



York International Women's Week 2022

SUMMARY

Each year York marks 8th March, International Women's Day, with a community programme of events organised by volunteers. The theme for 2022 was 'Climate Feminism', promoted alongside a strong 'Open Strand'. The core Programme ran from 5th -13th March, with some pre- and post-programme events. The Programme contained 36 events (2 were cancelled), with a mix of in-person (19), online (13), hybrid (2 in person & online) events, and in-person exhibitions (2). Feedback was received for 26 events. This review of the Programme is based on that feedback and reflections from the YIWW coordinators.

The events in the programme offered information, skills, fun, and calls to action via talks, music, crafts, literature, well-being and photography. Most events went very well, with both small and large groups, and our international reach was sustained as we continue to think global and act local. YIWW publicity attracted new audiences, while event-targeted support continued to be very useful. Organisers were very appreciated of the supportive work of the coordinators, and we are in awe of all the hard work that went into arranging these impressive events.

Next year we hope to work with even more people, to keep developing the possibilities and effectiveness of YIWW.

What next?:

- Catch up on YIWW2022 by browsing the [YIWW2022 Programme](#) or watching videos of events on our '[As it Happened](#)' page
- Find out more about Climate Feminism, International Women's Day, local women's groups, and online feminist organisations via the 'resources' and 'about' links on our [website](#) (and send us more info to add).
- Keep in touch via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and the www.yorkwomen.org.uk website. Connect to #yorkwomen if posting your own relevant events
- Consider joining our YIWW coordinating team, or helping with one-off tasks, or offering an event for YIWW2023 (read the longer report below, and if you're interested, contact us for a chat).
- Email us with relevant local or online events for inclusion: yorkwomensvoices@gmail.com

REPORT

Planning. Preparation started in Autumn 2021 with a YIWW coordinators meeting, and we were delighted to welcome new people to the group. In choosing the 2022 theme we were inspired by [COP26](#) and an increasing awareness of the [gendered implications of climate change](#). However, we did not want to exclude other vital issues, especially those close to the heart of local people, so we welcomed other topics via an 'Open Strand'.

We knew that there was much community activity around climate change, without such practices always being identified as such. In order to encourage people to think imaginatively about the theme we offered prompts in the [Call for Events](#) (CFE), as well as info from the United Nations about gender and climate change, and added resource links to relevant climate-aware organisations to the YIWW website.

We circulated the CFE to our growing list of past organisers and other interested individuals and organisations. In addition, as part of our ongoing commitment to constantly develop the remit of YIWW by encouraging new organisers, for the first time we distributed CFE printed flyers to local shops, cafes and community venues.

In line with past years there were three core criteria for inclusion in the YIWW Programme. We asked that all events: a) were not-for-profit (charges may cover expenses or donations to relevant organisations); b) addressed issues of physical and online access, particularly in relation to economics and disability; c) and – while most events were likely to be open to all interested people of any gender – any 'women-only' events were open to self-identified women.

Response to the CFE. Our efforts paid off, as alongside many of the longstanding YIWW organisers who have contributed so much to the development of YIWW, new organisers came forward.

In all, there were 36 events in the Programme (with 2 eventually cancelled). Two thirds of the events addressed the main theme in some way, with many highlighting the political and personal challenges of the climate emergency via talks or creative exploration, while others focussed on sustainability by reusing clothes and fabric, or avoiding plastic. The open strand events ranged across abortion, Afghani maternal and child health, an Indian feminist library, music, new local fiction, extraordinary York women and personal achievement. All events were organised locally, though many offered specific connections to work in other countries (India, Uganda, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, NW Pakistan).

Putting together and publicising the YIWW2021 Programme: All submitted events fitted our criteria so we were delighted to accept them all. We suggested a couple of changes of dates to avoid some clashes, and on the whole the events spread out well over 'women's week', with a few pre- and post- events. YIWW coordinators designed the Programme, and publicised this through as many channels as possible. Event organisers were urged to use their contacts not only to promote their own event but to promote the whole YIWW2022 Programme, to encourage a wider YIWW community to develop, and to attract new people to new events. YIWW coordinators distributed 2000 programmes and 1000 flyers to local shops and community centres, sent out press releases, were on local radio, and posted extensively on our social media sites of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Support from the YIWW coordinators. In response to feedback from organisers of YIWW2021 we arranged a free online session on using social media to promote events. We also provided free one-to-one support for Zoom session planning as well as, on request, an on-hand technician for setting up and hosting online events, and we supplied Guidelines for organising Zoom events on the YIWW website. Coordinators were on hand via email, social media, and phone to answer queries or discuss event organisation and promotion.

Funding YIWW2022. The Programme runs primarily on volunteer work. Our main costs were for experts to run workshops or offer technical support, funds to support low-income women, and printing and website charges. We are very grateful to the following for their support in donations and kind: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; York Human Rights City Network; the Centre for Women's Studies and the Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York; and York Council. Website and postal expenses were covered by individual YIWW coordinators.

What did YIWW2022 do well?

