



# 2024

## WOMEN'S HEALING RETREAT REPORT

Towards Sustainability and Future Growth

[www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)



## INTRODUCTION:

The Women's Healing Retreat, held at **Netherurd Garden House** in the Scottish Borders from October 4th to 6th, 2024, has proven to be an effective and transformative intervention for women in recovery from addiction. Funded in part by The Volant Charitable Trust, this retreat aimed to support vulnerable groups including lone mothers, ethnic minorities, asylum seekers, abuse survivors, and post-incarceration women. With an emphasis on holistic well-being, empowerment, and community integration, the retreat provided an immersive experience that fostered healing, unity, and self-discovery.

Given the profound impact of this event, our vision is to make this healing retreat an annual program, scaling up its reach and impact, and inviting additional funders to partner with us in making this ambition a reality.

### Programme Overview and Methodology:

The retreat offered a comprehensive range of therapeutic and developmental activities designed to provide a holistic approach to recovery. The programme of events combined group work, individual therapeutic interventions, physical activity, and personal reflection, creating a multifaceted approach that has proven successful in addressing the complex needs of women in recovery.



We brought together women from diverse backgrounds, all engaged with lived experience recovery organisations, to foster unity and community. Through this event, we built connections, shared skills, and celebrated one another's successes. Such gatherings are essential to dismantling the barriers that can create isolated, fragmented efforts across services. Women who work in the sector, volunteer, or are actively receiving support joined in an environment that highlighted collaboration, mutual support, and empowerment. By nurturing these bonds, we aim to move beyond competitive and isolating dynamics, laying a foundation of collective strength and shared purpose.



# Programme Highlights:

## Mind-Body Connection Activities:

The retreat included activities such as Sound Bath Meditation, Mother Earth Meditation, and Soulsa Dance Fitness, providing participants with tools to reconnect with their bodies and minds. Such activities are crucial for trauma recovery, as they foster mindfulness and help participants establish a positive relationship with their bodies—a significant aspect for those who have faced addiction and abuse.

Participants shared how these sessions helped them process their emotions in a safe space. One participant remarked,

*"I felt totally relaxed from the moment I got here. I've never been at a retreat like this where I felt so cared for."*



# Programme

## Highlights:

### Community and Connection

Community and Connection:

Throughout the retreat, activities emphasized the importance of peer connection and shared experience. The Women's Circle, campfire gatherings, and informal social opportunities (such as board games and the Silent Disco) fostered an environment of unity and mutual support.

Participants repeatedly emphasized how these connections alleviated their feelings of isolation. One attendee commented,

*The weekend has been about women empowering and uplifting each other. It's amazing to see how we can come together and support one another.*





# Programme Highlights:

## Personal Reflection and Relaxation:

Personal time for reflection, combined with access to amenities like hot tubs, cold-water therapy, and pampering sessions, created an environment where participants could rest and feel nurtured. This balance of structured programming and relaxation ensured that participants could fully engage without feeling overwhelmed.

