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women@thewell

**ANNUAL REVIEW &  
IMPACT REPORT**  
**2020/21**

# Message from the Chair

As we enter our fifteenth year, we continue to develop and expand services throughout the organisation, thanks to the dedicated work of our growing team of staff and volunteers.

Over the past year, under the extraordinary circumstances of a pandemic, our specialist team have worked incredibly hard to advocate on behalf of women entrapped in the sex trade. We have had to be flexible, developing our work carefully over the course of the year, in line with Government advice and guidance. Our vision and mission underpinned all service delivery adaptations. The safety and support of our service users, volunteers and staff lay at the heart of the decisions we have taken.

We have provided support to women who already faced a range of challenging situations, including homelessness, substance misuse, mental and physical health issues, poverty, experiences of both past and present sexual violence and severe trauma. This combination of abuse and disadvantage has left these women in an extremely vulnerable situation and it will therefore come as no surprise that adding a global pandemic into the mix has significantly increased the barriers to exiting prostitution. The extensive skill and expertise of our team ensured we were well equipped to provide support services in a trauma responsive way. We have not only met these needs wherever possible, but found that there have been other outcomes for the women we work with.

Our focus remains supporting women in order to help them find exit strategies from prostitution. We believe that viable options emerge when, through support and advocacy in a trauma informed environment, we are able to identify barriers, and open up solutions and alternatives away from the sex trade.

This year has seen a demographic shift in those in need of our support. We have noticed a trend across our service, with women who would not have typically experienced exposure to exploitation in the sex trade seeking support. We believe this is a direct consequence of loss of secure employment, and/ or housing. This new cohort of women shines a bright light of clarity on the direct link between disadvantage, poverty and entrapment in the sex trade.

Our mission is to work towards full abolition of the sex trade, lobbying and campaigning around legislation that protects women. Now more than ever we believe this is the only way to keep women safe and protected. Under an abolitionist legal framework, society recognises that women are not saleable objects and should have choices which come from a place of stability, not mere survival.

This year our international lobbying and campaigning work has continued to progress and strengthen, enhanced by digital technology, enabling us to attend and speak at conferences and meetings globally.

We have made great strides with what we are able to offer through our training and consultancy, ensuring a wide reach, working towards a greater understanding throughout society of challenges faced by amongst the most disadvantaged groups of women globally. Our commitment now and always is to give women entrapped in the sex trade a voice which is heard by all.

The board of trustees would like to express special thanks and appreciation to staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment over the past year. They enable women@thewell to make positive change both here in London and globally, with the aim to improve the lives of all women entrapped in the sex trade.

Dr Anna Rowlands

Chair of Trustees



# Our Vision & Mission

**Vision:** **women@thewell** envisions a society in which all women are empowered to achieve their full potential free from discrimination, abuse and neglect

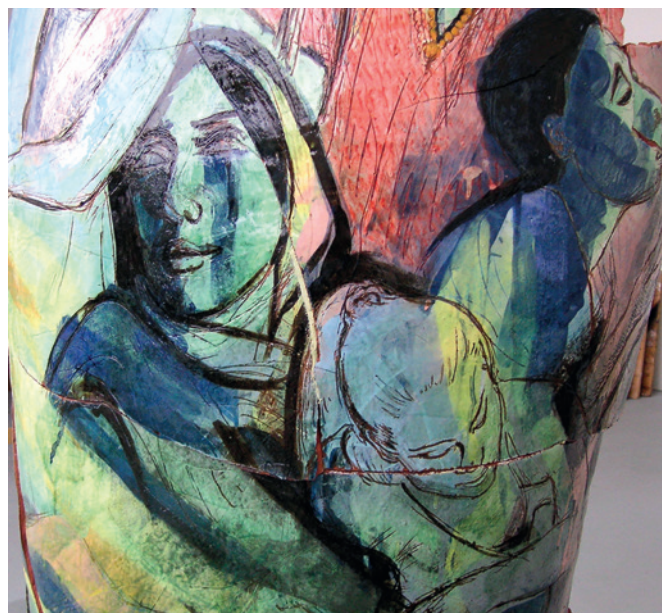
**Mission:** **women@thewell** is committed to working towards full abolition of the sex trade. Grounded in Catholic Social Teaching we seek to ensure that all women entrapped in the sex trade are given hope and are supported to see that an alternative future is possible. Through our evidence based exemplar model we provide women with comprehensive support to exit prostitution

