This means that the experience and learning built up during the lifetime of the project can be lost when the funding term ends.

The Women's Workshop currently receives no core funding from any statutory body and is therefore totally reliant on obtaining funding through external organisations for temporary projects. Although in the present economic times it is obviously more difficult than ever for organisations to obtain core funding, the benefits of this would enable the Workshop to maintain a more sustainable and consistent programme of activities for its service users.

The Women's Workshop may wish to consider:

- approaching Voluntary Action Cardiff to discuss options for applying for core funding from relevant organisations
- approaching the Welsh Assembly Government Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Division to discuss further funding options through their

Advancing Equality and Inclusion Grants scheme, to enable the Women Get Fit project to continue in its present form

- approaching Cardiff City Council Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning & Skills to discuss funding options

APPENDIX 1

The Women's Workshop, Cardiff Training Centre Ltd

Report on the mid term evaluation study of the Women Get Fit Project

Contents	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	32
1.1 Background	32
1.2 Aims	33
1.3 Methods	33
2 FINDINGS	34
2.1 Current use of the building	34
2.2 Previous groups who have used the building	35
2.3 Participants in activities	35
2.4 Views of group organisers and participants	36
2.5 Communication and administration	40
2.6 Ideas for improvement	42
3 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION	45

The Women's Workshop, Cardiff Training Centre Ltd

Report on the mid term evaluation study of the Women Get Fit Project

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Women's Workshop is a voluntary sector, not for profit women's training organisation which has been working with disadvantaged women to provide high quality training and support services since 1984.

In 2007, the Women's Workshop was awarded a People and Places Grant from the Big Lottery for the Women Get Fit project. The aims of the Women Get Fit project are to:

- create a new open space within the building for various community groups and activities
- deliver skills training that improves women's confidence and their future training and employment opportunities
- provide advice and guidance from other statutory and voluntary sector agencies
- raise awareness within the community of the importance of mental well being and the effects of mental ill health
- increase the number of people taking part in volunteering opportunities

The Women's Workshop asked Monica Keeble and Caroline Humphreys, independent housing and community consultants, to carry out a two stage evaluation of the project. The first stage comprises a mid term evaluation which was carried out in February and March 2009. This will be followed by a summative evaluation which will be carried out in February and March 2010.

1.2 Aims of the mid term evaluation

The aims of the mid term evaluation were to:

- assess the degree to which the following project outcome was achieved:

The creation of a new space to house a variety of community groups and activities

- document the lessons learned
- provide recommendations for project development and improvement in the final year of the project

1.3 Methods

The evaluation was carried out using the following methods:

- information was gathered on activities and skills training provided by groups and organisations
- an analysis was carried out of participants' ethnicity, age range, disability and geographical location
- consultation took place with six stakeholder groups using the building to gather their views. Groups completed a short questionnaire. 5 groups completed the questionnaire and returned either by e mail or post, and 1 group completed the questionnaire through a telephone interview.
- consultation took place with participants in 5 of the stakeholder groups to gather their views. This was carried out by visiting each group and holding informal discussions using a short topic schedule. The 6th group was not visited as it was not meeting at the time of the evaluation.
- consultation took place with a member of the Women's Workshop staff to gather staff views

2 FINDINGS

Section 2 sets out the findings of the evaluation.

2.1 Current use of the building

The building is currently used weekly by five groups. A further group was meeting until January 2009 and has been included in the evaluation. This group hopes to restart in the next few months.

Table 1 sets out the groups using the building and the times and days that they attend. All groups meet in the term time only.

Name of group	Description of activities	Date started using space	Day and time group meets
Bay Church Friends Group	ESOL and craft activities group	Jan '08	Tues 10.00-12.00
Mums Matters	Parent and toddler group with educational activities	Sept '07	Fri 9.30-12.30
Sure Start/ Flying Start	Stay and play parent and toddler group (a.m.) Parent nurturing training programme (p.m.)	Sept '07	Weds 9.00-4.00
Somali Integration Society	ESOL	Oct '08	Mon and Weds 10.00-2.30
Workers Educational Association	ESOL Cookery	Sept '08	Tues and Thurs 10.00-12.30 Mon and Thurs 10.00-12.30

2.2 Previous groups who have used the building

Table 2 shows previous groups who have used the building, the dates they attended, and the reasons they no longer use the space.