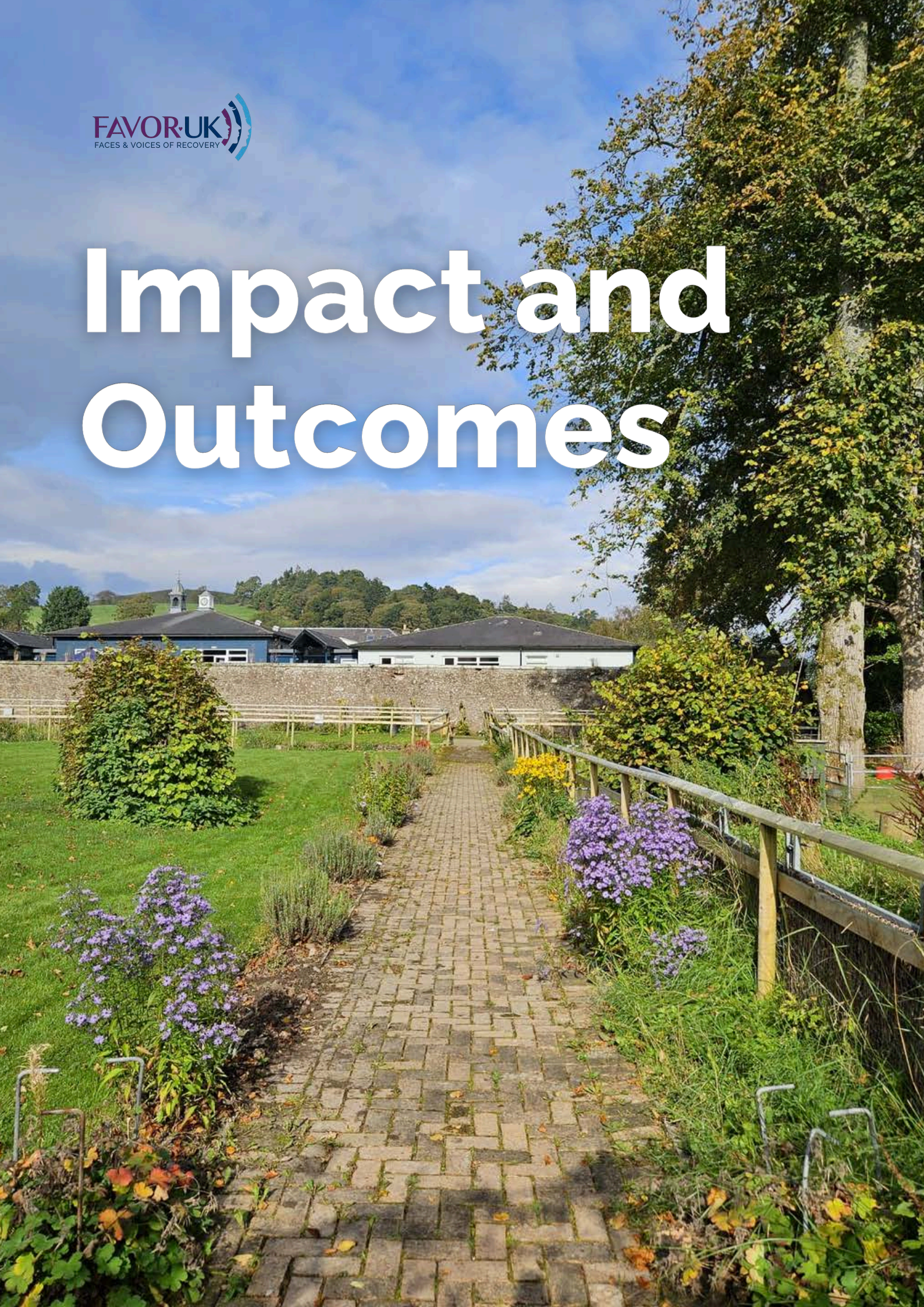
One participant stated

*"It was lovely just to come and switch off and be looked after."*





# Impact and Outcomes





# Impact and Outcomes

## Increased Well-Being and Self-Efficacy:

The retreat created a measurable improvement in participants' well-being. Participants reported increased relaxation, improved mental clarity, and a sense of empowerment. Cognitive-behavioral interventions helped women challenge and replace unhelpful belief systems, while group activities fostered a sense of achievement and competence.

## Building Sustainable Peer Support Networks:

The power of peer support emerged as a significant theme. Many participants, particularly those who initially expressed social anxiety, experienced a transformation in their ability to connect with others. One woman explained,

*"I've struggled with being around other women, but this weekend showed me how empowering it can be. I didn't want to leave."*



# Impact and Outcomes

## Environmentally Conscious Practices:

We employed several measures to maximize positive environmental impact, such as carpooling for reduced carbon emissions, sourcing food locally to support sustainability, and utilizing eco-friendly materials. Moreover, the retreat included nature walks and activities focused on fostering a deeper appreciation for the environment, further encouraging participants to embrace sustainable habits.



