

YORK  
WOMEN'S  
COUNSELLING SERVICE

# Impact Report

2021 - 2022

Together, we give women  
a space to speak

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# Introduction

York Women's Counselling Service provides one to one counselling to women who are experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties as a result of current or past emotional stress or trauma.

**Our mission** is to provide high-quality counselling for women in the York area who need our help, when they need it, for as long as they need it, regardless of their financial circumstances.

**Our vision** is a city where women who need help have access to quality affordable face-to-face counselling and psychotherapy within weeks, not years, and are never turned away.

**Our approach** is a unique mix of short and long term support: We are among a handful of organisations in York where the usual maximum of 6 sessions per person does not apply. The number of sessions offered is based on the time each woman needs.

## Run by women for women

Our service provides professional counselling, by women, in a confidential and safe setting for women experiencing difficulties, overseen by dedicated female trustees.

Our services have never been more needed. We saw a 90% increase in counselling in 21/22 compared to the previous year.

In 21/22...

90

Women supported

1,168

Counselling sessions held

90%

Increase on previous year

£35.05

Average cost of counselling to YWCS

£13.13

Average donation received per session

# Welcome

from Susie Braithwaite, Chair of Trustees



"I really want to thank our amazing staff and all our volunteers, counsellors and others who are the beating heart of York Women's Counselling Service"

“ Reflecting on the year, it has been one focussed on growth and effectiveness of the charity. I'm enormously proud of the way that our team has responded to the ongoing effects of the pandemic and the challenges that it has brought both to our operations and the lives of the women that we work with.

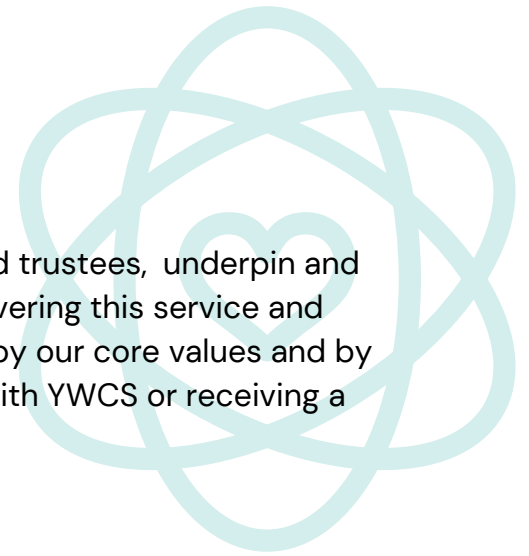
I really want to thank our amazing staff and all our volunteers, counsellors and others who are the beating heart of York Women's Counselling Service (YWCS). Everyone has adapted, found new ways to work and strengthen our organisation, so that we have been able to help more women than ever before.

Our other significant achievements during the year include the collaborative work which enabled us to identify our core values this year, the launch of a programme of continuing professional development for YWCS counsellors and others, the refurbishment of our working space, and the development of our digital capacity and data security. From staff and volunteers wielding paintbrushes, to working groups to implement new systems and policies, everyone has given above and beyond.

We have been supported by funders of all sizes from Trusts to crowdfunding. Growing numbers of people, who understand the difference that access to excellent counselling makes, are choosing to fundraise for us. On behalf of the women whose lives have been transformed, our thanks go out.

As we face the future, now as a stronger and more resilient charity, we know that the impact of the cost of living crisis will hit women hard and test us further. It's our pledge to ensure the continuation and development of our highly regarded service to meet the increasing demand and ensure a safety net for vulnerable women in York into the next decade and beyond. ”

# Values



Our values, drawn up in consultation with staff, counsellors and trustees, underpin and guide everything York Women's Counselling Service do. In delivering this service and running our organisation, we want all our work to be informed by our core values and by always holding in mind the wellbeing of all of those engaging with YWCS or receiving a service from us.

## Fairness

Integrity, inclusion and equality are the foundations on which our community is built and continues to grow from



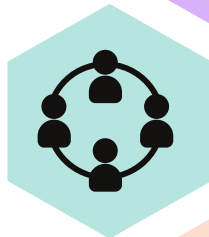
## Relationships

Building transformative relationships with the women who are using our counselling service is at the very core of everything we do



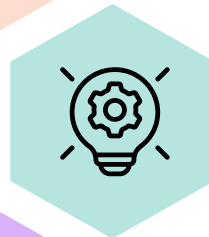
## Community

YWCS is a community of women who share a commitment to offering a high-quality counselling service to women within the York community. Community is at the heart of what we do.



