

The Women's Centre Programme, Thematic Summary: Issue 2 | July 2018

Beth Weaver, Claire Lightowler and Fern Gillonⁱ

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-LED WOMEN'S SPACE

INTRODUCTION

This thematic summary presents findings from an exploration of the development of women's spaces, to understand how they have progressed and the critical factors required to support such an approach. The findings draw predominantly on the first year of the development of Kairos, a developing women's space in Johnstone, and build on earlier findings from the development of Heart and Soul, Cumnock (Issue 1). The Robertson Trust commissioned the University of Strathclyde to carry out this research. The aim of this thematic summary is to share findings with others interested in similar approaches.

WOMEN'S CENTRE PROGRAMME

The Women's Centre Programme has been developed to demonstrate how a gender specific, community-led, multi-agency approach can support women to achieve positive outcomes at a community, individual and agency level.

This involves establishing a physical centre as a base for activity and adopting a whole community approach which draws on the existing assets and strengths within the community to support all women, but especially those who are at risk of negative outcomes as a result of the specific social or structural issues they face.

The Robertson Trust's interest in improving well-being for women and in supporting the development of two Women's Centres was borne out of their involvement in the criminal justice sector. In particular, their interest was prompted by the [2012 Commission on Women Offenders](#).

The Commission recognised that there were a range of interrelated factors which have a specific impact on women involved in the criminal justice system and recommended Women's Centres were established '*for women offenders to enable them to access a consistent range of services to reduce reoffending and bring about behavioural change*'.

The Robertson Trust then conducted research into existing women's centres in England, and Northern Ireland. They found that, whilst a joined up model of delivery could support women in the criminal justice system, there was a risk of further stigmatising them within their communities by adopting an approach that focussed on their offending. It was suggested that a more holistic approach, which provided support to women experiencing tough times within a wider community setting could provide better results.

From the research, it was proposed that The Robertson Trust support the development of two physical "Women's Centres", one in a rural location, and one in an urban location, which would generate learning

and provide evidence of the experiences, impacts and effects of community-led, co-productive approaches to engaging and supporting women and girls. You can find out more about the Women's Centre Programme in our first thematic summary, '[Introducing the Women's Centre Programme](#)' which includes details of who is involved, the intended outcomes of the programme, the critical factors that increase the likelihood of success, and the learning thus far.

Developing Kairos: the journey so far

- 2004** The Trust begins to support developments within Scotland's criminal justice sector, including specific support for women with convictions and their families.
- 2012** The [2012 Commission on Women Offenders](#) recognised the range of interrelated factors that coalesce to have a specific impact on women involved in the criminal justice system. The Commission recommended the establishment of Women's Centres 'to enable [women] to access a consistent range of services to reduce reoffending and bring about behavioural change'.
- 2013** Trust staff visited existing Women's Centres in England, and Northern Ireland. They learnt that a more holistic approach to providing support to women within a wider community setting may have better results than focussing on vulnerability or offending alone, and could avoid further stigmatising individuals within their communities.
- 2015** The Trust undertook activities to identify two sites. This resulted in identifying Cumnock, a rural area, as a site for a centre. A second potential site was not taken forward after a period of consultation.
- A process [evaluation](#) was undertaken by Weaver and Lightowler (2017), which focused on the development and design phases of the Women's Centres. It employed an action research methodology and resulted in lessons for The Robertson Trust about what a project of this nature requires in the early stages of development.
- 2016** Renfrewshire was identified as the second site, this time in an urban area. [Active Communities](#), who have a strong record of and commitment to community engagement and development were recruited as the host organisation. The Trust engaged with a range of stakeholders to raise awareness of the Women's Centre Programme, to share plans for the development of a women's initiative in Renfrewshire and to explain the gender specific, community-led, multi-agency approach and to encourage engagement.
- 2017** A Development Worker was recruited and funded for one year at a cost of £52,500. She participated in a range of training opportunities and visits to see how related projects and initiatives operate and to what effect. A series of stakeholder consultations and meetings took place to identify and agree the location for Kairos and to raise awareness of the project. Active Communities opened their own hub in Johnstone which is currently shared with Kairos. Key activities further included engagement with a diverse range of local community groups and organisations likely to become involved with the centre. Outreach activities and events were held with the purposes of raising awareness, encouraging engagement and supporting the participation of local women. This resulted in the establishment of the 'Leading Ladies', a group of women intended to drive the development of Kairos.
- 2018** An advisory board of key stakeholders was established. Engagement with a diverse range of key stakeholders, local agencies and community groups and local women continued and a social media presence has been created. A range of engagement strategies in the form of activities, public events, targeted focus groups and taster sessions were put in place to encourage participation by a diverse group of women, to establish a core group of women to shape the development of Kairos. However, Active Communities recognised that the approach taken by the Development Worker resulted in difficulties in maintaining a regular core group

