

Diversity house needs assessment - “Supporting Women & Girls”



8/31/2016

Report of Consultations held with Women & Girls in Swale District of Kent

“Women and girls continue to lag behind men and boys on key dimensions of rights, capabilities, opportunities and well-being. Key dimensions of what is essential if people are to realise their full potential. Efforts to address these inequalities must surely be central to the efforts of communities and organisations, globally and nationally” (British Council, 2015).

Picture 1: SWEW¹ end of project findings and consultation event



¹ SWEW – Swale Women Empowering Women, a Big Lottery Reaching Communities project, funded for three year (December 2012 to November 2015).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Girls need more support. There are no university or job opportunities in Swale" (Emma, 15 years)

The objective of this report is to deepen the understanding of women and girls needs in Swale. In highlighting the critical areas of needed actions, practical suggestions are made in order to ensure women and girls' needs are recognised as urgent and legitimate concerns.

The assessment found grave concerns and major unmet needs for women and girls in Swale in most health and social wellbeing areas, including , social support and network, education and early school dropout by young girls from some communities, underage conception, poor livelihood, community engagement and participation, health (including psychosocial aspects), nutrition, employment, aspiration, self-confidence and self-image, family relationships (including parenting issues), digital inclusion and online safety, communication, cultural issues relating to Roma Gypsies and Travelers and recent arrivals to the areas (example, refugees), and apathy.

This report is the result of the women and girls needs assessment undertaken by Diversity House in collaboration with Women Field Volunteers² and current service users of "Swale Women Empowering Women Project³". The assessment was undertaken to substantiate previously collected evidence of women and girls' needs in Swale.

The analysis is based on the responses from 8 focus groups, 5 key informants' discussions, 10 community forums, and 3 one to one interviews, totally 1032 respondents (women and girls). Among those consulted the most important overall concerns were:

- Girls are getting pregnant younger and not being married, which is impacting on their educational and employment opportunities;
- A high number of people are unemployed and need support to go back to employment or start a business;
- Young girls lack motivation and aspiration
- Women and girls are reporting lack of community activities and things to do, backing up the Swale Perception Survey, 2011
- Young girls informed that they do not only need academic knowledge but also social and vocational skills to navigate the world
- Young girls informed that they do not have role models and need career advice and guidance as they currently only receive it at age 16 when it is too late for them

² Women who joined the previously Big Lottery funded women project. These women are still engaged with the now scaled down project.

³ Swale Women Empowering Women Project (SWEW) – women project funded by Big Lottery Reach Communities for three years. This project was satisfactorily completed in November 2015.

- Both women and girls expressed the need for business support. Young girls felt that with the right support they could start their own business even whilst in school.
- The need for communication was seen as very crucial. The majority of women and girls interviewed mentioned the lack of communication which meant that people are unaware of activities/events in the community.
- They need mentors and role models to take them to work places helping them to see the different opportunities available locally
- Younger girls asked for further assistance in academic subjects (maths, history, science, and others) and would like an afterschool club where they can get help. Many of their parents themselves are not very well educated and cannot help their children
- Some young girls from the Romany and Travellers community drop out of school in year 10 to get married. It was noted that women from this community also do not network outside their own community.

The above expressed concerns/problems backup evidence from our desk top research, which categorized the local concerns as follows:

- Lack of aspiration and apathy;
- health (including psychosocial aspects);
- poor self-confidence and self-image;
- Lack of opportunities for livelihood/income;
- Poor education;
- Lack of access to community engagement and participation;
- Underage conception;
- Lack of sporting facilities;
- Lack of skills including access to digital inclusion;
- Poor lifestyle including poor nutrition, drinking and smoking,
- Lack of communication, social support and network, role models, life and social skills.

The sample of people assessed (1032) did not only identify their concerns and needs but also proffered suggestions to ameliorate or address those needs. Suggested activities and interventions are:

- After school outreach to promote education enhancement activities such as: tutoring services for young girls struggling with their academics.
- Identity awareness workshops
- Creative arts to improve self-confidence, resilience and mental wellbeing
- Character building and self-esteem workshops
- College readiness, job placement and life skills
- Soft skills training
- Goal setting and action planning
- Mentoring – e.g. take your daughter to work days
- Networking events
- Volunteering

- Health education including sexual health, how to say 'no'
- Peer to peer support
- Information, advice and guidance
- Media literacy
- Business support including support and input from local traders
- Social interaction including sports and games (e.g. outside exercise equipment, girls league)
- Support for single and teen mums including parenting skills, confidence and assertiveness
- Youth club
- Book club
- Planning interventions with local partners – local schools, faith communities, third and public sectors
- Engaging men for effective activism against sexual and gender-based violence

The report recommends urgent attention to women and girls unmet needs in Swale, and call on all agencies and sectors in Swale to advocate for and to ensure coordinated and partnership working to ensure that resources are used responsibly to meet the needs of the target population.

The report recommends that any future planned intervention to meet the needs and concerns of women and girls in Swale should be linked and be underpinned by the following global, national, regional and local policies, strategies and initiatives:

We recommend that in addressing the above enumerated unmet needs, that Diversity House should adhere to best practices of engaging and providing interventions for vulnerable women and girls. Also, Diversity House in setting up a women and girls initiative should adhere to principles of empowerment and best practice in service delivery by doing the followings:

- Use different approaches and proffer a menu of options of interventions for women and girls
- Interventions should be holistic and addressing practical needs of women and girls in Swale;
- Interventions should be gender specific;
- Interventions should support connectivity among women and girls;
- Employ supportive, collaborative, and non-hierarchical approaches;
- Address issues of primary concern for women and girls, including opportunities for skills acquisitions and social interactions;
- Be respectful and female driven;
- Interventions should be based on female strengths, not deficits;

SECTION ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Demographic and Epidemiological Information

This needs assessment is carried out in Swale district of Kent. Swale is partly located within the Thames Gateway growth area; it has a prime location, within 40 miles of London and the Channel ports, but set in the Kentish countryside. It is a diverse Borough, containing three distinct areas in the form of Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey, as well as an extensive rural hinterland. Swale has a growing population, and is currently home to approximately 142,400 (that is, male = 70,400 and female = 72,000 (Source: Nomis, 2015: Available Online at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/>).

Overall, Swale is the third most deprived district within Kent and is ranked 70 out of the 326 districts in England. Historically, it had an economy dependent on the processing industry, manufacturing and the rural agricultural economy. The manufacturing industry, the cornerstone of the local economy, has seen significant decline with over 25% reduction in employment since 1999. This reduction in employment has been made worst by the embanked austerity measures in recent years. Women and girls have been hugely affected by this reduction in employment as they significantly accounted for the majority of those employed by the aforementioned sectors.

The transition in economic activities has seen many challenges for Swale. For instance, these have contributed to a loss of traditional employment and skills, poor educational attainment and the deepening of pockets of severe deprivation.

In terms employment, a total of 74.1% of 16 – 74 years are economically active in Swale, which is significantly lower than South East 77.2%. 65.9% of men and 57.5% of women are in employment in Swale. This is interesting as the numbers of women in Swale is higher than that of men; more men are self-employed (6,900 or 14.8%) compared to just 4,400 women. Also, there is a gross discrepancy in earnings between women and men in Swale, that is, weekly pay for male full-time workers is £558.0 (South East = £574.9 and Great Britain = £529.6), compared to female full time weekly pay in Swale at £453.8 (South East = £499.5 and Great Britain = £471.6); hourly pay excluding overtime for male full-time workers in Swale is £12.88 (South East = £15.54, Great Britain = £13.93) compared to females' at £12.30 (South East = £13.29, Great Britain = £12.57) (Nomis, 2015).

