

Supporting Women & Girls Project

Year Two Progress Report

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16 August 2019



Foreword

I am writing as the Chief Officer of the primary umbrella organisation that supports the voluntary and community sector in Swale and am delighted to endorse the work of Diversity House and the project SWAG (Supporting Women and Girls). The SWAG project in Swale borough is well known throughout the sector for the excellent work carried out by both staff and volunteers of the organisation.

My organisation, Swale Community and Voluntary Services (Swale CVS) are housed in Central House, Central Avenue, along with many other voluntary groups. Help the Aged is also part of this Hub, and I have seen first-hand the staff and volunteers working on an art project as just one small part of the SWAG project and the art produced working along with the older clients have been truly outstanding. I have spoken to many of the older clients, and they look forward to the art sessions and the company of both the project workers and volunteers.

I hold both Diversity House and its staff and volunteers in the highest regard and have no hesitation in endorsing their work. I am not aware of a more capable organisation and project locally undertaking equality, diversity and more specifically women and girl's rights.

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Executive Summary

Supporting Women and Girls (SWAG) is a gender-specific program, aimed at empowering women and girls to excel in four core domains of ‘social, psychological and physiological, economic and community empowerment. However, the program acknowledges that women and girls are not homogenous in their abilities to participate in community activities and their life experiences. Treating women and girls as unitary or uniform entity often lead to one-size-fits-all approach, meaning that many of the women and girls are often not seen or heard. Factors such as race, faith, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality, location, employment, marital, immigration status and other social categorisations can combine with gender to create distinct and particularly troubling experiences of discrimination and inequality for women and girls (www.fawcettsociety.org.uk) – this intersectionality is still largely being overlooked. Consequently, crucial insight into the different experiences of women and girls in empowerment programs is often being lost. Because gender is not the only factor that puts women and girls to disadvantage or subordination, the SWAG project team in planning and implementing this program used the intersectionality approach. “Intersectionality is the multiple and simultaneous identities of women in terms of race, ethnicity/class, gender and other forms of hierarchy and difference, including social locations of women and girls within households among others” (www.ifpri.org). The project team used the opportunity that SWAG project offered to collect some data on the different social categories, to understand the experiences of women and girls using the program. Collecting this data is a step in the right direction. However, we need additional data that allows for comparisons between different groups of women and girls, which could be achieved by better linkages between datasets and data sharing between public services and NGOs and adequate funding. In this reporting year, the

project team will report on its activities and share data collected using intersectionality approach. The demographic data will help in understanding how gender and other social categories worked in disempowering or empowering women and girls in this reporting year.

The project carried out over 25 different activities with over 600 sessions of delivery. These project activities benefited a total of 6759 diverse people, mainly women and girls. Diversity House (SWAG project team) monitored and evaluated the project in this second year of reporting. The project and Diversity House (DH) resources were efficiently utilised by the beneficiaries, including DH contacts and previous relations with key community collaborators. “The relative value for money was deemed satisfactory as previously conducted women project” (<http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SWEW-END-REPORT-2015version2.pdf>).

“Quantitative goals were surpassed. Qualitative goals were achieved by a comprehensive approach to women and girls’ empowerment. SWAG addressed women and girls’ individual and collective empowerment as a process and an outcome, taking into consideration its social, health and wellbeing, economic and community dimensions. Literature research and consulting women and girls’ voices “were central

elements for the project as previously implemented SWEW project” (<http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SWEW-END-REPORT-2015version2.pdf>). These illustrated the complexity of the empowerment process and implementing the intersectional approach as a way of addressing the dynamics that can shape women and girls’ vulnerability and resilience. The main key finding among women and girls from Swale, who were involved in the project in this reporting year, was to voice, define and target psychological, economic and participation in community actions aspects to enhance their autonomy and agency. In the year under review, the project did embrace this finding, implementing activities to respond to the beneficiaries expressed needs, interests and expectations.

Furthermore, SWAG enabled DH to keep positioning itself as a crucial stakeholder whose capacity building and network activities substantially contributes to women, girls, and community empowerment and prosperity. DH paid staff and volunteers were also empowered by acquiring management skills and sharing experiences with their peers. DH through the capacity building fund received as part of the lottery fund was able to carry out the strategic review of the charity, and within the year under review, the management of the charity received final training from the Foundation for Social Improvement. Training the board of the charity is a crucial way of ensuring sustainability and continuity of the charity.

Key Findings and Lessons Learnt

This reporting year, evidence gathered by the SWAG project team from Swale Local authority, indicates that in the next 12 months (2020) ‘The Spirit of Sittingbourne’ regeneration project will be completed, creating 799 job opportunities; 230 of these jobs will be within retail and hospitality, and 30% of the jobs have been ringfenced for Swale residents. However, the Ambitions for Swale’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026 has highlighted as an issue, lack of skills within the district, meaning that potentially, those who are unemployed and in need of jobs in Swale may not benefit from these earmarked jobs due to lack of skills. Therefore, the project team will in the coming months work proactively in building the capacity and confidence of women and girls, getting them ready for these job openings.

Economic dependency continues to be an issue for women and girls in Swale. The project team learnt that female benefits claimants are higher in Swale than other parts of the UK - Swale =1,325 (2.9%); South-East = 1.5%; and Great Britain = 2.2% (Nomis 2019), therefore, activities in the coming months will be geared towards tackling the underlining causes of benefits culture.

We learnt that while there have been improvements in teenage conception rates in Swale, teenage (under 18 years), conception rates remain above the Kent average. The high prevalence of underage/teenage conception rates are indicators of deprivation and health inequalities. The project team have identified some risk factors to teenage pregnancy, and these are – being a looked after child, having a minority background, being a child of a teenage parent, and living in a deprived area. The project team in these coming months will work collaboratively with Swale Clinical Commissioning

Group (KCC 2015 – “Teenage Pregnancy Strategy 2015-2020”) to address the underlining causes of teenage pregnancy as a way of empowering our young girls and giving them a brighter future. Opportunities to build emotional resilience of young girls and women will be created. Some of the activities to be delivered this year will include building aspirations, sexual health education, sports and exercise to help improve emotional, physical, educational and economic wellbeing for young girls including those that are young parents.

Reports gained in four consecutive consultations with women in the area highlighted that one of the critical barriers for women in developing skills or progressing into employment, business or education is the cost of childcare and transport. We have found that providing sessions which fit around the lifestyle of women with children and offering them free childcare services has dramatically helped with the retention and the likelihood of accessing services. Therefore, in this coming year, the project team will redouble their efforts to provide more creche places for women with children, encouraging them to participate in the project activities.

To tackle the lack of skills, our proposed project will individually work with diverse women to create a pool of local job-ready candidates, particularly for women and ethnic minorities. We will provide intensive job readiness workshops for women and girls, and these will include: employability, soft skills, individual support and guidance, enabling them to gain self-esteem, confidence and skills to progress into paid employment.

Other lessons from the second-year implementation of the project are:

- a. Many young girls in secondary schools are averse to STEM subjects and need guidance and motivation to enable them to select these subjects in their GCSE;
- b. There is a need to support young girls with career options. This support should be both formal and informal, that is, input from parents, organisations and projects such as SWAG, and through the school. This need came to light through SWAG team’s involvement in schools through their career option week. It was identified that many young girls in 6th form did not have a clue of what they want to do after school (that is either in university or vocational studies);
- c. Empowerment is a vast concept that should be bottom-up rather than top-down. Interventions or effective enablement programs must come from women and girls themselves. However, planned interventions which led to projects being funded come from organisations themselves and as a result, project beneficiaries may decide not to engage with intervention and instead express a need for a different one.
- d. The project team learn that in terms of engagement, beneficiaries from Sittingbourne use the project activities like a fire fighting strategy, that is, the dip in and out of services when they have problems rather than proactive participation which will lead to individual transformation. Women and girls from the Isle of Sheppey and Faversham have better involvement and a higher rate of participation in the project’s activities.

- e. We have learnt that less than twenty-five of the beneficiaries came from Faversham in this reporting year. Therefore, in the coming year, the project team will carry out more outreach activities in Faversham to increase the percentage of women and girls participating in the project.
- f. The management of SWAG learnt that due to the nature of the interventions being proffered, which are quite a time consuming and need very skilled staff, there was an initial high turnover of the workforce. Recruited and trained staff and volunteers had to work in innovative rather than prescriptive way.

Key Priorities Today

What are the key areas to focus efforts to achieve women and girl’s empowerment over the coming year? The data collected both quantitatively and qualitatively (surveys and interviews) for this monitoring and evaluation report yielded a range of responses, but overall, four issues and one overarching approach – intersectional analysis – emerged consistently. Addressing any issue, informants (women and girls, and partner agencies) were clear that applying the intersectional lens is essential. The four current priority issues to ensure progress and social transformation of women and girls are:

1. Violence against women and girls;
 2. Poverty and economic security – education as a way out of poverty and economic dependency
 3. Psychological and physiological wellbeing;
 4. Advocacy
-
1. Violence against women and girls – there has been a rise in violence against women and girls in the district. The change in the demography of the area with inward migration from London has seen a surge in crime including knifing and intimate partner and other domestic violence. The grooming of young girls to distribute drugs, including weeds and cocaine by drug dealers from inner London is a thing of concern. Also, cyber-violence targeting young girls is something that the project team will have to address in the coming year. The project team has already started working with Kent Police County Lines and linking to Kent and Medway Gang Strategy 2018 – 2021, to address and end criminal exploitation of vulnerable children and adults by gangs, particularly women and girls.
 2. Psychological and physiological wellbeing - Unlike other forms of violence, the harassment, humiliation, intimidation, and threatening online occurs 24 hours a day and regardless of whether the targeted person is present. The vulnerability of young girls/women to online violence is something that the SWAG project has identified in recent months. The project team’s findings confirm the warning by the Amnesty International UK on 20 November 2017 that is - “more than a quarter UK women experiencing online abuse and harassment ...” (<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/more-quarter-uk-women->

[experiencing-online-abuse-harassment—receive-threats/](#)). The aftermath of this online abuse and harassment are self-hatred, self-harming, stress, anxiety and other psychological issues.

3. Poverty and Economic Security – employment equity and the wage gap are one of the acute problems confronting women and girls in the district. The project team is aware that to overcome this problem, that they will continue to deliver capacity-building activities. Young girls will need to be motivated to see the importance of further education (university or vocational studies through apprenticeship). The project lead is working with other partners to lobby and campaign for companies and local employers to be held accountable for the gender wage gap.
4. Advocacy - in all its forms, advocacy seeks to ensure that people, particularly women and girls who are most vulnerable in society, are able to: have their voice heard on issues that are important to them; defend and safeguard their rights; and have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives. Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to express their views and concerns; access information and services; defend and promote their rights and responsibilities and explore choices and options. The SWAG team are finding themselves doing more and more advocacy work on behalf of women and girls in Swale. The recent influx of minority communities into the district meant that organisations who were skilled in dealing with only mainstream issues are now expected to deal with cultures that are dissimilar to theirs. Working across cultures is an issue of concern with local schools and families in the district. The SWAG team are having to support mothers and young girls to deal with issues that are putting them more and more to disadvantage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the lessons learnt and noted critical priorities for today. In the coming months, it is recommended that SWAG project team should:

1. Increase the workforce of SWAG project to ensure that findings and gaps identified in this reporting year will be tackled effectively and efficiently.
2. Institute more capacity building activities to equip women and girls with the vital skills that they need to take up the eminent job openings in the district.
3. Continue to strengthen links and partnerships with the local authority, local agencies and businesses, particularly in the areas of creating opportunities for apprenticeships, work experience, and employment.
4. Continue to work with local secondary schools through the STEM Ambassador program, to motivate young girls to take up science, technology, engineering and maths subjects.
5. Ensure that childcare is included in every planned workshops/training and events, enabling women with children to participate in the project.

6. The project team should continue to ensure that older women are not invisible but collaborate with organisations such as AgeUK and Dementia Friends to improve the health and wellbeing of this beneficiary group.

1.0. Antecedents – Project Background

Supporting Women and Girls (SWAG) project builds on the former “Swale Women Empowering Women” (SWEW) project and Diversity House existing work with disadvantaged women in Swale District of Kent. It aims to continue offering in-house support to many of the 9,097 women who enjoyed positive outcomes in the previously delivered project, that is, SWEW and at the same time reach new beneficiaries. Also, SWAG project seeks to work with 10 to 18 years old girls and other marginalised groups, including Roma Gypsy/Irish Traveller girls and female Syrian Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

1.1. Rationale and Objectives of the project

The rationale and objectives of the project are derived from evidence and anecdotal reports (including Ambitions for Swale, Swale CCG, Nomis 2015, Diversity House needs assessment for the SWAG project, the Hansard Report, among others) revealed that Swale women are disadvantaged and marginalised despite accounting for over 51% of the total population of the District. Compounding the inequality, subordination and deprivation of the women in Swale are the following underlining factors:

- a. The decline of traditional local employers such as the Kemsley Paper Mill, Cement Works, assembly type of jobs, agriculture, and hospitality industry (pub houses) has led to the loss of jobs. These were areas where women worked, but the demise of these industries have left little or no opportunities for employment for most of the diverse women in Swale;
- b. The start of the countrywide economic recession in 2010, led to many women and their spouses made redundant, increasing the financial instability of most of the diverse women in Swale. Further, adding to the vast gap in economic activity between genders in Swale, which is 83.3% for men and 63.7% for women;
- c. Health inequality is significantly high in Swale. Women live longer than men, but they live with many psychological and physical health issues. The combination of these inequalities affects Swale’s women in the following areas: self-esteem; confidence; aspiration; and others;
- d. Swale's position as a coastal town, characterised by a combination of trends occurring, such as physical isolation, pockets of deprivations, inward migration of older people, and onward migration of young people. Other factors include high levels of transience, frequent dependency on single industry, low-wage, low-skill economies, and seasonal employment contribute to the socio-economic and health inequalities of the local population and particularly that of the diverse women in the district (The House of Commons Communities Local Government Committee 2007; BBC News, 4 September 2017). The demise of Swale maritime, tourism and traditional seaside resorts has affected its economy and especially of that of women who were formally matriarchs of the "bucket and

spade" holiday market in places like Queenborough, Sheerness, Leysdown, Minster and other parts of Swale district;

- e. Migration and diversity - With the slump in coastal towns tourism and the increase in the demand for housing in inner-city London, Swale has seen an increase in inward migration, with many families and female-headed households moving into the area.