Name of Group	Description of activities	Dates used space	Reason for no longer using building
Sakeenah Tots	Mother and toddler group	Jan '08 to Jan '09	Group temporarily disbanded
Grangetown/Butetown Toy Library	Toy Library	Sept '07 to March '08	Funding for project ran out
Fitness for Somali women	Fitness classes	Jan '08 to July '08	Group wanted an evening venue
Women's Arts Association	Arts class and creche	Jun '08- Sept '08	Project time limited to 16 weeks

Cardiff CC Equality	Focus group and creche	Jan '08	One off focus group
Fostering network Wales	ICT training for foster carers	May '07	One day training event

2.3 Participants in activities

Participants in current activities were asked to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form as part of the evaluation. A total of 41 forms were completed.

Table 3 sets out the results of the monitoring.

<u>Ethnic origin</u>	
Black/Black British/African	15
Other Black Background	1
White British	8
White Welsh	7
Other White Background	2
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2
Other Asian Background	1
Egyptian	1
Religion or Belief	
Muslim	22
Christian	15
Hindu	1
Baha'i	1
None	2
Age range	
16-24	1
25-34	19
35-45	9
46-60	8
60+	1
Disability	
Yes	3
No	32

Area lived in	
Butetown	14
Grangetown	11
Cardiff Bay	4
Pentwyn	3
Adamsdown	2
Splott	2
Ely	1
Heath	1
Roath	1
Tremorfa	1
Bridgend	1

2.4 Views of group organisers and participants

2.4.1 Reasons for choosing the Women's Workshop as a venue

Group organisers had the following reasons for choosing the Women's Workshop as a venue to meet:

- good location (3 groups)
- important for participants to have a women only venue (2 groups)
- enough space for activities (2 groups)
- use of kitchen and storage space (2 groups)
- work in partnership with Workshop (1 group)
- room offered free (1 group)

"We decided to go to the Women's Workshop because we can store toys and we can do our own refreshments so we have control. And there is a prayer room and it is women only, so that Muslim women feel safe" (group organiser)

3 groups said that they would not be able to relocate to another venue. Reasons given were:

- group needs to meet at a women only venue
- group needs the storage space made available to keep equipment and toys
- group is part of the New Life project at the Workshop

2 groups said they did not know whether they would be able to relocate if necessary. However one of these groups said that they felt their

participants would be put off attending if they had to meet in a mixed sex environment.

1 group said that they would be able to relocate.

2.4.2 Satisfaction with the venue

All group organisers and all participants taking part in the evaluation said that they were very satisfied with the space they used for their activities. The majority said that the things they liked best included:

Room and facilities

- room being light, warm and large enough for a variety of activities
- being able to have use of the kitchen
- having storage space for equipment and toys
- being able to use the garden in the summer

“There’s fruit, drinks, a w.c., all that we need” (participant)

“We are very satisfied. We have access to the outdoors, toilets, storage and eating room and kitchen. We have a whole room for storage, the best facilities of all our venues.” (group organiser)

Atmosphere

- atmosphere being friendly, relaxed, safe and comfortable

“Staff are friendly and make me welcome” (participant)

“Its friendly and welcoming” (group organiser)

Creche

- children being safe, well looked after and close by.

“The children are looked after well. It’s good that they are near” (participant)

“I am happy with the creche now that the TV has gone and they do more art work too” (participant)

“I like it that the children are close by” (participant)

Being a women-only environment

- group organisers, and participants in one group said that it was important for them that the venue was women-only.

“I very much like that it is all women here. I can take off my hijab. Muslim women feel free to uncover and to relax. (the Women’s Workshop staff) always tell you if a workman is coming”. (participant)

“It is very good for the local community that it is women-only” (participant)

“There is a lovely atmosphere and Muslims within the group feel safe as it is a women-only building”. (group organiser)

“We needed to have a women-only venue. Everyone was comfortable, that was the best part.” (group organiser)

Prayer room

- group organisers and participants in 1 group said that the prayer room is very important to them and they use it regularly.

“The prayer room is really good, and there is a place to wash.” (participant)

“We use the prayer room” (group organiser)

Activities

- Participants in 3 groups said that they enjoy the activities and the opportunity to mix with other people.

“I like coming to learn English”

“It’s good to be able to mix with other people, learn different subjects”

“It’s a nice and varied group, lots of different activities...we help each other learn new things...get friends”

Good location

- Group organisers and participants in 3 groups said that one of the reasons they like the venue is because it is easy for them to get to.

Garden

- group organisers and participants in 2 groups said that they like using the garden in the summer.

2.4.3 Problems with the space

Group organisers and participants identified the following problems with the space they use:

Entrance doors heavy

- Participants in 2 groups said that the front entrance door and the door through to the ground floor space were both very heavy to open, and that this was difficult to manage for women with buggies.

