



WOMEN AT LEEDS NETWORK

Impact Report 2023-24



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Introduction to the Women at Leeds Network (WALN)

We are a network of **1,400+ staff** and postgraduate researchers who identify as women and/or support women's issues.

We work closely with, and are funded by, the Equality and Inclusion Unit (EIU). Together we ensure our events and initiatives are in alignment with the wider University Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to enable our network to have impact at an institutional level.

We are a **platform for members** to share their experiences and achievements, access development opportunities and information, create community and sense of belonging, and also to have their **voices heard** by senior leadership during discussions about issues and policies that affect them.



Our Team: Co-Chairs



Sarah Budello

Digital Practice Advisor
OD&PL



Tao Jiang

Associate Professor of
Marketing Practice
Leeds University Business
School



Hafsah Khalil

Corporate Services HR Hub



Jacki Willson

Associate Professor in
Performance and Gender
AHC

Co-Chair Statement

"As one of the largest staff networks, WALN aims to provide a safe, inclusive and open space for its members to discuss and share views on issues ranging from career progression, gender pay gap, emotional labour, intersectionality, to health and wellbeing. The 2023-24 Impact report highlights the network's main achievements in restructuring the Network Committee, supporting the University's EDI Strategy, and delivering positive impacts on its members and beyond."

Our Team: Committee Members



Angela Beddows

Lab Technician
Deputy Module Leader



Lia De Faveri

Research Fellow in Cardio-metabolic
Translational Research



Camilla McCartney

Sense of Belonging Lead Officer



Nilisha Vashist

EDI Manager (Race Equality Charter)

“My experience of being on the committee has been brilliant, and my time commitment to it has always been manageable (despite working part-time for much of it). It has given me the opportunity to follow my interests and represent the network in discussions on the University’s response to unprofessional behaviour, and I’ve also been part of a successful grant bid to run a pilot scheme offering coaching to people returning from maternity leave. It’s been fantastic being able to feel like I’ve made a difference, which has really helped me to keep going some days.”

Jenny Love, previous WALN committee member

Our Team: Committee Members



Loren Sandoval Arteaga

Alumni and Communications Officer
School of Law



Stephanie Siviter

PA to the Director
Institute for Transport Studies



Dr Carolyn Auma

Lecturer in Nutrition
School of Food Science and Nutrition



Sophie Bramley

Institute Manager
Leeds Institute for Societal Futures



Susan Preston

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Project Officer



Nadine Cavigioli

Deputy Programme Manager
Lifelong Learning Centre

Our committee aim to meet five times each academic year to ensure that the network is upholding it's Vision, Mission and Values, to discuss event planning and to report back to EIU if required. Membership is reviewed every 2 years to ensure that the membership is representative of the network. Terms of Refrence can be found at the end of this report and are reviewed annually.

Our Values

Treating others with **kindness** and **respect** and being considerate of differing opinions, needs and decisions

An **inclusive** network of cis and trans women, non-binary people and allies

Empathy as the driving force of action to address our member's concerns

Our Mission

To **inspire, empower** and **engage** our members to **achieve** their professional and personal **goals** through **impactful events**

To provide a platform for our **members to be heard** at the organisational level in order to create **positive change** in the University and beyond

Our Vision

An active and diverse **community** in which members have had opportunities and support to develop, and felt a sense of belonging at UoL thanks to our activities

To be a fundamental driver of the **reduction** of the **gender pay gap** within the University of Leeds.

To **champion** female, trans, non-binary and ethnically minoritised **colleagues** and support them to **increase** our numbers in **leadership positions**.

Organisational Alignment

WALN plays an important part in **achieving** the current **University Strategy**, particularly the focus on **community and culture**. In a recent internal staff blog, interim VC Hai-Sui stated that a **core priority** for 23/24 was '**A focus on staff engagement**'. WALN's activities and aims align closely with the EDI strategy and strategic priorities, placing us as a key partner who can both consult on, and action these objectives.

