



Stirling & District Women's Aid

Annual Report

2022 - 2023



Executive Manager

During the last year, SDWA has continued to provide critical services to survivors of domestic abuse, as well as responding and adapting to the changing needs of service users. We have successfully ran and strengthened the capacity of our drop in, IDAA, Marac, outreach, children, and prevention services, as well as continued response despite the increased challenges we face in the sector.

We continued to support women in our refuge accommodation. Houses and flats have been upgraded to provide good quality and safe accommodations which are both homely and comfortable. We have also made sure that these meet the safety needs of women fleeing from domestic abuse. We also have improved our pet policy, should women want to bring pets into the refuge.

Our prevention services have been busy this year by arranging a new timetable for the schools and core training. Across the academic year, we have delivered the programme to seven Stirling schools. This is a real positive step in terms of providing a consistent approach to specialised Gender Based Violence input to education in Stirling. Within the next academic year, we are working with school staff with the aim to review and adapt materials to allow us to deliver sessions specifically for ASN groups.

We have been very fortunate to receive significant donations over the period, and we want to express our gratitude to everyone who has donated. All these donations allow us to build our service. However, it does concern us that this level of donations may be difficult to sustain due to the ongoing financial crisis.

Despite this, alongside other uncertainties, we feel encouraged and positive. A massive thank you to everyone who has helped us achieve such a successful year. I want to acknowledge the commitment, dedication, care, and work of our staff and volunteers because without them, these achievements would not have been possible. Thank you to funders, partner agencies and other stakeholders, and above all, the women who have reached out to us for support.

Lisa McGloin
Executive Manager

**The staff are hero's with no capes
They build you back up to stand on your
own again. No judgement, with compassion,
empathy, kindness and understanding.**

**Women's Aid has helped me
understand unanswered
questions I have had as a
young child and as an
adult.To make sense of the
abuse and the missing pieces.**

Chair of the Board

It is with mixed feelings that I write this introduction, as it will be my last as Chair of Stirling and District Women's Aid (SDWA). Our governing document limits us to two three-year terms, and I have reached the end of that tenure. I am sad to be leaving, but also quite proud of what the organisation has done since I joined the board in 2017.

In the 2022-2023 financial year, the board met eight times in order to discuss routine governance matters such as finance, funding, and operational matters. We also occasionally held smaller group meetings to address specific issues, such as approving organisational policies.

There have been many challenges and changes over my tenure: a pandemic, a punishing cost of living crisis, and the transition to a new chief executive, Lisa McGloin. What has remained consistent, however, is the high standard of support offered to women and children by the staff members. I am so incredibly proud to have played some part in supporting their lifechanging and lifesaving work.

It has also been a privilege to work alongside my fellow board members who bring a wide range of skills and experience, including in service delivery, human relations, finance, law, policy, management, and feminist activism. Our current board membership stands at eight. The recruitment of my replacement is ongoing, but I am confident that the SDWA management and board will appoint a woman with the dedication and skills to drive forth the priorities of the 2019-2024 strategic plan, while also looking to craft a new plan that continues to secure the future of the organisation in 2024 and beyond.

Of course, the future of that work also depends upon the continuing generosity of the local community. In addition to vital cash donations, our local community never fails to answer our social media calls for essential items needed by the women and children fleeing abuse. We are also deeply grateful for the funders who enable SDWA to provide essential support to women and children working to stay safe and overcome the trauma of domestic abuse. The work this year has been funded by Stirling Council, Inspiring Scotland, the National Lottery, The Robertson Trust, and the Henry Smith Charity.

As ever, I will continue to work towards a world where domestic abuse services do not need to exist. I believe that domestic abuse is preventable. I believe that we can change social attitudes that excuse male violence. Most importantly, I believe that everyone deserves to live free of violence and control. Until that world comes, however, I am so glad that organisations like SDWA exist. I wish everyone at Stirling and District Women's Aid – and especially the women and children the service supports – a safe, happy, and thriving future.

