

Getaway Girls



30 years 30 stories

Confidence

Resilience **Aspirations** Opportunities

Safe space

Belonging **Community** Coping skills

Fun **Diversity** Groups

Practical Support Training

Friendship Voice and Influence

Culture Volunteering peer education

Crèche Broadening horizon **Plan for future** Learning

Individual support

Adventure education **Hardship crisis**

Decision making Risk taking

Welcome **Complex needs**

Build on strengths

Resilience



Our journey so far

Getaway Girls was set up by a group of women youth workers in Leeds who wanted to provide a range of outdoor pursuits for young women. The workers felt it was important to offer girls and young women the opportunity to try challenging outdoor activities like climbing and water sports in a supportive atmosphere. From the beginning the project was young women centred with women instructors who were positive role models and a crèche. Over time Getaway Girls has broadened the activities offered but young women still remain firmly at the centre of our work.

Over the past 30 years around 12,500 young women have been offered support, opportunities and fun. Every young woman who has passed through Getaway Girls has a story to tell. The 30 stories included here reflect the nature of our work with girls and young women over the 30 years, the stories are in young women's own words and share the impact Getaway Girls had on their lives building CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE and ASPIRATIONS.

Getaway Girls continues to grow: new needs, new opportunities, new partnerships, new projects, new young women sharing their strengths, lived experience and support.

We want to thank everyone who has been part of Getaway Girls journey. All the amazing young women, volunteers, staff, trustees, partners and funders. We all have a story to tell. We hope you have enjoyed being part of the journey so far and we look forward to creating the next chapter of our story.

"Even when it's not pretty or perfect. Even when it's more real than you want it to be. Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own".
Becoming, Michelle Obama.



Inder's story

Going back 30 years I was one of the founding members of Getaway Girls. I worked with Asian girls groups. It was Sue Dare's brainchild - Girls building confidence through outdoor education. I didn't really like the name at first as I thought parents might think it was about taking girls away. Now I like the name and think it's different and memorable.

Later I became the first chair of Getaway Girls, I was chair for 17 years. I was a very active hands on chair - driving, training, doing residential as well as making plans for the future.

I did the Basic Expedition Training Award in Outdoor Pursuits. I learnt some fantastic new skills - how to run a voluntary organisation, outdoor pursuits and driving to any part of the country. Getaway Girls moved across the city and then settled in Harehills when we eventually bought the building.

We've supported 1000's of young women to build their confidence, resilience and aspirations.

Getaway Girls makes a real difference to young women's lives, developing young women, volunteers, staff, trustees and the community.



Alia's story

It was 1995 and I was 13 years old, living in South Leeds. I was shy and reserved - not confident at all. I saw some publicity at Asha in Beeston and got involved in an open activity event with my friends. In the climate I grew up in not many girls would go to university. When they finished school my friends would go abroad and get married and start a family. I did loads of exciting activities with Getaway Girls like going to the Isle of Aran - where I went canoeing and rock climbing. We thought it was the best weekend and I still hold fond memories, even now. We built friendships and did creative arts and performing arts. From this we created a drama about our lives as young Asian women in Leeds which talked about the conflicts of fitting into British society and expectations as an Asian girl. It toured with Red Ladder and was great!

At Getaway Girls I built friendships, and had amazing opportunities. It made me the confident person I am today.

I've now got my Masters in Development Studies and I set up South Leeds Sisters. Getaway Girls inspired me to want to inspire other young women. I want to be a role model. After my own experience, I wanted my daughter to get involved in Getaway Girls. She was shy so I wanted her to be inspired to reach her goals and do what she wanted to do and get outside her comfort zone. So Naimah got involved with Global Girls. She produced the Global Girls magazine talking about Education and expectations of Girls. She now volunteers with Getaway Girls and works part time. She is following in my footsteps and going to university in September.

GetawayGirls helped me to want more. I was the first person in my family to go to Uni I broke the taboo by not getting married young.



Bev's story

I got involved in Getaway Girls in 1990. When I was younger I didn't feel like I had a place I fitted in.

I came from a place where we had no money and expectations in life were low or non-existent.

Young people were not encouraged to look beyond where we were living. We didn't ever really go on trips outside the immediate area so life was what was around you. Getaway Girls came along at the right time for me. It emotionally opened up so many doors and helped me see something more than what was around me. I grabbed it with both hands. It felt like a massive gift had landed in my lap. Women and girls were actually encouraging each other and not being put down.

It developed me massively as a person- and the most significant thing was that Getaway Girls gave without wanting something back.

I was a really anxious young person, a bit of a nervous wreck really. Fearful of the world- no confidence, no self-esteem and no identity. Getaway Girls gave me hope - taking tiny steps was actually a massive step for me, so I got involved and grew.

The first thing I remember was going to Ilkley. I always loved photography and was always behind the camera snapping away. One of the girls asked if she could take a photo of me. I still have that photo. I was so nervous and anxious and I didn't even know how to smile properly.

I got involved in Outdoor pursuits and loved it - imagine being out in the open with fresh air - it was a whole new world that was safe. Then I got involved as a peer educator. I wanted to contribute and give something back. Without me even realising I was beginning to develop self-worth and direction.

I continued to be involved in Getaway Girls, raising my confidence and aspirations. I realised that no matter how petrified of life I was, Getaway Girls had my back. I went on to train in photography and loved every minute of it.





JoJo's story

I've been involved with Getaway Girls for about 12 years. I opened the new centre in Harehills. When I was at school I wasn't an exceptional student, but I was driven and really enjoyed extracurricular activities. I was always putting on shows, doing performances and I was in a band and dance troop. I feel very strongly about the education of women throughout the world, and that every girl has the right to an education!