## Creativity

We value the use of imagination, inspiration and inventiveness within our YWCS community to create positive change for women



## Relevance

We aim to make everything we do purposeful, meaningful and tailored to the individual needs of our clients, volunteers and staff and our organisation.

## Safety

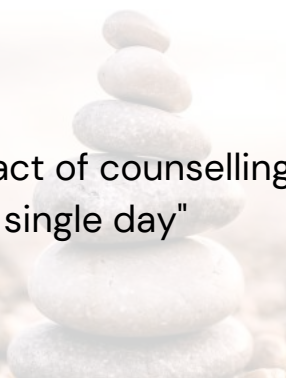
We are committed to doing all we can to safeguard our clients, colleagues and organisation, promote their health, wellbeing and human rights and protect them from harm, abuse and neglect.

In order to make counselling accessible to everyone, we have a hardship fund called the SPRING FUND. When a woman cannot afford the minimum £15 per session donation we can subsidise her fee from this fund. In 21/22 there was a 115% increase in subsidised session.

# Update from our staff



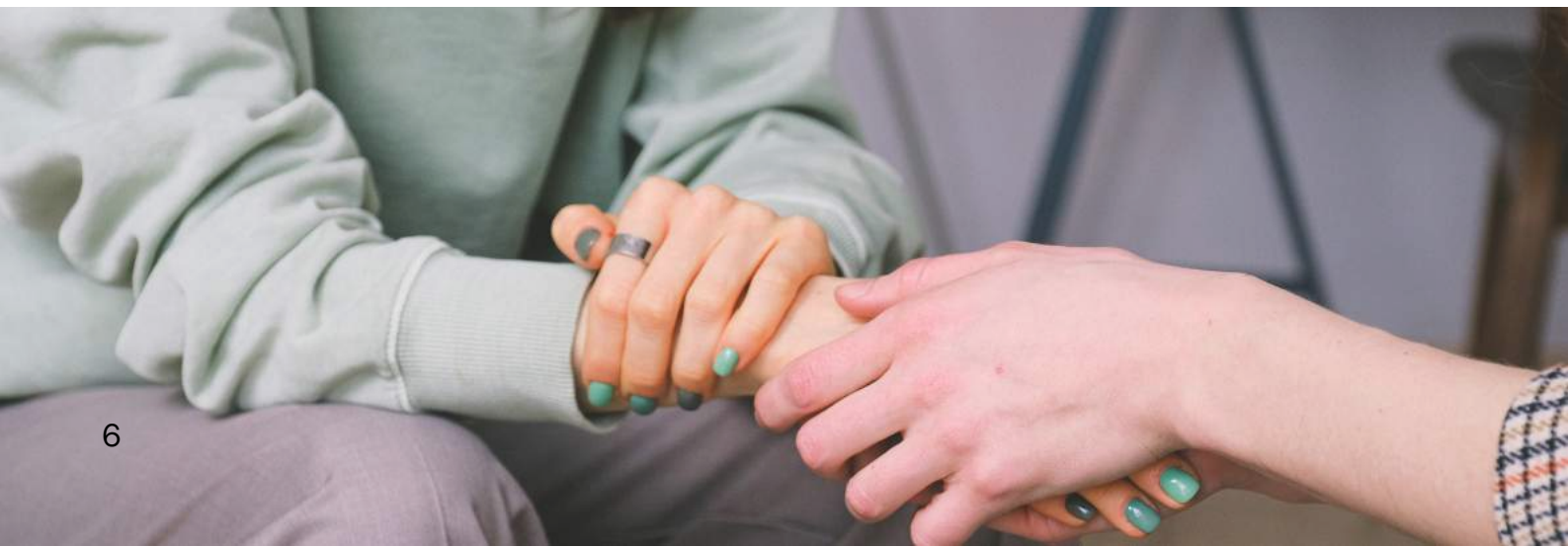
"Seeing the value and impact of counselling motivates me every single day"




“ As both Operations Manager and a volunteer counsellor I am fortunate to be involved in both sides of the work. I support the charity’s development including generating income through grants, fundraising and donations, and then see, first hand, what a difference the money makes. Seeing the value and impact of counselling motivates me every single day.