EDI Strategic objective 2 (SO2) - Cultural: An anti-discrimination and global inclusion approach

- Embedding EDI in University culture in a manner that empowers all staff and students to be agents of change within their existing roles or responsibilities - [Summer Conference 'Agents of Change'](#), [International Womens Day 'Cultural Awareness'](#), [Black History Month Screening](#), [International Womens Network](#)

EDI Strategic objective 3 (SO3) - Community: Build trust and credibility

- Repairing, strengthening and propagating constructive relationships across the entire University and alumni community- [Summer Conference 'Agents of Change'](#), [School consultations](#), [Online Teams space](#), [Networking events](#)
- Promoting clarity, quality, visibility, transparency and authenticity in the work of EDI - [Newsletters](#), [Financial Reporting](#), [Gathering feedback from event participants](#), [Meetings with EDI to pass on member needs](#)
- Providing safe spaces and respectful environments to encourage open and constructive conversations about diverse and difficult experiences and histories - [Specialist online events such as 'Dealing with infertility' and 'Childfree by choice'](#), [Safe spaces on and offline for members to share](#), ['Emotional Labour of Research'](#)
- Creating an environment that promotes belonging and strongly encourages individuals and groups to be treated with dignity and respect - ['Rules of engagement' with online space](#), [Summer Conference - 'Career, Confidence and Belonging'](#), [Co-created Mission, Vision and Values](#)

WALN alignment with University Strategic Priorities

When planning our activities for the academic year, we reach out to members for their suggestions, wants and needs first, then map these to cover the following strategic priorities to enhance the impact of our events at an organisational level

SO2B: Promoting access to careers at the University by removing barriers to physical and digital spaces, learning and development, and research and employment opportunities

SO2C: Introducing transparent and accountable EDI governance structures, making senior University leaders responsible for achieving change

SO3A: Promoting a culture where students and staff can raise concerns through robust and effective reporting and supporting procedures

SO3B: Promoting belonging through creating safe and secure spaces for staff and students. Creating physical and digital learning and working environments which are physically and psychologically safe

SO3C: Developing a sense of urgency for EDI work and promoting a culture of care and candour

SO3D: Creating opportunities for constructive but difficult conversations and ways to build understanding and empathy

As one of 6 institutional staff networks supported by the EIU, WALN are recognised as ‘...being crucial to the promotion of the University's wider equality and inclusion agenda’.

The EIU states on their website that staff networks ‘*through their activities, can help to open the door to changing the culture of an institution or organisation. They also provide members of staff who identify with a protected group or who have specific interests, with a safe, welcoming and practical platform; where exchanging information, generating and sharing views and new ideas can be expressed in an informal environment. The networks also provide peer support, networking opportunities and social activities.*’



Leeds Accessibility Network
Staff with Disabilities, Chronic
Conditions and Mental Health
conditions