1.2. Aims and Objectives of SWAG

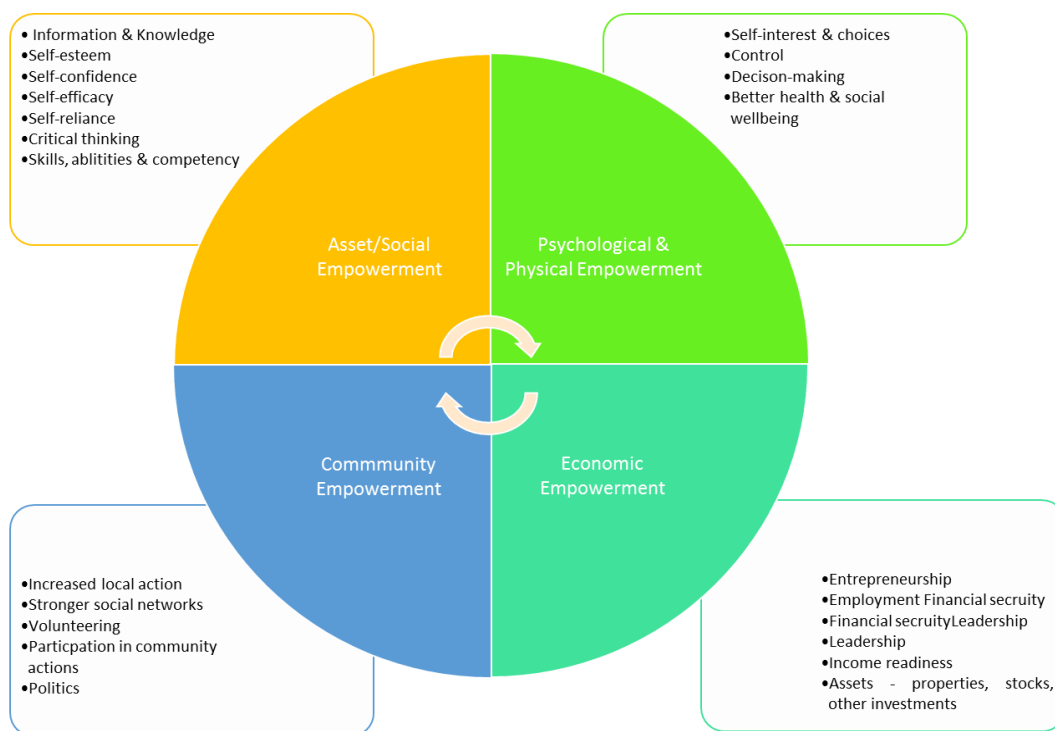
The overarching aim of the project is to empower marginalised women in Swale by tackling social inequalities among them. Other objectives of the project are:

- To help women with no qualifications to gain skills, leading to further education, paid employment or enterprise;
- To improve self-esteem, self- confidence and decision-making of women and girls;
- To create a network of support, information, advice, training, volunteering opportunities, which will enable women to access local services;
- To improve women and girls' opportunities for social engagements and interpersonal skills;
- To improve the psychological and physical wellbeing of women and girls
- To address women and girls needs holistically and thus improve their life chances.

1.3. SWAG Conceptualisation of Empowerment

Based on the evidence and anecdotal data in section 1.1 above, Diversity House embarked on finding solutions to resolve the underlining causes of disadvantages and deprivation among the diverse women in Swale. Diversity House noted that to support women and girls in Swale, that there needs to be a change of mind frame and attitudes among these women and girls. Women and girls need to take control of their affairs individually and collectively. Therefore, Diversity House theorises empowerment as “an action-oriented concept with a focus on removal of formal and informal barriers, and on transforming power relations between communities and institutions and government” (Themudo, 2009:2). Empowerment involves processes and outcomes. Based on this theory of empowerment, a conceptual framework for empowerment was formulated, which revolves around our theorisation of empowerment concept as demonstrated by the diagram below:

Figure 1 Domains of women and girl’s empowerment in Swale



1.3.a. Domains of Empowerment

The operationalisation of SWAG empowerment program as per the diagram above indicated that women and girls in Swale are to be supported to make changes in four core spheres such as:

- 1) Psychological and physical empowerment;
- 2) Economic empowerment;
- 3) Community empowerment; and
- 4) Assets/social empowerment

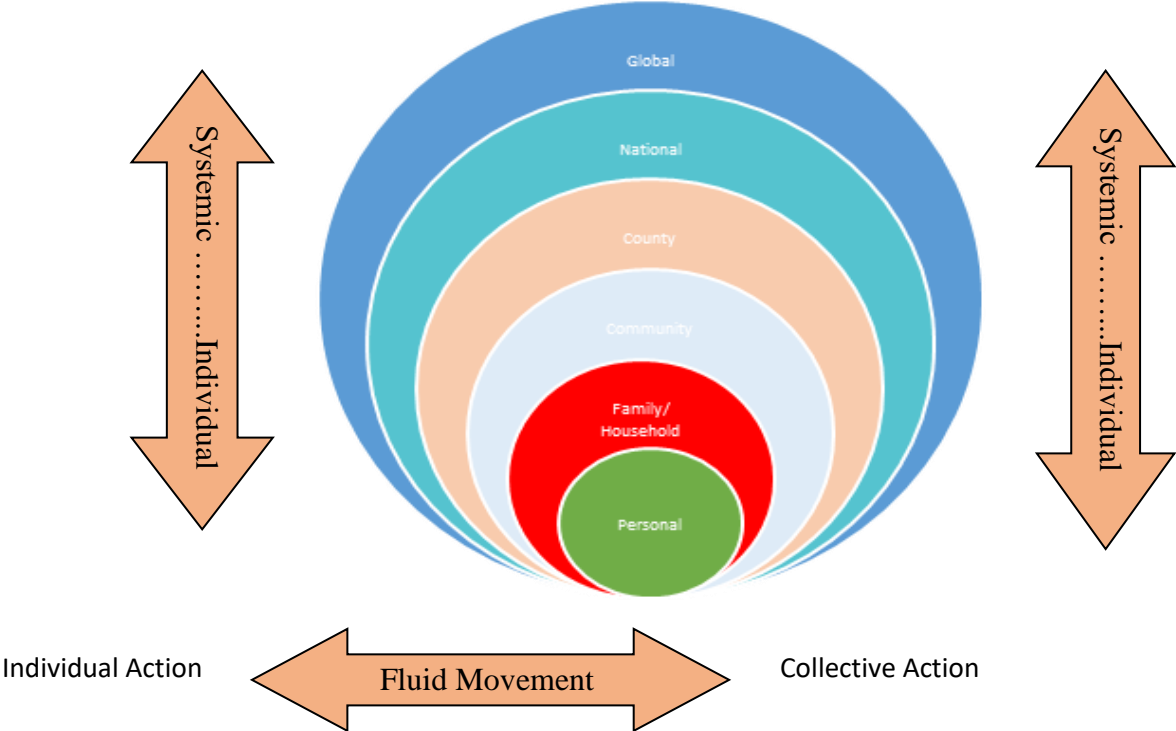
Each of the four core domains of empowerment has several indicators, which will help in monitoring progress and measuring changes in the lives of the women and girls engaging in SWAG project.

The assumptions made is that when women and girls engage and proactively participate in the various activities of the project, they will have;

- i. Improved health and wellbeing;
- ii. Improved self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy;
- iii. Improved skills for both paid and self-employment;
- iv. Improved motivation, aspiration, and reduced apathy;
- v. Improved participation in local community actions; and
- vi. Others

The empowerment of women and girls in Swale through SWAG project will occur on different levels as depicted by the diagram below:

Figure 2 Levels of women and girl’s empowerment in Swale



2.0. Year 2 Progress Report

The progress report for year two will consider the project’s activities and achievement from 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019. Also, it will consider SWAG’s plans for the coming year (year 3). In doing these, this report will highlight the emic of the project beneficiaries and other stakeholders regarding what is important to them and the significant impacts of activities delivered in the year under review. This report will draw on both quantitative and qualitative data to illustrate the progress made by the project so far.

2.1. Outcomes and Indicators for Year 2

In a bid to make its conceptualisation of the empowerment of women and girls in Swale a reality, Diversity House acted on the prioritisation of needs by the beneficiaries of the project. In the second year of the project, prevention and intervention revolved around equipping beneficiaries with well-researched information, advice and guidance; capacity building; health literacy and health promotion activities; employability opportunities; social networking and interactions; among others.

The four outcome areas that will be reported during this reporting period are as below:

Table 1: Outcomes

Outcome	Outcome Description
Outcome 1	Women and girls will gain improved motivation and confidence to access available local resources so expanding their horizons and opportunities.
Outcome 2	Women and girls will have improved opportunities, gaining new skills for employability or entrepreneurship, further their education or develop their career pathways.
Outcome 3	Women and girls will have improved psychological and physiological wellbeing to help them to develop and maintain their independence.
Outcome 4.	Volunteering opportunities through community and school activities will help gain skills for employment, build life skills, confidence, self-esteem and reduce isolation.

The above outcomes cannot be measured without indicators, acting as signs that changes or differences are occurring and buttressing the effectiveness of the project. The table below lists the indicators for each of the outcomes above. In this year two reporting period, outcome indicators are as below:

Table 2: Indicators table for year two.

Project outcome	Indicator	Level	Timescale
Outcome 1. The motivation & confidence of women & girls will improve.	Women & girls using the service will report increased motivation & confidence	100	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls will report increase knowledge of local services	50	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls will report accessing more services, more frequently to help them develop	50	By the end of year 2
Outcome 2 Women & girls will be better equipped to gain access to the job market	Women & girls will have increased access to work & educational opportunities	225	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls will have improved their skills	75	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls will use their new skills to apply for new opportunities, e.g. the job market, education and business	30	By the end of year 2

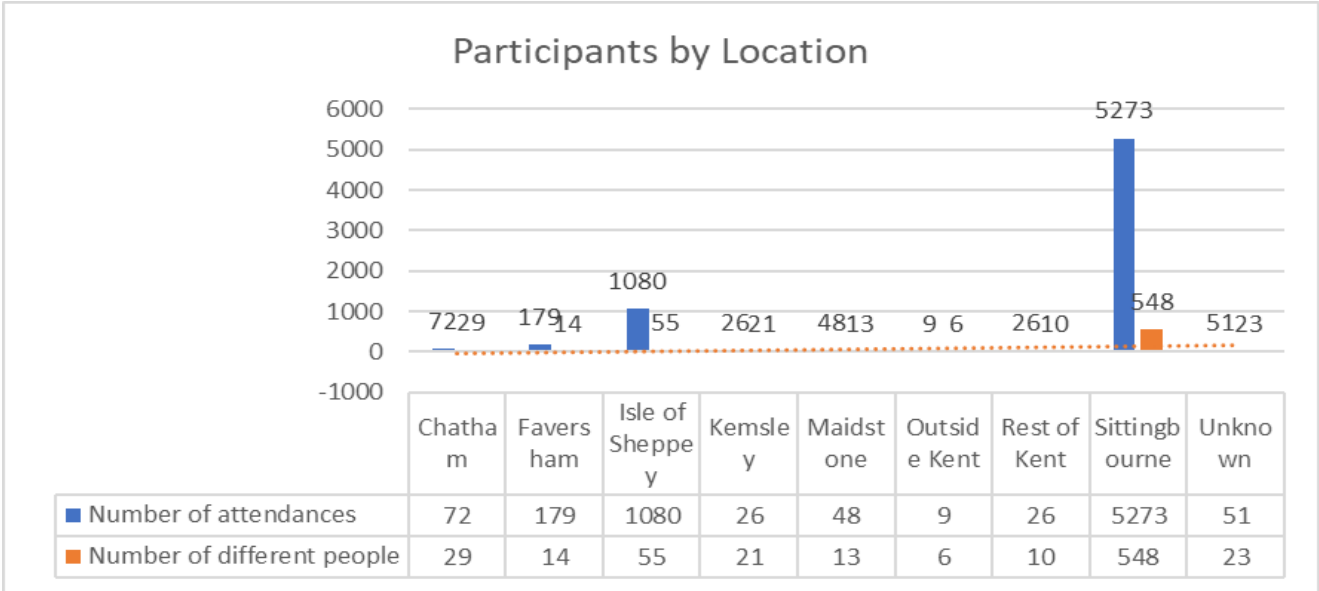
Outcome 3 The mental and physical wellbeing of women and girls will be improved	Women & girls have improved feelings of emotional wellbeing	100	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls will have increased levels of physiological wellbeing through the six ways to wellbeing – be active, keep learning, give, connect, take notice, care for the planet	100	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls can make decisions about themselves and others	150	By the end of year 2
Outcome 4 More women & girls will take part in volunteering activities	Women & girls have increased access to volunteering opportunities	100	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls engaging in volunteering opportunities	50	By the end of year 2
	Women & girls volunteering will feel less lonely and isolated	42	By the end of year 2

2.1.1. How did we perform, and what did we do?

Overall, a total of 6764 people participated in one or more of the over 600 sessions of activities provided in year two. However, out of the 6764 participants, 719 were different people. These 719 people frequently participated in the over 600 different sessions of activities and were counted for all those activities. The project team spent a total of 26706:58 people hours in delivering these activities. Out of these numbers, 1750 self-described themselves as females, 223 self-described as males, 19 were transgender, and 4767 did not partake in ethnic monitoring (unknown data). Within the 1750 women that participated in year 2 activities, 393 demonstrated changes in the four core outcome areas, 81 of the 223 men demonstrated changes in all four core outcome areas, out of the 19 transgenders, only 2 achieved changes in all outcomes areas, and only 152 out of 4767 people whose gender were unknown achieved changes in all four outcome areas. The chart below depicts the marital status of the beneficiaries who accessed the over 600 sessions of project activities.