As a DJ on Capital it's really important that you make sure that what you're saying is relatable, just that connection. I definitely think that's what I (and women) help bring that humour, and humanness...if that's even a word. It's important for girls to have a voice, and I promote this by presenting myself in a very strong fashion. We need to have the courage and confidence to speak up for ourselves, and I hope that's the kind of energy I give off. I want women and girls to have power to create change. There needs to be more women coming through, creating laws, looking after the needs of other women. Getaway Girls does that by building confidence and offering loads of opportunities and support.

It's why I was happy to be a patron of Getaway Girls. It's been great to support the project especially with the Women in Music project. It was a really proud moment to see the girls work displayed in the Leeds Museum, White Cloth Gallery and Trinity Shopping Centre. My photo was part of the Women in Music Exhibition. I've hosted some fantastic Events- Women in Music, SHE MATTERS, Launch of Women's Lives Leeds and the Global Girls magazine. I'm looking forward to hosting the 30 years Birthday party.

It's great to meet all the young women and seeing them building confidence and looking forwards to the future.



Jahdeya's story

I wrote a letter to do work experience at Getaway Girls as I liked what they were all about. I was fifteen and I wanted to be a writer or journalist at the time.

I joined the 13-16 group and talked about all sorts of things about being a girl. Then I joined the Women in Music Programme. We looked at female icons in the music industry who are positive role models from the past, present and met Leeds female artists. We went to gigs and produced artwork representing what we learned including graffiti on vinyl records. We launched an exhibition at Leeds Museum. I love Ruth Bee because she sings about things that are going on. I joined Global girls group. We talked a lot about issues that matter to girls. I went to the 'Stand up for Girls' event and got back involved after having a break from Getaway Girls.

I started doing photography and I was asked by Getaway Girls to take photos of the 100 years 100 girls' event celebrating suffragette's campaigns and women getting the vote. I also took photos when the girls from Oslo visited Leeds as part of the youth exchange. This was a great opportunity as I had decided I wanted to work as a photographer.

Getaway Girls helped me to decide what I want to do and how to get there.

We looked at apprenticeships and courses. I started to look at this as a career and they helped me to get on the Prince's Trust course to take the first steps to set up my own business. I did the leadership course. It was really interesting and helped me build confidence. I'm now going to be mentored by a female professional photographer through Getaway Girls and I've now got a place at Uni to study photography in September.

Getaway Girls helped me get out there and do new activities, meet people, get more confidence and plan for my future.

Bianca's story

I am currently finishing my teacher training in Primary Education which has been a stressful but really rewarding experience.

In September I will have my first class in a primary school. Sometimes I'm the only black person in the school and I want to inspire black girls to achieve and reach their potential.

I got involved through the cultural diversity worker who said Getaway Girls had a project for black girls where we could talk about our culture and black heritage in a safe space.

We took part in group sessions which empowered and inspired young women from black minority backgrounds. We also did weekly self discovery, looking at black heritage and why it's important to us. And of course, we went to have fun! Many of the sessions were based around dialogue which created opportunity for discussion, debate and reading other forms of research. We went to Liverpool to visit the Slavery Museum and we also visited London, which for many girls, was the first time they had been to London. Getaway Girls offered me wider experiences that you don't get in the community.

Being part of Getaway Girls gave me the confidence and drive to be the best I can be as a young black woman and the chance to meet other like-minded minority young women. I was also able to learn more about my heritage. Getaway Girls provides a safe place for girls to be inspired, experience new experiences, learn about the world and be themselves.



Sarah's story

I really struggled throughout my teenage years and my life didn't seem to have any direction. That was until I was referred to Getaway Girls in 2007 by my probation officer and things began to change.

From the first day at Getaway Girls, I felt like I belonged. I always felt safe and respected and there was always someone I could talk to and trust.

As I began to grow in confidence, I became motivated and determined to do something positive with my life and Getaway Girls gave me so many opportunities to do just that.

I began as a peer educator, setting an example to other young women using the service, before becoming a volunteer and assisting with the delivery of focus based sessions in schools.

Along the way, I was able to access many different training courses such as Pediatric First Aid, conflict resolution and drug and alcohol awareness. I also got to experience new things and visit new places such as Ireland, where I volunteered on a youth exchange programme, and London, where *I spoke at the House of Lords in front of a panel that wanted to hear first-hand how youth organisations such as Getaway Girls can help young women stay out of the criminal justice system. After all, I was living proof that such services really do help!*

At this stage, I was given the opportunity to train in youth work, an opportunity that I snapped up and which led me to become a qualified youth worker in 2011. My first paid youth worker role was based at Getaway Girls and I loved every minute of it.

It's crazy to think that I parted ways with Getaway Girls nearly 6 years ago but I still hold the memories and the appreciation close to my heart because *if I was never referred to their service I honestly don't know where I would be today.*



Shanise's story

Getaway Girls helped to shape me so I wasn't doing what other friends were doing, following what they think is right and getting into trouble, drink, drugs, pressures to look a certain way in unhealthy relationships.

I wanted to do something different. I finished college doing Health and Social care and wasn't sure what was next for me. My brother told me to get involved in Getaway Girls. I chose the culture programme which is about celebrating our cultural identity / heritage. I volunteered with groups and went to Dublin as a peer educator. I was on the panel for IAPT with the Department of Health. I understand about mental health and was supported to talk on mental health needs.

I received support with looking for jobs and going to university. I also completed a foundation degree in counselling and now I work as a youth worker with the council. Getaway Girls is supportive and encourages girls to be the best they can be.



Hazel's story

I got involved in Getaway Girls through my sister. I had heard it was a group that supported women with mental health needs. I didn't do much, just stayed in as my anxiety and depression was bad. I found day to day things a struggle.