The pandemic brought huge challenges for us – not only the financial worry, but a steep increase in demand for our services. I’m really proud of the way the team came together to tackle these challenges and come out the other side stronger than ever. Thanks to emergency Covid grants we were able to take on an additional counselling room and recruit more volunteer therapists – and whilst this helped, demand has continued to grow and we have a long way to go before we can truly achieve our vision to never turn a woman away. I have every confidence that our team of fabulous and dedicated staff, trustees and volunteers will continue to rise to the challenge and deliver high quality counselling to the women in York who need it most. ”

**Charlotte Walton, Operations Manager**





"In line with our value of "Community", we have built a nurturing and supportive environment"



“ Being the Counselling Manager for YWCS is extremely rewarding and I know how important and valued the service is to the women of York. Through speaking to clients during the assessment process, I hear about the struggles they face and the hugely damaging effect this has on their mental health.

It's a challenging role but it is enormously fulfilling and reading our clients' feedback after counselling, in most cases it is life-changing. Our highly skilled team of volunteer qualified therapists and trainee counsellors offer a supportive safe space for clients to explore and find their own way forward, connecting to themselves again after traumatic life experiences.

It is difficult having to close a waiting list which has only been open for two days, after being previously closed for six months, because of the huge demand for the service. Equally, to assess clients who will then be put on the waiting list for potentially months because we do not have enough resources to meet the demand.

I also manage our team of therapists and YWCS is fortunate they have a diverse skill set and specialisms in various client issues. This enables me to adopt a bespoke match when allocating clients which further aids positive outcomes. In line with our value of "Community", we have built a nurturing and supportive environment and my aim is for all our therapists to achieve their career goals and to feel a sense of belonging to YWCS in what can be an isolating profession. ”

**Emma Drake, Counselling Manager**

# Our counsellors

Our service seeks to benefit not only our clients but also our counsellors. In order to increase their skills and confidence, we offer access to training courses and workshops in the York area as well as peer-to-peer mentoring within the organisation. This, and our welcoming ethos, have enabled us to continue to attract and retain volunteer counsellors of a consistently high quality. Because of the level of support we offer, we are able to take on a number of trainee counsellors who often continue with us after they qualify.



“ I think what drew me to training with YWCS was the fact that the service is offered to all women regardless of their background or how much they can afford to pay so it feels like a level playing field rather than a luxury that only some people can afford. ”

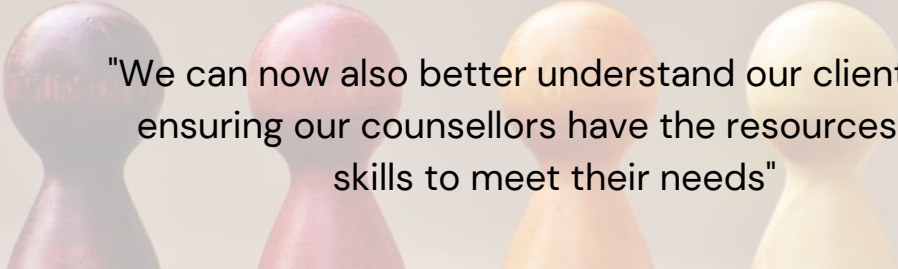
– **Kate**

"I was very happy to be given the chance to do my training here. I felt supported from the very beginning and have been impressed by how efficiently it is run, not only that, there is still time for humour, friendly chats and helpful advice. In addition, the training that is offered is just fantastic! After qualifying as a therapist, I decided to remain here as a volunteer not only to give something back, but to also be part of a warm and friendly organisation." – **Katie**

"I feel incredibly lucky to have secured a placement with York Women's whilst I was a trainee. I received support from a team of experienced and supportive women. As a qualified counsellor, I continue to volunteer alongside my private practice, receiving ongoing training and working with York Women's amazing team of counsellors, to support other women, regardless of their ability to pay." – **Sarah**



# Our pandemic journey



"We can now also better understand our client base ensuring our counsellors have the resources and skills to meet their needs"



“ The lockdown years were remarkably productive for YWCS. Not only did we completely reorganise our way of working, but our small charity was transformed into a strong resilient service. Working from home, able only to see clients who could safely access their counselling online, gave us time to make major improvements. In common with many organisations, lockdown meant we had to embrace technology, and since then we've recognised the benefits of virtual meetings, both with each other and with our clients. While we have returned to face-to-face counselling for the most part, having an alternative has proved useful when appropriate.