## Venue and Accessibility:

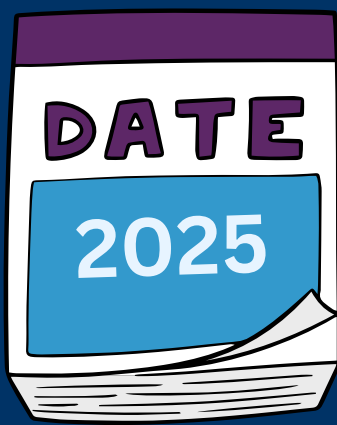
Netherurd Garden House, the retreat venue, was selected not only for its natural setting but also for its accessibility features, making it suitable for individuals with varying physical abilities. Ensuring that the retreat was accessible to all, regardless of physical limitations, was a critical element of our inclusive approach.





# Scaling Up to an Annual Event:

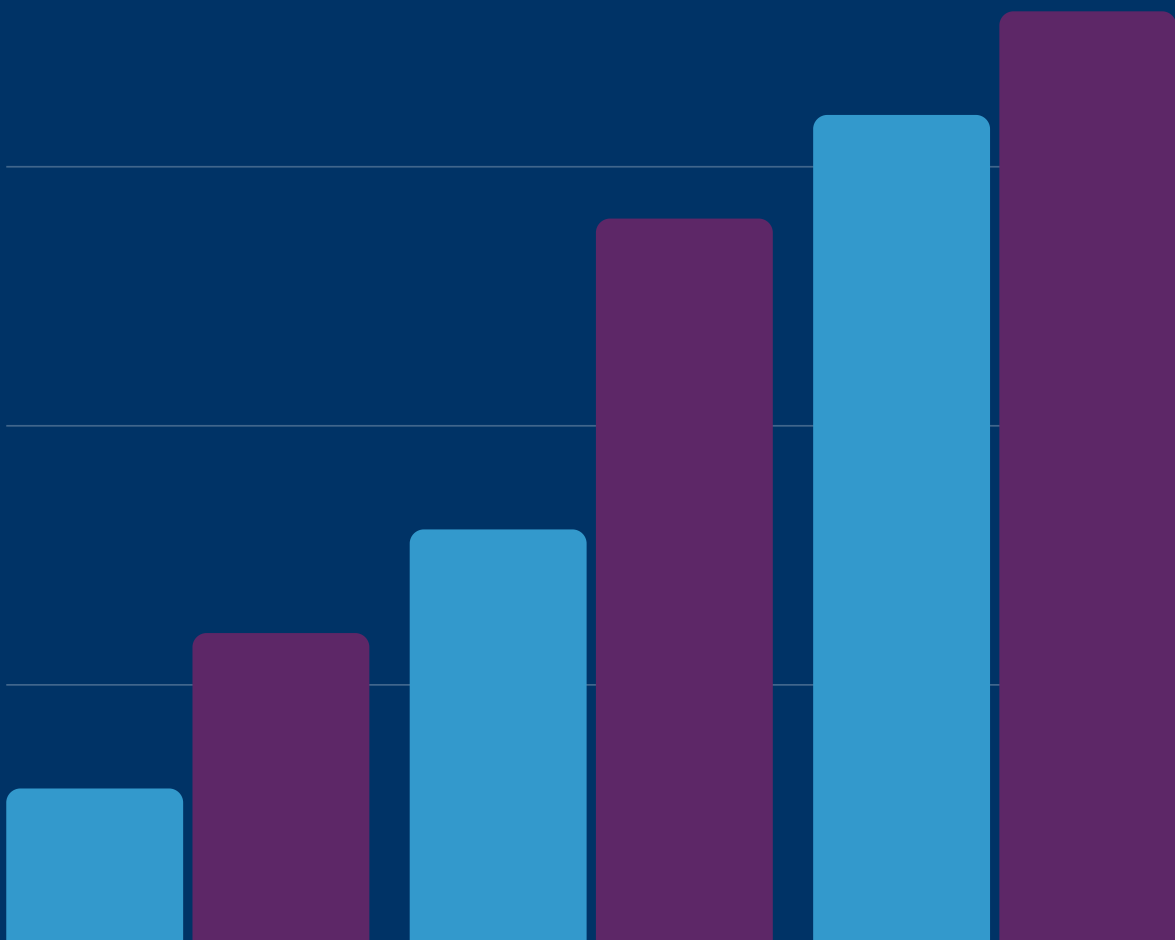
Given the success of the October 2024 retreat, our goal is to establish the Women's Healing Retreat as an annual event, thereby expanding its reach and ensuring consistent support for women in recovery. We aim to increase participant numbers to 44, offering more women the opportunity to benefit from this transformative experience.