WALN
Women at Leeds
Network



LGBTQ+
Staff Network



N4MES
The Network for Minoritised
Ethnic Staff



**The Muslim Staff Peer Support
Network**



Athena Swan Subgroups
Parent and Carer Network

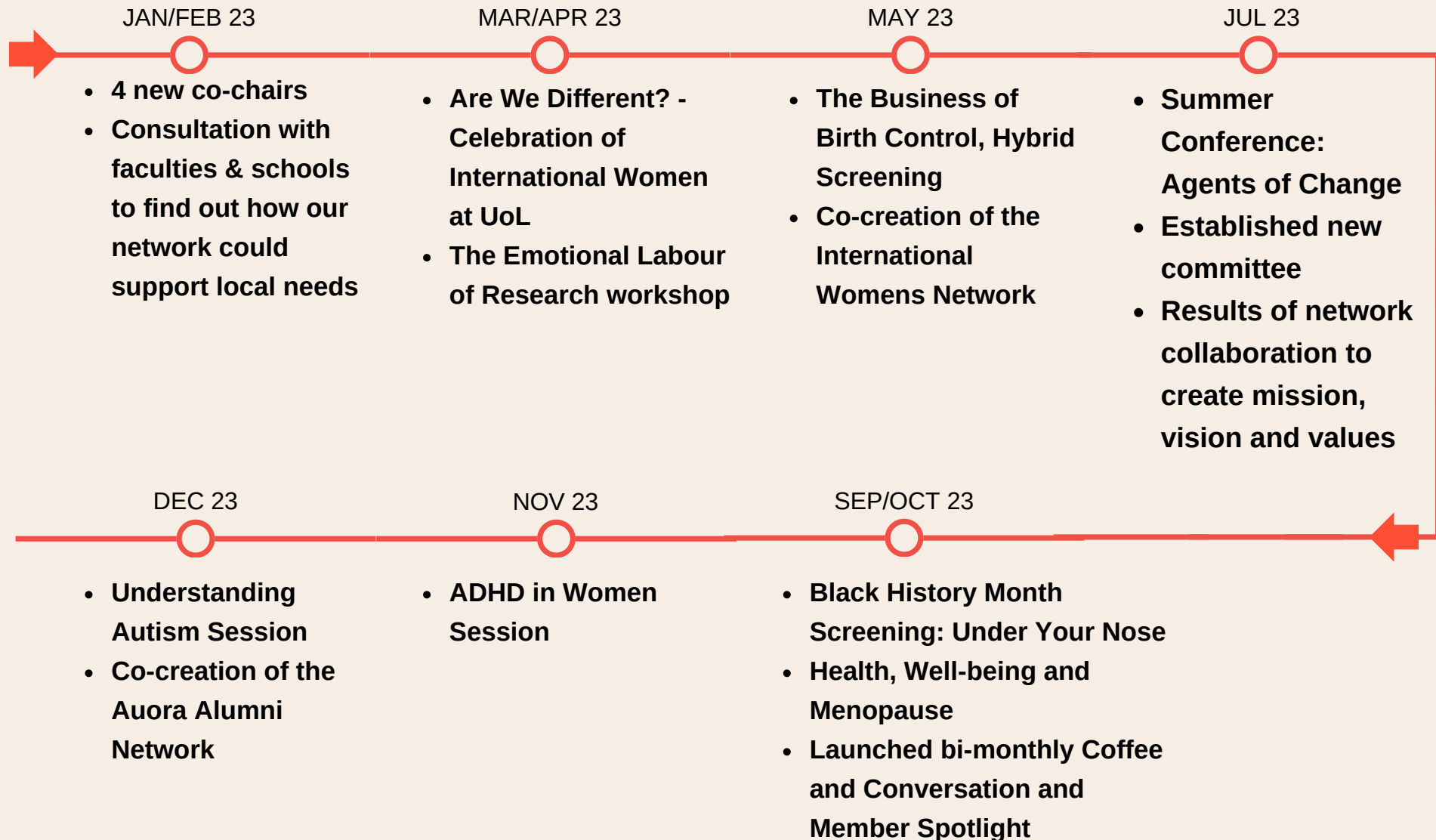
Statement from Fiona McClement, Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

“Equity Staff Networks can play a vital role in accelerating the pace of change on EDI. I’m deeply impressed by the Women at Leeds Network, in terms of ethos, activities and how aligned it is to institutional EDI objectives and aspirations.