We found time to successfully apply for grant support available to charities badly affected by the pandemic. This meant that we started 2020 with one staff member and emerged with 2; our 4 trustees were joined by another three talented women by the end of 2021; we had two counselling rooms and now have 3 plus a new office; our team of 10 counsellors expanded to 22. In 2020, our funding reserves covered only 2 months running costs, but now our reserves would cover a healthy 7 months costs, and this after increasing our staff working hours and pay.

Not only did we expand the number of counselling rooms, but we took advantage of the fact that while few clients were with us in person, we could decorate them: new paint, more comfortable furniture and a re-organisation of our library and other working materials to make them fresh and inviting for when we could return to them again. Importantly we were able to secure the support of Richard, an expert IT volunteer, who pulled together a team to transform us digitally. This helped us move from paper to a cloud-based secure record-keeping system that allows us to audit and evaluate our work quickly and accurately. We can also better understand our client base ensuring our counsellors have the resources and skills to meet their needs. ”

**Polly Griffith, Trustee**

# The impact - What our clients say



I benefited greatly from my time with YWCS. I will never forget the kindness, compassion and empathy I was shown. I learnt a lot about myself as well as strategies to help me through difficult times



My counsellor has been amazing and reassuring



I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved for this wonderful opportunity to change my life



I felt listened to and heard and I felt accepted



The work has strengthened me a great deal



I welcome the safe space and calm approach



I would come out feeling so positive even on my darkest days, and since my sessions I have been able to cope with whatever life throws at me in ways I couldn't before



# Our numbers

2.5

Days waiting list was open Oct 2022

16

Days waiting list open in Apr 2022

15

Days waiting list open in Nov 2021

35

Women on the current waiting list Nov 2022

10%

Sessions online Nov 2022

In 21/22 we delivered 1,168 counselling sessions – a 90% increase on the previous year. Not only did the numbers of women change, so did the challenges they were facing. During the pandemic many women took on caring responsibilities and were more likely to be affected by domestic abuse.

## 5,583 SUICIDES

were registered in 2021 in England and Wales, 6.9% higher than in 2020 – Census 2021

Almost half of our clients come with high levels of distress with 32% reporting suicidal thoughts and/or self harm

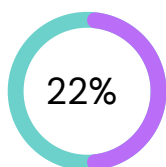


Around one in five women have a common mental health problem, such as depression and anxiety. – Mental Health Foundation

## 1.6 MILLION WOMEN

in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse and violence in 2021

– Health assured.org  
At YWCS 31% of clients experienced domestic or sexual violence.



More than 1 in 5 of our population (22%) are in poverty in our country. 14.5 million people. Of these, 8.1 million are working-age adults – Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK poverty report 2022

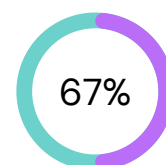
At YWCS 17% of our clients accessed our Spring Fund (209 sessions) for subsidised counselling due to financial hardship

## WOMEN

are twice as likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition compared to men. – World Health Organisation

In the first year of the pandemic, global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%