to lead its development, which necessarily hindered the progression of Kairos, as a community-led, women's space. Ultimately, the Development Worker concluded employment with Kairos. Later, a Project Manager was appointed who adopted a different approach to support the development of Kairos. The Leading Ladies group was refreshed and reconvened to form a 'Development Group' and an 'Inclusion Group'.

Key Findings

Identification of location

The decision to locate Kairos in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, was informed by a range of factors, including consultation with key stakeholders and existing relationships with the host organisation. Key considerations included the size of the community, the stability of the population and participation in the local area, and the resources or services currently available to women, or lack thereof.

The population of the site has to be sufficiently dense to justify a centre and to have enough people to support it. Having researched the evidence base, the Robertson Trust identified the optimum population size at 10,000. This volume means that there are enough women to build a community but not too many to preclude the development of a sense of ownership and belonging. The Robertson Trust was also keen to invest in typically overlooked communities; those communities in which projects are rarely initiated. While Kairos is yet to identify suitable premises, key considerations include visibility, accessibility, footfall and other spatial logistics alongside the character and atmosphere of the space.

Johnstone is a busy working class town. [Renfrewshire's Community Plan \(2013-2023\)](#) identifies that Johnstone, like its neighbouring towns Paisley and Renfrew, has a strong sense of identity and community. However, like other Scottish locations, the area is affected by poverty, disadvantage and deprivation, health inequalities, unemployment and problematic alcohol and drug use.

The Process of Development: Approach Taken

Stakeholder engagement comprising engagement with local community groups, key agencies and local women, and outreach activities have been undertaken throughout the past year by Active Communities and the former Development Worker, often facilitated and supported – particularly in the initial stages, by the Robertson Trust. These activities were designed to raise awareness, establish a presence and support buy-in. In addition, hosting open events for local women, and taster sessions (a series of activity based events informed by what women expressed an interest in at earlier events) were designed to encourage participation by women and support the formation of a core group to lead the development of Kairos, which came to be identified as the 'Leading Ladies'. This 'group' met on a weekly basis and, together, they agreed on the name, Kairos, coproduced or participated in events designed to engage a broader base of women, and established a social media presence.

While hosting events and activities are an important means of engaging women, the focus should be on people and participation, on the nature of interactions and on relationship building. Events and activities are a useful way of bringing women together to form a core group to develop the project and to raise awareness of the project, to encourage engagement and participation. They should not, then, be approached as an end in themselves. Questions arose over the course of the last year as to how formal or informal the approach to supporting local women comprising the 'core group' should be in enabling