2.1.2. The Demography of Beneficiaries

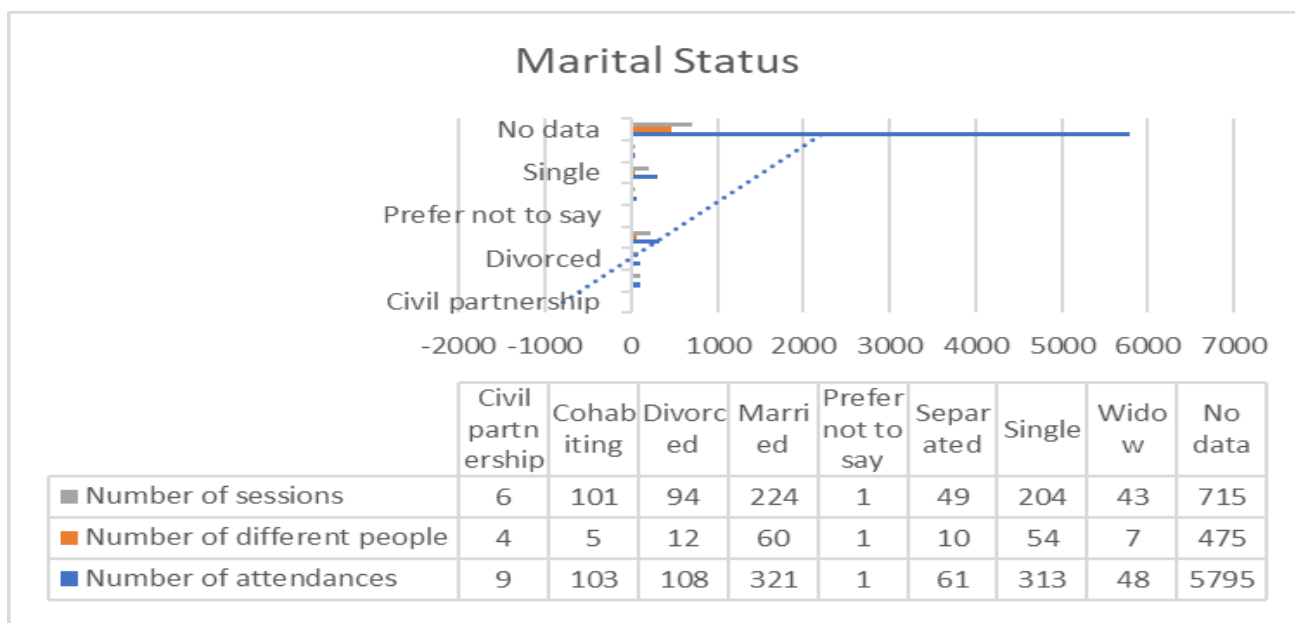
SWAG project is planned to meet the needs of women and girls in urban and rural Swale. Evidence indicates that where people live affects the way they access available services. Living in rural locations with little or no regular access to transportation can impact on the way women and girls access services, which in turn hurt their experiences of empowerment. Faversham and parts of Isle of Sheppey have several rural locations (villages) such as Oare Village, Halfway, Warden bay and other. Fifty percentage of beneficiaries should come from Sittingbourne, while twenty-five percentage should come from the Isle of Sheppey and Faversham respectfully. The chart below depicts the location where beneficiaries of the project come from in this reporting period. Also, the chart indicates that some beneficiaries of the project are not residents of Swale, which means that the project is having an impact outside of the Swale.



The marital status of participants was identified in order to understand the relational circumstances of the project beneficiaries and to gauge that the project is serving all those who are meant to use it. A breakdown of the marital status of the beneficiaries of the project is illustrated below.

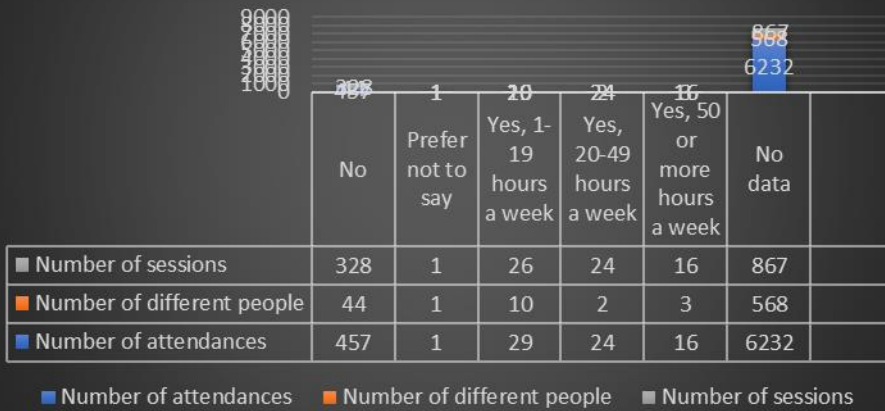
Marital status	Number of attendances	Number of sessions
Civil partnership	9	6
Cohabiting	103	101
Divorced	108	94
Married	321	224
Prefer not to say	1	1
Separated	61	49
Single	311	203

Marital status	Number of attendances	Number of sessions
Widow	48	43
Unknown	5668	551
Total	6630	1272
Mean	737	141



Beneficiaries family circumstance were taken into account; in this case, data was collected to identify if looking after families affect women’s engagement with the project. It was noted that out of the 457 women who responded that they are looking after family members and they participated in one or more of the over 600 different sessions of activities delivered during the year. However, 44 of these women participated in a total of 328 sessions of activities. We assume that caring role may impact on the ability and frequency of women and girls participation in community activities to transform their lives.

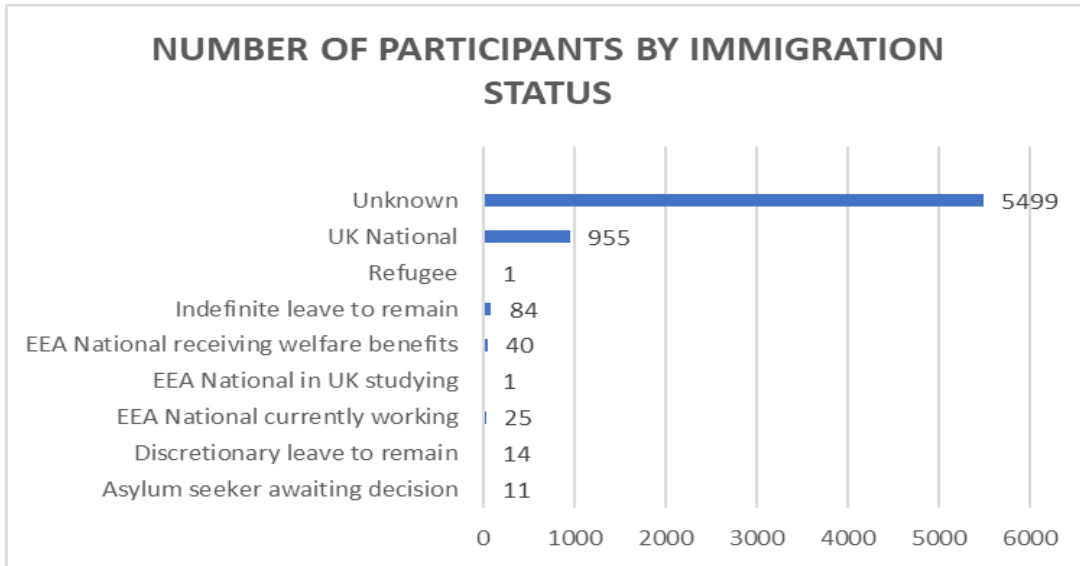
Participants that look after family members (caring roles)



The SWAG project aimed to support women and girls from all social categories and the project team made every effort to reach women and girls with various immigration status. Not having a settled status is another factor that could put women and girls to disadvantage as they may find it difficult to access services, particularly employment. Women and girls with limitation on their immigration status are not eligible to work (paid or voluntary) and to access welfare benefits including refuge (for those with domestic violence problems).

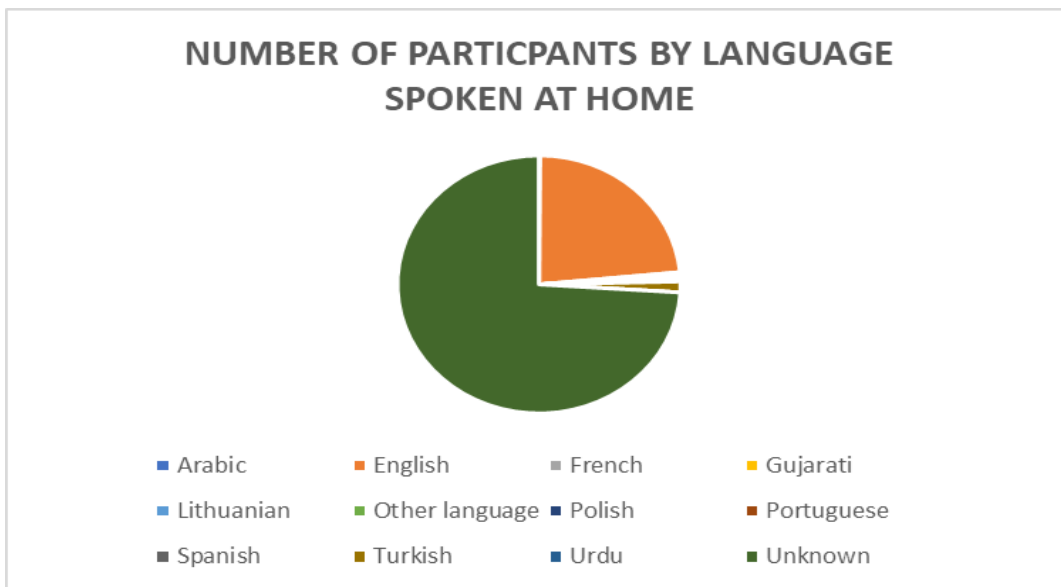
The immigration status of 5499 beneficiaries was unknown; however, 955 women and girls who benefitted from the project were UK nationals. Eleven of the beneficiaries were asylum seekers awaiting decision from the Home Office; one woman had a refugee status; fourteen had received a discretionary leave to remain in the country; eighty-four had indefinite leave status; one girl is an EEA national studying in the UK; twenty-five are EEA nationals working in the country; whilst forty are EEA nationals on welfare benefits in the UK.

The table depicts the immigration status of the beneficiaries of the project

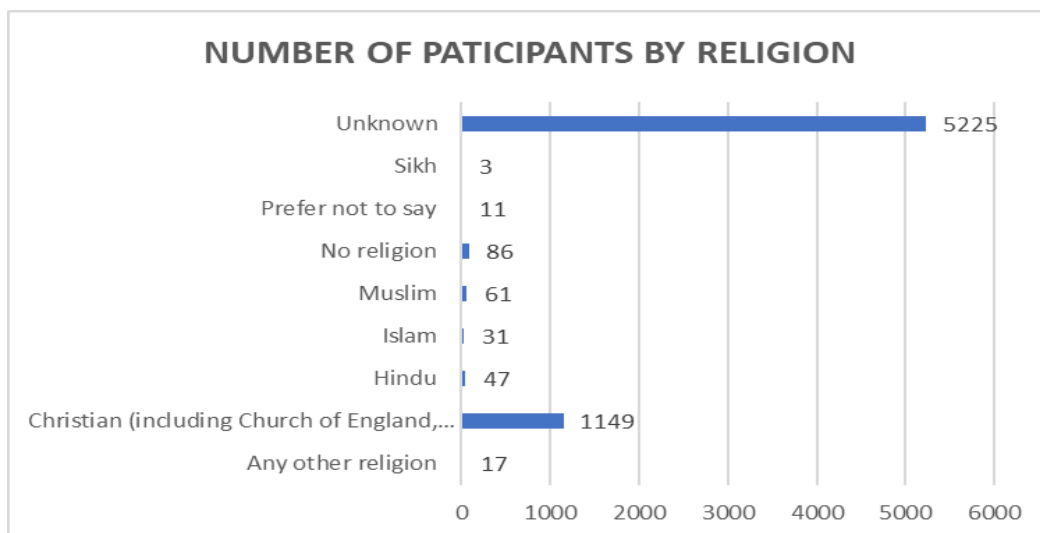


The most language spoken by beneficiaries at home was English, with 1550 people while 4906 preferred not to declare their spoken language.

