



womankind

bristol women's therapy centre

Annual Review

2019-2020



## Who we are

Womankind is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The organisation was founded in 1986 and since that time has provided a range of services for women with mental health problems in Bristol and the surrounding area.

## Our mission:

is to help women to improve their mental health and well-being. Through our help, we believe that women will experience a better quality of life, participate more fully in society, enjoy more fulfilling relationships and be better able to care for themselves and their families.

## Our values – Womankind exists to:

- enable women to define their own mental health needs
- improve the quality of women's lives by helping them to become less dependent on mental health and social services
- ensure our services are accessible to women on low incomes
- recognise that the roots of women's difficulties are often linked to personal life histories and the social and political environment in which they live.

## Our organisational aims are to:

- provide support, professional therapy and a therapeutic environment that is either free or affordable to women living in Bristol or the surrounding area
- increase the availability of psychodynamic therapy in the area by providing training and support for therapists
- enter into partnerships and working arrangements with other organisations to maximise the availability of support for women
- through judicious use of funds, ensure our services respond to emerging needs and provide best value.

## Our provision includes:

Talking therapy services, befriending services, a telephone and webchat helpline, training and supervision. An overview of our achievements and impact, followed by a review from each of our services, is given in the following pages.

## Chair's report

Womankind has provided vital mental health support for many women over the past thirty-three years. This year has seen more challenges than most, challenges of a very different kind and I am pleased to say that Womankind has risen to those challenges.

The arrival of Coronavirus resulted in significant changes for Womankind and our beneficiaries in March 2020. But with the careful dedication and concerted efforts of our committed staff and volunteers, all our services moved - relatively seamlessly - to online/telephone/remote delivery. This dedication has made it possible for Womankind to continue to offer so much to so many women, and gives the charity the resilience to thrive in these difficult times and I would like to sincerely thank them for that.

Despite the challenges, during 2019-20 Womankind still handled 4,623 helpline and webchat calls and approximately 700 emails from women in distress. We also supported 384 clients with a face-to-face service. (A full description of our charitable activities is found throughout this report.)

Over the year, we have continued to develop and maintain services that provide help to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of women within the community. The women we help struggle with multiple difficulties related to poor mental health, sexual violence, past and/or recent abuse, disability, financial hardship, isolation, language barriers and relationship problems.

In addition to receiving statutory grants for commissioned services, we have secured grants for specific services from a range of sources. In particular, to develop and maintain our innovative instant messaging 'webchat' service targeted at young women and Deaf/hard of hearing women, as an extension to our telephone helpline; to continue our Safer Women's project providing specialist trauma counselling to support women refugees, asylum seekers and trafficked women who are survivors of abuse and exploitation; and to deliver additional counselling sessions for survivors of sexual violence, in partnership with the Bristol Sexual Violence Consortium.

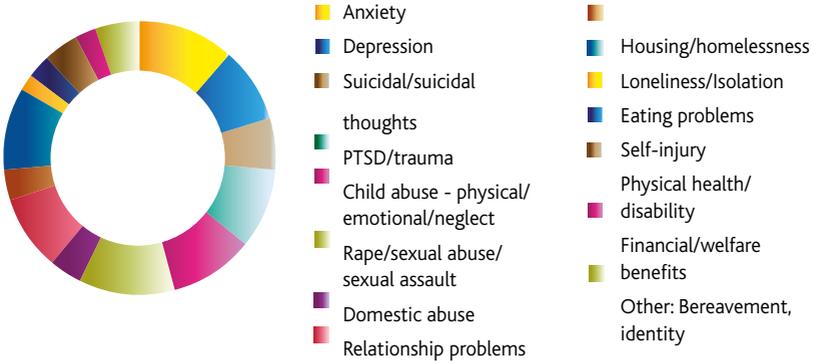
In addition to thanking the staff and volunteers for everything they have done for Womankind during these unprecedented times, I would also like to thank my fellow Trustees for their support and dedication over the past 12 months, as well as the generous funders and donors on whose support and current flexibility we rely.