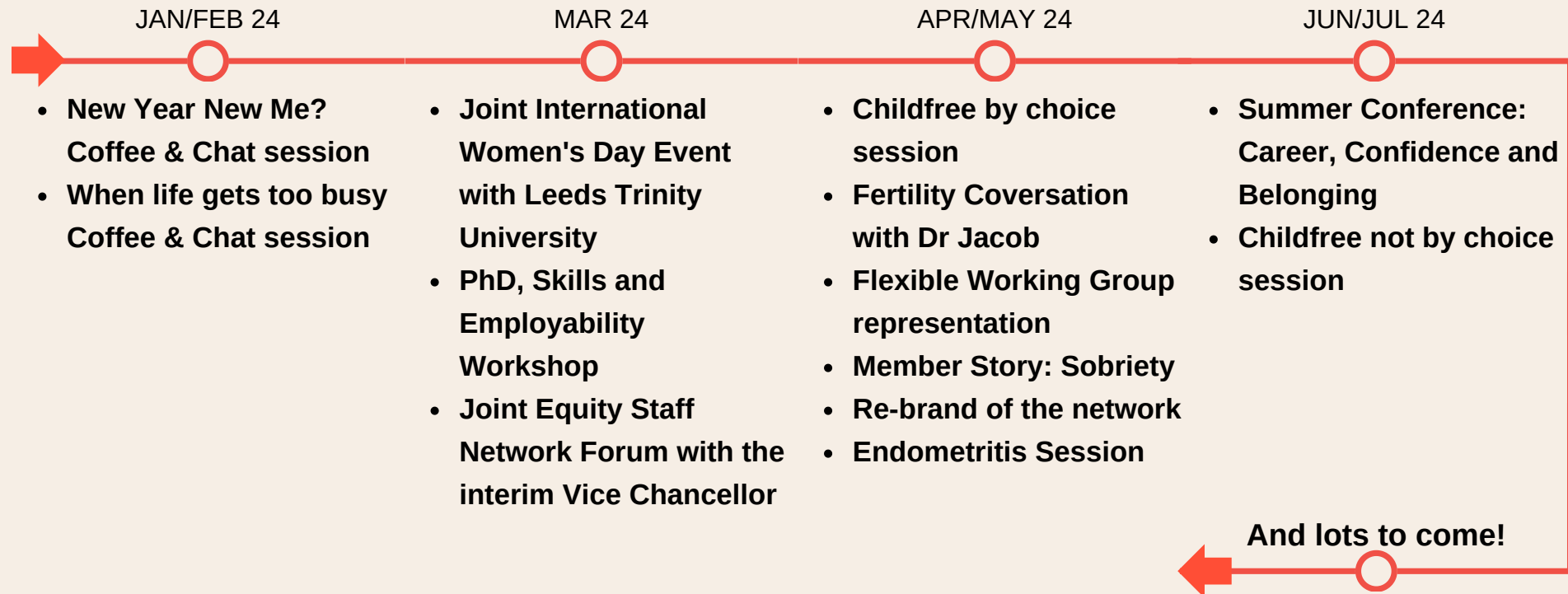
It offers a vibrant, inclusive space for women to come together, share experiences and forge connections across our large institution. I’m very grateful to the WALN co-chairs for their passion, commitment and vision, and to all of the members who make this such a welcoming and supportive network”.



Overview of Network Activities 2023



Overview of Network Activities to July 2024



Event Highlight - International Womens Day 2024

On the 8th March 60+ members joined together for our collaboration with Leeds Trinity University for International Women's Day. The event united colleagues from both universities, offering a unique opportunity to explore and celebrate cultural diversity, delving into its profound impact on our staff, culture, and campus.

Member Uma M Maniam gave a captivating performance using her training in traditional Indian dance to welcome participants, something she had not had the opportunity to do since moving to the UK. Post-graduate student, and Beijing opera trained singer, Yilin Ma performed and shared stories about traditional dress and it's cultural significance alongside Monica Tang.



Event Highlight - International Womens Day 2024



Panel members Kendi Guantai, Chong Liu, Juliana Momenti and Nicky Danino shared their unique experiences of the challenges and strengths of moving from one culture to another, and left us all feeling inspired, and with more understanding of the importance of cultural richness in our personal lives, and how it positively affects our organisations.



We finished off with a networking lunch, where our members were able to connect with fellow attendees and expand their professional network.

'We held a minute of silence for the lives of women lost. We celebrated cultural diversity and women's heritage and history. We saw performances and learned from each other. We listened to inspirational women on the panel share their thoughts, feelings and experiences. We learned that we have strong mothers, grandmothers and families. We know that women are fine, it's the world that needs fixing - and we don't need to disguise ourselves by wearing suits to do that!' - BK

Our Impact - members voices

" Myself and colleagues have discussed the 'buzz' we felt leaving the conference. It felt like such a safe environment where we could be honest, vulnerable, seen and heard. We noted how well thought out the morning was and that each guest speaker and exercise had such a mindful, positive impact... Overall, I think it was a huge success and cannot wait for the next event you put on. I will be urging other Women at Leeds to join us in future." - Summer Conference participant 2023

"For lots of people realising that networking is a massive part of career development can be daunting. WALN is the first stop for an inclusive space where progression and elevating voices is prioritised and engagement encouraged." - BC

"WALN makes me feel connected, informed, and heard. The network breaks down barriers, provides a safe space for diverse viewpoints, and continues to advocate on our behalf across our different communities, faculties and services. I have built wider networks and developed a stronger sense of belonging at the university as a result of the network's wide-ranging activities. Women@Leeds is special and long may its work continue! " - RW