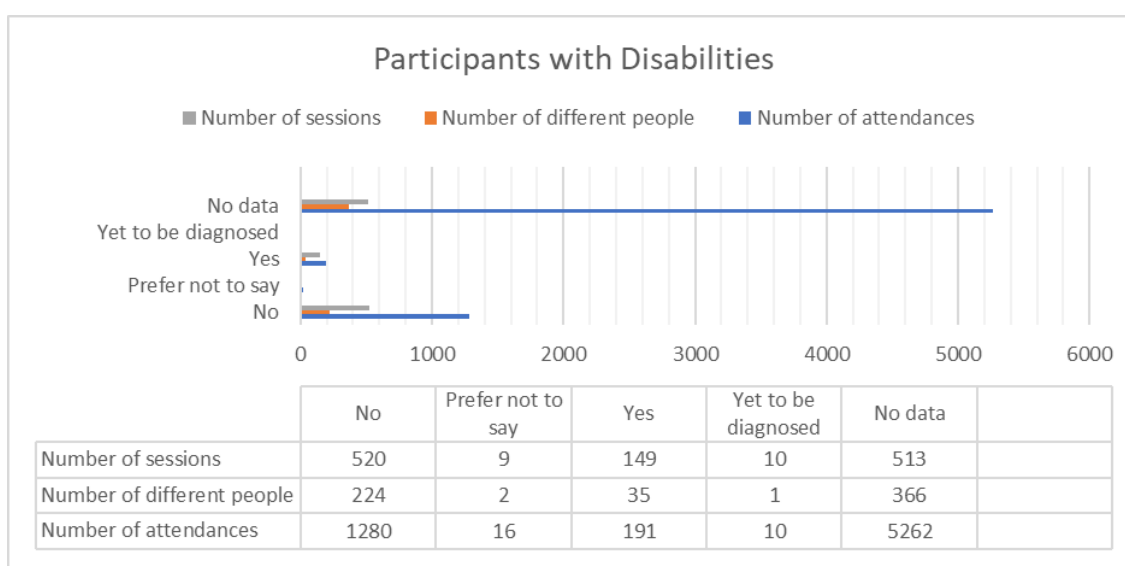
The chart below depicts the language that the project beneficiaries spoke at home.



The chart below depicts the religions of beneficiaries of the project. Christians had the highest participation of all those who proffered their religion. However, 5225 women and girls prefer not to reveal their religious affiliation.

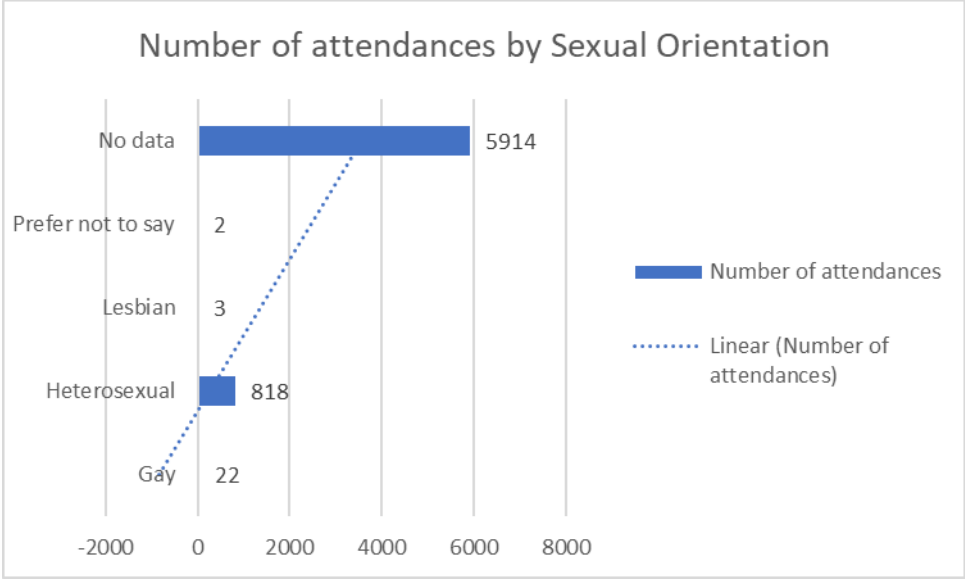


Another demographic data that was deemed crucial in the monitoring is disabilities. The project team wanted to identify if they were engaging with those with disabilities and what their experiences of participation were. The table below indicates that during the year under review, out of the over 6000 participants, 191 people self-reported to be disabled. Also, out of the 191 disabled people, 35 of them attended 149 sessions of activities.



Sexual orientation was an element that the project team wanted to collect. It is imperative to note that all women are not 'straight' or heterosexual. An empowerment project should embrace and promote inclusion and cohesion of women and girl's sexual preference. Also, some women and girls may be deterred from participating in community activities because of their sexual orientation, and this invisibility may add to their subordination and marginalisation. Therefore, an understanding of this factor was

crucial to the provision of an integrative and intersectional program in the year be reviewed.



In the next sections of this report, a breakdown of the various activities implemented will be proffered together with the description of impacts.

3.0. Year Two SWAG Project Activities

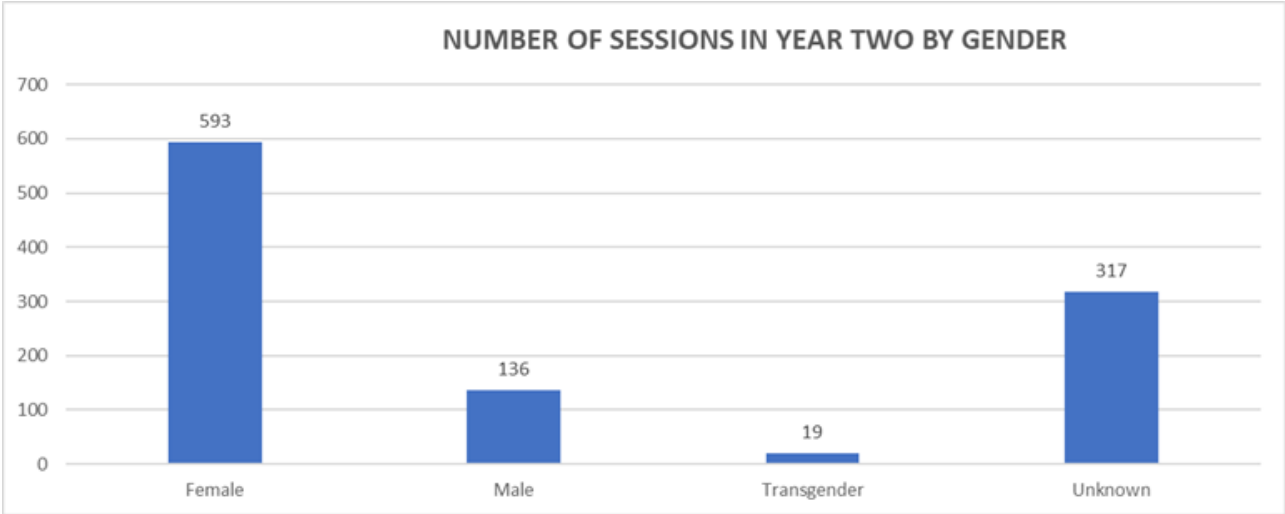
Table 1: Lists of project activities – 1 May 2018 to 20 April 2019

Several preventive and intervention programs were delivered during this reporting year. The table below indicates the number of activities provided by the project team in year two. This section will give a summary description of each of the activities delivered during this period.

The project team are very keen to understand how and who are using the different activities of the project; hence, diversity monitoring is top on the agenda of the teams' tasks. Over 600 sessions of activities were delivered, and records show that females participated in 593 sessions, males participated in 136 sessions, transgender accessed 19 sessions and those who did not respond participated in 317 sessions of activities.

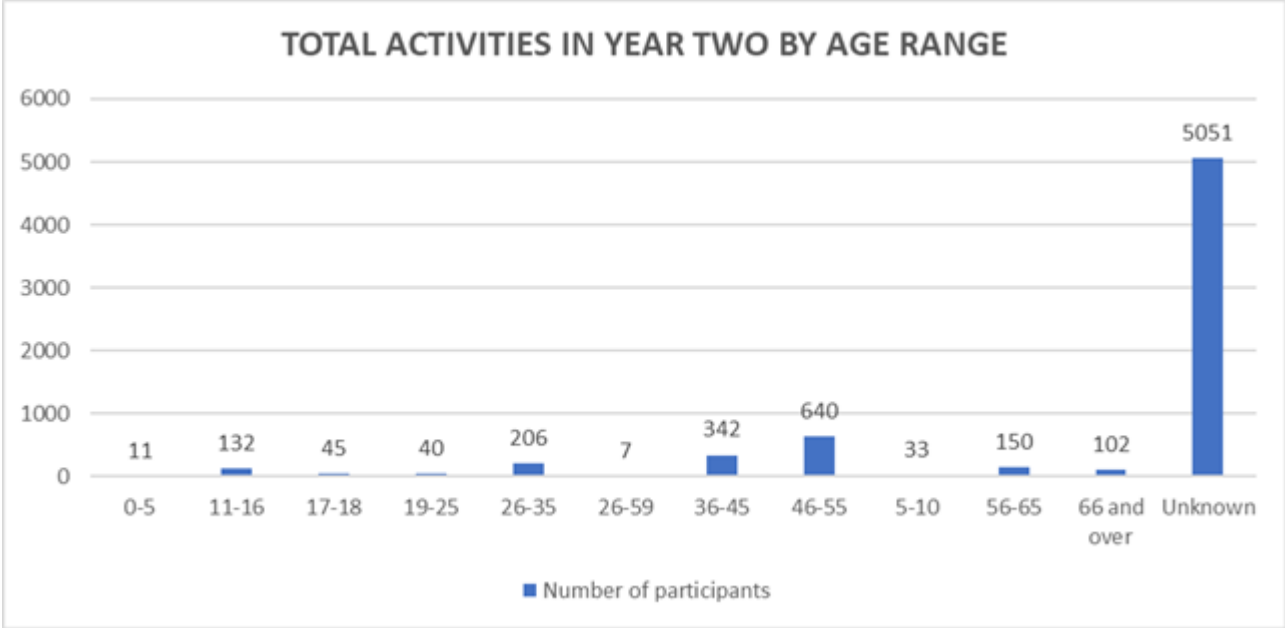
Nos	Activities	Total No of Participants	Total No. of different Participants
1	General enquiry (Information, advice & guidance)	293	146
2	Meetings	269	128
3	Drop-in Sessions	220	124
4	Mentoring and Support	574	292
5	Volunteering	3723	3244
6	Employability	408	311
7	Work placement	45	32
8	Job Club	127	82
9	ESOL	15	4
10	Conversation Club	131	86
11	After School Club	14	8
12	Homework Club	19	12
13	Business briefings	53	28
14	Workshops and training	2009	1817
15	Counselling	169	92
16	Outreach	3592	3416
17	LAPCEL – health and wellbeing	210	109
18	Walking & Exercise Club - wellbeing	89	33
19	Networking & community engagement	3106	2951
20	Donations - wellbeing	250	232
21	Collaboration & partnerships	4682	4320
22	Youth club	95	12
23	Arts and crafts - wellbeing	50	39
24	Advocacy	19	18
25	Apprenticeship	14	4

Table 2: Total numbers of sessions by gender



In terms of age, those within the age range of 46 to 55 years old participated most, followed by 36 to 45 years old. Although, 5051 beneficiaries did not provide their age.

Table 3: Total project activities by age range



3.1. Employability Skills

A crucial outcome for the SWAG project is to equip women and girls with the confidence and skills for paid employment, entrepreneurship, and further education. This is an excellent tool for women and girl’s financial stability. Therefore, a significant amount of time and money were spent to create opportunities to build the beneficiaries skills. Overall, 105 different sessions of activities were provided under

employability in year 2. Employability activities included – work placement, job club, apprenticeship, workshops and training.

In summary, a total of 2603 people partook in one or more of these activities. However, 313 different people participated in all the 105 sessions of activities. The total people hours for delivering these sessions was 12911:00.

Below is the breakdown of each of the activities delivered.

a. Work Placement & Take a Girl to Work Day

The work placement was vital in helping women and girls to gain much-needed skills and confidence for employment. Therefore, during the year under review, women and girls who engaged in the project were supported to participate in the work placement. There were different routes to work placement including, opportunities to work in Diversity House various projects, referral to partner organisations such as Swale Council for Volunteer Services, Ideas Test, Big Ideas Company, Swale Borough Council among others. An activity that was introduced in the reporting period is that of “Take a Girl to Work Day”. This activity is very significant as it gives young girls whose parents may not be in employment the opportunity to have a role model take them to work to experience the working environment. In Swale, a significant number of women are house persons or have never been in employment. Therefore, “Take a Girl to Work Day” is an approach to break generational dependency on benefits as these young girls will learn that it is rewarding and dignifying to be in work. Work placement and take a girl to workday helps to build women and girls self-esteem, confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Diagram 3: Work placement by age

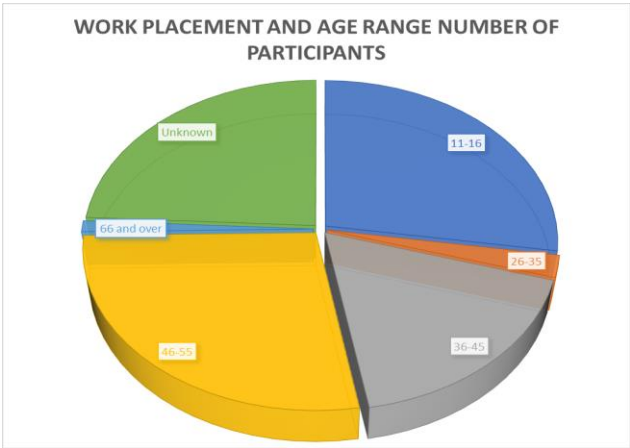
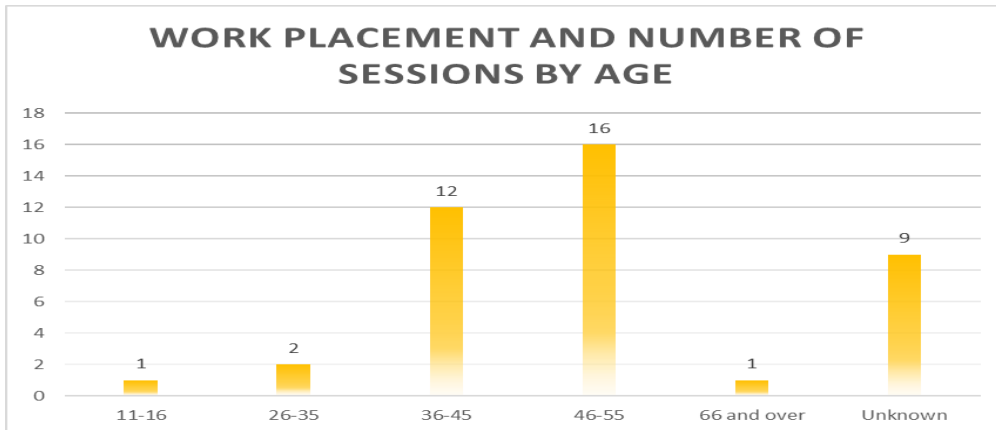


Table 4: Work placement and number of sessions by age



As shown by the table above, those aged between 46 to 55 took the most advantage of work placement, followed by those aged 36 to 45 years. The obtained result is surprising because one would have assumed that younger women and girls would participate most in work placement. However, what this data is showing us that some older women who have been looking after families for years are now wanting to go back to employment and needed to gain some work experience. Also, the advancement in new technology in industries and retail sectors means that most women are losing their jobs to technology and are having to rebrand themselves. For instance, in Swale women and girls make the higher percentage of those who work in the retail sector as sales assistants, shelves stockists, and others, but recent advances in technology have seen their jobs being taken over by Scanners.