I joined the Side by Side group. We do mindful things which helps to keep your mind occupied. We talk about our week and can have a rant and a laugh. I have met lots of different people I would not have met otherwise. I hosted the 'She Writes' launch event and felt really proud of myself.

Getaway Girls also helped me with practical things like sorting out my money.

Getaway Girls referred me to Women's Lives Leeds for Complex needs support. I wanted support with lots of issues I was having. I see a worker weekly. Sometimes we meet at Getaway Girls. I can see her for 6-12 months if I need to.

I felt alone for so long. I thought no one cared. Getaway Girls showed me there's a little house at the end of a street full of so much love and happiness. It's helped me so much.

No matter what else is going on Getaway Girls is always the first thing I want to do. It's my safe place, my escape - it's lovely.





Alice's story

As a teenager, I struggled at school. I was bullied and had a mentor to support me. I spent a lot of time in the mentor's office. I did alright in my exams but could have done a lot better. I went to college at 16 to study Performing Arts. I didn't enjoy college and messed about, got in with the wrong people, got drunk a lot and got pregnant. I was really badly judged for being pregnant at 17 and fell out with all my family.

I didn't think I had a future and got a bit lost, becoming very isolated and withdrawn, just staying at home all the time. I had a worker who visited me at home from the Family Nurse Partnership. She told me about Getaway Girls as she wanted to get me out of the house. I became involved in training to help choose a family nurse for the Family Nurse Partnership.

I joined the mums' group and loved Getaway Girls, straight away I felt welcome, supported and understood. I finally had someone who could support me and help me. I had individual support to check how I was getting on as a mum and a chance to talk to other mums in the group. My son played in the crèche. I attended Baby Massage classes which I loved. I went swimming with the other mums' and babies. I also completed a Mother's Day project during which we produced artwork, poetry and I even sang in front of people at the Mother's Day Event, which made my mum cry.

Through Getaway Girls I started to feel more confident and less isolated. I started thinking about my future.

As the mums group is funded by Children in Need I was asked to represent Getaway Girls by meeting Children in Need workers. I was chosen by the marketing department at Children in Need to be part of the BearFaced campaign. I went to London for a photo shoot at Rankin's studio and I took part in the campaign speaking to the press. All of these opportunities have helped me to build my confidence and Getaway Girls has really helped me through some difficult times.

I started to volunteer to help out with the mums', the younger girls and the children at the local church youth group. I wanted to help other girls to know they can achieve things and change.

Getaway Girls helps girls and young women like me to grow. It empowers you to know someone believes in you. It would have been harder to do what I want to do without the support of Getaway Girls.



Gabrielle's story

A worker from the sexual health clinic told me about Getaway Girls. She knew something was not right. My boyfriend was very controlling. She asked me to speak to her on my own. She asked lots of questions. She told me about a company that helps women with problems to get from the danger zone to safety, help with housing, someone to talk to, so I could say what's in my heart.

No one should be with someone like that. I don't want other girls to go through the same thing.

I met a worker from Getaway Girls in town and we spoke about what was going on. I wasn't sure if I wanted to leave my ex. Then a few weeks later things got worse so I phoned Getaway Girls to help me find somewhere to move - to run away, they even helped find somewhere to leave my cat. I started to trust Getaway Girls. They were trying for hours to find me somewhere. It was hard because the hostels could not take me because they said I have no recourse to public funds. Then they found me somewhere to stay with the help of Women's Aid. The next day I moved to a hostel through LDVS. Getaway Girls still supported me and even helped me look for work.

Then I became involved in a photography project with Getaway Girls called She's that Leeds Girl. It was on the big screen at Millennium Square where everyone could see it. I was very proud and happy to take part and it encouraged me to want to improve my life. Before I came to Getaway Girls I was sad and lonely and I used to self-harm. Getaway Girls is like a second home where I go to get away from my problems.

I felt there was a positive purpose in my life, I felt supported to try and build a good life for myself.

Getaway Girls treated me like I was one of the family. I was in an environment where I was accepted for who I am and they gave me lots of their time, ideas, support and helped me to develop myself. Getaway Girls made me feel loved and wanted, they helped me get away from a very abusive relationship.

No woman deserves to be abused whether it's verbally or physically. If that's happening it's time to part ways. Abusive men don't deserve good women. Your health and wellbeing matters!





Jorobo's story

I was referred to Getaway Girls in 2015 through Market Place Counselling Service. I felt low in confidence and not involved in much within the community and mostly stayed at home. I got involved in the Side by Side group, a peer support group for young women about mental health. I'd never seen a group like this where girls support each other. Part of the group activity is creative writing where even those who would say they can't write can show how talented they are.

I share my story and things I never talked about before because everyone tells their story. I don't feel judged, they understand, I feel really supported.

I went to Northern College with the Side by Side group. It's a lovely place away from everything where you can think in a peaceful place. The residential, Side by Side and the training and support I got at Getaway Girls has helped me build my confidence and feel accepted.

The 'She writes' group helped me to express my feelings and emotions in a positive way and realise that sharing your story empowers other girls. We also learnt to respect and empower each other. From this group, we produced two books of creative writing - 'Our Truth' and 'She writes'.

Getaway Girls taught me that I'm not alone with my struggles. There are other people who understand and who are in the same situation.

I also completed an 8 week training course and achieved a Level 1 qualification in Youth and Community Work. The training was good. It doesn't feel like a class as it's full of people my age and is interactive and fun. These groups work because you don't have to say your story or tell people why you're there. You are free to decide when you want to speak and how the group runs. I wanted to do something that helped other girls, where I would not be judged and where I could have fun. I started doing voluntary work with the creative group. It was fun and some of the girls were from the same background as me so I could help them join in.