Composition of civil service jobs by sex and hours worked (Nomis, 2015) demonstrated a huge gap between women and men as follows: males in civil service jobs in Swale are 640 and females are 470.

Self-harm in girls and women were found to be 302 per 100,000 in 10 – 14 year olds and 1,423 per 100,000 in 15 – 18 year olds, whilst boys and young men were 67 per 100,000 in 10-14 year olds and 466 per 100,000 in 15-18 year olds. Repetition of self-harm was frequent (53.3% had a history of prior self-harm and 17.7% repeated within a year) (NHS SWALE CCG, 2015).

Swale has the highest percentage of women with domestic abuse incidents per 1,000 people (Kent 'Domestic Abuse' JSNA, updated 2014/15).

Teenage conception rates in Swale have improved at 27.4% yet it is higher than England's average of 24.3% (Swale Health Profile, 2015). Fundamentally the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy is a product of poor aspiration and self-regard amongst young people (Kent Public Health Observatory, 2016).

NHS Swale had the highest rates of women smoking at the time of delivery, as high as 26.8% at Q4 of 2013/2014 (NHS Swale CCG 2015).

30.2% of adults are estimated to be obese in Swale and a higher percentage of those are women, more than 23% England average (Swale CCG, 2016).

Other baseline data evidencing the needs and problem in Swale specifically for children and young people include:

- 23% of children live in poverty
- 2nd highest number of looked after children and young people
- Highest number of children in a Child Protection Plan in Kent
- 2nd lowest reading scores and numeracy skills in the County
- 88% of girls and 84% of boys entered their level 3 studies with 5 A*-C GCSE including maths and English (The post 16 landscape in District Data pack Lite 2014 Swale)
- Rates of drop out across post 16 are the second worst in Kent and the NEET rate for year 13 is 2% higher than the Kent average, suggesting most of those who drop out become NEET (Swale 7.3%, Kent 4.3%). Evidence suggests that NEET has been shown to have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health (NHS Swale CCG, 2015; UCL institute of Health Equity, 2014); School leavers with less than five A* to G GCSEs in Swale is 8.7% compared to Kent's 7.6%
- The Swale Local Area Perception Survey (Updated 2015) showed that residents consider activities for teenagers to be something most in need of improvement with the borough, and 52% of respondents were dissatisfied with youth services and the services provided for teenagers by their local council.

1.2 Rational and objectives

Evidence and anecdotal reports indicates that the combination of the above factors impact negatively on women and girls' health and wellbeing, leading to: low self-esteem; lack of confidence; lack of aspiration and motivation; self-isolation; disintegration of families and communities; lack of skills; poor performance in academic work or absenteeism/disengagement from learning; teenage conception and under-age terminations; broken relationships and dysfunctional family relationships; young peoples' homelessness; unintentional and deliberate self-injuries in young girls; substance misuse among others.

Diversity House equipped with the above evidence successfully applied for funding from the Big Lottery Reach Communities grant and in December 2012 initiated Swale Women Empowering Women project to support women to make changes in four key spheres of:

- Psychological and physical empowerment;
- Economic empowerment;
- Community empowerment; and
- Assets/social development

According to both internal and external evaluations of the project, this three years women empowerment initiative was successful and recorded substantial positive improvement in the quality of life of the more than 7,092 beneficiaries. However, some recommendations from the external evaluation for the way forward for the project were as follows:

- To include the hitherto overlooked very marginalized group, that is, Roma Gypsies and Irish Travelers;
- To include girls in order to prevent them from growing up and being confronted with the aforementioned social inequalities;
- To continue to target women (both those that benefited from the previously funded project so that they will sustain changes made; and also to encourage those women that did not participate in the initial program to get involved);
- And to target refugees, particularly, those from Syria, as at when they arrive in Swale.

Objectives

Based on the above recommendations, Diversity House in this present study aim to achieve a deeper understanding of women and girls' needs, to highlight critical areas of needed action and suggest practical ways to move forward to ensure women and girls' needs begin to be recognised as urgent and legitimate concerns.

Therefore the main rationale of this needs assessment is to determine the nature, scope, and locale of women and girls' disadvantages (if any) and to identify a feasible, useful, and relevant solution(s) to the problem(s); ultimately, improving the quality of life of women and girls in Swale.

Briefly, the needs assessment will:

- Engage with women and girls to obtain their narratives of the problem(s) they face in Swale;
- Listen and take on board their views and suggestions on how their needs should be met;
- Explore and identify what gaps in services exists locally;
- Assess the availability of local agencies and organisations with similar vision and mission of providing holistic and gender sensitive services for the target population; and
- Recruit stakeholders who will collaborate in mapping appropriate services and activities for the target population

Diversity House intentions following the needs assessment are to:

- Work with women and girls to plan and implement a series of activities/interventions to address the identified problems and consequently, empower women and girls in Swale;
- Collaborate and work in partnership with like-minded agencies and organisations to provide a menu of options of interventions to mitigate or ameliorate the identified needs;

- Be holistic and address practical needs;
- Support connectivity among women and girls;
- Employ supportive, collaborative, non-hierarchical approaches;
- Be gender specific;
- Address issues of primary concern to women and girls;
- Be respectful and female driven;
- Provide interventions that are based on female strengths, not deficits; and
- Provide services that are based on the empowerment model

The next section explains the methodology used in this needs assessment.

SECTION TWO

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Training of Field Volunteers

A three day training course on gender mainstreaming, gender analysis and basic research methods was organised by Diversity House for women field volunteers⁴ from 3 areas of Swale (Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and Sittingbourne). The objective of the training was to enable women service users (as they are best placed) to work with us to raise awareness, develop capacity, collect and analyse data and information specific to women and girls' needs so that Diversity House and other local partner organisations will become better equipped to plan and respond to the needs of women and girls in Swale. The training course was designed through a collaborative effort involving staff of Diversity House and women themselves and content include the following aspects:

- Basic Gender Concepts
- Women and Decision Making
- Psychosocial Support
- Refuge issues –
- Ethical guidelines for doing needs assessment
- Needs assessment methodologies
- Introduction to draft women's needs
- Revision session
- Practice session/Feedback
- Detailed planning for field trips

Training methodologies included: group discussion; issue exploration; case studies; presentations; games and role plays; video discussions and scenario activities.

The training participants included 10 women field volunteers who put themselves forward to assist with the needs assessment.

2.2 Needs Assessment Tool and Administration

The needs assessment tool, designed to enable the collection of both qualitative and limited quantitative data, was administered to respondents totally 1032 through focus groups, key informants and one-to-one interviews, and community forums.

2.3 Data and Information Analysis

⁴ Women who are current users of the women project

The data and information is analysed from the perspectives of three main demographic groups: women, girls (women under 18), and a few men. Data and information analysis was conducted by a team of volunteers most of whom had been involved in the design and delivery of the training course and assessment form. This report was compiled by the project lead of Diversity House and supported by a volunteer independent researcher (woman).