Creche too small

- Participants in 3 groups, said that the room used for the creche was too small for the numbers of children using it, and that the room was very hot and stuffy.

“The creche could be made bigger – there are a lot of children in the space. If it gets too hot they need to open the windows.” (participant)

Room temperature

- Participants in 1 group which used the top and first floor training rooms, said that the rooms were not warm enough for them.

“The space we learn in is very cold” (participants)

- Participants in 1 group using the ground floor space said that the room got too hot at times.

“It gets too hot in here sometimes, we need the windows open” (participant)

“We need bigger, or more opening windows for the summer” (participant)

Use of the kitchen

- A group organiser from 1 group said that it would be useful if the kitchen was bigger.

- A group organiser from 1 group said that there was occasionally a problem with her group using the kitchen if it was needed by other people to make lunch

Inadequate cooker

- Group organisers and participants from 2 groups said that the cooker did not work well and that this caused them problems. 1 group said that only half the cooker worked, the other said that it was very difficult to light.

Garden facilities

- A participant and a group organiser in 1 group said that the patio area leading to the garden was not safe for children and needed to be cleared.

White board

- Participants in one group which used the top floor training room said that the position of the white board reflected the light from the window, so that they were unable to see what was written on it.

No longer a rest room

- One group organiser said it was a pity that there was no longer a rest room, now that it was used for training.

Lift

- Participants in one group which met on the top floor said that sometimes the lift was not available for them to use, or was out of order.

Parking

- A group organiser in 1 group and a participant in another group said that parking was a problem in the area.

2.5 Communication and administration

2.5.1 Hire and use of the venue

Group organisers were asked how well the Women's Workshop communicated with them regarding the hire and use of the venue. All 6

group organisers said that they were very satisfied with the way the Women's Workshop communicated with them.

"Staff are friendly, lots of communication is face to face, but also through e mail and letters"

"We're very satisfied, its partnership working"

"There is good communication. If there are changes coming up, someone will personally come and tell us, which means things can be further clarified if needed."

2.5.2 Information provided about other activities

Participants and group organisers were asked how well the Women's Workshop kept them informed about other activities taking place in the building.

Participants in 4 of the groups said that they were not well informed, and would like more information about other activities.

Although a minority said that they sometimes looked at the leaflets in the entrance hall to the building, most said that they would like someone to come and tell them about other courses:

"We would like to get more information about other courses. We don't get enough. The best way would be for someone to come and talk to us"

"they need to put up a timetable of events, maybe have someone coming to tell us about new activities."

"If there is something new, we need more information"

Some participants in one group said they would like information by e mail.

5 group organisers said that participants are informed about other activities.

1 organiser said that her group was not informed well. She suggested that at the beginning of each course Women's Workshop should give the organiser a list of other courses and information on how participants can access the course and who is eligible to access them.

Another group organiser suggested that the Women's Workshop could take all participants' e mail addresses and send out a regular e briefing to communicate what is going on in the building

2.5.3 Take up of other activities by participants

Some participants in 5 of the 6 groups also attended other activities at the Women's Workshop. Classes mentioned included:

- keep fit
- ESOL
- gym
- IT
- CLAIT
- drama
- learn and play
- rubicon dance

Participants in 2 groups said that they would like to do other courses such as keep fit, gym, English and DIY, and but were not able to do this as no creche was available.

One participant said that it was difficult for her to attend and join in some activities as she does not speak English.

2.5.4 Publicising the Women's Workshop in the local community

3 group organisers said that the Women's Workshop effectively publicise the building and its activities within the local community, while 2 said they did not know.

1 group organiser and several participants, said that publicity could be improved, and that awareness of the building would be helped by carrying out leaflet drops and word of mouth.

Several participants agreed.

"Leaflets would be useful. I've lived round here for 3 years and didn't know about (the Women's Workshop). I just thought it was a big building, I didn't know what went on".

"Women's Workshop needs to be more publicised in the community"

2.6 Ideas for improvement

Group organisers and participants had the following suggestions for improvements:

2.6.1 Hours of opening

Group organisers and participants in 3 groups said that they would like to see the Women's Workshop extending the opening hours of the building so that more people can use the facilities.