Figure 3 Work placement & Take a Girl to Work Day

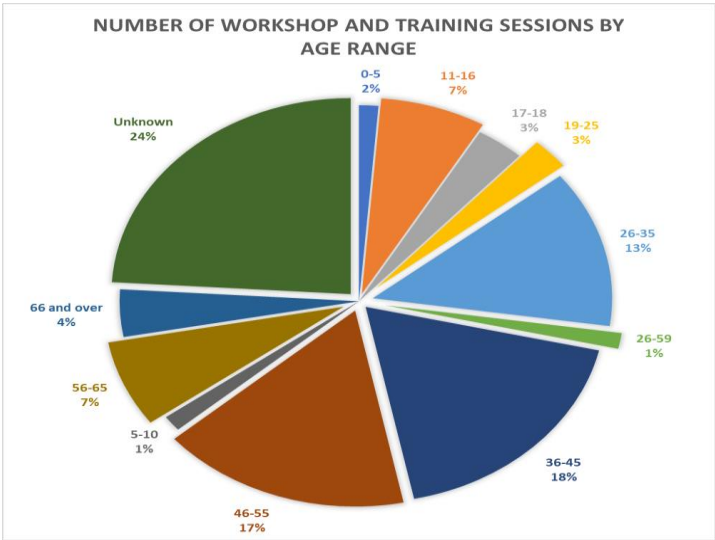
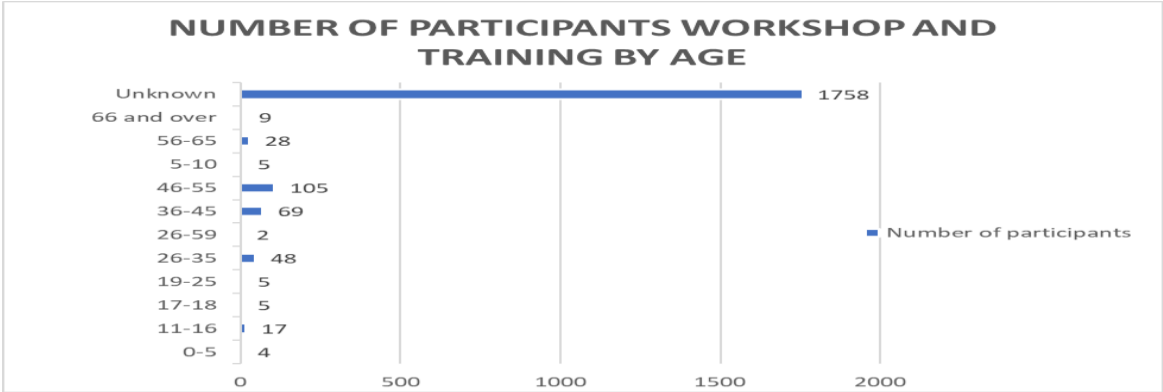
b. Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship was another activity that was introduced during this reporting period. The project team wanted to ensure that young girls who did not find placement in universities or who did not want to go to university did not stop learning. Apprenticeship is a way for earning an income and learning at the same time. During this reporting year, the project team were involved in supporting local secondary schools with their career option days and in so doing, it was identified that several students did not apply for placements in universities. Also, it was noted that many young girls did not want to study science-based subject, therefore, the CEO of Diversity House, who herself is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Ambassador decided to devote some time to mentor and motivate young girls to take up science subjects. Besides, she started urging local industries to give apprenticeship opportunities for young girls. In the year 2 of this project, DS Smith Kemsley Paper Mill and Sparshett Truck & Van (Sittingbourne) made available 14 apprenticeship opportunities for young girls to study engineering and production in local colleges, with a starting pay of £18,000. Unfortunately, only four girls took up the opportunity offered to them by DS Smith.

c. Workshops & Training

In the second year of SWAG, a series of workshops and training were provided for women and girls to help them to gain and increase their skills (social and life). Workshops and training included – filling the void (workshop to enable beneficiaries to address childhood trauma); self-esteem and confidence; assertiveness; relate (counselling course for none counsellors); and empowerment workshop (helping beneficiaries to develop skills for personal decision-making, choices, trust, and others). Other training delivered during the period were debt management and prevention; health and safety; volunteering; event management; writing a business plan and feasibility studies; CV writing; writing cover letters for a job application; careers advice, writing a personal statement for university application; journey towards the end of life; suicide prevention; among others. Tabulated below is the statistics of beneficiaries by age bracket. Also, pictures depicting some beneficiaries are proffered. The data collected from workshops and training confirms our assumptions made from the work placement. Just like in work placement, participants aged between 46 to 55 years participated most in workshops and training than any other age range. We assume that this group needed to retrain and be more job-ready as they may be returning to employment or seeking new employment. In year 2, 2009, women and girls took part in the different workshops and training delivered and out of which, 1871 reported gaining improved skills and confidence. The charts below give the numbers of participants by age bracket and the number of workshops and age range. [Visit this link to hear about the business workshop](http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/business-start-workshop/) - <http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/business-start-workshop/>

Table 5: Total number of beneficiaries engaged in workshops and training by age



Some other workshops and training include – empowerment, assertiveness, filling the void (a training for women who went through childhood trauma). Pictures below show a cross-section of women beneficiaries of these workshops and training.

Figure 4 Filling the void workshop



Figure 5 Participants of filling the void workshop in session



Figure 6 Self-esteem & Confidence Building Workshop



Figure 7 Empowerment Workshop & Networking



Figure 8 Assertiveness Workshop



Figure 9 Careers Advice Day



d. Homework and Afterschool Club

SWAG aims to prevent some of the underlining causes of subordination and disadvantages among women and girls, which are lack of skills, underachieving academically, and low numbers of girls taking up STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Education is a crucial driver in avoiding financial dependence later in life; therefore, young girls were supported with their school work, advice and motivational activities were delivered to them. The project team worked collaboratively with local schools such as Highsted Grammar School, Westland School, Abbey School, and Fulston Manor School to help students during their options and careers days. The project team worked with students in deciding which subjects will help them in their future career pathways. Apart from working in schools supporting young girls, the project team-initiated homework and afterschool club in one of the most deprived estates in Sittingbourne, that is, Cavell Way. The Afterschool and Homework Club are strategies used to support, build aspiration and motivate young secondary school girls to make time for their studies. Regular participants to these activities were 29, out of which 20 young girls reported very positive outcomes. They informed that participating in the club's activities helped them in improving their results and gave them a clear vision of what to do when they go to university. The chart below is some indication of the beneficiaries. Also, the picture below shows some of the beneficiaries in their school uniforms.

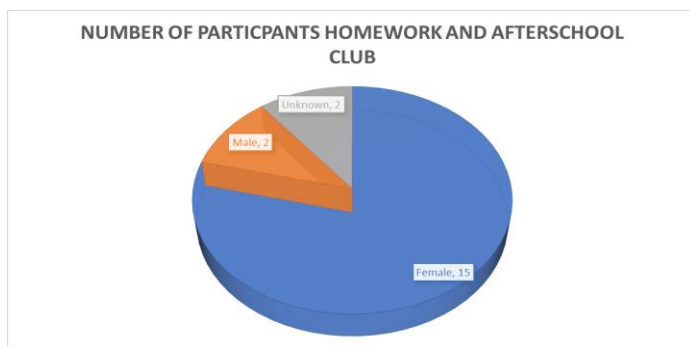


Figure 10 Some Homework & Afterschool Club Members



e. Health Literacy and Health Promotion

The project aims to promote the psychological and physical health of women and girls. Therefore, activities provided in year two of the project were geared towards giving beneficiaries health information, promoting their healthy lifestyles, health beliefs and attitudes. The project team worked collaboratively with other partners and agencies delivered a series of activities including – Counselling, palliative care and end of life for BME groups (LAPCEL), lunchtime walking club and yoga, healthy eating, food received from local farmers and supermarkets (e.g. Tesco) were given to SWAG beneficiaries, advocacy, referrals to domestic abuse services, female genital mutilation advice and prevention. Also, young women and girls were given tampon received from supermarket to avert period poverty. Overall, a total of 753 people in one or more of the 106 sessions of activities that took place in the year. However, 156 different people participated in all the 106 sessions of activities.

- **Counselling**

In terms of counselling, 169 women and girls benefited from this service out of which 92 reported a positive change of circumstances, particularly with their relationships, emotions, work and family life balance. The chart below depicts the percentage of females and males who partook in this activity.

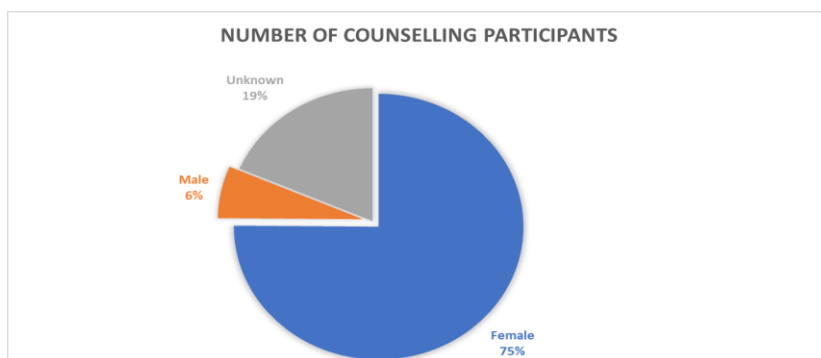


Figure 11 Some women attending the counselling workshop



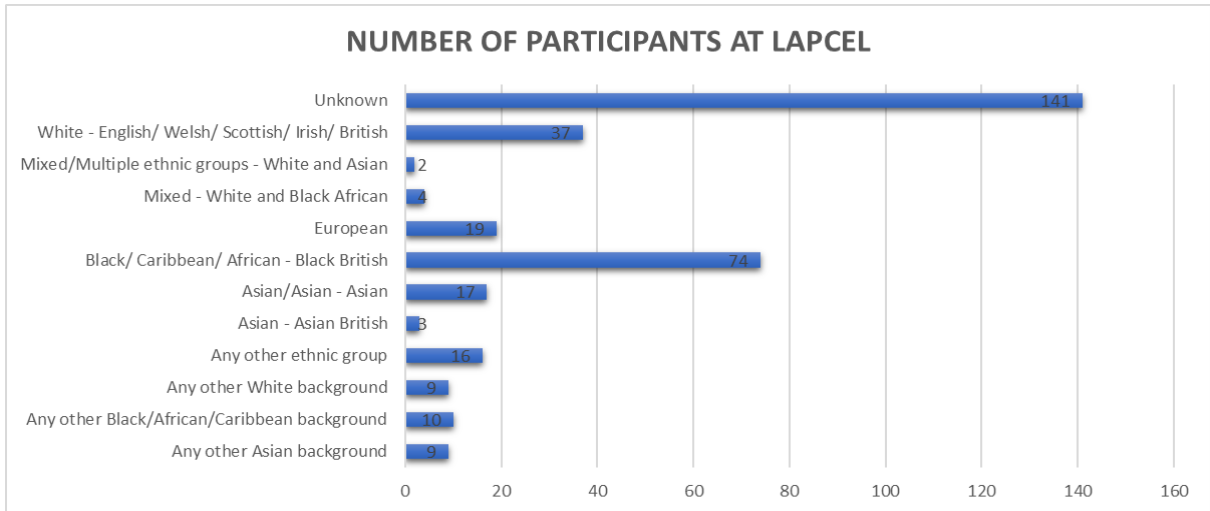
- **Palliative Care and End of Life (LAPCEL)**

Palliative and End of Life Care Services for Local and Eastern European Romany & Traveller Communities. This activity is a collaboration between Diversity House, Greenwich University, Anglia Ruskin University, Medway Diversity Forum, Eleanor Hospice, Public Health England, among others. Continuing the quest to raise awareness of the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups on palliative and end of life services, Diversity House, as part of the Learning Alliance hosted another seminar at Greenwich University in Medway on 15th September 2018 and 2nd February 2019 at Swale Borough Council.