The preliminary findings and recommendations of the SWAG's Needs Assessment carried out in three areas of Swale (Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and Sittingbourne) were shared with a number of stakeholders in Sittingbourne during a Stakeholders meeting on the 29th of July 2015. These stakeholders numbered 21 in total (17 female and 4 male), including the Director of Swale Council for Volunteer Service, company secretary of Swale Community Centres, the head teachers of Westlands Primary School and South Avenue Primary School; the chief executive of Twinkle (an afterschool organisation); women who used the previously Big Lottery funded project (SWEW) and are still using the scaled down interventions; and some representatives of Diversity House Youth Club. The overall response to the presentation was receptive and there was general agreement on the recommendations. Participants commented that the needs of women and girls are often overlooked and that more attention is needed so as to provide better services and support. Participants wanted more male service providers to be exposed to the findings in order to increase awareness and to address the issues related to women and girls; so as to be able to respond to the findings presented. Also, it was recommended that in future men should be trained to become champions for women and girls locally.

2.4 Limitations

The areas covered in this report should not be seen as a comprehensive women and girls' needs assessment. Rather the assessment intended to follow up on and explore in more depth the key issues that had emerged during the delivery of our previously funded women project (SWEW) for three years.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

As previously noted, volunteers who led the focus-group discussions were trained on the ethical guidelines for doing needs assessments. The areas covered during the training included: 'Do No Harm'; Personal Safety and Security; Informed Consent; Anonymity and Confidentiality; Team Selection and Preparation; Referrals; Use of Information. Verbal explanations about the objectives and nature of the study were given to all participants prior to starting the focus group discussions. The issue of written consent was discussed at the time of interview; however, participants expressed concern about signing documents and were fearful of having signed records taken, despite assurances of confidentiality. Therefore, each interviewer collected verbal consent from each participant and noted their verbal consent.

Participants who took part in focus group discussions were offered support through informal counselling mechanisms, after sessions had been completed. The focus group discussions were held during the day, and data collection teams remained within the interview venues and were accessible to individuals after the discussions and throughout the evening as required.

Throughout the data collection and compilation process the field volunteers were supported by Diversity House staff and were duly commended for their contributions of time.

2.6 Data Gathering Methods

Approaches used in these consultations include – one-to-one interviews with key informants (gatekeepers, and women and adolescent girls); focus groups; discussions at meetings; telephone conversations; online information through our social media platform (Twitter, Face book, website, etc.), community chat show via our local Radio (SFM Radio 106.9); and service users comments during drop-in sessions.

Diversity House staff including some women beneficiaries of the previously funded SWEW project jointly consulted with women (current and potential beneficiaries) and girls across Swale. As mentioned earlier, the women who participated in conducting the needs assessment were provided training on different aspects of research including, gender mainstreaming and gender analysis by the Project Lead – Christine Locke. This enabled them to understand how to frame sensitive gender related questions.

2.7 Key informants

Key informants were utilized to obtain expert opinions from individuals and organizations that were presumed to have special knowledge about the target population's problems and needs. Fifteen key informants interviewed were from the following organisations: Swale CVS, an umbrella for all voluntary organizations in Swale; Job Centre Plus; an organisation that supports those on benefits and job seekers; South Avenue Primary School and Westlands Primary School; Swale Borough Council Housing Dept.; and Kent County Council (regarding the Syrian Venerable Person's Scheme). These key informants were selected to be surveyed because they are in close contact with the target population and have special knowledge of their problems.

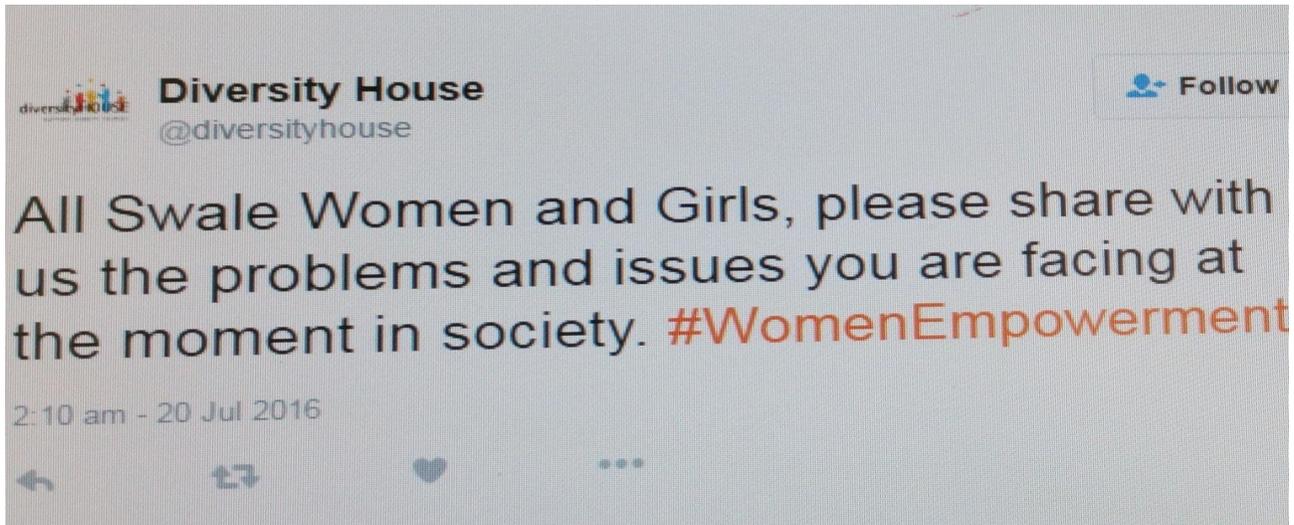
Face to face interviews with key informants produced new or original data. All The results of the key informants' interviews are discussed in Section three.

We interviewed the above key informants on the needs of women and adolescent girls in Swale. An interview schedule was developed in order to guide the process of interviewing the Key informants (Appendix A).

2.8 community forum

The community forum is an open meeting of all people who are interested in the specific service, target population. This involved inviting the general public to discuss the issues to be addressed in the needs assessment. In conducting the community forum invitations (online and hard copy) were distribute, requesting that women and girls attend meetings that were being held at different dates and at different venues across the Borough to discuss their needs. (Refer to Appendix B). Five hundred (500) invitations were distributed by women and girls (volunteers) around the Borough and 602 women and girls attended. Also, using Diversity House social media platform (website, Twitter, Face book) and a local Radio (SFM Radio 106.9), women and girls of Swale were invited to these meetings to discuss their needs and to proffer possible solutions too. (Refer to: <http://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/projects/consultation-with-swale-women-and-girls/> ; @diversityhouse; also see invitation below) and 44 women and girls gave their feedback through these channels. The community forum was used as part of the needs assessment. The discussion on the needs is guided by the six questions in Appendix A.

Twit1: Twitter Call out for Swale women and girls.



Twit 2: Art in the Park Event 16th July 2016 – Community Forum.

Women and girls were asked to note down their problems/needs and possible solutions on a flip chart. Many women and girls visited Diversity House stall in order to chart about the problems they face as women and girls in Swale.



2.9 Current and potential service users

Women from the previously Big Lottery funded project – SWEW, continue to receive interventions to sustain behavioural changes already achieves. However, it was pertinent to involve them in this needs assessment to

identify additional needs. Also, to work with them as enablers to reach women and even girls not reached previously. Therefore, using both online and written invitation, women (both current and potential beneficiaries) and girls were invited to attend events such as Christmas Ball; Valentine’s Day event; International Women’s Day; International Day of the Girl Child; and Coffee Mornings. These were opportunistic approaches of getting women and girls together to ask them about their needs. On the whole, 284 women and girls took part in one to one or focus group interviews. Sample of the interview schedule used for women and girls is presented in Appendix C.