“We would like to have the space available in the evenings and at weekends. Local community halls are booked up 6 months in advance”
(participant)

“This building has great potential and should be used on weekends and in the holidays” (group organiser)

“The building could be used after 5.00pm for physical activities for women, with a creche, eg yoga, gym, dance” (group organiser)

2.6.2 Garden

Participants and group organisers in 3 groups had the following suggestions for improvements to the garden:

- patio area leading the garden needs to be cleared and made safe for children
- garden gate needs screening to stop people looking in or throwing things into the garden
- patio furniture is needed for the garden, eg tables and chairs so we can eat outside
- needs to be stuff for children in the garden, eg slides
- the dip in the garden needs fiilling in so that children can use ride-on cars and play safely

2.6.3 Dining room

Participants in 1 group had the following suggestions for improvements to the dining room:

- adult chairs needed in the dining room
- more high chairs are needed – there are only 2 available and one group has 4 babies
- a lock or bolt needs to be fixed to the inside of the dining room door so that children can't run out while everyone is eating

2.6.4 Kitchen

Participants and group organisers in 2 groups said that a new cooker is needed.

1 group organiser said that it would be helpful for her group to be able to book times to use the kitchen to avoid clashing with others needing to use the space.

“Maybe we could book times so we don’t inconvenience other groups. This would also help us with our planning (of activities)”.

2.6.5 Creche

Participants in 2 groups said that they would like a creche to be available for all classes as they were currently unable to attend some classes where no creche was available.

“I would like to do other courses, eg exercises, DIY, but there needs to be a creche for me to be able to come”

“I want to go to English and gym, but there is no creche so I can’t go”

Participants and the group organiser in 1 group said that they would like to see a bigger creche, with more space and more places

2.6.6 Equipment

Participants and the group organisers identified the following equipment they think would be useful for their activities:

- more adult chairs for the large ground floor space, preferably fold up ones which are less bulky and heavy and easier to stack
- up to date webcams for computers
- speakers to be fitted to computers
- more toys suitable for very small children, for example baby walkers

2.6.7 Communication with groups and participants

The following suggestions were made for improving the way the Women’s Workshop communicates with groups and participants:

- a Women’s Workshop staff member paying regular visits to each group, to tell them about new activities and courses
- putting up a timetable of events in the hallway

- getting the email addresses of group organisers and participants who have access to this and sending out a regular e briefing to let people know what is going on in the building
- at the beginning of each course, providing group organisers with a list of other courses and information on how participants can access the course and who is eligible to access them

2.6.8 *Communication with the local community*

It was suggested that there should be more publicity given to the Women's Workshop resources in the local community.

The best way to achieve this was seen as through doing a door to door leaflet drop, and through providing information to other community groups by word of mouth.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Conclusions

The outcomes of the mid term evaluation highlight many strong areas of the service provided by the Women's Workshop. These include:

- the building being very well used in the term time by a wide range of groups which provide a variety of activities
- the location of the building, quality of the spaces and facilities provided, being highly valued by the groups
- many of the group organisers and participants valuing the Workshop as a women-only venue where Muslim women in particular feel safe and comfortable
- group organisers being very satisfied with how well the Women's Workshop communicates with them.

3.2 Issues for consideration

Some issues were identified during the course of the evaluation which the organisation may wish to consider when planning future project development and improvement. These are set out below.

3.2.1 *The venue being available only during office hours in the school term time*

At present, funding constraints mean that the venue is only available to groups during office hours. Many participants and group organisers taking part in the evaluation said that they would like the building to be open for events in the evenings, at weekends and in the school holidays, and that there is a shortage of suitable venues locally.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop consider carrying out a survey of statutory, voluntary, statutory and community groups, current groups and participants using the building, and the organisers of other community venues, to assess demand for out of hours and school holiday opening.

If the survey finds that there is sufficient interest, the evidence gathered could be used to make an application for additional funding to enable the building to extend its opening times

3.2.2 *Not enough information being provided for participants and group organisers about other activities taking place in the building*

The evaluation found that many participants in groups were also taking part in other activities in the building. However, a number of participants said that they would welcome more information about courses and activities, and several with limited English said that they would prefer information to be given verbally. Some group organisers also said that they would like more information on a regular basis that they could pass on to participants in their groups.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop carry out a review of the ways that information about activities taking place in the building is provided to groups and participants, to make sure that all participants have accessible and up to date information about opportunities available to them. Some methods that might be considered include:

- a member of staff visiting each group at the beginning of term to tell participants about courses and activities available
- a more prominent display of information and leaflets in the front entrance hall, provided in appropriate languages, and including the name of a Women's Workshop staff member to contact if people have queries or need more detailed information
- compiling a termly e briefing setting out activities and training and who to contact for further details, to send to all group organisers and to all participants with access to e mail

- improve the accessibility of the Women's Workshop Newsletter by providing it in other languages and on tape/cd

3.2.3 *The absence of a creche for some activities*

Several participants said that they were prevented from joining in some activities because a creche was not available. We understand that there are currently funding constraints which prevent the running of a full time creche.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop carry out a survey of all participants using the building to gather information on how many are prevented from attending other activities taking place because of lack of creche facilities.