**Melody Russell, Chair**

# Who we helped in 2019/20

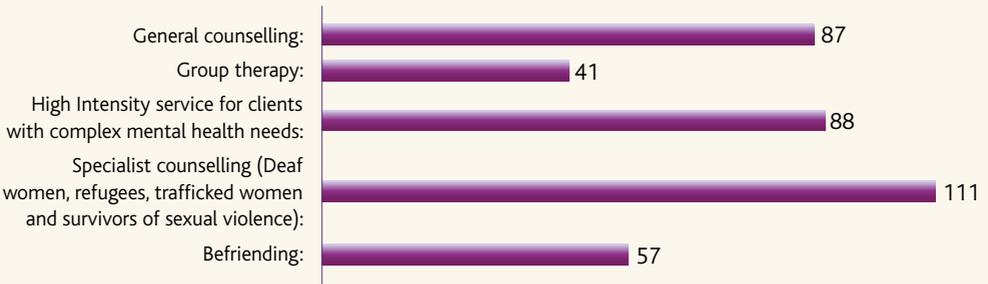
Helpline: 4,623 telephone and webchat calls and 667 emails handled

## Presenting issues for Helpline listening calls



## Therapy services

### Numbers of women receiving face-to-face services



### Age

16 – 25	17%
26 - 50	62%
51 - 65	18%
65 and over	3%

### Ethnicity:

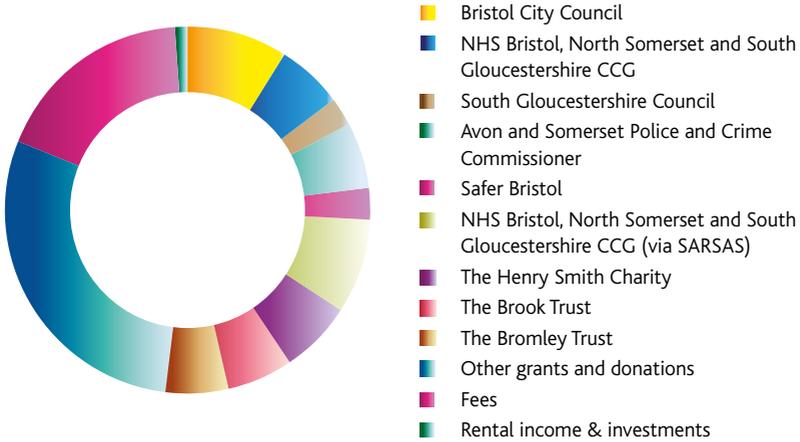
Black, Asian or minority ethnic	25%
White British	66%
White other	9%

Disability: 36%

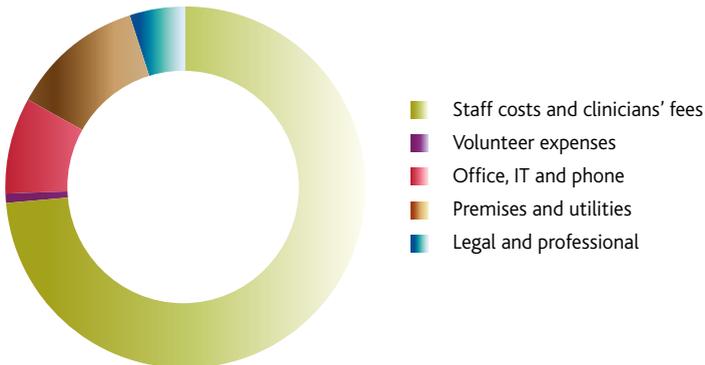
## Financial review

In 2019/20 Womankind successfully raised sufficient funding to cover our costs and generated a surplus of almost £40k although there were several grants received that were restricted for use in the following year. The figures below are extracted from our examined Statement of Financial Activities. The full accounts are available on the Charity Commission website.

### Our income in 2019/20 - £368,345



### Our expenditure in 2019/20 - £328,435





## Introduction to Services

Womankind is an established charity that is run by women for women. We support thousands of women every year to improve their mental health and well-being so they can experience a better quality of life.

We recognise that the roots of our difficulties are often linked to personal life histories. We also recognise that the social and political environment in which we live affects our mental health. It's not always easy to ask for help but we encourage women not to suffer in silence as talking to someone about your problems and how you feel can really help.

We work with women to understand their situation and we can help them to think things through so that they get the support they need. Womankind supports women in Bristol and the surrounding area with professional counselling, group therapy, befriending, and a telephone and webchat helpline service. More detail, together with anonymised client stories, follows for each of our services.

"I don't know where I'd be without Womankind."

## Counselling

Womankind's counselling service is in high demand and supports diverse groups of vulnerable women from all areas of the city. Women contact us seeking help, alongside referrals from GPs and health professionals. The telephone and webchat Helpline is the main referral point and can support women whilst they are waiting for a service.