them to develop the Women's Space. On the one hand, the approach taken needs to be informal enough to be engaging and enjoyable but it needs to be formalised, or at least sufficiently structured, to provide direction and drive it forward. The absence of structure and leadership results in drift and stagnation and when this occurs, momentum is lost and women disengage. Different women need to be engaged and included differently, and this implies the need for a continuum, or variety, of opportunities for participation. On reflection, the initial approach taken by the former Development Worker to the development of Kairos was, for the most part, insufficiently structured despite active guidance and support from the host organisation, Active Communities and The Robertson Trust. This lack of direction resulted in difficulties in sustaining women's engagement in the Leading Ladies group, the composition of which was constantly changing, and this lack of continuity hindered the development and progression of the Women's Space, inhibited a sense of community and ownership, and resulted in a lack of clarity around roles, aims, vision, values and purpose. The discontinuity in women comprising the core group meant that women experienced the meetings as repetitive, frustrating and unstructured. These difficulties were recognised by Active Communities and have since been addressed by a change of leadership and approach including the appointment of a new Project Manager, who reframed and refreshed the 'Leading Ladies' to comprise a Development Group and the establishment of an 'Inclusion Group' (a distinct group specifically tasked with supporting the participation of those not currently involved). At this time, the focus is on consolidating the group, forming a shared value base and developing a shared vision. We distil the learning from this further under 'Developing a Core Group' below but the approach being taken now is about 'bringing people together to do something together with a purpose in a facilitative environment' (Project Manager). That approach recognises that sustaining momentum is critical and that feeling a sense of progression is central to that. Women need to see things happening and that means not only coming together to share ideas but running activities women can be a part of and building an infrastructure by identifying the roles and responsibilities required to develop the project that women can take forward and take ownership of and responsibility for.

Emerging Vision and Evolving Aspirations

The approach being taken is community-led and asset based; it is about bringing women from the community together to coproduce a women's space. Fundamental to its development is the need to develop a shared vision and value base that is inclusive and that recognises that everybody has views to express, skills to bring and a contribution to make.

As noted above, due to the approach taken by the former Development Worker, the early developmental stages of Kairos was hindered by a lack of clarity or understanding of the aims, vision and purpose. Following the change in staff, the newly appointed Project Manager, who has considerable experience of working with the women's sector, undertook activities to address this, including facilitating a programme called 'Beautiful Women, Beautiful Me'¹.

'Beautiful Women, Beautiful Me' is a value-led, consciousness-raising, personal development course which explores gender norms and how women are situated and socialised; perceptions of personal identities, concepts of resilience and experiences of overcoming adversity, drawing on self-experience. It challenges assumptions around various social issues to support the emergence of non-judgemental attitudes through the development of a greater understanding of and insight into the causes and consequences of such issues and it explores ideas of belonging and community, and of what makes a

¹ This course was developed by the Project Manager in a previous occupational role

loving community. The wider aim was to engage women, support the development of a cohesive core group and to identify and address the issues that matter to women. Feeling unsupported, experiencing a lack of confidence and self-efficacy, loneliness, social isolation, poverty, mental ill-health, damaging relationships and poverty of aspiration are emerging as key issues affecting women. Accordingly, women have expressed that they need somewhere to go and be. Women who have children have reported that there is nowhere for them to go in the area and older women feel confined to the home. Some have said that they go days without speaking to anyone and consequently, what they want are opportunities to interact and build relationships, acquire a sense of purpose and meaning and to find their own contribution – to explore: ‘what else could I be?’.

‘Beautiful women has been very exciting and good fun. I look forward to Thursdays very much now and feel part of the group of super people’ (A Course Participant).

Participation on this course, alongside regular meetings and activities, has led to a sense of commitment to and understanding of the concept of Kairos and the value base they are co-creating, oriented to identifying and embedding shared values in and across the women engaging with Kairos to shape its culture and ethos and which is intended to consolidate a core group of women to drive Kairos forward, and, in so doing, relaunching and revitalising the ‘Leading Ladies’.

Recent meetings with women have focused on developing a shared vision. The emerging vision is one in which different generations of women come together to share skills which is an effective way to connect and bond women to and with each other. Rather than bringing professional or external people in to Kairos, at this point, the focus is on exploring their own skills and resources. A further aspiration is to facilitate cross-cultural learning, bringing women together from different cultures to share skills. Their emerging vision for the women’s space is one of an open living room space which might include a book exchange and reading space, a space to cook and eat together, and a space in which women can participate in courses, classes and activities. Running alongside all of this is a therapeutic element with individualised support provided in the background around issues related to, for example homelessness, mental health, domestic and sexual abuse, poverty and criminal justice. Activities and events that have been proposed included drop in sessions, mums groups, singing groups, one off celebration events and awareness raising events. The women are also interested in pursuing a social action project looking at issues that affect local women to see if they can effect change in that area. It is important to note that Kairos are still in the questioning phase: the current question they are asking is what shape and form do they want Kairos to take.