There are girls from all backgrounds at Getaway Girls and staff and volunteers from diverse backgrounds who speak different languages and who understand.

I have a diagnosis for depression and the group of women at Getaway Girls gave me strength. Then I volunteered to give back to the community. I learned about myself. What I want to do in my life. I was supported to apply for university and studied youth and community work. I found my career and now I'm working with children and young people.

I'm proud to say I'm part of Getaway Girls and celebrating 30 years of the charity. It represents a lot for girls in Harehills and Leeds. There's no other support like this. It helps to enhance and change lives. We need to celebrate!

My 3 words for **Getaway Girls** are **fun, open** and **safe** place.

Yvonne and Anna's story

Yvonne - I joined Getaway Girls in 2006. I had not long since left care. I was a teenager and pregnant. I lost a lot of friends and I didn't go anywhere. I heard about Getaway Girls because someone who lived near me went there. I had 2 kids at a young age and a horrible boyfriend.

Anna - I was pregnant with my son at 17. I was scared and someone at the youth centre told me about the mums' group at Getaway Girls. I didn't know anyone else who was pregnant. I was scared to go but I settled there. It was nice and welcoming. We were all the same age so the group would talk about all sorts.

Yvonne - When I went to the group I met Anna. I thought she was really quiet and I was loud but our kids got on. We became friends.

Getaway Girls has helped me with all sorts, like leaving a violent relationship. I went to a women's hostel out of Leeds. They helped me talk about being a mum. We did baby massage classes, I went to Herd Farm, Northern College. We bonded and supported each other. We did makeovers, went out together to York Maze and Flamingo land with the kids. It was nice to get out of the house. Going out with 3 kids on your own is daunting.

Being a young mum can be hard, losing your friends. People think life is finished but you just need to find the right support. Getaway Girls brought us mums together to support each other. People in the same situation. It gave us confidence being a mum. I was so worried about being a mum. The staff are really supportive.

Anna - Being with other mums was important. It was somewhere we could relax, talk and do activities and the crèche was great. Me and Yvonne became friends supporting each other with the kids. Going on holiday together. We were even each other's birthing partners.

It helped me find a best friend for life.





Ripa's story

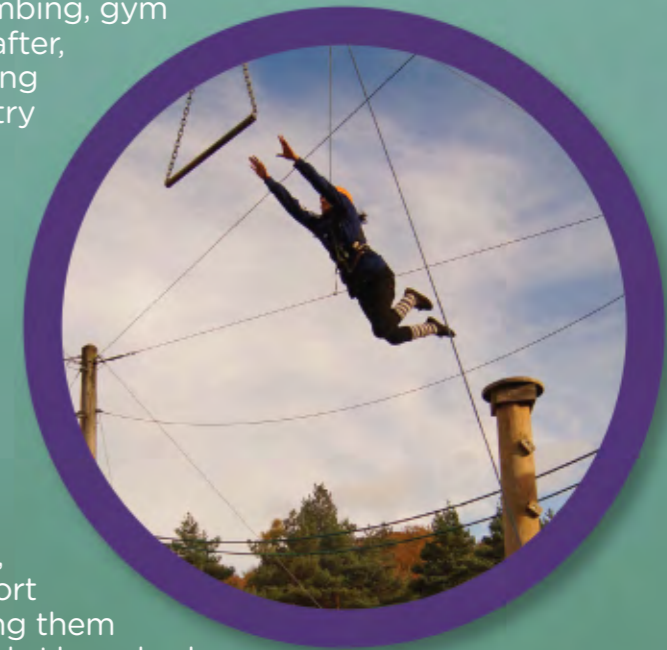
I became involved with Getaway Girls during their summer scheme in 2012. I wanted to venture out of home and get involved with social activities therefore it appealed to me because I wanted to try new things and be adventurous, which Getaway Girls offered through a range of activities such as indoor wall climbing, gym sessions, self-defence and Zumba. Thereafter, I got involved with group sessions including passion4fashion and the culture and poetry groups.

Meeting and socialising with other young people helped me to build friendships, develop my social skills and also my interpersonal skills including the ability to think critically, solve problems and further increase my confidence and resilience. I religiously attended Getaway Girls because for me it was a safe space and a friendly environment.

Following that, I became a peer educator, helping to facilitate group sessions, support and mentor young people by empowering them to reach their potential. With Getaway Girls I have had many opportunities to host events, attend Children and Young people Now awards in London, go on residential trips, take part in a youth exchange, be on an interview panel to appoint Getaway Girls workers, perform poetry in events and work in partnership with other third sector organisations.

Getaway Girls helped me to reach my potential by encouraging me to believe in myself, to challenge myself and aim higher for example, going to university.

I now am a qualified children's nurse and I'm now the youngest trustee of Getaway Girls management committee which means I am involved in making decisions alongside other trustees regarding the future of Getaway Girls.





Sarah's story

I moved around a lot when I was younger. We stayed at Women's Aid. This made me interested in issues affecting women and girls. I saw an advert at College about the Girls Forum and Global Girls group. This was somewhere I could speak about issues that mattered to girls with other people, so I phoned up and said I wanted to join. As soon as I joined Getaway Girls it opened doors for me and gave me opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise. I built trust with staff and girls. It made me feel important and reinforced my belief that all girls are important.

I then joined Global Girls which is a group for young women aged 15-18 which aims to empower girls. They are the same age as me and they get me. We talk about the pressures girls face and we get to see how we all progress. I helped to organise the Girls forum.

I learned how to value myself - talking to young women who have dignity, self-respect and confidence.