At YWCS 68% of clients experienced anxiety and 46% experienced depression

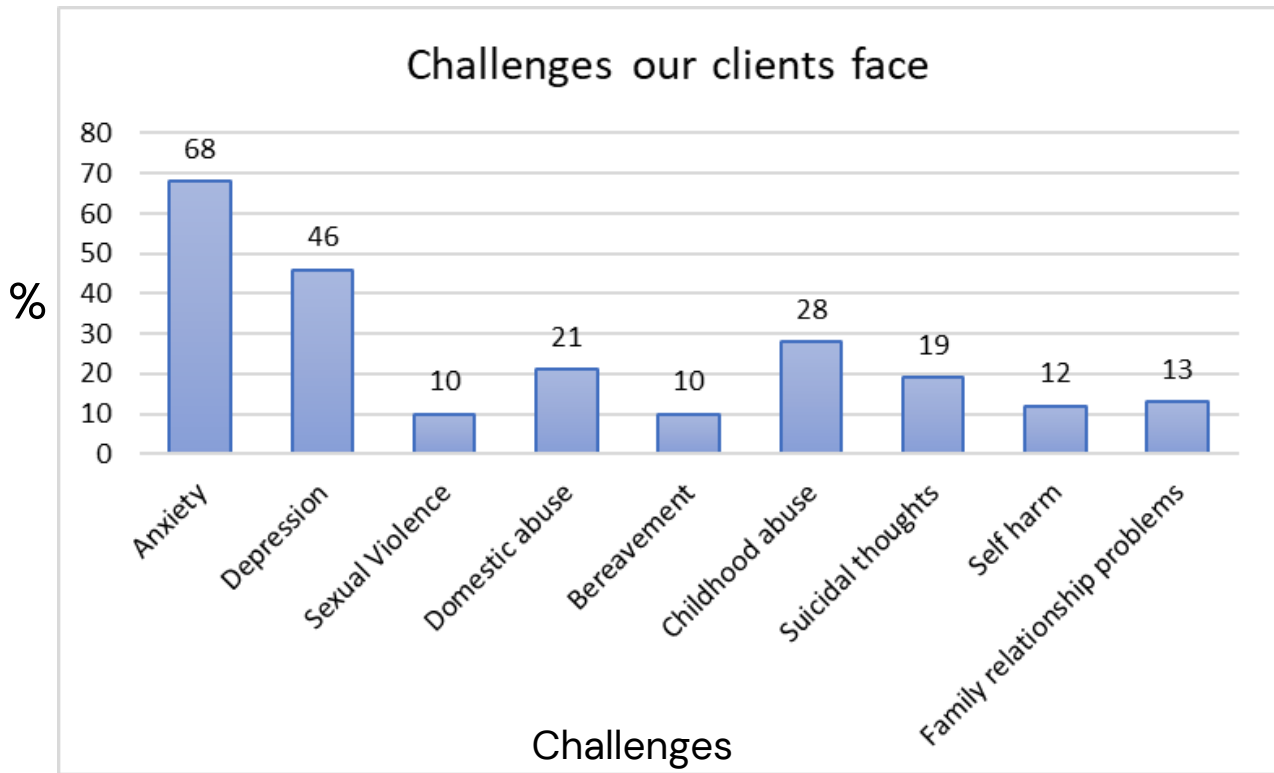


According to NHS England 67% of IAPT clients report improvements in their mental health

At YWCS, 96% of clients scored lower on the CORE-10 'psychological distress' measurement tool after therapy demonstrating substantial reductions in distress