In order to fulfil this **mission, women@thewell** aims to:

1. Provide pro-active supportive services to women involved in, or at risk of being involved in prostitution and other aspects of the sex trade
2. Provide a specialist, trauma responsive service in a creative and supportive environment
3. Work across all our services to enable women to develop sustainable exit strategies from involvement in prostitution, and the cycles of abuse that are associated with the sex trade
4. Support agencies to improve and develop their practice, with a view to improving the services and support available to women who are seeking exit prostitution
5. Work at a local, national and international level, to abolish the systems of prostitution and the sex trade, ending the sexual exploitation of women and actively promote the establishment of effective exiting services

The **values** of **women@thewell** are based on Catholic social thought and teaching, they include commitment to:

- Being a place where women, exploited by their involvement in prostitution can find hope
- Promoting the right of women to feel secure and safe in their lives and be protected from violence, abuse and oppression
- Acknowledging the unique worth of every woman and the promotion of her equal right to opportunity, inclusion, respect and dignity



# Aim 1:

## Reaching out to women

Provide pro-active support services to women involved in or at risk of being involved in, prostitution and other aspects of the sex trade

### What we said we would do:

Work across 4 London Boroughs, supporting around 70 women over the year.

### What we did:

We extended our outreach support, working across London Boroughs of Camden, Haringey, Hackney, Islington and Westminster.

**The team had 208 street contacts with 131 women providing ongoing support to 35 women. Completing over 112 shifts throughout the year.**



**2**

women were supported in relation to sexual assault



**14**

women were supported through our Medaille Partnership  
<https://www.medaille-trust.org.uk/>



**6**

women were supported to register with a GP



**20**

women were supported into safe accommodation

**5**

women were supported in relation to their experiences of being trafficked into the sex trade

# Aim 2:

## A holistic response

Provide a specialist trauma responsive service, in a creative and supportive environment

### What we said we would do:

Provide support to 140 women over the year via our daily drop in service and advocacy and support service.

### What we did:

208 women were supported over the course of the year with 81 women supported face to face or remotely by our advocacy and support team. We were unable to run our daily drop in for most of the year.



124

women were supported in relation to their involvement in the criminal justice system



165

women were supported with their mental health needs



145

women were supported with need associated with substance misuse issues



114

women were supported with financial and benefit issues



143

women were supported with accommodation needs

# Aim 3:

## Develop sustainable exit strategies

Work across all our services to enable women to develop sustainable exit strategies from involvement in prostitution, and the cycles of abuse that are associated with the sex trade

### What we said we would do:

Work with around 20 women providing specialist support.

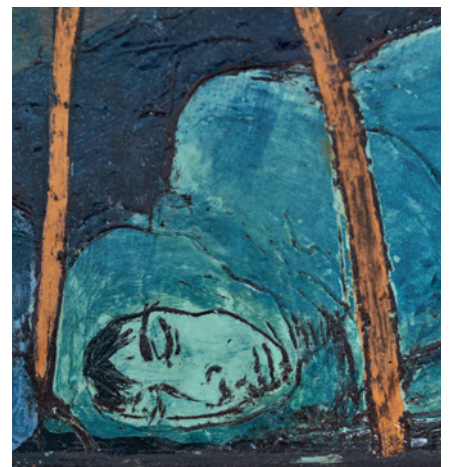
### What we did:

**16** women were supported with specialist exiting support over the course of the year

**2** women were supported with continuous support to access psychological therapies, with a further 5 having one off or short term sessions

**116** women supported with issues related to employment

**10** women were supported on an ongoing basis by our specialist ISVA. The staff team received regular ongoing training and consultancy support from the specialist ISVA, supporting 128 women in relation to issues of sexual abuse, violence and exploitation



# Aim 4:

## Improving support to women

Provide support to external agencies to improve and develop practice, with a view to improve services and support available to women, who are seeking to exit prostitution

### What we said we would do:

Provide training and consultancy services to other agencies.

### What we did:

Provided specialist training around women involved in prostitution and the sex trade to

**44  
people**

Provided sessions and seminars throughout the year reaching

**575  
people**

Provided awareness raising sessions to

**628  
people**

Individuals were present at international events where work of women@thewell was presented

**114  
individuals**

Our print, media, web and online presence significantly increased reaching

**38,600  
people**



# Aim 5:

## Contribute to local, national and international debate

Work at local, national and international level, to abolish the systems of prostitution and the sex trade, ending the sexual exploitation of women and actively promote the establishment of effective exiting services



In 2020, working with partner organisations including, Clinks, Homeless Link and Caritas Social Action Network, we fed into consultations and campaigns on issues relating to homelessness, domestic and sexual violence and exploitation, sharing the voices of the women we support to inform these areas of policy.