Beyond ideas about what the space might provide, a vision is emerging about how the space might feel, all of which is underpinned by what they want Kairos to achieve. To this end, Kairos are avoiding the label of a women’s centre which, it is thought, can discourage participation and engagement due to connotations of need. They want Kairos to be supportive of vulnerable women but to be for *every* woman so that it is not a space that people need to come to when something is wrong. It should feel welcoming, inclusive, enabling and empowering; women should feel listened to, valued and it should engender a sense of purpose and generate a sense of belonging. It should be a safe and positive space for *all* women to come to, to feel comfortable and to be able to open up; a space in which women can help other women, and in so doing reduce loneliness and isolation but which is also a space in which

they can learn, they can try things that they might not try otherwise, and that allows them to push their own boundaries. The vision is therefore to connect a community of women together so that Kairos becomes a place for any woman in the area to go to who might want or need somewhere to be. Underpinning this emerging vision are the core values of uncritical acceptance, inclusion, and non-judgmentalism. These values are now shaping the approach that taken, which the women have identified and summarised as follows:

- **The Vision:** Women supporting women to be the best they can be
- **The Mission:** A world where all women achieve their potential
- **The Ethos:** Love, Laughter, Friendship and Support

The Role of the Host Organisation

Active Communities are the host organisation supporting the development of Kairos. The role of the host organisation needs to be clear from the outset and throughout, as does their relationship to the project. At the start, the host organisation signs an agreement with the funding body, in this case The Robertson Trust. While funded by, in this case, The Robertson Trust, the host organisation assumes the role of an employer. However, plans for longer-term economic sustainability should be discussed in the early stages, so that the project is not wholly reliant on Trust funding in the longer term.

The host organisation's role is to:

- Employ and line manage the Development Worker/Project Manager and oversee the administration of their employment;
- Provide both administrative support and a space or base from which the Development Worker/Project Manager can work;
- Maintain regular contact with the Development Worker/Project Manager, and provide regular supervision, pastoral care and guidance in boundary setting;
- Support the engagement of women using their own networks and pre-existing relationships with stakeholders, local groups and community members;
- Actively support the Development Worker/Project Manager to empower and guide the community to develop and lead on the project.

A host organisation should have:

- A pre-existing working relationship and open communication with the funding organisation, and strong links to and connections with the community in terms of presence and engagement;
- A background in community engagement and development, experience of project development *with* communities, not simply *in* communities, and, preferably, volunteer training and management.

A value set reflective of the overarching approach and ethos of the programme, which is inclusive, non-judgmental, accepting, kind and empowering.

Core Characteristics and Skills of an Effective Development Worker/Project Manager

The effectiveness of a Development Worker/Project Manager relies on a balance of and interaction between personal qualities (which includes attitudes and manner of relating) alongside skills and professional experience. Here we identify some of the characteristics, skills and experience that our research with those involved, both at Kairos and in Heart and Soul, has identified as critical, while recognising that this is an area of continued learning.

Characteristics and qualities:

A good Development Worker/Project Manager is someone who is:

- Warm, engaging, motivated, reflective and respectful; who is dynamic, proactive, and able to work independently and take responsibility.
- A good listener and inclusive of and open to all ideas, individuals and institutions, ensuring everyone feels part of it.
- Open to learning and knowledgeable, yet creative, innovative, flexible and resourceful, and who has a solution focused nature.
- Exhibits the qualities and character that other women connect with, identify with, and respond to.
- Approachable, friendly and responsive to people's diverse needs, skills, strengths, respectful of their perspectives and experiences, and therefore able to enhance and support the development of cooperative and coproductive relationships between differently situated people.

When people arrive, remember their name, get them a cup of tea. When they sit down at the table, introduce them to everyone else tell them a little about what it's all about – not too complicated: this is Kairos, it's a women's space. We're all about kindness here. It makes all the difference. It's about respecting their voice and experience and that means they go away and tell everyone that Kairos is the place to be because you're accepted, you're understood, you can be yourself (Project Manager).