One of the first things I did was write a poem for the 'She Writes Books' campaign. I liked seeing it in print. I read my poem at the She Writes launch event and at the 100 years 100 girls' celebration event which celebrated women getting the vote. I helped to facilitate the creative writing workshop. It was great to get our thoughts onto paper.

I also completed the leadership programme with Getaway Girls. The training was on a weekend and it was great. The sessions helped look at my skills and build on strengths, roles in groups and look at how you can help diffuse situations if there is conflict. It also helped me feel more secure and self-assured in what I'm doing.

I also took part in the 'She's That Leeds Girl' exhibition and went to Oslo on an exchange with Getaway Girls in the summer. As Getaway Girls had built trust with my parents I was allowed to go.

Getaway Girls helped me build my confidence and made me feel comfortable taking the lead where I used to be passive. The best thing about Getaway Girls is the people. Everyone who is part of the team makes me smile. When I go to university in September to study medicine, I will still be involved in supporting other girls at Getaway Girls.

Look this way.

I want to have my breath taken away, by the precise blend that made your skin tone just that hue, by the rivers of colour on your face, from the nuances of your hair in the sunshine to your eyes which seem to change whenever your gaze moves and rests upon those you like, dislike, love with a passion that is equally as colourful as your physique.

darling, you feel so much, and it snatches the air from my very lungs as if my awe is what gives you vibrance, but don't you see? it isn't my awe. you don't require my awe to shine as you have for all these long years, sweetheart, you are a constellation yourself, shining long before my gaze fell on you.

I know, it may be difficult to look at yourself in the mirror because your beauty just doesn't fit there, and perhaps that is why I find myself so in awe of you, for at each angle there is new beauty, but again, this isn't about me. it's about you.

if not today, then one day, you will stop colouring crimson at compliments because it could be a joke, because surely your emotions don't have the impact of a wall of water, drenching those lucky enough to be caught in the riptide, and stealing those breaths away once again.

you are a work of art and I hope that the world is there to see the day you discover just how beautiful you are I hope that bland numbers on a set of scales are replaced by xx's by roses by countless expressions of love and colour and passion, because all of your woman deserves to be appreciated, to be loved, to be loved by you.



Lana's story

I came to England four years ago from Syria and became involved with Getaway Girls three years ago. My first interaction was after I was invited to a welcome session with my mum. There were lots of fun activities like smoothies, henna, cupcakes, and arts and crafts. There was also lots of other girls there with their mums and it was really busy. I knew some of the girls but I didn't speak much English so we spoke a mixture of Arabic and English. I liked it and started going to the Syrian girl's friendship group on Sundays at Getaway Girls. It was a chance to see friends and do activities. At first, the mums sat in the group with us then they started to have coffee downstairs. Our mums started to trust Getaway Girls so they were happy for us to attend. We also completed Race for Life at Temple Newsam and went in the minibus with other girls which was great.

I also helped out with a crowdfunding campaign called 'See What I See' where we produced a short film about moving to Leeds in order to raise awareness and funds for our group. I was involved in lots of activities like arts, music, dancing, climbing, and canoeing. I also went to Herd Farm with other girls. It was a chance to stay with friends, have fun and face your fear of heights. I also went to the events, attended the Girls Forum to get involved in campaigns and Global Girls. We also took part in the 'She's that Leeds Girl' exhibition. It made me feel famous as people said they saw my picture in Millennium Square. I also took part in the Oslo youth exchange and it was the best thing in my whole life.

Learning about new people and a new language. I even hosted the celebration event in Oslo. Getaway Girls made me want to achieve more and now I want to be an architect and to study at university.

Getaway Girls helped me feel much more confident and also confident speaking English. I've made lots of friends. The staff are really friendly. You can talk about anything with them. I had lots of experiences to include on my personal statement at school. I've made lots of friends and had fun.

Emma's story

I've always had mental health problems ever since I was thirteen and it's still ongoing now. I was involved in Children Adolescent Mental Health Service when I was younger. I went into the hospital when I was seventeen and then there was no support when I turned eighteen. I hadn't been to any places like Getaway Girls before.

I'd never been to a place that made me feel so welcome I felt like I'd found my place. It feels like a home from home. No one judges you. I always look forward to going to Getaway Girls.

I moved to Leeds three years ago because my partner lived here. My midwife told me about Getaway Girls when I was pregnant and I was a bit shy at first.

I've attended the mums group ever since I was pregnant. I liked the swimming sessions with my baby the best. I now go to Side by Side group. We do lots of crafts and talk about everything including positive thinking and feeling good about ourselves and I also have 1-2-1's. It helps knowing I have someone to talk to! I've always wanted to work with children and so I applied to volunteer in the crèche where I have just started volunteering. I want to gain experience working with children and then I want to go on to study childcare.





Sara's story

Nine years ago I was introduced to Getaway Girls by Social Services Contact and Referral team who supported unaccompanied refugees and asylum seekers. When I first went to Getaway Girls I was confused because it looked just like someone's house. I also had a language barrier as my first language was Amharic and I was not confident speaking English. I came to the group because I wanted my son to play with other children and because the workers phoned me and welcomed me back.

I was quiet, nervous and scared at first. I was a new mum speaking a new language in a new group.

The workers at Getaway Girls encouraged me to come to the group. They were friendly and there was a nice crèche for my son to play in. As time went on I became more open, understood more English and became more involved with the group. I started volunteering at Refugee council, with breastfeeding buddies and with Getaway Girls with the Side by Side group.

I completed the youth work training with Getaway Girls and helped to set up the Side by Side group. I was then given the opportunity to become a trainee youth worker at Getaway Girls through PATH Yorkshire. I now work for Getaway Girls supporting groups. One of the groups I facilitate is the Sisters Group. I set up the group to support Eritrean/ Ethiopian young women where I support them to settle and build confidence. We share food, talk, dance, and laugh together. I speak 4 languages and I know what it feels like to settle in Leeds.