2.10 consultation schedule

2.10.1 Qualitative Approach:

Qualitative approach involved interviewing (1-2-1, focus groups of key informants, community member through community forums; current and potential target population.

Table one outlines dates and locations of the consultations; and numbers of women and girls engaged with.

Date	Description	Where	Number Consulted	
22 Dec 2014	Diversity House Christmas Ball	Phoenix House, Central Avenue, Sittingbourne	32 (13-25 years) <u>26</u> (adult) <u>58</u> Total	1-2-1; Focus Group
Oct 2015	Telephone interview with Kent County Council	Sessions House Kent County Council	2	Key Informant
9 Oct 2015	Coffee Morning	Phoenix House, Central Avenue, Sittingbourne	50 young people (13 – 25 years old)	1-2-1; Focus Group
8 March 2016	Diversity House event for International Women’s Day	Phoenix House, Central Avenue, Sittingbourne	30	Community Forum
11 March 2016	Diversity House event for International Women’s Day	Xross-PolyNation Art Gallery Maidstone	115	Community Forum
27 Nov	Coffee	Phoenix House, Central Avenue,	36	Focus Group

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2015	Morning	Sittingbourne		
29 Jan 2016	Coffee Morning	Swallows Leisure Centre, Sittingbourne	30	Focus Group
16 Dec 2015	Diversity House Christmas Ball	Hempstead House, Bapchild,	45 (11 teenage girls 34 women)	i-2-1 interviews and focus group
13 Nov 2015	Diversity House SWEW Outcomes finding meeting	Hempstead House, Bapchild	26	Focus Group
2 June 2015	SWEW Annual Conference	UK Paper Leisure Club	20 young girls;	Focus Group
14 Feb 2015	Valentine's Day event	UK Paper Leisure Club	45 couples	Focus Group
18 March 2015	Community Action Event	The Forum, High Street Sittingbourne		Community Forum
21 April 2015	Social Media	Online – Survey Monkey	35	https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2knsn9k Community Forum
17 June 2015	Swale Community Centers Fun Day	Phoenix House	108	Community Forum
14 Aug 2015	SFM @ SFMRADIO Community Chat Show	Central Avenue Sittingbourne	2 = Community – responded through call in and live chats	https://youtube/S5iOyOEmStM Community Forum
10 Aug 2015	SFM @ SFMRADIO Community Chat Show	Central Avenue Sittingbourne	6 = Community – responded through call in and live chats	https://youtube/S5iOyOEmStM Community Forum
4 Feb 2016	South Avenue Primary School – parents/carers	South Avenue, Sittingbourne	261	School Event (Community Forum) Adults and pupils

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	and pupils during family event at the school			
6 June 2016	Jane Durant Partnership Manager	Job Centre Plus Roman Square Sittingbourne	1	Key Informant
8 July 2016	Zoe Kent	Housing Dept., East Street, Sittingbourne Swale Borough Council	1	Representing the Council on Syrian Refugees Key Informant
15 July 2016	Westlands Primary School	Homewood Avenue, Sittingbourne	12	Feedback from School Leaders (women) (Key informants)
16 July 2016	Art in the Park	Milton Creek Country Park, Milton Regis	88	Community Forum
3 July 2016	Swale CVS	Central House, Central Avenue Sittingbourne	11	Key Informants
3 July 2016	Diversity House Youth Club	Phoenix House, Central Avenue Sittingbourne	50 (5-18 years)	1-2-1; Focus Group
		Total women and girls consulted = 1032		

Picture 2: Christmas Party – Consultation.



SECTION THREE

FINDINGS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

3.1 Women and Girls' Needs – Key Findings

3.1.1 Demographic Data

Some quantitative data is presented in the first instance to show some characteristics of interview participants, these include demographic data.

It was pertinent that we gathered these demographic data to enable us understand factors such as: the area of residence; age; gender; ethnicity; marital and employment status and much more

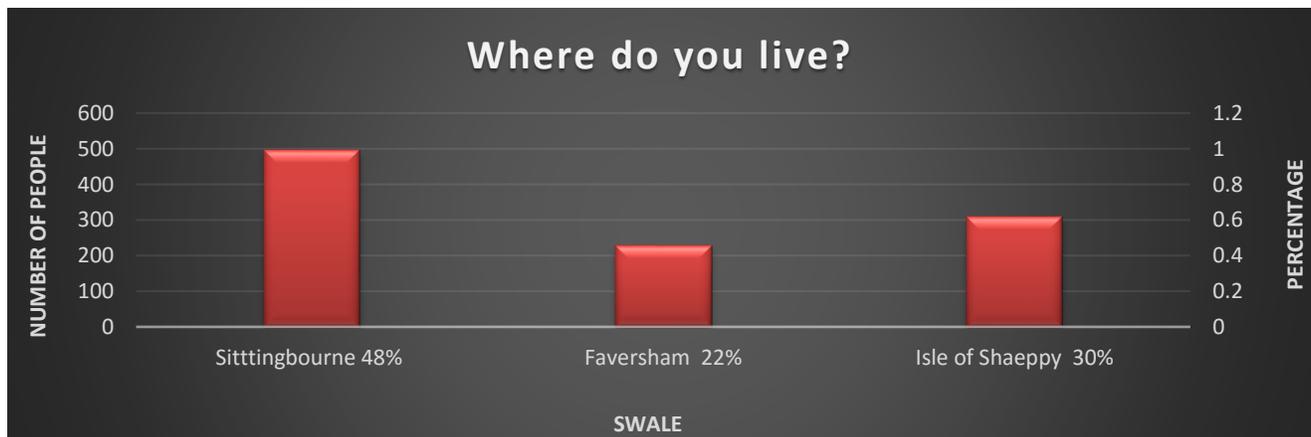
Question 1: Where do live?

All interview participants were asked for their current place of residency and it was identified that out of the 1031 interviewed, 48% live in Sittingbourne; 30% in Isle of Sheppey and 22% in Faversham. Table 2 and chart 1 depicts the statistics on residency.

Table 2:

Where do you currently live?					
Sittingbourne	48%	Faversham	22%	Isle of Sheppey	30%
495		227		309	

Chart 1: where do you live?



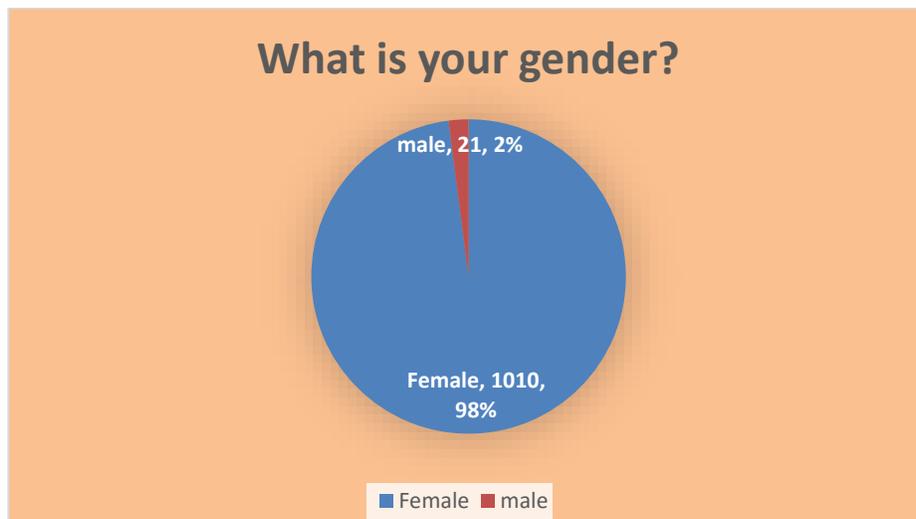
Question 2: what is your gender?