Core Skills:

Communication and engagement skills:

- The Development Worker needs to be able to connect to diverse and differently situated local women from across the respective communities, to then drive the development of a Women's Space, and to build a cohesive and cooperative community of support;
- A core skill is the ability to regularly communicate with people at every level from the women involved, to stakeholders, to policy makers and influencers. This requires multi-layered interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to communicate and collaborate with a diverse group of people in different ways yet in a participatory, inclusive and respectful manner.
- They should have the ability to transfer their skills and knowledge through formal or informal training and pro-social modelling, facilitate skill-sharing between people, and adapt their skills

and knowledge to the local context and needs of the community.

Leadership skills:

Although these projects are community-led, they need to be value-led and they need clarity of focus, objectives and intended outcomes which implies not only the need for structure but the need for direction and, as part of that, leadership. Exhibiting leadership in a community-led initiative requires:

- Encouraging and facilitating all people to share and explore different ideas and examine the practicalities behind each idea and in so doing, setting realistic parameters;
- A problem solving, solution focused and strategic approach, that is participatory, guiding, facilitative, reflective and supportive;
- The capacity to work alongside people to develop a shared vision and the capacity to communicate and continuously reinforce that vision and its underpinning values;
- The ability to help people to see things they might otherwise not have noticed and ask the kinds of questions that no-one else is asking. An example we were given is: 'You [core group] might want this but have you asked the community what they want?' [Project Manager]
- Maintaining a focus on values and purposes and ensuring a focus on outcomes.

Value base:

A good Development Worker/Project Manager has:

- a value set reflective of the overarching approach and the skills to be able to talk about values with women to guide the emerging culture and ethos which is inclusive, non-judgmental, accepting, kind and empowering;
- a commitment to social justice and community participation;
- a belief that by working together people can constructively effect change;
- a respect for diversity and difference.

Experience:

Our research to date suggests that, at the very least, a good Development Worker/Project Manager needs experience of:

- Working in the women's sector and understanding of gender specific work which implies at the very least an understanding of women's needs and group dynamics;
- Community engagement and development.

Professional experience in these fields requires knowledge of a range of techniques and approaches that are too numerous to mention. One approach that has been both explicitly mentioned and variously implied is that of *Guided Discovery*. This approach, informed by cognitive psychology, is used in both coaching and education for example. Guided discovery is essentially a structured, facilitated and inductive process which is task focused, reflective and inquisitive. Applied to this context, the objective is to guide people to make decisions, to support reflection within sessions or meetings about what they have done, why they have done it and what they have achieved, and to agree objectives for and

purposes of the next meeting or session. It is not about telling people what they should be thinking or doing but about giving participants the best information so they can make their own informed decisions.

Developing a Core Group: how to connect a community of women together

Much of the learning we have detailed above and below provides the answers to this question. Given the importance of this element of the development process, we distil the key points here and outline the approach currently being taken by Kairos.

Events and activities are important ways of engaging women but the focus should be on people and participation, on relationship building and on communication of the vision rather than the events and activities per se. This means maintaining regular contact through different means with all women out-with arranged meetings and structured events.

As we outlined above, questions arose in the past year as to how formal or informal the approach taken to supporting local women comprising the core group should be in enabling them in planning for and progressing the women's space. This of course depends on the women participating in the core group and the skills and experience of the workers to tailor the approach to and harness the skills, strengths, capacities and experiences of the women engaged.

What also is required to connect a community together is a shared vision and values, aims and purposes. This necessitates clarity of roles and responsibilities and a continuum or variety of opportunities for participation, reflecting the diversity of interests and capacities of those involved.