# Enhanced Evaluation Framework:

Moving forward, we plan to establish a more rigorous evaluation framework to assess the retreat's impact on participants' mental health, social integration, and long-term recovery outcomes. Pre- and post-retreat surveys, combined with qualitative interviews, will be conducted to capture measurable changes in well-being and self-efficacy.

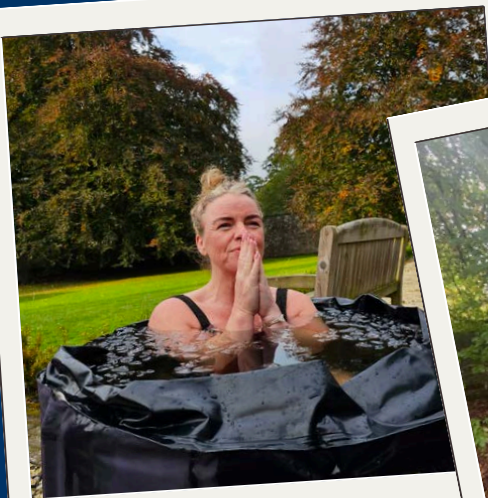




# Expanding Therapeutic Offerings:

To further enhance the impact of the retreat, we plan to expand our range of therapeutic services. Future retreats will include additional trauma-informed therapy sessions and culturally tailored activities to meet the specific needs of ethnic minority groups, asylum seekers, and others who may face unique challenges in their recovery journeys.

Invitation to Potential Funders:





*“We are actively seeking partners to help bring our vision to life. With additional funding, we can.....”*

**Expand our capacity and infrastructure to accommodate more participants.**

Broaden our programme by offering specialised workshops, such as career readiness training and advanced trauma recovery sessions.

Provide follow-up services post-retreat, such as ongoing group therapy sessions and alumni-led peer support groups.

We believe that investing in the Women’s Healing Retreat is an opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of women at a critical point in their recovery.

Our mission aligns with social impact goals, including mental health support, poverty reduction, and community cohesion, thereby offering funders a significant return on investment in terms of social and community benefit.



# Conclusion:

**The Women's Healing Retreat at Netherurd Garden House demonstrated a substantial impact in fostering healing, community, and empowerment for vulnerable women. With the support of The Volant Charitable Trust, we have provided a safe, supportive, and enriching environment where participants could heal, connect, and thrive. The overwhelmingly positive feedback and transformative experiences reported by attendees highlight the retreat's success and the potential for future growth.**

Our aim is to make this an annual event, providing consistent and expanded support for women in recovery. We invite additional funders to join us in making this vision a reality. By contributing to this initiative, funders will be directly impacting the lives of women and their communities, ensuring that those overcoming addiction have the opportunity, support, and resources needed to build healthier, more fulfilling lives.