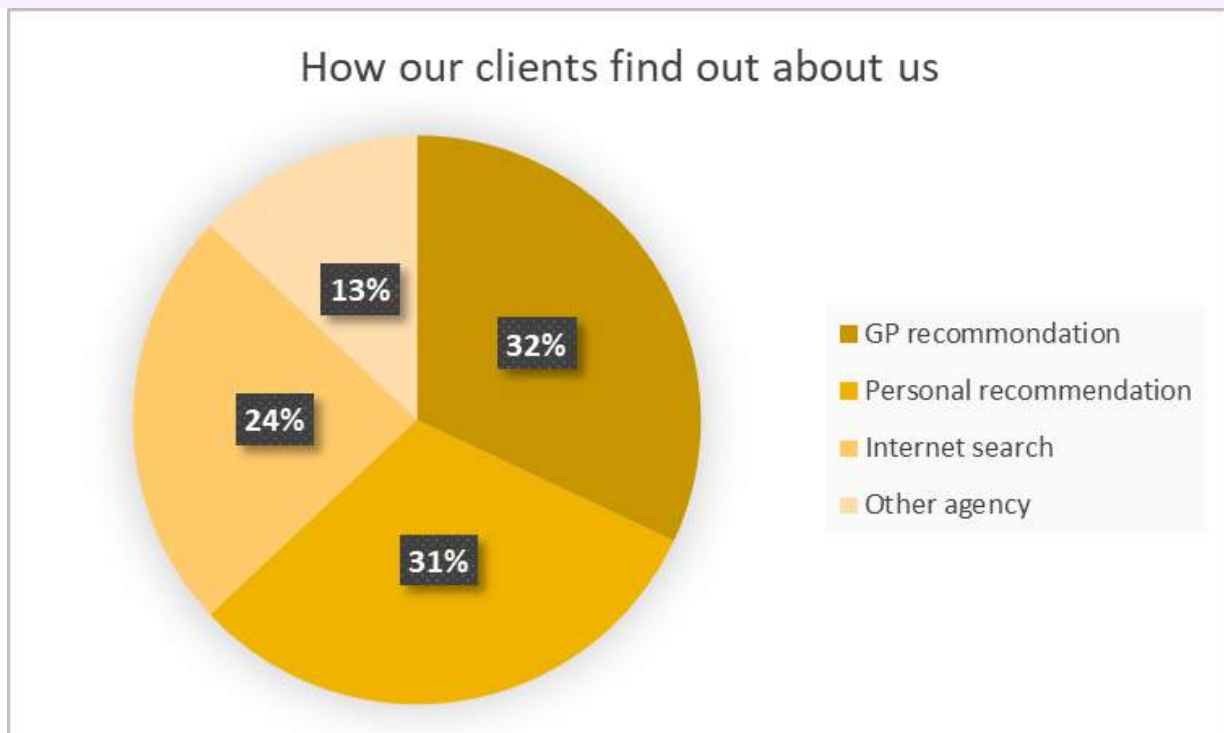


Many clients face multiple challenges but the highest one recorded is anxiety.



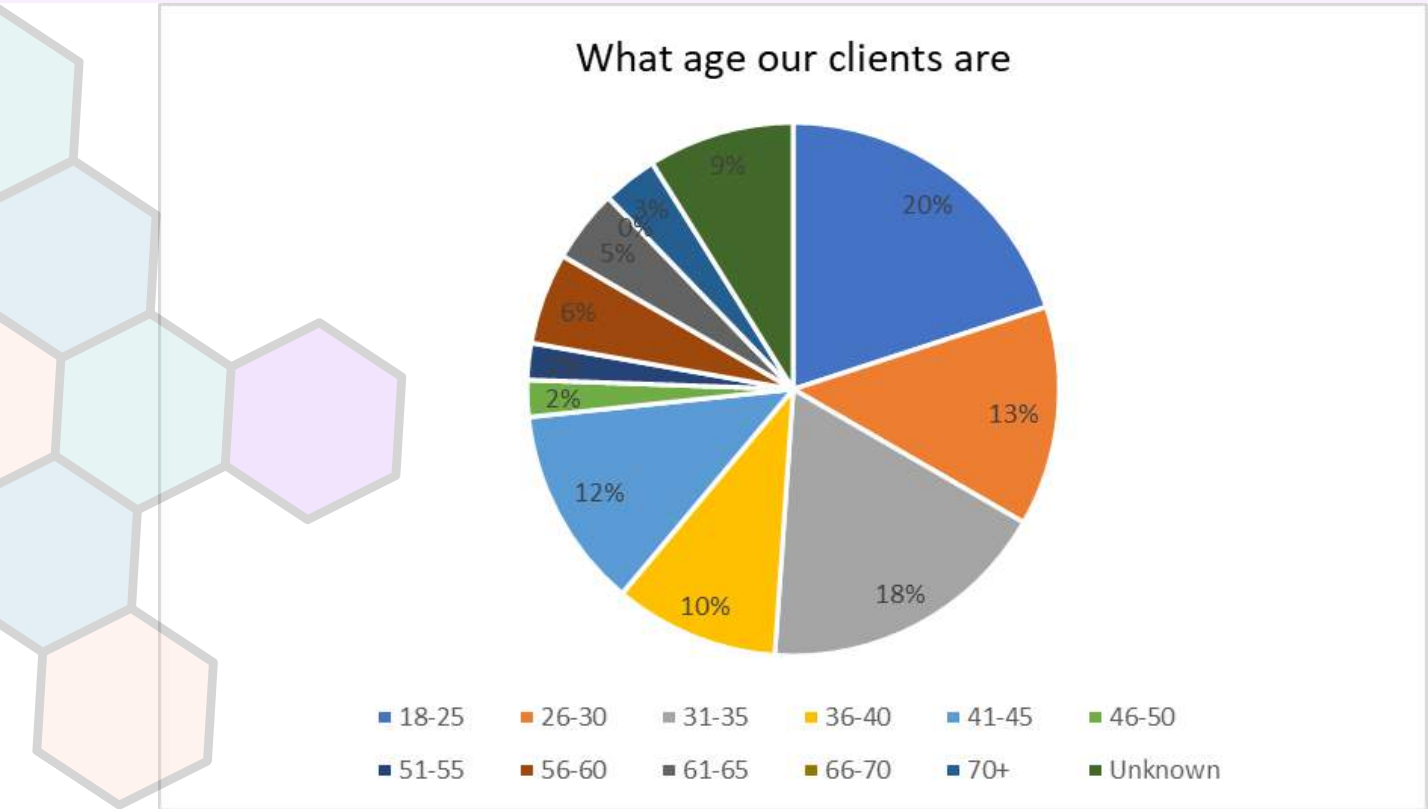
\*Many clients experience multiple challenges

Most of our clients are signposted to us from GPs, followed closely by personal recommendation.