Specific to Kairos, the structure adopted in order to connect a community of women together is that the Leading Ladies have reformed to comprise a **Development Team and Inclusion Team**. The **Development Team** is focused on the practical tasks required to support its development. The roles and responsibilities that the Project Manager and participating women have identified to drive this forward *at this stage* include:

- **Programme planning:** identifying what activities and courses women want at Kairos
- **Premises:** liaising with the Council, feeding back the needs and the position of the group
- **Consultation:** consulting the community and sharing the message of Kairos while speaking to women about what they want and need, sharing ideas from the programme planning and inclusion teams with the community
- **Social media:** creating regular posts with updates and photos of delivery
- **Partnership planning:** identifying who their key partners should be, what messages they should receive and attending meetings with local services.
- **Social Enterprise:** leading on and developing ideas for social enterprise.

Sitting alongside the Development Team is an **Inclusion Team**, who may be women who have less time to offer, but whose aim is to identify barriers to access for women from diverse groups and innovative ways to overcome them. This reflects aspirations for Kairos to be accessible and inclusive.

Developing a core team also requires training. Both teams will have the opportunity to visit other women-centred spaces to collect ideas and develop knowledge to influence the development of Kairos. They will also be offered training around key areas such as women-centred working and supporting women.

Key Learning from the Development Phase

The learning from the development phase was initially captured in an evaluation by Weaver and Lightowler at the University of Strathclyde (available [here](#) on The Trust's website) and summarised [here](#). We distilled the key findings into a list of key elements that a project of this nature requires in the early stages of development. These key elements informed the ongoing early development of Kairos. Based on the learning from the development of Kairos, the following provides an update (see Issue 1) on what it takes to establish projects of this nature.

Engagement

- Agree an inclusive, visible and clear plan for engaging stakeholders
- Engage with all stakeholders in the early stages to assess the need and appetite for a Centre, including with 'ordinary women'
- Visit other women-centred organisations to learn what others are doing, how and to what effect

Communication

- Develop a communication strategy to ensure the flow and regularity of information between all key stakeholders, both formal and informal using a variety of media and approaches
- Agree a consultation plan that identifies who and how key stakeholders, communities and target groups will be engaged, perhaps including focus groups or surveys

Shared vision and mandate

- Enable stakeholders to visualise what the next steps might be, by developing a shared vision in the early stages or providing a sufficient steer
- That vision should be task focused and clear rather than abstract and intangible; it should focus on the why and the how rather than simply the what.
- Beyond activities and events, the vision should be underpinned by a set of core values and a focus on the outcomes, on what it intends to achieve rather than simply how it should work
- Ensure a clear and shared understanding of the mandate for the work and mechanisms for the regular communication of that vision to a range of stakeholders

Host organisation and Development Worker

- Appoint a host organisation, which in turn recruits a Development Worker at an early stage, both with sufficient capacity, skills and experience

Relationships

- Support fun, passion, enthusiasm and commitment amongst all those involved
- Develop strong relationships, trust and understanding between the project funders, the host organisation, other agency representatives, and women from the community
- The manner of relating is critical to the building of sustainable and constructive relationships; it should be accepting, inclusive, non-judgemental, and kind
- In addition to encouraging community participation in the development phase, the establishment of cooperative relationships that are fundamental to the development of a project of this nature requires that the Development Worker and core group participate reciprocally in what communities and groups are already doing. Mutual exchange and support are the foundations of relationships

Clear roles and decision making

- Establish a core group of women who will lead on the development of the Women’s Space
- Ensure people feel they know what they can and can’t do – as well as what they ought to be doing and when
- Identify task-focused roles and agree the expectations for the different roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder (or stakeholder group) involved
- Offer a continuum of opportunities of participation and involvement that reflects the needs, skills, strengths, capacities and experiences of a diverse group of women
- Ensure a continual sense of progression and impact to maintain momentum and support retention. This can enable a sense of ownership, commitment and collective efficacy.
- Agree clear structures and transparent processes for making decisions and for communicating the decisions once these are made

Project planning and monitoring

Ensure a project development plan is devised, which includes:

