

Anawim women's centre in Balsall Heath, Birmingham, is a day centre for vulnerable women. It acts as a one-stop shop for women with multiple needs such as substance misuse, poverty, homelessness and domestic violence. Anawim offers women offenders community sentences which offer high levels of support to break the cycles of re-offending and act as an alternative to custody. A range of different agencies come into the centre and Probation staff are co-located reducing the need for women to attend appointments at other locations around the city. The centre provides food, clothes, social activities, educational classes and a crèche for children whilst the women engage.

Building upon the experience for running the Specified Activity Requirements and Community Payback, Anawim has recently added the Mental Health Treatment Requirement to the mix with support from a pilot funded by the Department of health. This is proving very beneficial as high numbers of the women supported at Anawim have problems with mental health and emotional well-being. Many have suffered years of abuse both as children within their family homes or in the care system, and as adults on the street or at the hands of violent partners, leaving them particularly vulnerable to a range of mental health issues.

Aims & Objectives

- To help and support women over 18 who are involved in and around prostitution, offending behaviour, drug abuse and sexual exploitation to move their lives forward
- To provide a viable alternative to custody
- To increase self-worth, recognise potential and offer hope
- To keep families together where appropriate
- To empower each woman and child towards independence, regular employment and dignity
- To raise each woman's self-awareness, trust and responsibility towards herself, her children and the wider community
- To ensure the wider community are better informed about issues affecting the client group

Objectives

- By providing a full timetable of courses and activities that raise self-esteem, confidence, skills, awareness and social responsibility.
- By providing good quality, professional counselling.
- By providing childcare at the centre with developmental checks, parenting assistance and support, plus educational, fun trips and outings.
- By providing space at the centres for women to drop in when needed to receive support, clothes, food and use of the phone and Internet.
- By providing advocacy for the women and their children with social care and health, education, work providers, the criminal justice system and the wider community.
- By forming and maintaining partnerships with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies in order to provide a holistic package to the women.
- By providing assistance and support to women on the street at night, in prison, at court and in hostels in a flexible way, responding where and when it is needed.