As should be expected, 98% percent of those interviewed were women and girls. Table 3 and chart 2 illustrates this.

Table 3:

What is your gender?			
Female		male	
↑	1010	↓	21
	98%		2%

Chart 2:



Question 3: What is your age?

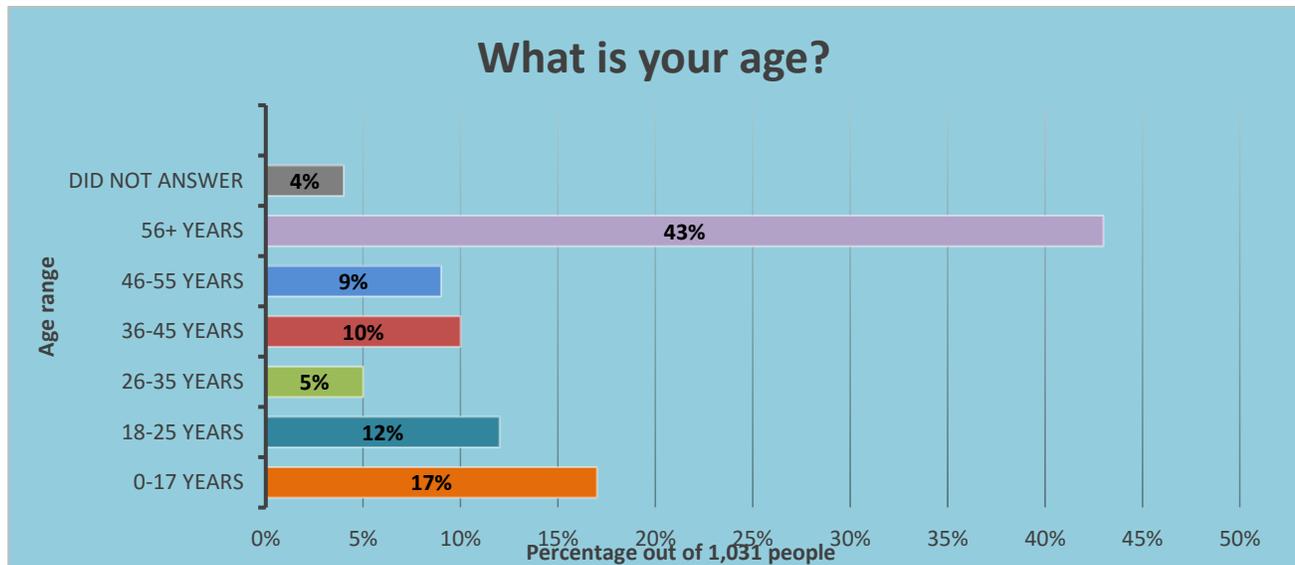
It is not surprising that the percentage of women and girls that described themselves as White British are higher 43%. This is reflective of the population of Swale.

Out of the 1031 interviewed 43% percent were 56 years and above. This corresponds to the data on ageing society. See table 4 and chart 3.

Table 4:

What is your age?							
Age Range	0-17 years	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56+ years	Did not answer
Out of 1031	175	124	52	103	93	443	41
Percentage	17%	12%	5%	10%	9%	43%	4%

Chart 3:



Question 4; what is your ethnicity?

Table 5: ethnicity

		Number of people
White British	55%	567
Black African	25%	258
White Other	2%	21
Mixed race	4%	41
Black British	3%	31
Asian	2%	20
Black other	3%	31
Travellers & Gypsies	6%	62

As depicted by the table above, the ethnicity of the participants varied, with a higher percentage from the mainstream White British background at 55% (567 participants). This is followed by Black Africans at 25% (258). This is interesting as it confirms the sudden influx of Black Africans moving into the area from London. Also, the percentage of Travelers and Gypsies = 6% (62) may be indicative of the difficulties in engaging with this community. Swale has the highest percentage of Travelers and Gypsies in Kent, even though they are settled (brink and mortar) but they still keep to themselves. This also links with the anecdotal report a Head Teacher of a local school –

“The mothers do not mix with others even when they come to the school, they stay within their own...” (Head Teacher, Westlands Primary)

Chart 4: what is your ethnicity?

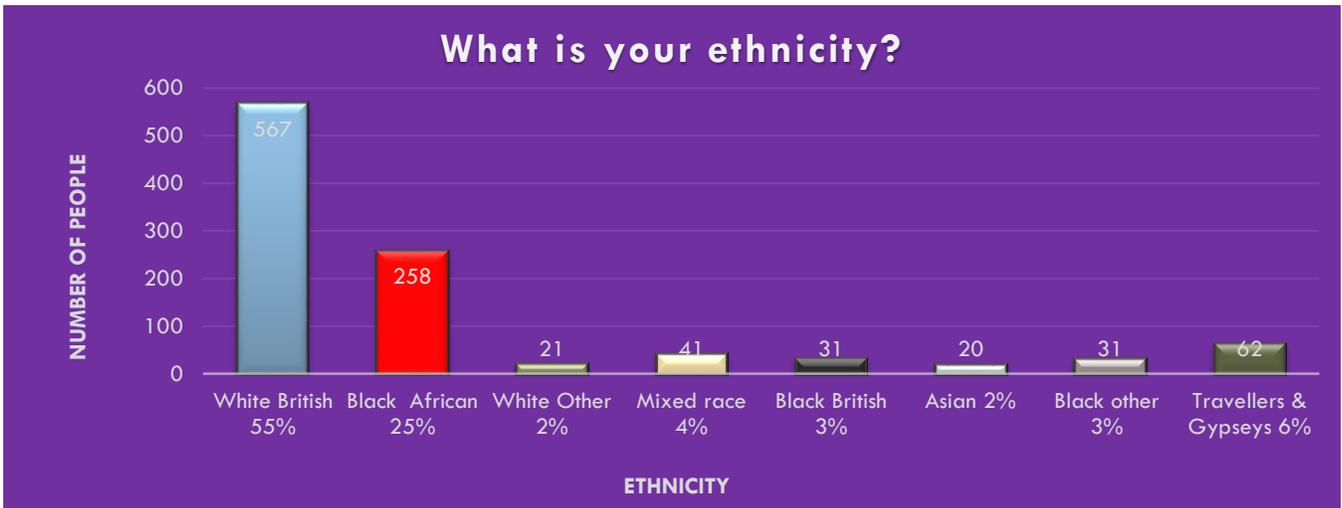


Table 6: marital status

What is your marital status?	Single	Students	co-habiting	Married	Prefer not to say
Divorced	7%	15%	11%	57%	8%
	72	155	113	588	82