- Brought together hundreds of people, mostly but not exclusively local York women, to discuss, explore and experience aspects of women's lives locally and globally.
- Attracted new organisers alongside retaining many long-standing ones, thus stimulating an evolving YIWW.
- Promoted events which offered information about gendered climate change and supported thinking about action.
- Encouraged fun: many events entertained and stimulated people with singing and brass bands, poetry, new local novels, crafts and photography.
- Collaboration. We continued to collaborate with many diverse local organisations (for instance, Kyra, York Spoken Word, Femmes Fortissimo, Theatre Royal), and to develop new relationships (for example, with Good Neighbours UK, York Learning and GP surgeries). It is also heartening to see individuals organise events (on climate feminism, and photography). One event was organised jointly by the Trans Rights Now Collective in Tamil Nadu, southern India and the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York, and was broadcast simultaneously on Zoom and the Trans Rights Facebook site to facilitate access in both countries.
- Feedback indicated that organisers felt very well supported by the YIWW coordinators in offering clear guidelines, speedy responses, and individual support.
- Some events gained new people for their organisations.

What could we do better?

- While we attempted to extend the scope of YIWW2022, we could do more in learning from and supporting individuals and groups who may be interested in organising and/or participating in YIWW events, but who feel excluded for many reasons, including economics, disability, sexual or gender identity or age.
- YIWW printed, email, online and media publicity is quite extensive, but is limited, and is still not as effective as we would like.
- There was some misunderstanding over the criteria in our Guidelines for including events in the Programme, and we'll seek to make these clearer in future.

What else might we take forward to improve YIWW2023? Last year we listed ways to feed into our thinking for YIWW2022. How did we do?

- Listening to and working with as many different constituencies of women as possible in order to expand the Programme offerings and the likelihood of participation.
 - New organisers offered events. This was achieved by YIWW distributing a Call for Events flyer for the first time, targeting climate events, and more extensive use of social media (Instagram became more significant this year).
 - *We will continue to extend the CFE distribution, and work on more effective communication and support.*
- Offering technical support via face-to-face workshops (if safe in 2022)
 - We didn't do this, as there wasn't a need. However, we provided targeted individual support on request, which was appreciated.
 - *To continue, as needed.*
- More extensive and targeted publicity for the Programme, combining print and online publicity and information.
 - This year we distributed 2000 Programmes and 1000 flyers, via EXPLORE, community venues, cafes and shops. We drove around. We walked the streets. We increased our use of hashtags on social media and posted very frequently. We emailed organisations who were likely to be interested. This had some success, and new people participated in some events. Yet, still, most events drew from existing contacts.
 - *Some organisers suggested a more dynamic website, and even more extensive use of Instagram. The coordinators are also keen to update the design of the printed programme.*
- Should we encourage online workshops alongside face-to-face activities in 2022? How might event organisers assess and offer relatively covid-safe in-person events?
 - The success of YIWW2021 as an online programme, aligned to the increased use of online interactions due to the pandemic, meant this was achieved relatively easily as many people have gained the necessary skills over the past year. In addition, covid-awareness has become part of everyday life, and was not a big issue.
- What training is needed to become more proficient in attending to issues of disability with regard to event organising and participation, and designing online and print publicity?
 - YIWW2022 strongly encouraged attention to this aspect.
 - *We continue to actively seek ways to improve access awareness and practices. We intend to highlight access in our YIWW2023 CFE, and seek to offer more specific advice and suggestions via the website and, possibly, a workshop.*
- What do we want from the relationship between York and other national and international organisations? Should all events be organised by York-based people?
 - *YIWW remains York-organised, though one event was organised jointly with an Indian community, and this might develop in future.*
- How far should events be opened up to all interested people, wherever they live, and what are the implications and logistics of this?
 - *We remain focussed on thinking globally and acting locally, and welcome all interested people to YIWW, wherever they live.*

Interested? There are many ways to get involved in YIWW:

- Join the coordinating group. We warmly and actively welcome new people. If you have some time and would like to consider joining the informal, friendly group of volunteers who organise the overall programme, feel free to email us for a no-obligation chat. The time commitment is mainly, but not exclusively, in September, January to March when we meet every three or four weeks. One of the most important tasks is to keep in touch via our internal group email and to take an active part in making ongoing decisions as YIWW comes together. Volunteers also take on various tasks singly or with others, for instance coordinating the Programme, taking responsibility for social media, or distribution of printed publicity. For the past two years all our meetings have been online, but this could change in response to the coordinators – and virus control!
We welcome all interested people who can spare some time, whether you are new to this kind of volunteering or you have specific experiences or skills to offer.
- Offer an event. Alongside new coordinators, we welcome the support of event organisers who are unable to commit to helping to developing the YIWW programme, but who become part of our wider YIWW community. The Call for Events goes out each September for submission by the following January. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be added please email YIWW. Or check the website or social media sites in late September.
- Constructive comments on YIWW. Do you have ideas about the future of YIWW, especially in response to this report, or from your participation in YIWW?
- Help with publicity, for instance by distributing brochures in your neighbourhood or disseminating information via social media or in your organisation. Please contact us if you could do this, without the commitment of joining the coordinating group.
- Keep in touch via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram or by visiting our website www.yorkwomen.org.uk. The Programme goes live in mid-February each year, and we look forward to seeing you at one or more events.

To contact us with offers of help or with suggestions, or for information, email yorkwomensvoices@gmail.com

Many thanks to everyone who participated in YIWW2022 - see you next year!
Best wishes from the YIWW2022 Coordinating team.