**Acknowledgements:** We extend our deepest gratitude to The Volant Charitable Trust for their support in making the October 2024 Women's Healing Retreat possible. We are excited about the future and hope to continue this partnership, growing the reach and impact of the retreat for years to come

Contact Information: For more information on how to partner with us and support future Women's Healing Retreats, please contact:

[Annemarie@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](mailto:Annemarie@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

***"We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate and expand this meaningful program, fostering sustained transformation for women across Scotland."***

On the next page we have a series of quotes from the women who attended the retreat, capturing the essence of their experiences:



Here are a series of quotes from the women who attended the retreat, capturing the essence of their experiences:



"I was a bit anxious coming in, but this weekend has been dead uplifting. A bit exhausting too, but I'm here to stay. It's been fabulous." - **Roseanne**

"I've not always been here mind-wise, but I got clean and sober. To be here today and be part of this has been a real privilege for me." - **Margaret**

"Coming in here, I was full of excuses not to go, but straight away I felt at ease. I pushed through a lot of stuff, and I'm so glad I stayed. The weekend was definitely much needed." - **Veronica**

"I've not always been confident, but it's taken me 15 years to get here. I've been in almost every seat in this room, and it's been wonderful to be part of this weekend." - **May**

"I felt really nervous at first, but seeing everyone so relaxed and connected made it worth it. It was so heartwarming to see all the support from each other." - **Amanda**

"This is my fourth retreat, and I've enjoyed it from start to finish. It was nice to see new people, talk, and just enjoy nature. The food was nice, and everybody was kind. Thank you so much." - **Ashley**

"I was exactly where I needed to be this weekend, even though it was tough I've had so many moments of getting to know myself and feeling grateful" - **Delvina**



"I've thoroughly enjoyed the chance to slow down, think about where I'm at, and meet new people. It's been huge for me to bring things back to basics." - **Barbara**

"I kept thinking I wasn't supposed to be here, but the moment I arrived, I felt totally relaxed. It's been great laughter, great hugs, and I can't wait for the next one." - **Helen**

"The silent disco was amazing. I had so much fun, and it made me realize how important it is to embrace these moments." - **Jolene**

"This weekend has been filled with laughter, deep conversations, and lots of fun. It's been really empowering being around so many wonderful women." - **Lisa**



"I wasn't expecting much, but what I found here was an abundance of kindness and a true community of support. It was just beautiful." - **Dalvina**



# Here are quotes specifically highlighting the experience of being with other women during the retreat:

*"When women get together, it's amazing. I've always had incredible women pushing me to do better, and it was beautiful to watch that here."* -

**Michelle**

*"I was really nervous about being with so many women, but I felt comfortable, and it was so empowering. The connection among us was priceless."* -

**Margaret**



*"I have always thought I didn't like being around women, but this weekend changed that. I saw such strength and support, and I was able to let go and just be myself."* -

**Lisa**

*"This weekend has been about women empowering and uplifting each other. It's amazing to see how we can come together and support one another."* -

**Jolene**

*"I struggled with being around women because of my past, but I've never felt more comfortable than I did this weekend. I didn't want to go home."* -

**Sharne**

*"The laughter, connection, and support among women were just so powerful. This weekend has been filled with beautiful, heartwarming moments."* -

**Amanda**

*"It's been so special meeting these beautiful souls who only want the best for you. That is absolutely priceless"* -

**Amanda**

*"Seeing the other women here and hearing their stories has been amazing. I feel I've learned so much from everyone this weekend."* -

**Ronnie**

*"I've felt an abundance of love from everyone here, and I'm grateful I could pour that back into others. It's been a truly special experience."* -

**Dalvina**



*"I came here anxious about being around so many women, but it's been incredible to see how supportive and uplifting everyone is. I can't thank you all enough."* -

**Tina**





Here are quotes specifically mentioning Annemarie & Evelyn as the central figures behind the initiative



"Annemarie, Evelyn, thank you. It's been a privilege to be part of this retreat and see the incredible impact you have on so many women." - **Veronica**

"Annemarie, your dedication means so much to all of us here. I can't thank you enough for making this retreat possible." - **Roseanne**