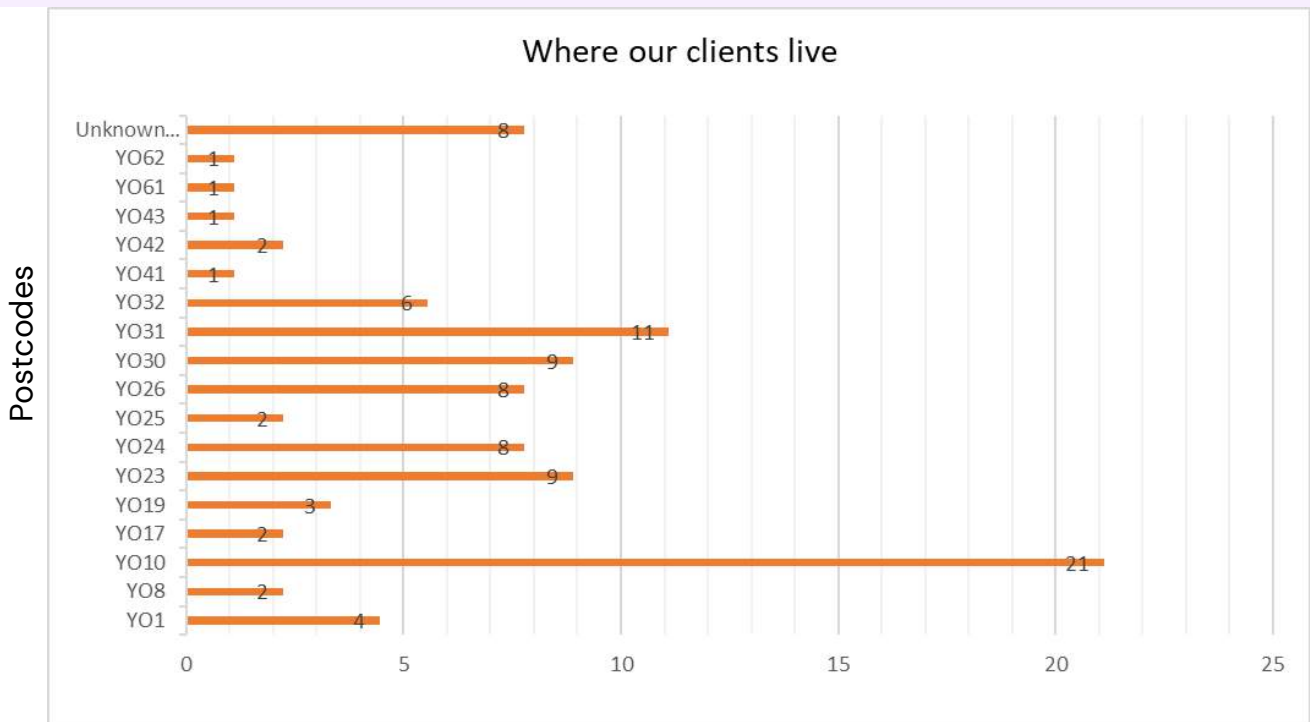


Data taken from financial year 2021-2022

We support women of all ages with half aged between 18–35.

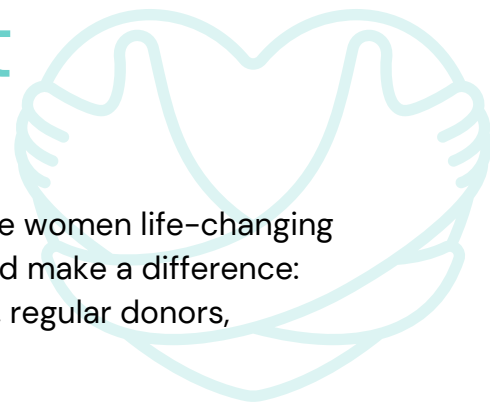


Clients come to us from across the city with the majority from YO10 postcodes.