Warmest regards,

Dr Clare McKeown
Chair, Board of Trustees, Stirling and District Women's Aid



Drop In / IDAA

Stirling & District Women's Aid has continued to run the drop-in and IDAA (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy) services from the main office in Stirling City centre. These services are available for women experiencing domestic abuse, where they can receive emotional and practical support as well as advice relating to housing, finances, police, and legal matters through our partner agencies when required.

All women are assessed for their safety and risk level at their first appointment - this helps the worker consider what options and support can be offered to the women. If refuge accommodation is required, the assessment would be carried out at this stage followed by a referral to the SDWA refuge manager, or an external Women's Aid refuge. Women can also be referred in to the service by partner agencies, including Housing, Police, Social Work, Health or Education. As long as SDWA know there was consent from the woman to share the information, a worker will then make contact to offer support.

SDWA has built up a great working relationship with partner agencies and we all work well together to understand and support the needs of women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

She helped me to not fully blame myself for my past, and that I'm not a victim, I'm a survivor! My worker took a chance on me and believed in me where none has before.

IDA A Case Study

R made initial contact with Stirling and District Women's Aid (SDWA) in April 2021, disclosing she separated from her ex-partner 6 years ago but continued to be impacted by the trauma from the domestic abuse she experienced during the relationship. Additionally, she reported that her ex-partner was still abusing her via posting explicit images of her on social media and adult web pages. R disclosed to have experienced physical, mental, and sexual abuse while in this relationship. A discussion was held with her regarding reporting the abuse to the police at the time with her stating she had however the police never attended her home to follow this up. R also discussed her mistrust of the police due to previous disclosures of rape to them which resulted in no prosecution due to lack of evidence. R agreed to ongoing support from the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDA A) service at SDWA.

R was provided with support regarding exploring and processing her experience of domestic abuse alongside ongoing emotional support. Safety planning and safety measures were carried with R to improve her safety and try to reduce her fears over the perpetrator which included a storm marker and crime care referral with the support of partnership working. Following a period of support and confidence building R was able to make a statement to the police regarding the domestic abuse she experienced and ongoing abuse via social media posts by the perpetrator. SDWA were able to support R through this process due to her anxiety around reporting to the police. R was offered ongoing support during the statement process over several sessions and with her ongoing contact with police and courts through partnership working. The perpetrator was apprehended by police however released on bail. Additional safety planning was undertaken at this point due to R fears of retaliation from the perpetrator upon reporting him to the police and him being charged. The IDA A service supported her during her court appearance to give evidence and arranged for her to have special measures put in place at court such as a screen so she would not have to face the perpetrator. The perpetrator received a sentence for domestic abuse towards R which included being placed on the sex offender's register. R reported feeling she had been "believed" and was "relieved" the perpetrator had been held responsible for his abuse and continued actions towards her.

The IDA A service continued to offer R ongoing support following the court process to aid her to build on her self-esteem and resilience. R informed the IDA A that without support of a keyworker she would not have been able to go through this process due to initial fears over providing a police statement, the length of the court process and uncertainty over the outcome of this. At the point R was ready to be discharged from SDWA she reported she had secured full time employment, felt safe and felt empowered by being able to take the control and power back from her perpetrator with the support of the IDA A service at SDWA. R also stated she is now able to recognise "red flags" for potential domestic abuse perpetrators which she will apply to any future relationships she may have.



MARAC

Stirling and District Women's Aid are committed to ending domestic abuse and as a result, in 2021, we secured 3 years funding for a Marac coordinator post, the process which looks at safety planning for high risk victims and children of domestic abuse. This evidences the importance we place on this multi-agency approach to safety planning for victims.

A little bit about Marac:-

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (Marac) have transformed the multi-agency response to domestic abuse across Scotland, providing a coordinated response to risk for domestic abuse victims. At the heart of Marac is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. By sharing relevant, risk-focused information in a safe environment, a coordinated multi-agency safety plan can be developed, increasing victim safety.