We have responded to London and Central Government consultations in the areas of VAWG, prostitution, trafficking and women in the criminal justice system, providing evidence through our work and the women's experiences to back up submissions.



Internationally, we have continued to work with European Women's Lobby, SPACE International, CAP International (Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution), European Freedom Network (EFN) and other national and international partners. We lobby, not only for a Europe Free from Prostitution, but also influencing the world's stage through the UN towards decriminalising the victims, exploited through their involvement in the sex trade (predominantly women) and the criminalisation of those who buy access to their bodies (demand), and all aspects of organisations and individuals profiting from the sex trade.



We have been involved in delivering presentations on this issue during the annual Commission the Status of Women in New York for many years. Working within the formal side events in the UN in partnership with the Holy See and through the NGO parallel events in partnership with SPACE, CAP, NBCW, Arise Foundation, and other partners. This event did not go ahead in 2020, but has taken place via a virtual platform in early 2021. In 2020 we participated in UK and international online events and seminars both with and for our partner organisations.



# Finances

The information in this summary is taken from the full audited and unqualified annual accounts which were approved by the trustees in December 2020 and have been submitted to Companies House and the Charities Commission. Copies of the full accounts can be obtained from [www.watw.org.uk](http://www.watw.org.uk) or by applying to our office

## Income:

Donations and legacies	£18,842
Charitable activities	
Unrestricted grants	£340,249
Restricted grants	£436,074
Fundraising activities	£3,380
Investments	£714
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£776,323</b>

## Expenditure:

Project 1 – Basic Needs	£118,262
Project 2 – Support & Advocacy	£177,972
Project 3 – Life Skills	£3,017
Project 4 – Health & Wellbeing	£2,195
Project 8 – Outreach support	£117,175
Project 9 – Exiting & ISAV	£71,110
Project 10	£57,202
Core-costs	£165,735
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£712,669</b>



# Looking forward:

**Women@thewell** has made good progress as we enter the final year of our three-year strategy. In response to the pandemic, our aim is to continue to provide seamless service provision underpinned by our mission and vision.

The way we offer and deliver support to women has evolved and developed as per Covid-19 restrictions and Government advice and guidance, nevertheless, a constant is our commitment to providing trauma responsive service delivery and ensuring women are safe and supported.

As our team of staff and volunteers expands, as does our expertise – growing and nurturing a pool of knowledge and specialism, which provides the women we support with the tools needed to break down barriers to exiting prostitution and the wider sex trade.

We are aware that the impacts of the pandemic will have a wide reach and psychological fall out for many of the women we support, which at this stage would be impossible to measure. Women who have already faced disadvantage, abuse and exploitation – often from childhood are vulnerable to increased psychological difficulties from enforced isolation. Enforced isolation has potential to trigger past trauma and create new fears and anxieties. Our team is confident that our extensive expertise means we are well equipped to advocate and support women through changing landscapes.

As the pandemic moves to endemic and towards recovery in an unpredictable environment, women@thewell is committed to flex and change the support we offer to best meet the needs of women who are exploited in the sex

trade and support exiting as a viable option.

With this in mind, we are excited to be embarking on a provision of psychosocial support for women, support which we believe will work towards women feeling emotionally secure and in a place where exiting is a possibility.

We are acutely aware that secure funding streams and their sourcing are essential for the organisations survival. Collaboration from funders remains a high priority for the organisation, ensuring that we are able to continue supporting women with a proactive response and providing the organisation with the ability to fill service provision gaps as and when they arise.

Our training and development consultancy offer has made great strides, ensuring we now have a wide spanning reach, working towards a greater understanding throughout society of challenges faced by one of the most disadvantaged groups of women globally. Our commitment now and always is to give women entrapped in the sex trade a voice.

We continue to work hard to lobby for the needs of the women we support locally, nationally and internationally.

As we enter our fifteenth year we reflect and celebrate the resilience and strength of women and the achievement to survive, against the odds day after day. Prostitution is always damaging and dangerous for women: as an organisation we strive to walk alongside women entrapped in the sex trade with determination and a shared vision that exiting is not only one option but also a priority.

