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Feminist health promotion in practice: Analysis of a UK voluntary sector women-centred project and partnership working towards empowerment

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What are we talking about?

We are discussing a voluntary sector strategic partnership and delivery project involving eleven women-centred organisations who worked together to support the most vulnerable women and girls across a city in the north of England 2017-2021.

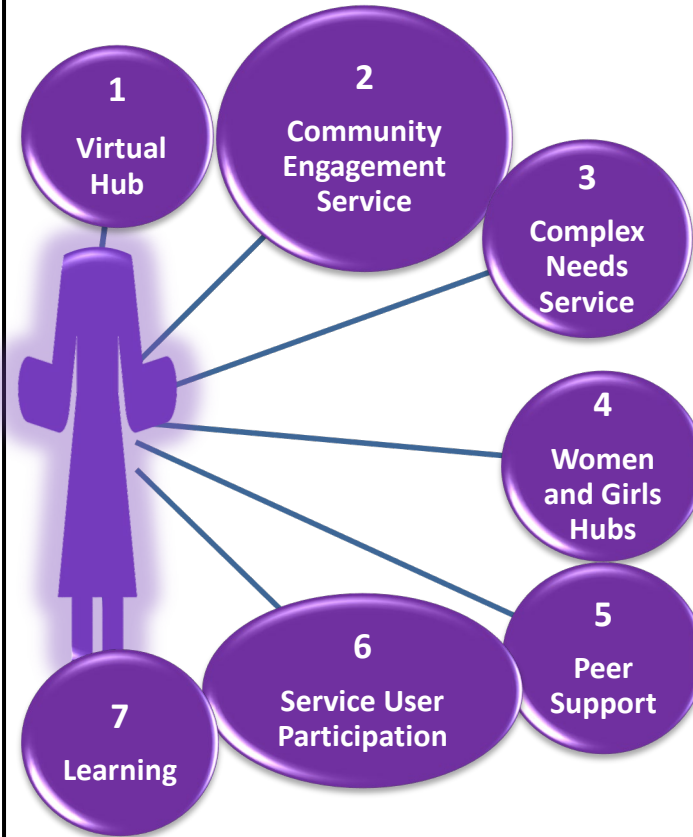
Both the project and the partnership intended to:

- Improved and extended access for vulnerable women and girls in one city, to the services and support they want, when they choose (identified groups: young women, women with complex needs, recently arrived)
- A holistic response to ensure that the needs of women and girls with multiple and complex issues are better supported
- Women and Girls will be empowered to support their peers and influence service delivery, development and design across the city

This presentation details the project and partnership model and illustrates the importance of feminist health promotion as a tool for change.

The delivery model

The Project



The Partnership

- Eleven organisations working together to influence strategy across the city in which they are all based
- United together to secure the funding for this project
- Variance in purpose, size, income and ability to deliver services