Many of the women have histories of trauma and abuse and seek counselling in a women only setting. Some women seek help for enduring mental health issues; others with a more recent trauma. Following two initial consultation sessions, Womankind provides 24 sessions of counselling and offers clients the opportunity to work through some of the most troubling aspects of their lives. We also provide a high intensity service of up to 12 sessions for women referred by Bristol and South Gloucestershire Well-being Therapy Services. The majority of the women we see within this service have complex needs.

**Dalia** moved to the UK from Lithuania when she was 17. She wanted to get away from her father who had been violent to his children and his wife. Dalia had scars on her body from the physical abuse and had a permanent limp from him breaking her leg when she was a child and not being taken to hospital.

Dalia came to Womankind because it was women only - this was very important to her because of her father's violence and because in her adult life her partners had frequently been violent. Through her counselling Dalia wondered about her choice of partner as she considered her friends' relationships where there was no violence. Towards the end of her counselling Dalia started a new relationship. She was astounded by her partner suggesting that they both needed some time to think following a heated disagreement - this was her first experience of an ordinary row. Through counselling she saw for the first time that it was possible to have a relationship without violence.

"Life no longer feels like a 'burden' but is a positive thing."

"I have less physical ailments and time off work, reduced reliance on alcohol = improved overall health."

## Group Therapy

Womankind runs four weekly groups which provide longer term therapy for women with more enduring mental health problems. In the safe environment of the group, members can take the time they need to work through difficulties together. Many women struggle with the trauma of their early years including childhood abuse, neglect and violence.

Some women find it difficult to socialise and relate to others as a result of feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Being in one of the Womankind groups is great practice at just being around other people. Group members come from a wide range of backgrounds and the women have the opportunity of learning about other people and different cultures as well as about themselves.

The open, honest and meaningful relationships which develop between group members support the growth of self-confidence, self-awareness, self-acceptance and the capacity to trust our own judgement to make good decisions about the way we wish to live our lives in the future.

**Samira** had a troubled childhood and joined the group following the end of an abusive relationship. She was living as a single parent and often felt very anxious, fearful and scared that her ex-partner would turn up at the house at any time demanding to see the children.

The other women in the group were very supportive and one who had been through a similar experience said that she now realised that part of her fear had been linked to her childhood experiences of violence. These words had a big impact and Samira was able to see that her past experience of violence was also getting triggered. This enabled her to separate out the different experiences and deal with the current situation in order to protect herself and her children. There has since been a court case and her ex-partner has been denied access to the children.

Samira is now working on the experiences of violence she experienced and witnessed as a child.

“I feel I can say things here I didn’t ever think I would be able to tell anyone...”

it’s given me confidence.”

“I never realised things were so complicated and mixed up in my head, but it is such a relief to begin to sort them through.”

## Specialist Sexual Violence and Abuse Services

Womankind works in partnership with a consortium of agencies including Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Service (SARSAS), the Green House and Barnardo's BASE. The Bristol Sexual Violence Consortium is funded by Safer Bristol and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group to provide a range of specialist services for male and female survivors. Demand for specialist services is high and as a consortium, we are committed to developing collaborative services so that more survivors can be supported by the right service at the right time.

Our trauma informed services support women who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, and historic or recent rape or sexual assault. We know the consequences of sexual violence are often devastating and life changing and survivors need to be at the centre of their support where they can set their own goals, take control and lead the way.

**Lucie** is a 30 year old graduate who was referred to Womankind after treatment at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre following a rape. Lucie was traumatised and described herself as having low self-esteem. She had been in multiple abusive relationships and disclosed a history of childhood sexual abuse.

During counselling, Lucie worked through her deep feelings of shame regarding the rape, and the earlier (previously undisclosed) abuse. She explored how her experiences had affected the way she related to men and reflected on her use of alcohol and need for affirmation. During the counselling Lucie spent time evaluating her close relationships, her quality of life, and her options. She took up a new job, moved to be closer to a supportive network, reduced her use of alcohol and began a new relationship. These changes gave Lucie many opportunities to explore feelings that came up, of vulnerability, inadequacy, low confidence and self-esteem, and to try different ways of coping. At the end of counselling she reported coping better with stress, reducing her negative self-talk and being more involved in her community. She also reported experiencing less physical pain relating to earlier traumatic injuries, and relying less on alcohol.