# Women's stories

## Estar's Story

Estar arrived in the UK in 2018 after fleeing Iran due to religious persecution.

Settling in the North of England, she was provided accommodation for person's seeking asylum. In December 2019, Estar was granted indefinite right to remain. When her housemate's application to remain in the UK was denied, she viciously attacked Estar in the bathroom of their shared house.

After sustaining multiple life threatening injuries, Estar spent six months in hospital –leaving her with severe scarring and injuries which meant she had difficulty walking and carrying out physical tasks. Estar was also experiencing severe PTSD from the incident. Her therapist advised her to leave the area where the attack took place so that she could detach from the memory of her trauma.

Wanting to make a fresh start in London in December 2020, Estar arranged to stay with friends. She was asked to leave their house when lockdown was announced, leaving her vulnerable, afraid and open to exploitation.

In January 2021, after she was told by authorities to return to the North of England to receive help, Estar attempted to take her own life and was hospitalised. Rather than release her to stay on the streets, Estar's hospital liaised with women@thewell.

Women@thewell provided Estar with emergency accommodation. Our support and advocacy team advocated on her behalf, completing an extensive housing application. Estar's application was initially refused on the grounds that she should return to the original borough where her attack had taken place, in order to receive help with housing. Persisting with her case, women@thewell appealed and saw the council overturn their original decision, securing Estar a self-contained flat.

The council have since decided to permanently accommodate Estar, and are moving her to a ground floor flat to help with her mobility issues.

Estar said "women@thewell have helped me to rebuild my life, I now have security and can look towards a brighter future."

## Suzanne's Story

We first met Suzanne a 47-year-old woman on an outreach shift. Suzanne was associating in a very male environment on the streets, and she seemed to have slipped the net with the local authority. She had no support services actively working with her and was extremely vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Women@thewell assessed her risk level to be high.

Suzanne was sofa surfing, and informed us that in all her adult years she had not had a stable address.

Suzanne has suspected learning difficulties, struggling to complete tasks without support. She disclosed to us that she had previously experienced bullying in a previous work place and throughout her school life. We suspect that Suzanne had already fallen victim to exploitation, and she often disclosed to be staying at different male's homes for the night.

We provided Suzanne with a mobile phone, to allow us and other organisations to contact her which would enable her to carry out appointments and assessments.

As an organisation we accommodated Suzanne in a hotel, and then got to work on her housing. The following week we had emailed the 'Green House' in order to set up an appointment for Suzanne to be assessed to be referred to 'assisted living'. In order for her to stand the best chance of passing the assessment we ensured all documentations were provided accordingly. For example; we ordered Suzanne a new birth certificate and supported her to get her bank statements and send them over on her behalf. Advocating on her behalf to ensure she had the best support around the application process.

We ensured that we met face to face with Suzanne regularly, in order to keep on top of her support needs (i.e. welfare checks, emotional support, benefit support, basic necessities, housing support, travel support, appointment support etc.)

Suzanne now has a place in assisted living and told women@thewell that this is the first time in her life that she has felt safe and supported in a place she can call home.

Sheltered accommodation has allowed Suzanne to take control of her life and enjoy the stability that having your own home brings. Allowing her to make choices from a place of safety and not only based on survival.

Suzanne feels that women@thewell have supported her into a safer, happier life which is free from exploitation and abuse.

# Support Us

It can take many years of small steps and frequent setbacks to see a life turned around. We want to be here for as long as it takes each individual

Your donation helps each of these small steps and enables us to be here to celebrate these as big achievements



Visit [www.watw.org.uk](http://www.watw.org.uk)

Our website will take you to our Just Giving page where you can or set up a standing order



Text **watw01** to **70070** and state the amount you would like to donate



Make cheques payable to '**women@thewell**' and post them to the following address:  
**54/55 Birkenhead Street,  
London WC1H 8BB**

**Boost your donation** by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate - Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer

## What your gift could mean



**£10** pays for a replacement birth certificate so a woman has identification



**£25** pays for 15 warm lunches for our women within the drop in



**£50** pays for an hour of specialist therapy such as counselling or massage



**£150** pays for emergency accommodation for a vulnerable woman for 4 nights

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## Gift Aid It!

**In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the relevant boxes below:**

I want to Gift Aid my donation of

£.....

☐

today;

☐

any future donations;

☐

or donations made in the past 4 years to **women@thewell**

I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility

**My Details**

Title: .....

First name: .....

Surname: .....

Home address: .....

Post code: .....

Date: .....