"At the recent WALN conference it was useful for me to meet other Professional Services staff in a similar role and grade, sharing the same concerns about progression and inequality of the exclusive Academic promotion process...The conference provided an opportunity to network and learn about other roles at the university. I'm looking forward to the next WALN event." - JP

Our Impact - members stories



“After joining the WALN I have been an active and eager member attending all coffee and chats, talks and networking events. I found the in-person WALN event a transformational day in my Leeds university journey and used this inspiration to dive into something I had on my bucket list – to speak publicly about my sobriety journey. I gave a talk to WALN members on this subject and had an overwhelmingly positive response.”

On Wednesday the 13th March committee member Stephanie Siviter shared her story of addiction and recovery from 2 bottles of wine a day to nearly 4 years sober. She shared about how lockdown forced her to face her addiction, how she broke a 21-year habit and what life is like now. Here are some comments from attendees:

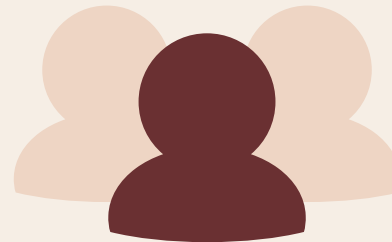
“Thank you so much, Stephanie. What a wonderfully uplifting story - you are truly inspirational. If your 17 year old self could see how confident and engaging you are now, without the alcohol, they would be blown away. I could listen to you all day!”

“It was an incredibly honest and articulate story, thank you so much for sharing.”

'I was so gripped with what you were telling us, that I didn't go to the other session I had booked on! Incredible story...'

Following this session Stephanie has gone on to launch her services as a speaker on sobriety - huge congratulations for putting your story and storytelling skills out into the world Stephanie!

Staff Engagement Snapshot



Cross -institutional
collaborations with
Leeds Trinity, alumnae
and other networks



200 individuals* attended
online sessions since Jan
23

Financial Statement 23 - 24

Date purchased	Description	Supplier / Detail	Debit
12/6/2023	Conference	Sweet Treats/ Personalised chocolate bars	£135.00
4/6/2023	Conference	50 - minute speaker	£150.00
4/7/2023	Summer Conference	Deli(very)	£740.45
9/10/2023	Rebrand of network	Daisy Bennett	£200.00
12/10/2023	Under your nose Film Screening	25th Oct film screening of LGBT+ activist	£175.00
30/10/2023	Emotional Labour workshop (26th April)		£74.95
16/01/2024	Meeting with Leeds Trinity	Deli(very)	£71.85
28/02/2024	Catering for IWD Event	Deli(very)	£513.15
13/06/2024	Stationary	Amazon / Conference gifts	£49.13
20/06/2024	Confectionary sweets for event	Sweet Treats Leeds	£70.50
24/06/2024	Confectionary sweets for event	Sweet Treats Leeds	£25.00
25/06/2024	Women@Leeds Conference	Love2Shop / Conference gifts	£50.00
09/07/2024	Catering for WALN Conference	Deli(very)	£745.95
		Total	£3,000.98

Terms of Reference - Women at Leeds Network Committee

- To foster a positive and proactive culture within the Women at Leeds Network.
- To ensure that the work undertaken by the committee on behalf of the network is driven by the core values of respect, kindness, inclusivity and empathy.
- To serve the network by embedding its work within the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion framework.
- To strategically identify priorities for the Women at Leeds Network, making sure these align and respond to the diverse needs of its members.
- To discuss and plan events for the Women at Leeds Network.
- To serve as a meeting point between the co-chairs and the network, ensuring that all network members feel represented.
- To identify and develop strategies for managing and sharing information within the network.
- To discuss and respond to national and international events, policies and stories relevant to the network.
- To advocate for impactful change for its members by working in solidarity with Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter committee and other partners.

Membership

- WALN Co-Chairs (in alphabetical order): Sarah Budello, Tao Jiang, Hafsah Khalil, Jacki Willson
- Plus + 6-8 members who are representative of the network ie. a broad range of experience/roles including academic/professional services/technicians as well a breadth of intersectional perspectives.
- Representative Member of the Equality and Inclusion Unit.