Chart 5: marital status

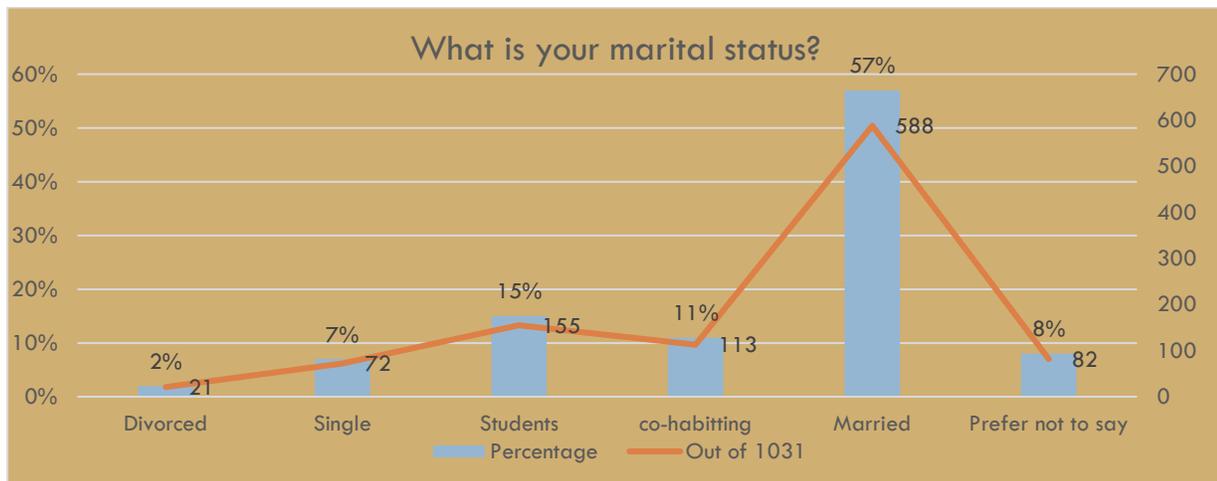


Table 7:

Do you have children?		
Yes	381	37%
No	650	63%

Chart 6: children

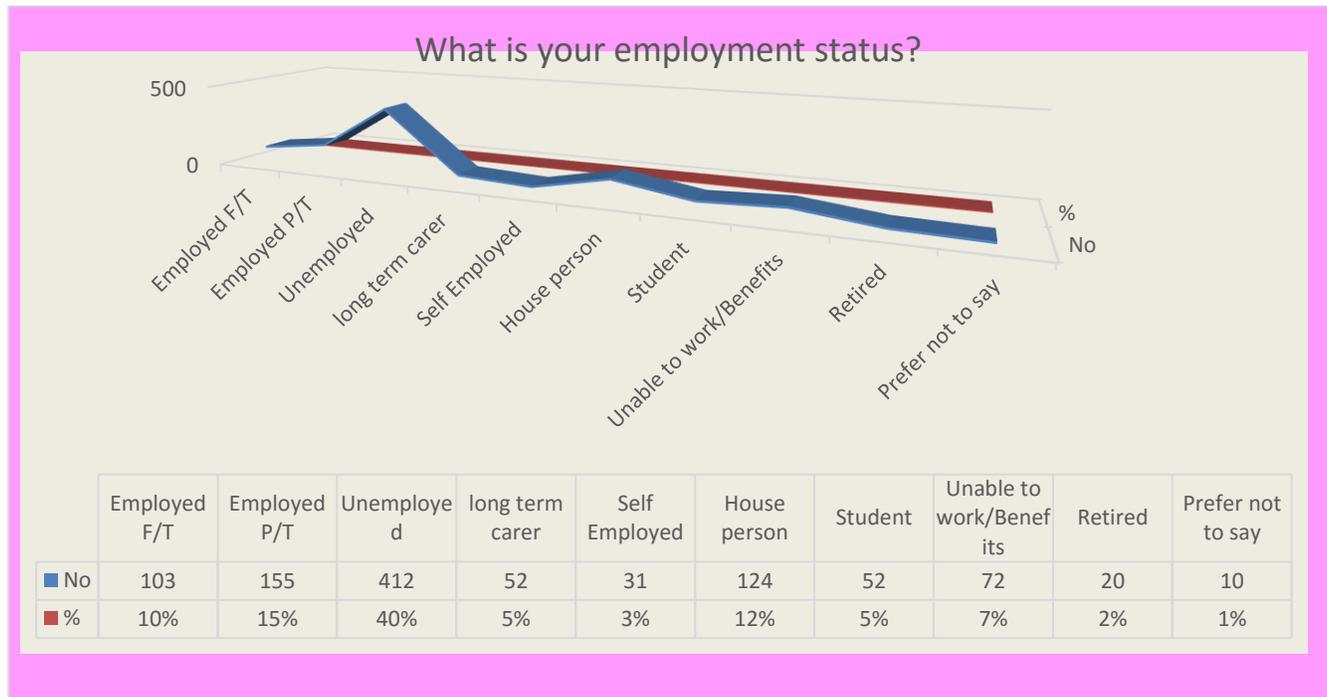


A majority of the participants do not have children = 63% (650), whilst 37% (381) have children.

Table 8: employment status

What is your employment status		
	No	%
Employed F/T	103	10%
Employed P/T	155	15%
Unemployed	412	40%
long term carer	52	5%
Self Employed	31	3%
House person	124	12%
Student	52	5%
Unable to work/Benefits	72	7%
Retired	20	2%
Prefer not to say	10	1%

Chart 7: employment status



In terms of employment status, a higher percentage of the participants were unemployed 40% (412), whilst only 3% (31) were self-employed. This reflects the situation on women and girls in Swale, where a negligible numbers of women and girls participate in enterprise.

The result gathered for the needs assessment by the use of key informant; community forum; and the target population are provided as follows:

The Interview with Key Informants

Data from key informants is obtained by means of an interview. An interview schedule is used and data is collected by means of audiotape and suggestion sheets. These were later transcribed.

The five stages approach as suggested by Marshall and Rossman’s (1989:112-20) was utilised in generating categories, themes and patterns that emerged from the data collected. Based on the data collected from the transcripts from the key informants, negative aspects and positive aspects emerged from the data. The negative aspects that key informants mentioned were used as the category for negative instances. The positive instances that the key informants mentioned about women and girls were used as the category for positive aspects as highlighted in Table 9 as follows:

Table 9: Categories, Themes and Patterns

Theme	Category (Positive)	Category (Negative)
Empowerment	They will learn. They will take control of their own lives.	Not empowered, no confidence, no control, lack of participation in decision-making (in family and community)
Community participation	They will engage in: Meetings/networking, Seminars/conferences, involvement in volunteering and community actions, sports, physical and emotional health, included, They will gain: skills, confidence, sense of belonging	Isolation, excluded, drinking/smoking, not involved in decision-making locally, mental health, skills
Health	Attitude, awareness, decision-making, control, confidence, sexual health, relationships, respect Physical and emotional wellbeing, lifestyle, behaviour change	Poor attitude, ignorance, wrong decisions, unplanned pregnancies/conceptions, STIs, broken relationships, teenage mums, poor physical and emotional health, poor lifestyle,
Aspiration	Motivated, attendance, knowledge, skills, attitude, progress & achievements, pride, education, vocational training, enterprise	Not motivated, apathy, poor attendance and absents from schools (young girls), no skills, knowledge, NEET, no future
Education	Aspiration, Job opportunities, Skills, knowledge, income, stability, career, life chances, take charge of their fertility (plan when to have children),	Lack of aspiration, Unaware, lack knowledge and understanding, lack job opportunities, chances of good income, lack knowledge of certain aspects of family life, lack life chances,
*Community integration	Information, advice, guidance, advocacy, knowledge, access services, health, new communities	No information, advice, guidance, lack of knowledge of available services and opportunities, poor access, new communities become

	feel settled	polarised

Results from the Community Forum

The community forum the women and girls brainstorm the problems they are facing and come up with solutions for the problems. Diversity Staff, women and girls volunteer facilitators' uses a flip chart during the brainstorming session in order to keep record of the feedback from the group.