"I understand myself better by understanding how my past has affected me at present."

"I understand my source of anger and don't feel as bad about it".

## Safer Women's Project

This project funded by the Henry Smith Charity and the Bromley Trust supports refugees, asylum seekers and migrant women who have suffered abuse and exploitation. Many of the women have been trafficked or are fleeing war-torn countries. They come from different parts of the world, diverse cultures, ages and backgrounds and present with extremely difficult problems as a result of traumatic experiences.

Weekly counselling or EMDR therapy sessions are delivered with language interpreters at Womankind and in our outreach location at the Wellspring Settlement in Barton Hill. Our evaluation shows that women can recover and move on with their lives - the changes women make after attending their counselling differ enormously but are very significant for each and every one of them. Many women leave us feeling more hopeful, less afraid and in control of their own lives. We can also see that they feel better equipped to cope with difficulties.

**Solada** was born in a rural part of Thailand and was one of nine brothers and sisters. At 16 years her parents sent her to 'stay with a friend' where she was forced into prostitution. She ran away twice before eventually escaping but her parents had been very angry and beaten her so badly that she was hospitalised.

When Solada came to Womankind she was seven months pregnant and had started to have panic attacks. Solada was very anxious but after a few weeks of counselling through an interpreter she spoke about the sexual abuse she had suffered and of how she had ended up in the UK. She had a good relationship with the baby's father and was trying to put her traumatising past behind her, but on learning that she was pregnant it had all come rushing back. Once Solada's daughter was born she was even more in touch with frightening and terrible memories of her own past.

Solada returned to counselling when the baby was just 8 days old – through the next few months she cried and talked extensively about what had happened to her. The counsellor was able to support her through this extremely difficult period and by the end of her counselling Solada was feeling better and was restored to managing her baby and her life in a way that she was content with.

"I will miss you.  
You saved my  
life and my  
baby's.."

"I'm learning to look  
after myself and  
to live alone whilst  
not focussing on  
anyone else".

## Service for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Women

Womankind's service for Deaf and hard of hearing women is part-funded by the James Tudor Foundation and offers women six months' one to one counselling. There is considerable evidence that the first choice of a Deaf client is to work face to face with a counsellor who is fluent in the client's preferred first language whether that is British Sign Language (BSL), Sign Supported English (SSE) or spoken English. Working through an interpreter is seen as a further barrier to accessing therapeutic support as is the lack of understanding of Deaf community and culture.

Womankind's counsellor can sign or speak to match the preferred communication of the client and also has a knowledge and understanding of the Deaf community and Deaf culture. Deaf women bring similar issues to counselling as hearing women but their feelings are often exacerbated by communication barriers, isolation, employment challenges, and frustration about lack of access to mainstream services, including mental health services. Eight women used the service in the year and they all reported an overall improvement in their mental health and well-being.

**Naomi** was in her thirties in a professional job and although seemed to be successful in her career and personal life had been struggling with confidence at work and in relationships. She said that she used alcohol to manage anxiety especially in social situations and some days felt very low and physically unwell.

During her counselling Naomi explored her early life and growing up as the only deaf person in her family. She looked at how she had developed ways of coping when her deafness made it very difficult to understand what was going on around her. She had become very self-sufficient and had not asked for help even when it was available. She said that she had become used to being the outsider but wanted to feel closer to others.

Naomi was dissatisfied in her job and uncertain about her future direction. Through the counselling she could see that her lack of self-esteem had held her back. She secured a new role and said that for the first time in her life she was doing something positive for herself. By the end of the counselling Naomi said that her health was better, she was having less time off work, was less reliant on alcohol, her relationships had improved and she was looking forward to her new job.

"I'm more able to not let anxiety prevent me from doing things and getting on with life."

"Very helpful – it's impossible to accurately portray the full impact this has had on my life but to put it simply – it has saved it."

## Telephone and Webchat Helpline

Womankind's telephone and Webchat Helpline offers confidential listening support to any woman experiencing emotional distress. Trained volunteers provide a safe space where women can express and explore their feelings without judgement. The Helpline also acts as the first point of contact for women wishing to access our therapy services.