If the survey finds that there is sufficient demand, the evidence gathered could be used to make an application for additional funding to extend the opening times of the creche so that it is available for all activities

3.2.4 *Improvements and more equipment needed in the garden*

Several group organisers and participants said that they would welcome improvements and more equipment in the garden. The patio area immediately outside the door to the garden is in particular need of clearing, rubbish removing, and generally making clean and safe.

The old sandpit in the garden which is currently partially covered also needs making safe, and we understand that work will be under way shortly to make it into a flowerbed.

Although there are some fixed benches in the garden, many participants said they would welcome picnic style benches, or patio tables and chairs which would enable them to meet and eat outside in the summer.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop consider making improvements to the garden, particularly regarding removing the rubbish from the patio area, and making the sandpit area safe. This could be done by enlisting the help of interested participants, and/or of British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), who we understand have previously helped with some of the landscaping.

We also suggest that some lightweight patio chairs and tables be purchased, to enable groups to have their lunch outside in the summer.

These could be removed and stored when not in use to provide more space for children's activities when necessary.

3.2.5 Gas cooker to kitchen not working properly

The kitchen cooker does not work properly, with only one oven working, and the other being very hard to light. We understand that an application has already been made for funding to replace the cooker.

We suggest that in view of the fact that the kitchen cooker is not working properly, for health and safety reasons the Women's Workshop arrange to have a gas safety check carried out on the cooker as soon as possible.

3.2.6 More equipment needed in the dining room and kitchen

The dining room at present only contains small children's chairs, with no seating available for adults. In addition there are only 2 high chairs, and one group has 4 babies which causes problems. There is no method of securely closing the dining room door, so that children are able to run out of the room during meal times.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop consider purchasing a set of stackable adult chairs for the dining area, and 2 further high chairs.

We suggest that a bolt is placed high on the door of the dining room so that children are not able to get out of the room during meals.

3.2.7 More equipment needed in other areas

Participants and group organisers identified the need for more equipment in other areas of the building.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop consider providing:

- stackable lightweight chairs for the large downstairs space
- more toys and babywalkers for very young children
- webcams and speakers for computers used for IT classes

3.1.8 Not enough publicity within the local community about the resources available and activities taking place

Currently, the Women's Workshop advertises its groups, training and activities in the Grangetown News, via a regular Newsletter, and on its website. However, some participants said that they would like to see events, and the Workshop in general, publicised more widely within the local community.

We suggest that the Women's Workshop consider reviewing how it advertises its events within the local community. Some additional ways of advertising might include:

- producing posters advertising activities and training opportunities, and asking for these to be displayed by local shops, libraries, health centres, schools, places of worship and community centres and projects
- producing information fliers and asking local community projects and centres, Communities First, the Council and local housing associations, to include these in their mail outs and magazines sent to users of their services
- circulating the e briefing suggested *in 3.1.2*, to all voluntary, statutory and community groups, Communities First, and community development officers of the Council and local housing associations

Monica Keeble and Caroline Humphreys
8.4.09

APPENDIX 2

Areas for improvement identified in the Mid term evaluation study and action taken

Areas for improvement identified in the Intermin Evaluation Report	Action taken
Venue being available only during office hours in the school term time	Bid submitted to Big Lottery in December 2009 to open the centre out of hours and to run programmes for school age girls during the holiday periods
Not enough information being provided for participants & group organisers about activities taking place in the building	<p>All group leaders are invited to the termly User Group Forum.</p> <p>A board has been created in the foyer of the studio space to display all current activities</p> <p>A quarterly newsletter is e mailed out to organisations and participants</p>
Absence of a creche for some activities	A bid has been submitted to allow some activities to be supported by a creche
Improvements and more equipment needed in the garden	Hamdryad Hospital volunteer group has been working on the garden
Gas cooker in the kitchen is not working properly	A new cooker has been purchased
More equipment is needed in the dining room and kitchen	High chairs have been purchased
More equipment is needed in other areas	<p>48 lightweight chairs have been purchased via a separate grant</p> <p>Additional toys have been purchased</p> <p>Webcams have been purchased</p>
Not enough publicity within the local community about resources and activities available	The newsletter is distributed in the Butetown and Grangetown area, and is e mailed out to organisations and participants