Getaway Girls is a space where I felt like I belonged. Now I want other young women to experience the support, opportunities and fun that I had.

Rhianna's story

I met Getaway Girls at an outreach session at Asda when I was fifteen. I was a quiet introvert and liked my own space. I didn't really do much extra after school. My mum encouraged me so I decided to attend the summer programme, I loved it and after that I joined Global Girls.

One memorable campaign was the Mannequin challenge. We wanted to challenge perceptions about body size and body image and challenge why so many mannequins are small sizes and not realistic. So we made mannequins which reflected our real body sizes by covering ourselves in sellotape and then cutting ourselves out. It was an interesting experience. We basically wanted to say everyone is different, let's embrace who we are and be body confident. We are all changing and we don't want anyone to feel they have to look a certain way. We wanted brands to take note and for shops to use real body sizes not skinny mannequins.

We produced a magazine with research about body image and then did a workshop at the Plan UK national conference in London on International Day of the Girl.

I have also hosted events with Getaway Girls and spoke about Getaway Girls to raise the profile and raise money. We built the girls forum together so girls can talk about things that matter in Leeds and make changes. We talk about equality, opportunities for girls, freedom, diversity and safety.

Getaway Girls helped me come out of my comfort zone and see there is a world out there waiting. It really boosted my confidence. It's a safe space where you have meaningful conversations and you don't feel stupid for asking questions. You can have a laugh.

I'm at university now in my third year. It was scary at first and busy. I know Getaway Girls will always be there for me. I love to come back and support the girls now. When I finish university, I'm going to become a Trustee at Getaway Girls.

I've learnt that you can boost confidence of girls and raise aspirations by building on young women's strengths and offering opportunities to learn in a safe place. Getaway Girls means love and support to me.





Zafran's story

I moved to Leeds from Ethiopia. I attended the Side by Side group. I met a worker there from Getaway Girls and she spoke my language (Amharic). I have had lots of support from Getaway Girls including help with my housing and getting a pushchair from the baby bank when I had my baby. I've also had help with baby behaviour and talking about feeding my baby.

At the Side by Side group we can talk about lots of things that are going on in our lives. We do crafts, go to events, we write about our lives. I even made coffee to introduce my culture and welcome other women. My children can also play in the crèche.

I'm happy the sisters group (Eritrean and Ethiopian women's group) is at Getaway Girls. It is a great place to make friends. When new people come they can speak Tigrinya or Amharic so they feel welcome. I encourage other people to come to Getaway Girls.

Getaway Girls has helped me a lot with housing, practical things, decision making, my children, what to do in the city, and is still helping me to be confident in myself.

The Journey of My Life

I remember well the day I left my village. It was a Thursday, the 7th of June and everyone was crying, I left, leaving my family behind. 15 days later I heard of the death of my mother. I wasn't allowed to return, and so I was unable to honour my mother at her funeral. It was the saddest moment of my life, it has left traumatic wounds that open every time I remember her loss. The only thing I can do is to cry alone, to release my sorrow from deep inside.



I travelled through Sudan, Libya, Italy and France to reach the UK, but I did not have to travel alone. I met my soul mate, my husband. He helped me through the hardship, and made me happy during the dark times on our journey. He is the funniest guy, and I love him so very much. Together we crossed the war zone of Libya it was as scary, especially as a woman. Let me tell you one story from the many I have from this time.

We travelled across the biggest and most desert in the world, the Sahara, and after many hundreds of miles we arrived in the UK. On the 6th May 2016 our sweet daughter arrived, she is a gift from God, and she is such special thing to have in my life.



Sharan's story

I joined a school group that Getaway Girls were running at Allerton Grange. We were able to talk about everything. I realised Getaway Girls was in Harehills where I lived so I went to the 13-16 group and the summer scheme where I could have fun and get support.

I'm a carer and I always had lots to do at home when I wasn't at school.

Sometimes I felt down and not very confident, I had individual support time. I love music but I was a bit scared about going to music sessions that Getaway Girls were running with Lifeforce. I went with a Getaway Girls worker and I attended our Sister Salon music sessions and Women in music workshops.

I had my first Djing gig at the Wardrobe and Getaway Girls supported me. Since then I have performed at the Hip Hop Celebration event, had more performances at the Wardrobe and DJ'ed at the Women in Music Celebration event at White cloth Gallery.

I set up my own business as a DJ at events and I run music / Djing workshops for other girls. My message to other girls is 'be who you want to be.'

I am a member of Global Girls and have planned and ran workshops, campaigned and facilitated the Girls Forum. I led the Valentine's Day Campaign with the message 'Love not Control' and I am now studying at University.

Getaway Girls is still a big part of my life. I've gained so much support and had so many opportunities, building on my strengths and Getaway Girls has always been there when I need them. Now I want to be a role model and support other girls the way I was supported.



Ella's story

I heard about Getaway Girls through the youth council network.

I first heard about the Leadership course and I thought the course was great. I learnt a lot and wanted to get more involved in Getaway Girls

I became a volunteer with the 11-13 group. It's a space for girls to be themselves. We have had lots of discussions about racism, young women in the media and periods. We also do lots of games, arts, team work activities.

Through coming to Getaway Girls I have had multiple opportunities. I have built my confidence, met lots of new people and helped to build my CV.

Getaway Girls gives girls a space to express themselves and I am happy to be a part of the group.