In June 2019 we launched our new Webchat (instant messaging) extension to the Helpline, targeted at young women and Deaf/ hard of hearing women. The Helpline handled a total of 5,290 telephone and Webchat calls and emails in the year – a third of the callers had suffered sexual abuse/sexual assault, rape, domestic abuse, trauma or PTSD. The amount of callers presenting with loneliness and isolation has risen by almost a third. We have seen a similar rise in callers presenting with more complex mental health needs and suicidal feelings. Feedback from our callers shows that the helpline makes a significant difference to women going through challenging times. 93% of callers reported feeling less isolated as a result of the call and 89% felt better able to deal with current stressors/difficulties as a result of having an opportunity to talk about them.

**A young woman** who is hard of hearing contacted our Webchat having recently found out that she was pregnant. Her boyfriend had broken up with her after finding out, and her main feelings around her pregnancy were of confusion. She wanted to consider how different aspects of her life would be affected if she had a child, which she did during this chat. She also spoke about her work and about how difficult it had been to get to where she is; as a woman, hard of hearing, in a corporate environment; she felt inadequate compared to her male colleagues. She thought her work would not be supportive of her pregnancy.

By the end of the chat she was still feeling confused about her future, however, the conversation had allowed her to reflect on the fact that she is a very strong and resilient person. She said that she felt able to deal with whatever came next regardless of which decision she made. She also felt that the Webchat volunteer had been a listening ear and offered her the space to talk through her options which had given her a lot to think about.

"I feel more empowered. . . I feel lighter. . . It's really helpful to talk through these things."

"The Webchat helps me feel less isolated: Womankind has given me SO much and it has literally saved my life."

**Helplines**  
**STANDARD**

## Befriending

Our Befriending service supports isolated women who are experiencing mental health problems, and/or who are survivors of rape or sexual abuse, to improve their mental health and well-being. Trained volunteer befrienders provide consistent support for a year. They encourage women to become more confident and independent by helping them to set their own goals, get out and about, build social relationships and engage in community activities such as keep fit or well-being classes.

Over the year befrienders supported 57 women from different backgrounds, cultures and ages. Some of the funding was awarded by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office for victims of sexual violence. This aspect was externally evaluated by the University of Bristol, and their report 'Opening Doors' (2019) found that "Befrienders provided an effective service to survivors by modelling positive relationships; building trust, bounded friendships, confidence, and self-esteem; providing consistency and encouragement. This helped women to overcome social isolation, which had a positive impact on mental ill health."

**Mandy** has multiple disabilities causing chronic daily pain. At the start of befriending she had been suffering with long term depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and difficulties sleeping. She described herself as "closed off, isolated and negative." She hoped befriending would help her to find a purpose in life, and improve her mental health and general well-being.

Mandy's Befriender supported her to attend yoga classes and a craft group. Six months in to her befriending year she reported "I feel more me" and was able to recognise "I have some good points in me making me happier...I am growing as a person." When asked at the end of befriending 'what were the most helpful aspects of the service?' she replied "There are too many – time, commitment, guidance, support... all this and more added together to make this an amazing experience. Having someone solely there for me, being accompanied at every step of this journey and who introduced me to new experiences, I have discovered so much about myself, my surroundings in general that together have changed my life in every output and in a much more positive way. Befriending quite simply saved my life."



"Throughout the year my state of mind improved so much that I was able to come off anti-depressants"

"I feel more resilient, I manage things better, instead of falling apart when things get difficult now I manage."

# Volunteers

In order to provide our valuable services, Womankind is supported by a dedicated and skilled team of volunteers who we thank wholeheartedly. Our volunteers make a positive difference to the lives of the women they help, and their role also brings added value to them - they benefit from the training and supervision we provide, together with personal and career development.

## Administration/ Social Media

Lindsey Brown  
Izzy Fielden  
Tilly Hall  
Jude Western  
Joss Yapp

## Befrienders

Sarah Alloway  
Aishlyn Angill-Williams  
Maddy Aulakh  
Beatrix Balog-Baranyi  
Suzie Carr  
Grace Carter  
Jessica Charleston  
Mel Ciavucco  
Emma Clifton-Hadley  
Sarah Dunthorne  
Davina Edwards  
Hannah Embleton-Smith  
Jessica Flett  
Phaedra Florou  
Abby Foord  
Milly Foot  
Gaynor Gallagher  
Caterina Gentili  
Eleanor Grudgings  
Sinead Gullless  
Sammie Hollie  
Clare Hopkinson  
Tripti John  
Esther Kopp