- Events and activities across local areas using a range of methods that bring women together to encourage dialogue, participation and the development of relationships with and between different groups of women. Events are not an end in themselves but a means to facilitate participation and engagement.
- Milestones and core tasks that reduce ambiguity surrounding expectations and responsibilities, that are sufficiently structured to enable progression but remain flexible to respond to the needs of the community
- Clear boundaries and outcomes that can guide project development to provide a context shaped by those intended outcomes
- Opportunities to reflect on and raise concerns about progress at an early stage
- Opportunities for training and personal development

Sustainability

- Consider sustainability in the early stages, in terms of long-term funding and leadership to continue the work so that the project is not wholly reliant on Trust funding. This should include strategies to realise both the social and economic objectives of the project

Plans for evaluation 2018-2019

Over the next year, we will continue to evaluate the Women’s Centre Programme to identify whether and how this specific approach can generate its intended impact. We will ask questions to understand more about:

- The **design, governance, cost, and broad activities** adopted
- The **nature of participation** by women, groups and agencies. For example, how women may experience the Centre differently to accessing support through ‘traditional services’
- Any **‘critical factors’** of a Women’s Centre demonstrated within projects. For example, the value of having a physical centre
- The **impact** for women, communities and the agencies involved
- The **factors that influence** positive outcomes, and any surprises (positive or negative)
- **Lessons learned** for future delivery or replication
- Challenges and opportunities for **sustainability**
- The **role or value of the independent funder**

The focus of the next stage of the evaluation of Kairos in 2018-2019 is on the process of delivery, focussing on the broad theme of participation.

Data collection methods will include **documentary analysis** of project monitoring information, annual project plans and monitoring reports, participation records, user feedback, attendance at activities by key target groups; **observations** of key planned activities designed to engage women or spend time in Kairos to observe interactions, activities and dynamics; **semi-structured interviews** with members of the local advisory group, project team, community stakeholders and women involved in the centre's development; **mobile diaries**ⁱⁱ with women involved in Kairos, followed up with **individualised interviews**.

The Project Manager will be asked to continue to maintain a **monthly electronic project diary**ⁱⁱⁱ, which will be followed up discussions between diarists and the research team.

A **Thematic Summary** will be produced by the end of the second year informed by the preceding activities on the theme of Participation

Participatory annual '**Reflect and Learn workshops**' will provide opportunities for all involved to share and engage with learning at key stages of the projects development. Rather than a final evaluation report at the end of two years, we will share written learning from the evaluation through a series of short thematic summaries such as this along the way.

The Trust will engage with partners and stakeholders as the Women's Centre Programme develops, to raise awareness of the programme. The Trust will also share learning from the evaluation and regular updates from the programme across all of their digital channels.

Find out more

Find out more about the programme on the Trust's [website](#), or follow The Robertson Trust on Twitter [@RobertsonTrust](#) or [LinkedIn](#) for updates. You can also follow Kairos [@Kairos_women](#)

Acknowledgements

Active Communities in Renfrewshire; Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Appendix: A note on methods

The evaluation takes a participatory action-research approach, using mixed methods. This thematic summary was informed by the following methods:

- Three semi-structured interviews with the Development Worker, Host Organisation and the Programme Manager at the Trust in December 2017 and four semi-structured interviews in June-July 2018. These interviews were designed to clarify their perceptions of the need for this project, their vision/s and aspirations; processes of development; governance plans and partnership arrangements over time.
- Analysis of monthly project diaries maintained by the Development Worker and the Programme Manager at the Trust, which were followed up by three-monthly discussions with diarists to discuss their entries.
- Evidence also drew on the documentary analysis of information gathered or produced by the Trust and Kairos.

ⁱ To cite: Weaver, B., Lightowler, C and Gillon, F (2018) *Developing a Community-Led Women's Space* The Women's Centre Programme, Thematic Summary: Issue, 2. www.cycj.org.uk

ⁱⁱ Mobile diaries are typically used with a small group of participants, purposively sampled, to capture their personally relevant insights, reflections on key issues, feelings or events which are further explored in follow up interviews. They allow for the generation of data that interviews or observations cannot achieve.

ⁱⁱⁱ A project diary is a written record of insights, recording how decisions are being made, experiences, significant activities, events or processes that occur during the life of a project.