Zozanne's story

I'm a mum and I've got two children. I came to Getaway Girls when I was three months pregnant with my first child. My family nurse told me about the project. I didn't really know anyone and she told me about some of the things Getaway Girls do. At first I was a bit shy and I wasn't sure what the people would be like. They treated me like everyone else at the mums group. We had a mother's day party and took part in photoshoots. I loved that!

Getaway Girls helped me with my housing and college interview and also helped me learn English and Maths. At the mums group we can have time to be ourselves and the kids love playing in the crèche. We also go swimming with the kids, have messy play and first aid, and even had makeover at Boots. I helped with the 'She's that Leeds Girl' exhibition where we spoke about our lives and relationships.

Getaway Girls is a big part of my life. It has made me more confident. I've met women from all religions and cultures.

The best thing is the staff, they are always smiling and welcoming and they support you with whatever you're going through.



Emily's story

I grew up with a good family, went to a good school and was surrounded by good friends, I was just young and naive and met the wrong boyfriend. You believe that you're going to be able to change a person, no matter what they've done in their past and the terrible stories they tell you. He could have told me anything and I would have believed him. We were together for under 2 years and in that time he had managed to isolate me completely leaving me with only him to rely on. I barely spoke to my friends, he controlled every part of my life from what I wore to who I spoke to, to when I left the house. Aged 19 I got pregnant, and two months in we broke up - which was a blessing in disguise.

Being a new, single parent is an extremely lonely position to be in. This, along with mental scars from my previous relationship, left me with major anxiety issues

As a young, single mum, you're automatically put into a category. Your life is over, no chance of amounting to anything. It didn't matter how many GCSE's or A Levels I had, or what my talents were. All my friends were off being normal 19 year olds, and I'm at home with my baby. Dealing with the stigma attached to your new lifestyle can often be gruelling, knowing that no matter what you say or do, you'll always be the one that got pregnant.

I had been involved with Getaway Girls for many years previously, however I went along to the young mums group to meet other people in my situation. It was nice to spend time with people that actually understood what it was like to be in my shoes, and just have time to relax, laugh and chat about the joys of being a parent.

Through Getaway Girls I've had many opportunities, such as leading on a photography project which featured influential women in music, which was then on display in Trinity shopping centre. I also facilitated sessions with young women interested in photography, designed a magazine for a group on voice and influence and helped to plan and run events.

I started university when my son was one year old, studying Advertising and Marketing. I made some great friends and really enjoyed my course. Unfortunately, during my final year I had to balance my dissertation, coursework and exams with attending court proceedings with my son's dad.

Despite the drama, I managed to power through and achieve a first class degree. My dissertation focused on the effect that social media has on the self esteem of young women.

Many of the projects I produced during university were focused on empowering young women, one in particular, was a marketing campaign to help young women in abusive relationships to see the signs and get out.

I'm now working in a job I love, in a PR agency which produces fantastic campaigns for clients, one of which is Getaway Girls.



Kescia's story

When I was young, my mum and I experienced domestic violence.

I didn't get any support as a child when I needed it, I just learnt to deal with it.

As an adult, I want girls to feel like they have someone to talk to. Working at Getaway Girls has given me a chance to offer that support.

I worked at Npower for 14 years whilst bringing up my children, but I would often talk about wanting to support young women. I joined the youth work training at Getaway Girls through a friend and started volunteering with groups.

When someone believed in me, and I had positive people around me, I started to believe in myself. I started to think about change which encouraged me to go to university, something I never thought I would do. A role came up at Getaway Girls within HTC (Help Through Hardship Crisis), helping young women to find food, income and somewhere safe to stay while they consider their next steps, and I got the job.

I'm learning all the time. I'm in a new chapter of my life – juggling work, uni and family- making a difference and believing in myself. Getaway Girls has staff and volunteers from all backgrounds and experiences. It makes a difference because staff listen, care and understand young women's lived experience.

I'm proud of who I've become and I'm proud to say I work with Getaway Girls, an inspirational organisation that has been supporting young women in Leeds for over 30 years.



Anuareth's story

My name is Anuareth, I am from Angola but I grew up in Leeds. In secondary school I became involved with Getaway Girls through my friend Keanna's mother who told us about the youth group and the type of activities they had to offer.

We both began attending and it was the best choice I made whilst in school!

I was able to express my opinions and emotions through poetry and short films, and I had the chance to go on a youth exchange in Dublin.

As a young girl I felt empowered with this organisation and most importantly, more confident within myself. I am now in my final year at university studying law.

Even though I have not been involved with the youth group for several years, Getaway Girls still help me with my future aspirations to become a lawyer and I completed a mini internship at an international law firm with their help.

With the inspiration of Getaway Girls I began a society of my own at university - The Woman In Me - with the same initiative to empower women and to build their confidence.





Kianna's story

I started coming to GG 5 years ago as part of the Culture Group which looked at our identity and the way we need to express our culture and alongside that I started doing the Poetry Group which I really enjoyed.

Getaway Girls has changed me by increasing my confidence.

This was done through the continual girl to girl support that they provided.

My new found confidence has given me the ability to pursue my career in politics.

My future aspirations include becoming an MP. Through attending GG I've realised the importance of getting your voice heard and being a pillar for change. Further to this, I am extremely interested in working for various charities and this is because GG has taught me the importance of giving back and what it can really do for communities. GG is about empowering young women, aising their aspirations and offering support. It offers lots of opportunities and raises their aspirations and helps them build their confidence and find their identity.



GG uses a strength based approach and offers a peer support approach where you are able to come back and support new young people settle in.

GG empowers young women to become leaders who can use their voice and influence to make a positive change.

One thing I really like about GG is the one to one mentoring. GG is an important organisation in Harehills because there are lots of underlying issues for girls including safety. Harehills is not the safest place in Leeds but you can come to GG which is a safe space to make friends if you are new to Harehills or would like to learn a new skill or would like support to develop your confidence.