Abi Legg  
Jodie McFarland  
Jess Milton  
Beci Monks  
Fiona Nash  
Chloe O'Connell  
Maxine Owen  
Hannah Parsons  
Jessica Pickett  
Olivia Spooner  
Margherita Szabo  
Maddy Toner  
Evanthia Triantafyllidou  
Angela Walker  
Gemma Walker  
Alva White  
Rebecca Woodman

## Counsellors

Angelique de Silva  
Pamela Hampton  
Donna Lloyd  
Tammy Payne

## Helpline

Liz Appleby  
Chloe Archer  
Gaynor Ashdown  
Kate Ashley  
Eleanor Bennett  
Elise Bird  
Stephanie Bohin  
Jessica Cheshire

Maddy Cunningham  
Lily Fogden  
Marika Fordonnel  
Jane Godfrey  
Adetoun Grant  
Rebecca Hall  
Clare Isham  
Lesley Jarman  
Laura Keeling  
Sabrina Lee  
Chloe Lumb  
Becca Massey-Chase  
Darletta Oduntan  
Donzella O'Reilly  
Chloe Powell  
Camilla Qureshi  
Cathryn Rogers  
Kona Rogers  
Alice Steel  
Laura Sullivan  
Mel Sweetland  
Evanthia Triantafyllidou  
Natty Triskel  
Elena Vergara  
Meg Walker  
Lorna Walton  
Georgina Watson  
Sophie Welsman  
Alice Wenham  
Eleanor Wolff  
Yasmin Worsley

# Who's Who at Womankind

Womankind has an experienced Management Committee (Board of Trustees) consisting of women from diverse backgrounds and ages, who bring a range of skills and interests to their role of overseeing the running of the charity. Our committed and well qualified core staff team are supplemented by sessional counsellors and group therapists, together with external professional supervisors.

## Management Committee

Melody Russell (Chair)  
Vicki Morris (Vice Chair)  
Terry Jones (Secretary)  
Louise Lacey (Treasurer)  
Sarah Bartlett  
Sally Bennett  
Lucy Downes  
Alyson Fielden  
Joan Solomon  
Hélène Titus-Glover  
Ruth Yudkin

## Patrons

Ms Jacki Hill-Murphy  
Ms Sian Norris

## Staff

Kyra Bond, Chief Executive Officer  
Yael Ben-Akiva, Counsellor  
Nicola Coggins, Volunteer Service  
Co-ordinator (Befriending)  
Laura Gallagher, Volunteer Service  
Co-ordinator (Webchat/Befriending)  
Catherine Howells/ Anna Wyatt,  
Administrator  
Rae Pears, Volunteer Service  
Co-ordinator (Telephone Helpline)  
Justine Rowe, Book-keeper  
Rosie Thoburn, Clinical Manager  
Helena Thompson, Fundraiser

## Sessional Supervisors

Christine Brookes  
Josie Eckoldt  
Fiona Hassard  
Dr Judy Malone  
Heather Mora  
Susan Sparham  
Deirdre Sutton-Smith

## Sessional Counsellors

Carrie Alexander  
Aine Bourke  
Anita Bradford  
Ailee Breakspear  
Diana Chia  
Becky Clarke  
Juliana G S Garcia  
Ruth Jones  
Erica Lanigan  
Hazel Millar  
Dorothy Neal  
Michelle Rice  
Vicky Riddiford  
Natasha Vdovkina

## Sessional Group Therapists

Erika Holloway  
Michelle Rice  
Natasha Vdovkina

## Thank you to our Funders

We'd like to thank all the organisations who have funded our work during 2019/20 – it wouldn't be possible without your support. In addition to the funders shown below, we are grateful for the grants provided in the year by: Alec Van Berchem Charitable Trust, The Brook Trust, Denman Charitable Trust, The Edward Gostling Foundation, Fulmer Charitable Trust, James Tudor Foundation, Lark Trust, Morland's (SC and ME) Charitable Trust, Nani Huyu Charitable Trust, Nisbet Trust, The Society of Merchant Venturers, Tampon Tax Community Fund, University of Bristol Students Union RAG and the Wesleyan Foundation.

A special thank you goes to all the other charitable trusts, local companies and individuals who supported us through small grants, fundraising events and one-off or regular monthly donations throughout the year. Your support has a significant impact on how we can help distressed women on a day-to-day basis, as well as on our long term sustainability.



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3rd Floor, Brunswick Court  
Brunswick Square  
Bristol BS2 8PE  
[www.womankindbristol.org.uk](http://www.womankindbristol.org.uk)

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