Data taken from financial year 2021-2022 %

# Community of support



The generosity of our supporters has enabled us to give vulnerable women life-changing support. Thank you to all the people and organisations that helped make a difference: volunteer counsellors, trustees, staff, service partners, supporters, regular donors, fundraisers, expert volunteers and funders.



It really is very difficult to convey in words exactly how grateful we are for the difference you are making to women's lives in York.

Despite all the challenges you have faced during this extremely challenging period, the Committee were extremely impressed with how you have recruited so many new therapists and reached so many more women. They believe this is a real credit to your hard work, ingenuity and passion. - **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**



I loved organising a fun run, with friends, for York Women's Counselling. We ran on World Mental Health Day which seemed appropriate. 20 women ran 20 miles to help other women. That's girl power at its best! We had such a great time - and also raised money for a brilliant cause. Many of us have experienced mental health issues and know how hard it can be to find good quality, affordable help.

- **Elizabeth, volunteer fundraiser**



I'm a photographer with a flexible job and so I'm happy to volunteer on an ad-hoc basis, when there's an event or when the charity needs good quality photos taking. The last couple of years have been tough for many people, and it's nice to give back to an organisation that's been dealing with the enormous mental health impact of the pandemic. - **Jonny, volunteer.**



# Special thanks to:

**Anaplan**

**COMMUNITY LINKS**  
Inspiring hope.  
Inspiring change.

Rotary 

North Yorkshire  
Police, Fire & Crime  
Commissioner

**CGA**  
BUSINESS ADVISORS, TAXATION SPECIALISTS  
AND CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS

**PEOPLE'S  
POSTCODE  
LOTTERY**

BRIDGE

**JRF**  
JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

  
**Two Ridings**  
Community Foundation

**The Purey  
Cust Trust**  
Charitable Grants for York

Eva Reckett  
Trust Fund

 **COMMUNITY  
FUND**

**AVIVA** | Community  
Fund

 **Masonic**  
Charitable Foundation

THE RATTLE OWL

  
SALTS

**OC**  
Oakdale Centre

 **Belfrey Trust**

**Arnold Clark  
COMMUNITY  
FUND**

The  
Charles & Elsie Sykes Trust

**PARTISAN**

# Contact details



## York Women's Counselling Service

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York, YO1 6ET

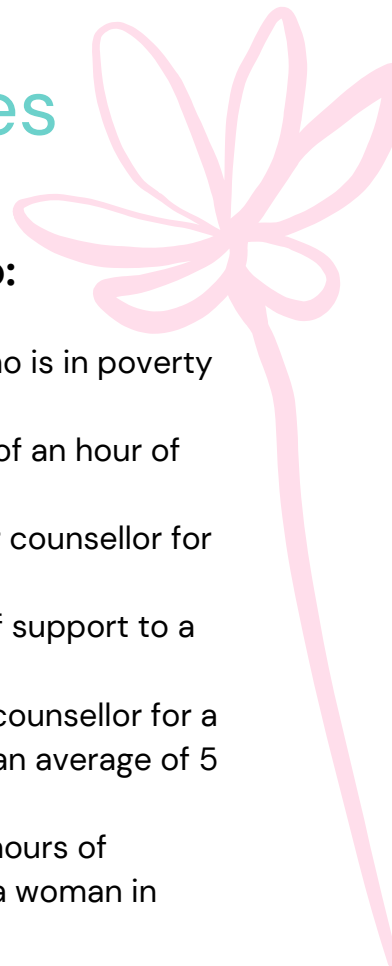
Email: [enquiries@yorkwomenscounselling.org](mailto:enquiries@yorkwomenscounselling.org)

Phone: 01904 652 706

Website: [www.yorkwomenscounselling.org](http://www.yorkwomenscounselling.org)



## How you can help change lives



### Donate today

Scan the QR code if you would like to support York Women's Counselling Service and make a donation.



### How your gift will help:

- £15 will provide a woman who is in poverty access to our support
- £35 will cover the real cost of an hour of counselling
- £40 will support a volunteer counsellor for a month
- £100 will provide 6 weeks of support to a woman who needs our help
- £240 supports a volunteer counsellor for a year, with each counselling an average of 5 women annually
- £500 will provide over 30 hours of professional counselling to a woman in distress
- £1000 will secure a confidential counselling room for 4 months, enabling our counsellors to hold up to 640 counselling sessions

Registered charity number: 1086078