The needs questions as mentioned in (Appendix A) are also utilized during the brainstorming session. The questions suggest solutions such as a program to promote gender equality (women and girls in Swale). The needs identified aimed at defining a "social service intervention/support" program for Women and girls in Swale. This was done in order for women and girls to collectively mention and prioritise their problem.

Attendees (women and girls) to the community forum priorities heir problems and suggested solutions as mentioned in Table 10 as follows:

Table 10: Needs/Problems and Solutions of Women and Girls in Swale

Table 10: NEEDS/PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Needs/Problems	Solutions
Employment opportunities	<p>They can start their own businesses, but need skills</p> <p>Job support for young people</p> <p>Support from local traders and businesses, initiatives for young entrepreneurs to help young girls who want to start their own businesses to start putting their ideas together,</p> <p>Vocational skills should be supported for both young girls and women, encouraging them to learn vocational skills such as sewing, cooking, plumbing, etc. Also, women and girls should be given opportunities in the construction industries. Training to increase their involvement in this industry should be promoted. Initiatives such as work shadow, work experience, internship, apprenticeship and visits to local construction industries and even science and technology should be incorporated in programs for women</p>

	<p>and girls.</p> <p>Speakers from different job roles should act as ambassadors, giving motivational talks to women and girls to enlighten them on the different career pathways available to them.</p> <p>Career advice and guidance; work experience</p>
Skills – life skills (social and financial)	<p>Role models, peer to peer support, mentoring and coaching, training and workshops (e.g. take your daughter to work week), finance, budgeting, savings – banking, cooking, sewing, resolving conflicts, looking after oneself, how to live in a global world, etc.</p>
Education	<p>Motivational workshops, career information and guidance, outreach support for those cultures that take their daughters out of school early to have children, behavioural training for parents, after school sessions in school to tackle problems that affects girls education, after school clubs in schools and in the community targeting girls, support from STEMNET Ambassadors on: Mathematics, Science, Technology, book club, etc.</p>
Income	<p>Training and workshops on work programs, business enterprise, young farmers club, soft skills for employment; young entrepreneurs</p>
Communication	<p>Information, advice and guidance on community services, online and face to face forums to promote women and girls connectivity, magazine - fashion, clothing, music, pen pals</p>
Activities for girls	<p>Sports – competitive games, girls' leagues, young innovative competitions (e.g. science, history, mathematics, spelling, debates, other infrastructure;</p>
Support for Teen mums	<p>Childcare, holding events in team times, parenting skills, information, advice and guidance on working from home, work, life and family balance, activities for mums and toddlers, child friendly venues, support on making and sustaining relationships, etc.</p>
Support for Single mums	<p>Same as above</p>
Self-esteem & confidence	<p>Workshops on confidence building and self-esteem</p>

Help with digital inclusion – social media	Training on online safety, bullying, shaming, sex-ting, revenge porn; workshops and training on how to use the online to generate income; online magazines – fashion, clothing, games building, etc.
Community activities	Interactive networking with young people
Social interactions	Youth outings, camping, clubs, music, coffee mornings, etc.
Health	Health education and promotion – sexual health, healthy lifestyle – nutrition, information and advice on use of misusing substances, psychosocial support – emotional wellbeing, resilience, etc.

Main Social Needs of Girl

The majority of participants (both women and girls) strongly expressed gaps in activities for young people in the area.

“More things for teens to do” (Jasmine from Tonge)

“More activities for young girls” (Jenna from Tonge)

“Getting out and about meeting new people” (Linda – The Meads)

“Not enough for younger people to do” (Jacqui, 33 years, Murston)

“More play grounds” (Ashleigh, 10 years, Manor Grove; Annemarie, 12 years, Kemsley)

“Not enough sport involvement for girls” (Mark, 54 years, Langley Road, Milton)

“There need to be shared goals using sports, music, drama, etc for girls. Not enough community event” (Andy, 32 years, London Road)

“More groups for children for dance, singing, and drama for adults (Gemma, 31 years, Sittingbourne)

Girls lack role models:

“It is critical that children at the formative juncture between childhood and the teen years receive consistent mentorship, support and, guidance”.

Life Skills

In terms of life skills, majority of participants, particularly, the women felt strongly that life skills should be taught to younger girls to enable them live in the ever changing society that we live in now. According to participants, young people need additional support to cope with living on their own and sustaining tenancies –

"Many young people in Swale are becoming homeless and cannot cope on their own" (Marion, 36 years, Iwade)

Different solutions were proffered on ways to address this issue including:

1. Mentoring scheme for homeless young people where they can get personal help, advice and support from an individual mentor as and when they need it. Participants felt that mentors will also be able to act as role models for homeless young girls and help them to develop life goals and aspirations.

Also on life skills:

"Schools are too interested in the academic abilities and not life and practical skills" (Liz, 55 years, Bapchild)

Social Skills

All participants identified the need for social skills for both women and girls. This include community participation, negotiating social norms.

Also, the use of social media by young girls was identified as an issue of concern by many women and young girls. Despite the incredible benefits that the presence of advanced media technology has in our lives, especially the ever-increasing possibilities for communication and interconnection of people around the world, media can be dangerous. According to those interviewed, influential media exposure infiltrates the minds of girls' ages 8 to 12 at an alarmingly high degree. With the growing popularity of social networks such as Vine, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Oovoo, Tu Go, Facetime, and Snapchat amongst pre-teens and teens, social media plays a major role in how they perceive themselves, their life and the world in which they live. In addition to the influence of social networks, the inundation of media influences in our society such as television, movies, the internet, music, and magazines has real effects on their minds and bodies. Therefore, it was suggested amongst others, that girls should be supported to make sense of the social media.

"Teach girls to deconstruct media images" (Maria, 54 years, Faversham)

"Teach girls to love their bodies" (Faith, 32 years, Bapchild)

"Girls should be offered opportunities to express themselves, be heard, and explore their world in a safe environment" (Rita, 47 years, Newington; Miles, 29 years, Upton Lane)

Health Literacy

The women felt that some of the problems experienced by girls in the area is that they are have children younger these days. Having children impacts on a number of things, including: dropping out of school to look after the baby; inability to go to work because the girl cannot afford the cost of child care;

"Teenage pregnancy stops girls from having a career. Many young girls have children for different men. They do not know how to sustain relationships" (Jackie, 58 years, Snips Hill)

Several solutions were proffered as to how to address this problem. One solution given was to provide health literacy for girls which include sex education, how to develop and sustain healthy relationships, 1-2-1 support top enable girls understand that life does not stop with having children.

Social interaction –sports and games

One of the concerns pointed out was the lack of or shortage of outdoor sports activities for women and girls. According to participants of our needs assessment, through structured sport programs, girls and women can become more physically active, benefiting their physical and mental health, including the reduced risk they will suffer from chronic diseases, depression and anxiety, and engaging in health risk behaviours. They asserts that sport can also be a powerful health information and education platform, connecting girls and women with the information, skills and strategies they need to reduce health risks in their lives, particularly in connection with their sexual and reproductive health.