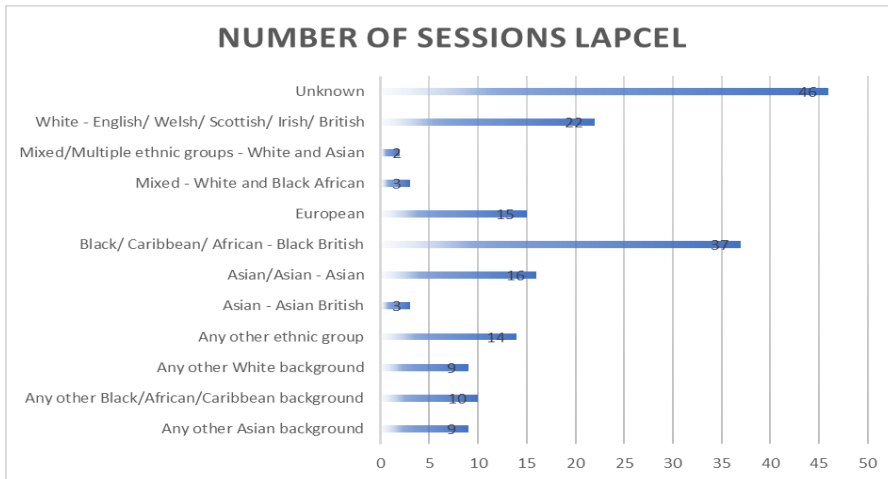
The topic for discussion this time round was the needs of Eastern European and Romany, Traveller Groups, their experiences of accessing services, as well as identifying measures of how these services could be improved.

Approximately 201 beneficiaries took part in this program out of which 109 reported improved awareness and confidence in accessing this service when needed.

The chart below depicts the participants of this program by ethnicity



The chart below indicates the numbers of sessions by ethnicity.



The picture below shows some of the participants in the activity (LAPCEL).
Figure 12 LAPCEL Workshop



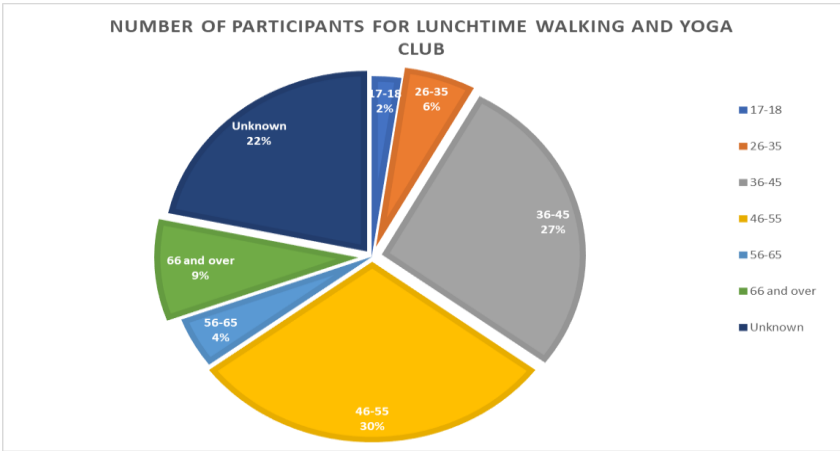
Figure 13 LAPCEL Participants



- **Lunchtime Walking Club and Yoga Exercise**

Promoting the health and wellbeing of women and girls was top on the project’s priority list. Evidence from Swale Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Sources: Psychological Therapies: Annual report on the use of IAPT services, NHS Digital (2018) show that in terms of psychological therapies females in Swale have lower recovery rate than England’s average. Therefore, a significant process of supporting women and girls in Swale is through improving their rates of physical activities and their eating habits, among others. In year 2, lunchtime walking, and yoga exercises were some of the ways that the project team used to empower the project beneficiaries. In addition to this health promotion activity is the weekly lunchtime walking and one-hour yoga sessions were carried out. Overall, 89 women and girls frequently participated in the weekly session and out of these, 33 reported improved health and

wellbeing. Also, 6 of these women went on to register with Park Run UK for a minimum 5km weekly run at the Milton Creek Country Park. Those within the age brackets of 46 – 55 years (30%) and 36 – 45 years were 27%.



While in the frequency of participation, those between the age brackets of 36-45 and 46-55 had the most percentage of participation, that is, 22%.

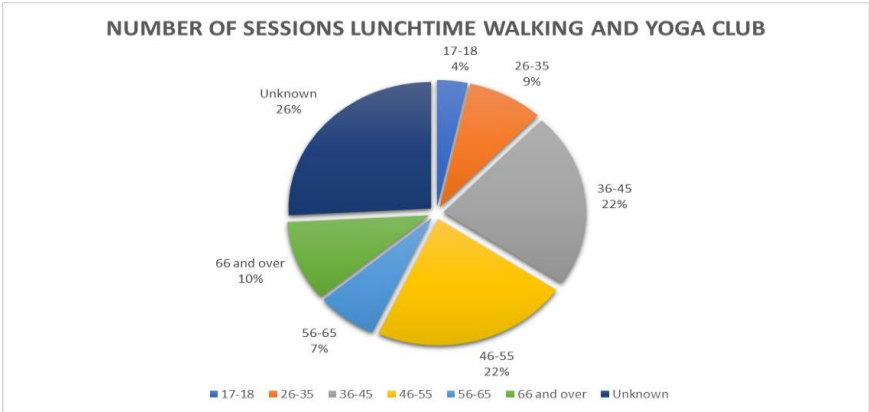


Figure 14 Some SWAG Beneficiaries on their weekly Walks.



Figure 15 SWAG Beneficiaries progressing to Park Run



- **Art and Crafts**

In this reporting year, the project team added a new activity to their already jam-packed lists and this is Art and Crafts for the senior citizens. This activity was added to meet the expressed needs of women aged 60 years and over, using Faversham and Sittingbourne AgeUK Day Centre. In essence, this activity is a collaboration between AgeUK and SWAG project team. On average, 39 different people partake in this activity every week.

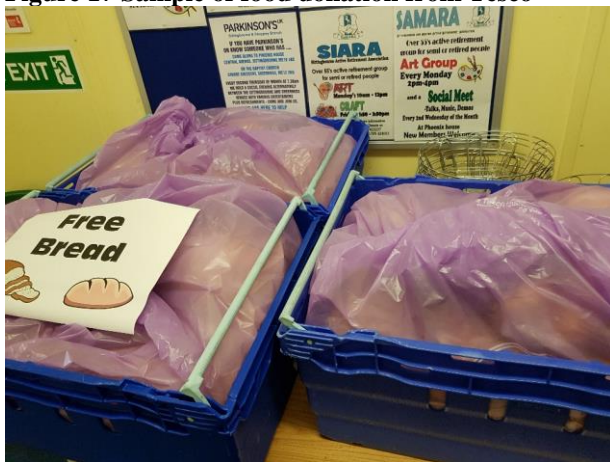
Figure 16 Senior Citizens in Art & Crafts Activities



- **Healthy Eating (Free Food)**

As a way of supporting women and girls to address obesity, they were taught how to cook healthy meals within a budget. Regular meals were shared among beneficiaries and beneficiaries were provided fresh fruits and vegetables, donated to SWAG project by local farmers and Tesco. Two hundred fifty women and girls benefited from the weekly food donation at the centre. However, 232 different women informed that they depended on the free food, fruits and vegetables that they collected from the project weekly to supplement their food shopping.

Figure 17 Sample of food donation from Tesco



- **Period Poverty**

Young women and girls could become isolated, losing their self-esteem and self-confidence due to not having necessities such as tampon/sanitary towels. The project team with support from local supermarkets was able to provide regular sanitary towels to women and girls that need them.

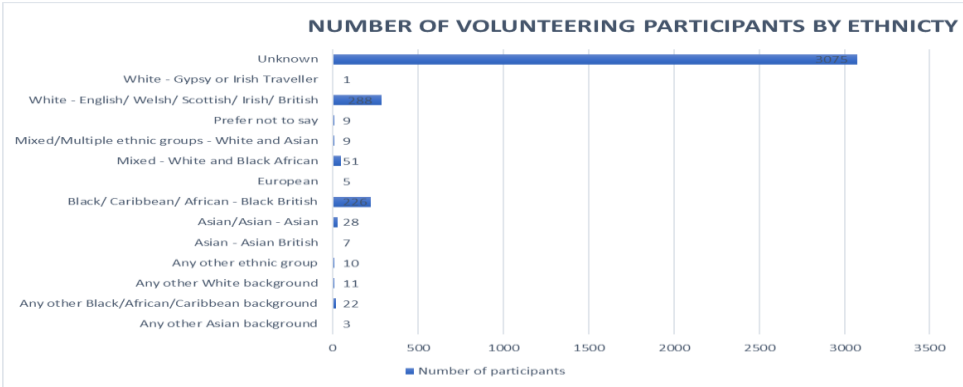
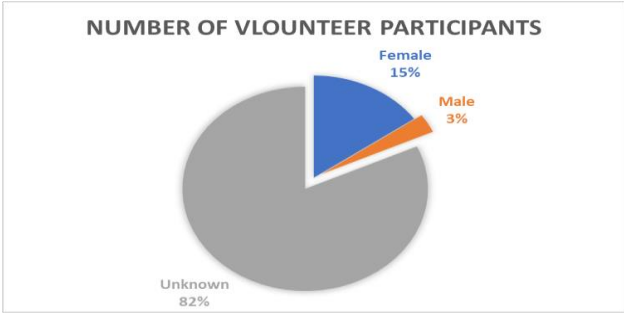
Figure 18 Tampons Donated by Local Supermarkets



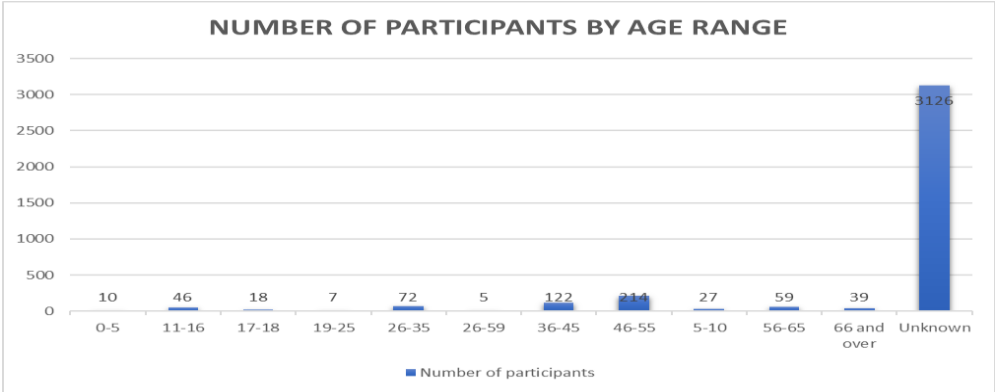
f. Volunteering

Volunteering is core to community engagement and local community actions. The project team introduced a flexible approach to volunteering, which is not rigid and meaning that women with as little as 30 minutes of free time a day could participate in volunteering. Volunteering could include walking your neighbour's dog as you are walking yours, or picking a pint of milk for the old lady down your street. This flexibility ensured that a high percentage of women and girls engaged in one form of volunteering or the other.

Women and girls made up of 15% of those who trained and volunteered in year two of the project. However, 82% of beneficiaries of this activity preferred not to divulge their gender. The project team used every avenue to recruit, induct, train and place women and girls as volunteers. Swale Council for Volunteers Services was assigned to provide induction and training for the beneficiaries, enabling them to volunteer either in-house in Diversity House or with other local charities and organisations in Swale. The charts below depict the percentage of volunteers during this period by gender and ethnicity.



The most volunteers were between the age brackets of 46-55 years old = 214 and 36-45 years old were 122. However, most of the volunteers, that is, 3126, did not give their age.



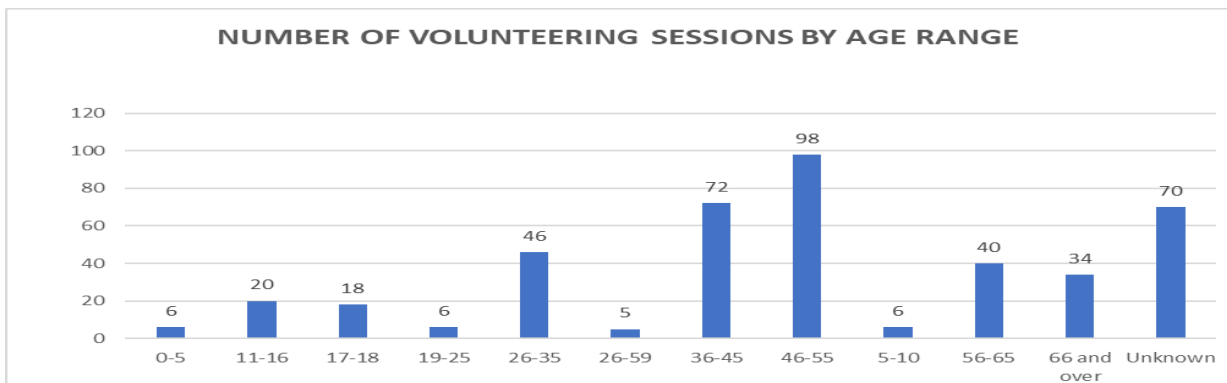
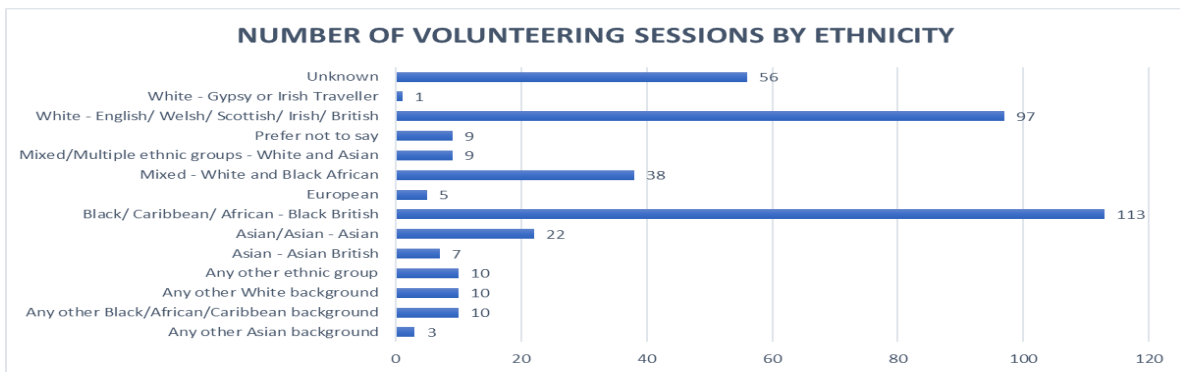
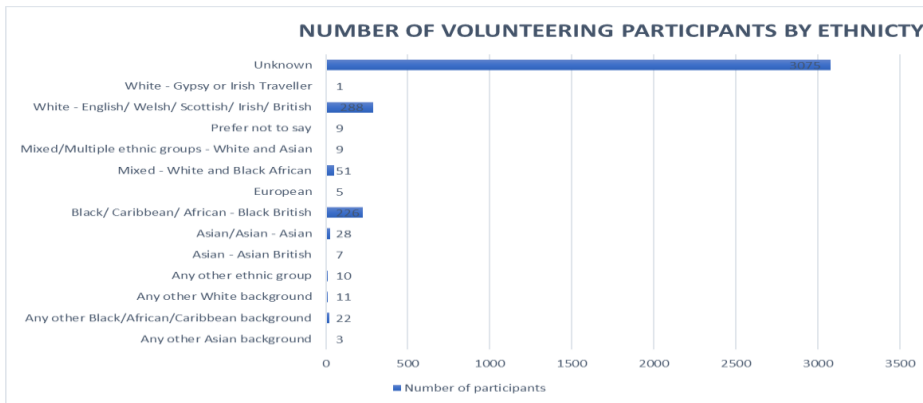