Jennell's story (written 12 years ago)

I have been involved in Getaway Girls since I was 15 years old. I was part of the inspiration project when I first joined and didn't say a word for about a month - a teacher at school had embarrassed me so much in front of the class that I lost my confidence to speak.

Attending Getaway Girls gradually helped me build my self-esteem and I eventually found my voice again.

The staff encouraged me to work on my confidence by encouraging me to talk in a big group, reassuring me about myself and telling me I could do what I wanted when I put my mind to it. I remember one day I was asked to speak to an MP, I was scared but so proud of myself. During my time with Inspiration I had the opportunity to go to London for Black History Month. I was also one of the first young people to develop the 4front awards which is run by the Camelot foundation.

When I found out I was pregnant I started going to the mums group. At first I felt a little nervous because I was the new girl and everybody else seemed to know each other, but I started to feel more relaxed and welcomed. I started speaking more to the other mums and it helped me to be able to share my worries and experiences with them.

In December 2004 I had my little girl Tiana and continued to come to the group. I felt different because now I was a mum I was a little more concerned about what I should be doing with her. I had questions like: was I breast-feeding right and was I hurting her when I was brushing her hair and getting her dressed? The group helped me overcome these worries by talking to the other mums who have had the same worries. We also had different people like midwives and health visitors come to talk to us, giving us tips on how to do things. Now Tiana has grown a bit more she plays in the crèche with the other children which she seems to enjoy too.

I hope Getaway Girls are still around when my daughter is old enough to come so she can benefit from all the positive experiences I have had.

Tiana's story

My mum used to go Getaway Girls so I've been involved since I was a baby playing in the crèche. I'm 14 and I go to the 13-16 group, the Summer scheme and the residentials - all the opportunities my mum had. I'm doing the graffiti project which is all about identity. We talk about everything.

The best thing for me about Getaway Girls is that I am allowed to express myself without any judgement from others. I find this particularly comforting because it allows me to get things off my chest.

Another good thing for me is all the different activities we do throughout each project, Getaway Girls plan sessions in a way that keeps me engaged even if it's a topic I'm not too keen on. The 13-16 group has helped me to make more friends along with teaching me how to express my feelings in a positive manner. These skills have helped me to deal with some school issues.

Jennell (written 2019)

12 years have passed and so much has changed over those years. I am a happy mother of three beautiful daughters, all of which have taught me valuable life skills.

Over those years I have had the opportunity to work on various projects at Getaway Girls which taught me how to understand the youth work ethics to allow myself to support young people with their development, decision making and enabling them to have a voice.

I'm currently studying Youth Work and Community Development at Beckett University.

Rachel's story

Our mum is a midwife and we got involved in Getaway Girls through mum meeting one of the staff. She came home and said "I've met this lady who has a girls group, do you want to try it?" I was a bit apprehensive at first but we got involved in the summer programme. I thought the staff were friendly and welcoming.

We helped to plan the 'Girls Forum' where girls aged 13 and over can get involved in campaigning about issues like safety. We did a Valentine's Day campaign called 'Love Not Control' and we also completed an exchange trip to Oslo where we got to experience what life was like for girls from a different culture.

Getaway Girls gives girls massive opportunities and a platform to speak about what's going on in their life, build life experiences, build friendships, learn skills and have fun.



Rebecca's story

We joined Getaway Girls when we were 11. I liked that there were lots of different people from all backgrounds and different things to get involved in. We went for the summer and then joined the 11-13 group. We were part of the Women in Music programme where we got to see performances, host a radio show and produce artwork for the museum.

We joined Global Girls when we were 14 and helped to plan events like 'She Matters' and 'Stand up for Girls'. We also helped to produce the magazine where we interviewed JoJo from Capital Radio and councillor, Alison Lowe. We spoke to the media about a range of women and girls issues and also about the suffragettes.

When we were on Calendar it was a bit scary but was a great experience.





Diane's story

I've known about Getaway Girls since starting youth work in 1989 as a volunteer girls worker, so I remember it in its very early days. I recall going on a residential to Lumley Fee at a similar time, a trip organised for girls and young women's youth workers from across the city and the outdoor activities were led by Getaway Girls staff. This was at a time when there was a good network of girls work across the city.

Throughout my youth work career, I have always had links with Getaway Girls in one way or another, then 14 years ago I was approached by the Director to join the Management Committee and take on the role of Chair of Trustees. I found the idea daunting at the time, however, took up the opportunity and have been involved ever since.

There have been some challenges, however it has been fantastic to see Getaway Girls develop over time without ever losing its original aims, ethos and youth work values.

It's great to see that Getaway Girls also seeks to influence locally and nationally without losing its roots, whilst continuing to challenge and empower girls and young women to build their confidence, develop new skills, take positive risks and have a voice and influence.

One great thing about Getaway Girls is that so many begin on the path accessing projects and activities and end up still involved as volunteers, workers and trustees years later.

Getaway Girls vision:

All young women and girls in Leeds will lead safe, healthy and fulfilled lives.

Getaway Girls empowers girls and young women to support each other to build confidence and resilience, raise aspirations, develop new skills and take positive risks in a positive environment which offers co-operation and support.

We offer group work, individual support, outreach, detached, residential opportunities creative arts, sports development, adventure education, exchanges, training, peer support, volunteering, opportunities for voice and influence within Getaway Girls, Leeds and nationally.

Do you have a story about Getaway Girls ?

If you've been part of Getaway Girls and would like to share your story on our website, Facebook, twitter, photos or Instagram please send your story to us.

If you would like to get involved in Getaway Girls please contact us by email:

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