Sport can help increase self-esteem by giving girls and women opportunities to learn new skills, engage in positive relationships, acquire achievements, engage in volunteer service and receive public recognition. By providing women and girls with a voice in program design and decision-making, training, and opportunities for leadership and advocacy, sport programs can also empower and help equip them to take greater control over their own lives.

Sport programs can help to reduce the social isolation and exclusion that many girls and women experience in Swale; particularly those that cannot attend school for one reason or the other and live in poverty. Sport programs can provide girls and women with safe places to gather, help them to build social networks, offer social support, and connect them to health, education and employment information, services, and opportunities that can help to address their marginalization in society.

Specific support for girls – preventative interventions

Many of those interviewed informed that it is crucial that girls as young as 10 years be engaged in the program. According to them:

"It's hard to be a girl. Girls and boys deal with many of the same issues; however, there are certain issues unique to the experience of growing up as a girl in this society. Girls today are exposed to sexual violence and abuse, domestic violence and abuse, relationship violence, unplanned pregnancy, drug use and abuse, prostitution, direct and indirect gang involvement, involvement with the criminal justice system, influential media exposure, unrealistic and unhealthy body expectations, inhibiting gender expectations, and poverty".(Antoinette, 63 years, Minster)

SECTION 4

4.1 Prioritization of Needs

The process of prioritizing needs was carried out with a sample of women and girls. Women and girls were invited to take part in needs prioritizing needs and categorizing them in order from less important to most important. Below priority matrix depicts the participants’ perception of women and girls needs/problems.

We believe that if participants’ effective priority setting will be beneficial as it may lead to:

- Improved stakeholder understanding and acceptance of the priorities and goals for improving interventions for women and girls needs/problems;
- Improved stakeholder satisfaction with their involvement in the decision-making process;
- Allocation of resources to implement planned changes to the current situation of women and girls; and
- Improved quality of decisions.

Table 11: Priority Matrix for SWAG Project

Identified Needs	Women/Girls	Weight	Important	Very Important
Skills – communication; conflict resolution; self-awareness & esteem; financial/savings; peer to peer support, Administrative skills Science, history, mathematics, ICT, technology; Vocational skills – sewing, crafts; constructions; etc.	Women & girls	5		Yes
	Girls	5		Yes
Social interactions and networking: Digital inclusion – online safety, creative activities Sports and physical	Women & girls	4	Yes	
	Girls	5		Yes

activities				
Income: Employment – employee; self employment Work programs, career advice and guidance, mentoring and role models (e.g. take your daughter to work days) Business networking and advice Entrepreneurial skills – marketing, business planning, bookkeeping,	Women & Girls	5		Yes

Weighting Scores

Very Important = 5

Important = 4

Moderately Important = 3

Of Little Importance = 2

Unimportant = 1

4.2. Further Stakeholders Involvement

As part of the prioritisation process, a further stakeholders meeting was held to discuss with key agencies on the possibility of partnership working. Based on the stakeholders meeting, we have developed a wide multi-disciplinary partnership consisting of VCS and statutory sector partners across the Swale area. Some partners will participate as members of the Project Board, some will be delivery partners and all will sign formal partnership agreements specifying their level and type of support.

- Swale Borough Council (provision of venue, advice on relevant policies and strategies)
- Swale Council for Voluntary Sector (advice and information; induction/sign posting of volunteers and training)
- SFM Radio 109.6 (support in social marketing to reach target population and training on digital inclusion) Westlands Primary and Southlands schools (satellite venue for the project for young girls and guidance on working with providing for their needs)
- Swale Community Centre (Provide venue and work with their youth club)
- Job Centre plus (provision of work placements, programmes and referrals)
- The Swallows Leisure Centre (Provision of sports and leisure venue for physical activities, we will also signpost to them)
- NHS Health Trust (Provision of health trainers and community sexual health team for health promotion and health education)
- Kent County Council (guidance on Syrian refugee scheme)
- Carers Support (signpost us to young girls that are carers)
- Porchlight (signposting and referrals for mental health issues)
- Swale Action to end Domestic Violence (identify and refer people to them)
- My-voice-info and Rubicon Cares (identify and refer people to them)

Additionally, six out of the above agencies have given us a supporting letter with in kind funding to present to potential funders. The table 12 below depicts this in kind funding.

Table 12: Partners In-Kind Funding

Who	What	How Much (In-Kind) £	How Much (Monetary) £
Swale CVS	Venue	4,500	-
Department of Works & Pension	Venue	5,200	-
SMF Radio	Marketing/Advert	4,500	-
Westlands Primary School	Venue	Not quantified yet	1,000
Swale Community Centres	Venue	2,740	-
Director of Swale CVS	Mentoring support	4,380	-

SECTION 5

Conclusion

Key recommendations

The report recommends urgent attention to women and girls unmet needs in Swale, and calls on all agencies and sectors in Swale to advocate for and to ensure coordinated and partnership working to ensure that resources are used responsibly to meet the needs of the target population.

We recommend that in addressing the above enumerated unmet needs, that Diversity House should adhere to best practices of engaging and providing interventions for vulnerable women and girls. Also, Diversity House in setting up a women and girls initiative should adhere to principles of empowerment and best practice in service delivery by doing the followings:

- Use different approaches and proffer a menu of options of interventions for women and girls
- Interventions should be holistic and addressing practical needs of women and girls in Swale;
- Interventions should be gender specific;
- Interventions should support connectivity among women and girls;
- Employ supportive, collaborative, and non-hierarchical approaches;
- Address issues of primary concern for women and girls, including opportunities for skills acquisitions and social interactions;
- Be respectful and female driven;
- Interventions should be based on female strengths, not deficits;

Appendices

Appendix A

Needs Assessment

Interview Schedule for Key Informants and Community Forum

Do you think it is necessary to have a supporting women and girls initiative in Swale?

.....
.....

Do you think women and girls are disadvantaged in Swale?

.....
.....

What are the problems, women and girls are facing in the community?

.....
.....

How do you think women and girls should be supported to address these problems?

.....
.....

What do you think should be done to tackle the problems confronting women and girls in Swale?

.....
.....

What do you think will happen once these problems are addressed?

.....
.....

Do you think women and girls of Swale will benefit if they participate in the Supporting Women and Girls Project?

.....

Thank you for your views and time.

Appendix B

Invitation to a Community Forum

Dear Swale Residents

You are hereby cordially invited to attend a community forum concerning the needs and problems facing women and girls in Swale.

Date:

Time:

Venue: The Forum Shopping Mall High Street, Sittingbourne

Theme: "Supporting Women and Girls"

YOUR ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION WILL BE MUCH APPRECIATED.

Maz Nkhuwa

Project Coordinator

Diversity House

Appendix C

Agenda for the Community Forum

Opening and welcome:	Project Lead, Diversity House
Introduction of the researcher:	Project Lead, Diversity House
Purpose of the meeting:	Researcher - To discuss issues around the needs and problems that women and girls are facing in Swale
Group method:	Brainstorming - Issues around women and girls (needs/problems and solutions)
Further planning:	Participants were asked to sit in two groups to prioritise the identified needs and problems in order of 1 to 5 (1 being unimportant and 5 being most important)
Closure:	Thank the community for attending the meeting, the project lead and those who participated in the priority setting were invited to further meetings.