Figure 19 Some volunteers showcasing their certificates



Figure 20 Volunteers leading on Activities at a Community Event



g. English for Speakers of other languages (ESOL) and Conversation Club

Language is usually a barrier for women and girls from accessing community services. Recent migrants from countries where English is not spoken, find it difficult to engage or participate in any community services when they arrive in the UK. Evidence shows that more than 55 different national languages are spoken in Swale. Some women in communities such as Chinese, Turkish, Asian, Polish have lived for several years in the district but are still finding it difficult to speak the English Language. Their inability to speak English limit their opportunities to be gainfully employed, to support their children in school works, to engage in parent evenings at schools, to socialise in the community and participate in local actions. The project team noted that for some of the women from the minority communities, one need to start teaching them English from the beginning, that is, from the alphabetical stage. This means that they cannot be referred onwards to the Adult Education for support as they would not meet the criteria for enrollment. The project team had to initiate and facilitate the ESOL and conversation club to help build the beneficiaries necessary language skills and confidence before referring them to Adult Education for further tuition. Pictures below depict women and girls benefiting from the ESOL and conversation Club. [Visit this link for beneficiaries interviews](http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/english-speaking-class/)

Picture of beneficiaries attending English Language lesson (ESOL).

Figure 21 English Language Class (ESOL)



Figure 22 Conversation Club



h. Outreach

The project team were proactively embedded in the community. The project was in the heart of the community, ensuring that beneficiaries knew what was on the offer and how to access all the activities of the project. Weekly assertive outreach was carried out, and regularly talks were given by the project officer at the Radio Stations in Sheerness and Sittingbourne. Volunteers and project staff distribute posters, flyers and other promotional literature to create awareness of the project activities. Also, the project team and volunteers use all community events and festivals as platforms for publicising the project and for recruiting additional volunteers and enrolling beneficiaries.

Overall, 3592 people informed that outreach was crucial to their hearing about most project activities. The project team undertook 57 community outreach across the district, spending a total of 18905:43 people hours.

Figure 23 Volunteers manning the Stall at an Outreach Event



i. Networking and Community Engagement

One of the critical assumptions of the project and empowerment as conceptualised by SWAG team is that women through the project will have improved confidence to participate in local community actions and that through their engagement, they become active citizens, contributing to community decisions, socialising and taking control of their own lives and that of others.

In year 2, a totally of 2951 different women and girls had the opportunity to socialise and partake in community engagement activities, reporting forming new relationships and contributing to their community’s social capital.

Figure 24 Community Engagement in Sittingbourne



Figure 25 Women Enjoying Open Mic Poetry



Evaluation

Summary of the evaluation framework and objectives

The monitoring and evaluation framework for the SWAG project is underpinned by the logic model and theory of change, set at the consultative and planning phases of the project.

There are different methods that the project team used to monitor and evaluate the process and impact of the project in the year under review. The methods used are grouped under qualitative and quantitative methods. Using a mixed-method to monitor and evaluate the project meant that the project team were able to collect hard data (numbers) and soft data (narratives from the project beneficiaries and partners). These two methods complement each other as those changes which cannot be counted are extrapolated from the narratives of the beneficiaries themselves. The table below depicts some of the tools used for monitoring and evaluating the project in year two.

As demonstrated by the table below, quantitatively, the project met the four outcomes. Also, narratives from some beneficiaries as seen in the case studies below indicated that they had positive experiences too.

The table below depicts the outcomes of the project quantitatively.

Table of outcomes achieved

Project outcome	Indicator	Level	Tracking Tools	No. Achieved in Year 2
Outcome 1. The motivation & confidence of women & girls will improve.	Women & girls using the service will report increased motivation & confidence	100	Outcome Star; questionnaires; comment sheets; attendance and service user log; participants observation; Lamplight dbase System; photovoice; self-esteem test etc.	587
	Women & girls will report increase knowledge of local services	50		6630
	Women & girls will report accessing more services, more frequently to help them develop	50		549
Outcome 2 Women & girls will be better equipped to gain access to the job market	Women & girls will have increased access to work & educational opportunities	225	Attendance sheet; training evaluation form; Lamplight dbase System; pre and post-test; one-to-one interviews; Case studies; Skills audit and action planning chart; work Star;	465
	Women & girls will have improved their skills	75		268
	Women & girls will use their new skills to apply for new opportunities, e.g. the job market, education and business	30		102
Outcome 3 The mental and physical wellbeing of women and girls will be improved	Women & girls have improved feelings of emotional wellbeing	100	Mentoring log; service user logs; pre and post-test; feedback form; significant change stories; Outcome Star; Walk and run chart; exercise activities chart;	735
	Women & girls will have increased levels of physiological wellbeing through the six ways to wellbeing – be active, keep learning, give, connect, take notice, care for the planet	100		456
	Women & girls can make decisions about themselves and others	150		186
Outcome 4	Women & girls have increased access to volunteering	100	Volunteer enrolment form;	3745

More women & girls will take part in volunteering activities	opportunities		Volunteer timesheet; social skills pre and post-screening;	
	Women & girls engaging in volunteering opportunities	50		281
	Women & girls volunteering will feel less lonely and isolated	42		281

Following the quantitative data on achieved outcome in year two is some testimonials from some women who benefited from the project.

Case Study One

Figure 26 Case Study One - Rashmi



How I started a Beauty Business from Scratch with the Support of Diversity House. I first came to the UK from India 13 years ago with family, at the time it was only myself, husband and baby daughter. We settled in Hemel Hempstead amongst a sizeable Asian community, so I found little opportunity to learn English. My native language is Kannada and therefore, I could not speak the language. I found it very difficult to communicate and even do essential activities like taking my children to the hospital, children’s centre etc. In the early days, most of my time was spent looking after my young children; I now added another member to my family, my lovely son, who was six months when we moved to Sittingbourne. Because I was no longer surrounded by my community, I found things even more challenging to get by. At the weekends I run a stall doing face painting and henna designs, also some festivals. However, my lack of English was a real problem. I learnt a little from customers, but I knew I needed to do more. In 2012, I bumped into Mrs Christine Locke, fortunately, at Phoenix House and she informed me about the Diversity House programme Swale Women Empowering Women which would help improve not only my English but other areas including my business. This was the first time I heard about the empowerment programme, and I was happy to join. Christine referred me to the English as a Second Language (ESOL) at the Adult Education Centre t I registered for Entry Level 3, which proved to be a turning point in my life. Before going on the SWEW programme, I was isolated, with no friends hindered by lack of English, but once I joined my life started to

change. I was on my journey of empowerment. I gained more confidence and even hired a room at Phoenix House after Christine introduced me to the management. Once children were at school, I ran my business now with added beauty services including eyebrow threading, facials, manicure, pedicure, eyebrow tinting, eyelash extension. The whole works. I had taken a beauty course at Fast Track and Sally's Beauty Salon. I kept up with the English classes, and even my friends became my customers. We do parties together, go shopping and chat with each other now and again.

One of my long-time goals was to pass ESOL level 1 in English, Level 2 Maths and to sit for the exam: Supporting Children's Learning course and Rapid English. I am proud to say I achieved all these goals in 2016. I am even thinking of giving my son, who has ASD (Autism) extra support, instead than paying for expensive tuition.

In the same year, I received an achievement award from the Mayor of Doorstep Learning, and since then I have completed more Kent Adult Education courses including Jewellery Making, Cake Decorating, First Aid, Sign Language, Computer Skills and How to Run a Business. I even passed.

In summary, the driving test and have my car. There is no stopping me now. It is hard to think about how my life has changed from the early days. The Swale Women Empowering Women Programme made a difference to my family and me.

All I can say is thank you to Diversity House for assisting my progress! I hope this story will give you the motivation to do the same (<http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/started-beauty-business-scratch-support-diversity-house/>).

Case Study Two

Aderonke runs and after school pick up service in Sittingbourne. This is her story:

I currently have an after – school day-care, where I pick the children up from school, and they stay with me until their parents come and collect them. The bonus is Ade has a late collection hour, so this helps people who have a long commute home. I gained a lot from attending the course; I have a better understanding of the legislation of childcare and taxing of small business and how to go about things set by step. How to write the business plan, how to advertise and market myself. Because I studied business administration, the course gave me fresh. She went into a great deal on how to work out profit and loss. I will be creating a proper business plan, record keeping, along with setting myself targets and how I can meet those targets.

I am currently mainly using word of mouth you can reach her on

Overall, I found that the workshop was very informative and helpful.

(Aderonke, Mother of two).

Case Study Three

Journey to `Why Fund Management is an excellent career for Women` event on the 18th July 2018



On my quest to return to marketplace as God had told me. I had come across the above-stated event, and to my utmost surprise on Friday the 15th July 2018, I found out that it was fully booked online. I tried to contact the event planners to no avail. On Monday the 16th I brought this to the attention of Mrs Christine Locke of Diversity House who took it upon herself to try to find a way to get me to the event. She looked up the panel of speakers and searched out one of them on LinkedIn. Next, she called the lady's office and spoke to her PA who asked that the request be put in writing. On Wednesday morning we had not had any response, so we followed it up with a phone call, and the lady said she was not able to help as she was not willing to show favouritism to any one person. At this point I said to Mrs Locke that despite what looked like a setback, I was not deterred from going to London and with determination, I would still be able to register to attend the event, to which she also agreed and encouraged me to go. I left early, and I was the first delegate the first to arrive at 4:50 pm. I approached the registration team and explained my plight of wanting to attend the event and that I felt it was a great opportunity not to be missed. On hearing about the attempts, I had made, the lady proceeded to prepare a name tag to allow me to attend the event.

In engaging and networking with other delegates, I was able to use some of the things I had been taught in my one to one session Mrs Locke; listening, being confident, being presentable, punctuality, and having a positive attitude to learning and new approaches to doing things. The structure of the formal part of the event was as follows; first a welcome speech by the company CEO, the panel talk and discussion by women from diverse backgrounds sharing their individual experiences in the industry. At the end of the discussions, the panel members graciously stayed behind to answer questions we delegate had for them on a one to one interaction. I confidently approached different people, and I found their responses helpful and saw them as pointers in the right direction. I was able to come to an action plan of how to use what I had gained from attending the event to what I will embark on in the future.

By Yinka (Member of Supporting Women and Girls project)
(<http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/journey-fund-management-great-career-women-event-18th-july-2018/>).

Personal statement

“SWAG team are committed to supporting people. They are always sacrificing their time to support people. They are role models that I am emulating now, especially in my life, to be focused and determined in my personal life. The team make me feel that I am a priority anytime that I use the drop-in service. They make me feel as if I matter, because of this I will not let them down. I will work hard to make changes in my life”.

(Anita - mother of 3)

Networking, alignment, linkages, sustainability

The project team has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve and how to go about achieving them. The clarity of vision is key to SWAG success. However, the project would not have achieved or exceeded year two's outcomes without active collaboration and joined-up working. Collaboration is an essential tool, which extends resources, builds momentum and stretches inadequate funding. Collaboration often requires new partners to learn about one another and understand the issues from different perspectives.

In the year under review, the SWAG team went beyond “the usual suspects” to engage with less typical partners, such as AgeUK, Tesco, Morrisons, DS Smith Kemsley Paper Mill, Sparshett Van and Trucks Sittingbourne, the Police, elected officials of all parties in the local district, among others. Diversity House and the project team by building up its partnership base ensured that old activities were sustained, and new opportunities were provided for the project's beneficiaries. SWAG's collaborators and joined-up working are tabularised below:

Who? Organisation	Name of	Type & Description of Joined-up Working	Sustainability
AgeUK Sittingbourne & Faversham		Art & Crafts for women over 50 years old	Future funding to be sourced for the continuity of this activity
Fare Share – Tesco and Asda		Free food for women and their families	Sustainable
WestKent Extra		Afterschool & Homework Club at Cavell Way Estate	SWAG Project to look for future funding
Swale Commissioning (Swale CCG)	Clinical Group	Health promotion across Swale	Collaboration and to be led by NHS Health Trainers
DS Smith Kemsley Paper Mill		Apprenticeship and work experience	Sustainable
Sparshett Van & Truck Sittingbourne		Apprenticeship and work placements	Sustainable
Joining Hands, Heart	Joining	Support for women who suffered childhood trauma and domestic violence	Sustainable
Methodist Sittingbourne	Church	School Uniform wardrobe	Sustainable
Milton Creek Country Park		Walking Club and Park Run	Sustainable
Tesco Metro, Sittingbourne		Healthy eating program through food donation	Sustainable – through free donation from Tesco supermarket

Swale Community Centres	Provision of free venue for networking	Time-limited activity
Swale Council for Voluntary Sector	Recruitment and training of volunteers	Paid for services
KCC Libraries Sittingbourne	Free venues English Language Lessons and Conversation Club. Free Venue	Time-limited activity These activities are sustainable with the support of volunteer facilitators.
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce	Training for women and girls on business start-up and growth	Time-limited activity
JOBCENTRE Sittingbourne Sheerness Plus and	Support for women and girls on benefit	Collaboration with DWP, some funding needs to be procured for one to one and mentoring activities for this cohort
Kent Adult Education	Support with English Language	Referral to Kent Adult Education – collaborative activity
National Careers Service	Employability support	Collaboration
Prince’s Trust	NEET program -	Collaboration and sustainable

Figure 27 SWAG Collaborators



Figure 28 SWAG Collaborators in Meeting



The SWAG project team has over these number of years, built rapport with local partners and involved in international debates on the SDGs. The team’s dedication and commitment to addressing gender inequality by promoting women and girls’ empowerment have earned them the respect of their peers as the letter below signifies.