"I can't thank Annemarie Evelyn, and all the FAVOR UK enough for giving us this space. The effort put in to make everyone feel loved and cared for is just beyond words." - **Dalvina**

"I'm so grateful to be here, and I recognize how honored I am to be part of something like this facilitated by FAVOR UK." - **Annemarie**

"Annemarie, I know you often worry about how things will turn out, but I just want to say that your leadership and the love you pour into this are truly inspiring." - **Amanda**

"This is my third FAVOR UK retreat, and I can see the change in myself each time. The connections I've made here have been pivotal in my recovery, and I'm so thankful to Evelyn and the team." - **Adele**

"Thank you, Annemarie & Evelyn, for creating an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and deeply cared for. This retreat is a testament to your vision for recovery." - **Helen**



"The role I have within FAVOR UK is such an honor, and I genuinely believe that if I hand my will over to God, opportunities like this retreat will continue to come my way." - **Annemarie**



These quotes reflect the gratitude and admiration the participants have for Annemarie and the team at FAVOR UK, highlighting their role in creating a supportive and impactful retreat experience

Here are quotes highlighting the themes of unity and working together collaboratively during the retreat:



*"Everybody's just been there for each other. The feeling of unity has been incredible, and I've enjoyed every part of it." - Veronica*

*"The women just came together and made everything work, even when things went wrong. It shows how much we can accomplish together." - Evelyn*

*"This weekend has been about women empowering and uplifting each other. It's amazing to see how we can come together and support one another." - Jolene*

*"The sense of unity was beautiful. Everyone was willing to help, and it's rare to find such support anywhere else." - Ronnie*

*"I loved seeing how everyone came together to help one another. The volunteers worked so hard, and it was amazing to see such collaboration." - Barbara*

*"The laughter, connection, and support among women were just so powerful. We all came together, and it made the experience even more meaningful." - Amanda*

*"Even though I couldn't participate in everything, just seeing everyone else talking and laughing made me feel part of something bigger. It was truly powerful." - Amanda*

*"It was heartwarming to see how everyone supported each other without hesitation. There's nothing quite like the power of a group of women working together." - Amanda*

*"When things went wrong, everyone stepped in to support and make things right. It was an inspiring example of teamwork and togetherness." - Evelyn*

*"The women here have been incredible, working together in every aspect, whether it was volunteering, organizing, or just offering a kind word." - Lisa*



**These quotes illustrate the strong sense of unity and collaboration that the women experienced during the retreat, emphasizing the importance of collective support and working together.**





## Title required



"This is my first retreat, and I truly enjoyed it. Coming here, I could just be myself, try new things, and meet welcoming people. It was really nice." - **Senga**

"I was dreading coming this weekend, but I've never been around so many women and felt so comfortable. I don't even want to go home now." - **Tina**

"I came in feeling a bit socially awkward, but the kindness and warmth from everyone made me feel like I belonged. I am grateful to have been here." - **Sandra**

"I've felt like I've been looked after like never before, and that's something so special about this retreat. It's a feeling I'll take with me." - **Anna**

"I was anxious about coming, but being here has been a reminder of how good people can be when you connect with them on a deeper level." - **Michelle**

"I don't usually like events like this, but the care and support from everyone made it easy to stay, connect, and grow. I'm glad I didn't let my fears stop me." - **Ronnie**

"I wasn't sure about sharing a room with someone I didn't know, but it turned out to be better than expected. I'm glad I pushed myself." - **Helen**

"I felt like I didn't deserve to be here when I arrived, but everyone's warmth and openness helped me let go of that. It was truly healing." - **Dalvina**

"The love and connection I've felt this weekend have been unlike anything I've experienced. I'm grateful for every moment." - **Rose**

"Being here, I felt completely safe to be myself, without judgment. The unity and connection among us all were simply beautiful." - **Barbara**



**These quotes reflect the experiences of different participants, emphasising their personal journeys, the kindness they experienced, and the importance of connection during the retreat.**