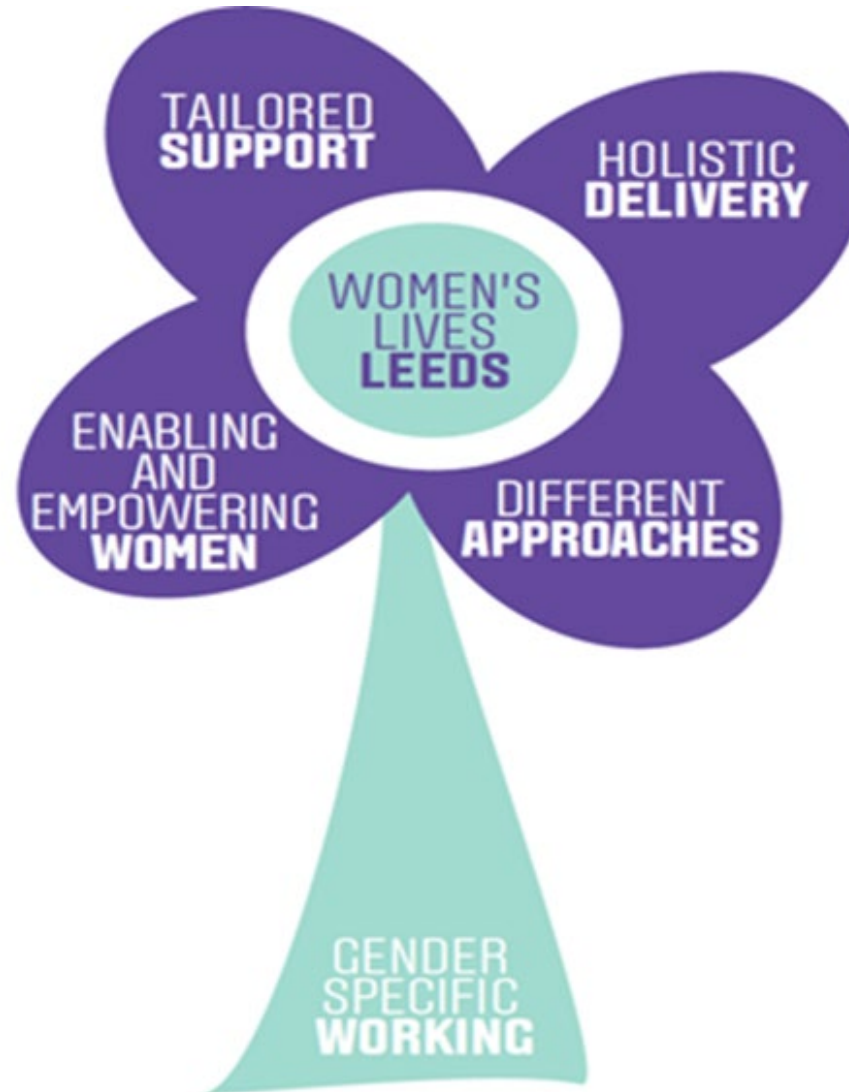
Our evaluation

- A three year longitudinal qualitative evaluation, from the start of delivery underpinned by a feminist methodology.
- Theory of Change approach to assess the extent to which the project and partnerships aims had been met.
- Our sample included 34 service users and 54 professionals (19 of which were repeat interviews) with data gathered between 2017-2020.



Project data

- Complex Needs Service = success
- 207 women supported
- Lots of unmet and complex need
- Positive outcomes for women
- Empowerment via holistic support





Project data

- Community Engagement Service increased reach to women across city and was good at signposting to other services – 4326 received information, 1186 attended drop-ins
- Positive safe space for Advisory Board members, but no access to partnership meetings- 58 women ‘served’ and reported positive peer support experiences
- Hub seen as a place to network and find out information but mostly used by professionals. Purpose? Action? Barriers to engagement? 451 ‘attended’ meetings

Partnership data

Challenges in the partnership	Facilitators of the partnership	Benefits of the partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of full attendance at meetings delaying decision making • Greater time and resource pressures for smaller partners • Competing priorities (remaining focused on the priorities of their own organisation, such as securing their own funding for the future, alongside meeting the demands of the partnership) • Maximising the best use of partner time • Challenging dynamics (conflict and disagreement) because of differences in partner approaches and personalities • Difficulty separating project and partnership at the outset, with priority given to service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project delivery was 'the glue...and that's a fact' • Effective leadership from the Core Team • Appointment of a Strategic Development Worker in 2019, focusing upon longer term strategy • Appointment of an Independent Chair to manage partnership meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting a Complex Needs Worker (skills development and the creation of additional capacity) • Supporting funding bids by evidencing partnership working and avoiding service duplication • Increased sustainability for partners • Wider systems change



Final reflections

- Evaluation evidence shows that the aims of the project and partnership were met
- Feminist health promotion requires further analysis as a mechanism to achieve emancipatory innovation
- Our data uncovered the hidden dichotomy between external success, such as achieving the delivery outcomes, and internal partnership politics, which are underexplored in the literature
- Despite these challenges, our evidence shows that this project and partnership was a successful gendered intervention that had positive empowering impacts on many of those involved



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Thank you

Any questions?