Letter of Support from a Partner Organisation

19th August 2019

Dear Christine

I am writing to you as the Chief Officer of the primary umbrella organisation that supports the voluntary and community sector in Swale and am delighted to endorse the work of Diversity House and the project SWAG (Swale Women and Girls)

This SWAG project on the Swale borough and is well known throughout the sector for the excellent work carried out by both staff and volunteers of the organisation.

My organisation, Swale Community and Voluntary Services (Swale CVS) are housed in Central House, Central Avenue, along with many other voluntary groups. Help the Aged is also part of this Hub, and I have seen first- hand the staff and volunteers working on an art project as just one small part of the SWAG project and the art produced working along with the older clients have been truly outstanding. I have spoken to many of the older clients, and they look forward to the art sessions and the company of both the project workers and volunteers.

I hold both Diversity House and its staff and volunteers in the highest regard and have no hesitation in recommending them to you. I am not aware of a more capable

organisation and project locally undertaking equality, diversity and more specifically women and girl's rights.

Swale CVS is always willing to support the work of Diversity House, and we are happy to continue providing room hire and our services free of charge as matched funding for the SWAG project.

Should you require any further information do not hesitate to contact me, and I am hoping this Letter/Email may be of use for forwarding to the Big Lottery.

sincerely

Christine White
Director

Swale Community and Voluntary Services
Central House, Central Avenue,
SITTINGBOURNE, KENT, ME10 4NU

Telephone: 01795 473828
Website: www.swalecvs.org.uk

Key Highlights of the project in Year Two

One of the key highlights and achievements of the project in year two was when our entry to the United Nations Global Compact on the ‘enabler’ category for shortlisted out of over 2000 gender projects globally. Below is the SWAG entry for the ‘enabler’ category.

Sustainable Development Goals Award



Diversity House applied for the above award for its women's empowerment project under the category of 'enabler.'



Diversity House gender-specific “Supporting women and girls” (SWAG) was initiated in 2010 as a self-help empowerment program, supporting disadvantaged and marginalised women and girls in the most deprived areas of Kent in four critical spheres of their lives, that is, economic, psychological and physiological, self-esteem and confidence, community engagement and participation in local actions. The program

provides prevention and intervention activities, offering over 9,000 beneficiaries yearly the opportunities to build their capacity for paid or self-employment, further education and relationships.

Since inception, SWAG has had direct and indirect impact on the lives of 72,000 women and girls who have been engaged with its services, making the saying – “when you empower a woman, you build a village” a reality. Most of these women and girls had no self-esteem and confidence, no qualifications, were victims of domestic violence, single and young parents, long-term carers, dependent on state welfare, refugees and asylum seekers, lacked motivation and aspiration to progress and take control of their own lives.

SWAG supports them by putting in place well designed, person-centred, holistic and accessible activities, encapsulating their expressed interests and needs. By this, they are enabled to engage in employability training, entrepreneurial briefings with the added value of business start-up and growth, volunteering, take a girl to work (ensuring that those girls who had no role model and with generational issues of parents on long-term state welfare) gained first hand opportunity of working in an office environment, mentored and coached to change any behaviour acting as an impediment to their progressing in life.

See link: <https://sdgactionsaward.org/initiatives/426>

Life Skills Fair in Sittingbourne (<http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/something-everyone-life-skills-fair-sittingbourne/#single/0>)

Another highlight in year two was the well-received women and girls conference, which hosted over hundred women and girls to different capacity building and networking sessions. Over a hundred people attended the trendy Life Skills Fair hosted by Diversity House on Friday 8th June 2018 at the UKP Building in Sittingbourne.

The event was billed as an introduction to services and opportunities in Swale. Over twenty different providers from all over the region and across Kent participated, showcasing their services and providing vital information about the skills they have to offer. The Stallholders included household names such as the NHS, The Kent Police Force, (which was promoting a recruitment drive targeting women), Mary Kay, Swale CVS, Christians against Poverty, SATEDA, Porchlight to name a few.

The Member of Parliament for Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey, Mr Gordon Henderson MP, as well as Mrs Helen Whitely MP for Faversham, attended this event and the Lord Lieutenant of Kent - Major the Viscount De L’Isle CVO MBE was represented by Diversity House’s patron, Mrs Rosemary Dymond (Deputy Lieutenant of Kent). Below is the poster for the event.

An introduction to services and opportunities in Swale

- Inspiration Et Motivation
- Networking Support
- Social Events
- Employment Training
- Communication Skills
- Personnal Development
- Education Et Training
- Well Being
- Mental Health
- Creative Pursuits
- Friendship

diversityHOUSE
SUPPORTING WOMEN AND GIRLS

SWAG LIFE SKILLS FAIR

Friday June 8th 9-5pm
UKP Leisure, Main Hall, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent
Free Entrance
Full programme details and booking:
www.diveristyhouse.org.uk



Figure 29 Participants at the SWAG Life Skills Fair June 2018



Recommendations/Steps

This section sets out the essential findings and lessons learnt in the reporting year. Also, some recommendations for change are proffered for the forthcoming delivery year.

Key Findings and Lessons Learnt

This reporting year, evidence gathered by the SWAG project team from Swale Local authority, indicates that in the next 12 months (2020) ‘The Spirit of Sittingbourne’ regeneration project will be completed, creating 799 job opportunities; 230 of these jobs will be within retail and hospitality, and 30% of the jobs have been ringfenced for Swale residents. However, the Ambitions for Swale’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026 has highlighted as an issue, lack of skills within the district, meaning that potentially, those who are unemployed and in need of jobs in Swale may not benefit from these earmarked jobs due to lack of skills. Therefore, the project team will in the coming months work proactively in building the capacity and confidence of women and girls, getting them ready for these job openings.

Economic dependency continues to be an issue for women and girls in Swale. The project team learnt that female benefits claimants are higher in Swale than other parts of the UK - Swale =1,325 (2.9%); South-East = 1.5%; and Great Britain = 2.2% (Nomis 2019), therefore, activities in the coming months will be geared towards tackling the underlining causes of benefits culture.

We learnt that while there have been improvements in teenage conception rates in Swale, teenage (under 18 years), conception rates remain above the Kent average. The high prevalence of underage/teenage conception rates are indicators of deprivation and health inequalities. The project team have identified some risk factors to teenage pregnancy, and these are – being a looked after child, having a minority background, being a child of a teenage parent, and living in a deprived area. The project team in these coming months will work collaboratively with Swale Clinical Commissioning Group (KCC 2015 – “Teenage Pregnancy Strategy 2015-2020”) to address the underlining causes of teenage pregnancy as a way of empowering our young girls and giving them a brighter future. Opportunities to build emotional resilience of young girls and women will be created. Some of the activities to be delivered this year will include building aspirations, sexual health education, sports and exercise to help improve emotional, physical, educational and economic wellbeing for young girls including those that are young parents.

Reports gained in four consecutive consultations with women in the area highlighted that one of the critical barriers for women in developing skills or progressing into employment, business or education is the cost of childcare and transport. We have found that providing sessions which fit around the lifestyle of women with children and offering them free childcare services has dramatically helped with the retention and the likelihood of accessing services. Therefore, in this coming year, the project team will redouble their efforts to provide more creche places for women with children, encouraging them to participate in the project activities.

To tackle the lack of skills, our proposed project will individually work with diverse women to create a pool of local job-ready candidates, particularly for women and ethnic minorities. We will provide intensive job readiness workshops for women and girls, and these will include: employability, soft skills, individual support and guidance, enabling them to gain self-esteem, confidence and skills to progress into paid employment.

Other lessons from the second-year implementation of the project are:

- g. Many young girls in secondary schools are averse to STEM subjects and need guidance and motivation to enable them to select these subjects in their GCSE;
- h. There is a need to support young girls with career options. This support should be both formal and informal, that is, input from parents, organisations and projects such as SWAG, and through the school. This need came to light through SWAG team's involvement in schools through their career option week. It was identified that many young girls in 6th form did not have a clue of what they want to do after school (that is either in university or vocational studies);
- i. Empowerment is a vast concept that should be bottom-up rather than top-down. Interventions or effective enablement programs must come from women and girls themselves. However, planned interventions which led to projects being funded come from organisations themselves and as a result, project beneficiaries may decide not to engage with intervention and instead express a need for a different one.
- j. The project team learn that in terms of engagement, beneficiaries from Sittingbourne use the project activities like a fire fighting strategy, that is, the dip in and out of services when they have problems rather than proactive participation which will lead to individual transformation. Women and girls from the Isle of Sheppey and Faversham have better involvement and a higher rate of participation in the project's activities.
- k. We have learnt that less than twenty-five of the beneficiaries came from Faversham in this reporting year. Therefore, in the coming year, the project team will carry out more outreach activities in Faversham to increase the percentage of women and girls participating in the project.
- l. The management of SWAG learnt that due to the nature of the interventions being proffered, which are quite a time consuming and need very skilled staff, there was an initial high turnover of the workforce. Recruited and trained staff and volunteers had to work in innovative rather than prescriptive way.

Key Priorities Today

What are the key areas to focus efforts to achieve women and girl's empowerment over the coming year? The data collected both quantitatively and qualitatively (surveys and interviews) for this monitoring and evaluation report yielded a range of responses, but overall, four issues and one overarching approach – intersectional analysis – emerged

consistently. Addressing any issue, informants (women and girls, and partner agencies) were clear that applying the intersectional lens is essential. The four current priority issues to ensure progress and social transformation of women and girls are:

5. Violence against women and girls;
6. Poverty and economic security – education as way out of poverty and economic dependency
7. Psychological and physiological wellbeing;
8. Advocacy

5. Violence against women and girls – there has been a rise in violence against women and girls in the district. The change in the demography of the area with inward migration from London has seen a surge in crime including knifing and intimate partner and other domestic violence. The grooming of young girls to distribute drugs, including weeds and cocaine by drug dealers from inner London is a thing of concern. Also, cyber-violence targeting young girls is something that the project team will have to address in the coming year. The project team has already started working with Kent Police County Lines and linking to Kent and Medway Gang Strategy 2018 – 2021, to address and end criminal exploitation of vulnerable children and adults by gangs, particularly women and girls.
6. Psychological and physiological wellbeing - Unlike other forms of violence, the harassment, humiliation, intimidation, and threatening online occurs 24 hours a day and regardless of whether the targeted person is present. The vulnerability of young girls/women to online violence is something that the SWAG project has identified in recent months. The project team’s findings confirm the warning by the Amnesty International UK on 20 November 2017 that is - “more than a quarter UK women experiencing online abuse and harassment ...” (<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/more-quarter-uk-women-experiencing-online-abuse-harassment—receive-threats/>). The aftermath of this online abuse and harassment are self-hatred, self-harming, stress, anxiety and other psychological issues.
7. Poverty and Economic Security – employment equity and the wage gap are one of the acute problems confronting women and girls in the district. The project team is aware that to overcome this problem, that they will continue to deliver capacity-building activities. Young girls will need to be motivated to see the importance of further education (university or vocational studies through apprenticeship). The project lead is working with other partners to lobby and campaign for companies and local employers to be held accountable for the gender wage gap.
8. Advocacy - in all its forms, advocacy seeks to ensure that people, particularly women and girls who are most vulnerable in society, are able to: have their voice heard on issues that are important to them; defend and safeguard their rights; and have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are

being made about their lives. Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to express their views and concerns; access information and services; defend and promote their rights and responsibilities and explore choices and options. The SWAG team are finding themselves doing more and more advocacy work on behalf of women and girls in Swale. The recent influx of minority communities into the district meant that organisations who were skilled in dealing with only mainstream issues are now expected to deal with cultures that are dissimilar to theirs. Working across cultures is an issue of concern with local schools and families in the district. The SWAG team are having to support mothers and young girls to deal with issues that are putting them more and more to disadvantage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the lessons learnt and noted critical priorities for today. In the coming months, it is recommended that SWAG project team should:

7. Increase the workforce of SWAG project to ensure that findings and gaps identified in this reporting year will be tackled effectively and efficiently.
8. Institute more capacity building activities to equip women and girls with the vital skills that they need to take up the eminent job openings in the district.
9. Continue to strengthen links and partnerships with the local authority, local agencies and businesses, particularly in the areas of creating opportunities for apprenticeships, work experience, and employment.
10. Continue to work with local secondary schools through the STEM Ambassador program, to motivate young girls to take up science, technology, engineering and maths subjects.
11. Ensure that childcare is included in every planned workshops/training and events, enabling women with children to participate in the project.
12. The project team should continue to ensure that older women are not invisible but collaborate with organisations such as AgeUK and Dementia Friends to improve the health and wellbeing of this beneficiary group.

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