A good working example of this is when information was shared at a recent meeting from Criminal Justice Social Work who reported that the perpetrator of a woman being discussed had had a Criminal Justice appointment earlier that morning. During conversation he alluded to his Social Worker that he had rekindled his relationship with this woman and that she had been residing at his home address occasionally. The coordinator was aware that there were live bail conditions for a serious domestic crime in place preventing any contact, and was also aware that other partners had shared information about her lack of engagement with services and concerns that her addiction had spiraled and she was particularly vulnerable at that time.

The coordinator identified this immediate risk to victim safety and the police representative present was asked to have officers attend at the address to check on her welfare and to progress any domestic breach of bail offences.

This was actioned immediately, and whilst the Marac meeting was still ongoing, local officers forced entry to the address in question and traced the victim who disclosed she had been held against her will and coerced to stay. The perpetrator was arrested for breach of bail and subsequently remanded due to the seriousness of the index domestic offences.

This information may not have been shared or acted upon if not for the Marac meeting that morning and the commitment from partners to attend, share relevant information and be proactive in their action planning.

There is no doubt her safety would have been compromised but for this effective and efficient response to information shared.

Marac is currently NOT a statutory provision, so there is no formal obligation, or funding, for Marac to exist. However, within Stirling area all agency representatives attend Maracs as part of their normal, day-to-day work as the importance of this is recognised locally. In Equally Safe the Scottish Government committed to developing and building a national framework for Marac in Scotland, and SafeLives have been commissioned to collating information from relevant sources which may evidence the need for Marac to become a statutory provision. Our Marac coordinator and staff are participating in this project to ensure accurate local data and information is provided for this very important piece of work.

Refuge

Within our range of services at Stirling and District Women's Aid, we provide safe accommodation for women and their children fleeing domestic abuse. We currently have 13 refuge properties ranging from one-bedroom flats to three-bedroom houses, which allow us to accommodate the needs of both single women and large families. Our accommodation is made up of our main refuge which has seven self-contained flats and a large fully enclosed safe garden for the families to enjoy. Additional to our main refuge we have six other properties scattered across the Stirlingshire area. We ensure that all of our accommodation is well maintained and have a welcoming and nurturing environment for families during an incredibly difficult time in their lives. Arriving at refuge is just the start of a long journey of healing for these families, therefore ensuring our accommodation is homely and comfortable is a huge priority for our service.

Over the course of this past year, we have supported 31 women and 50 children within in our refuge accommodation. Each family is supported by a women's worker and a CYP worker. Women are provided with weekly support sessions which allow them time to initially access practical support to help the family settle into the area and then to work through and better understand their experiences of domestic abuse. This includes supporting women to recognise and understand the abusive behaviours they have experienced as well as looking at healthy relationships, boundary setting within intimate relationships and low-level mental health support – such as building confidence, self-esteem and self-help techniques for managing anxiety. Women within our refuge accommodation also receive support during any court proceedings and advocacy where required while working with any other services. It has been noted that since the impact of the covid-19 pandemic there has been an increase in the need for support for mental health across wider society. This has been noted within refuge accommodation with a higher presentation of families requiring additional mental health support. Our refuge staff are experienced in working with trauma and recognising when families require additional support and therefore work with local GP practices to ensure that these families have access to the support, they require for any mental health concerns. All children and young people living in refuge also receive weekly support from their CYP support worker – which includes age-appropriate one-to-one support sessions with the aim of providing them with a safe space to explore their feelings and better understand their own experiences of domestic abuse within their families. Our CYP service also provides support to women where a need for parenting support is identified.

Within our main refuge complex women also take part in weekly house meetings, which provide an opportunity for the women to get together and socialise with each other, over a cup of tea/coffee and some pastries. During these house meetings we have been able to arrange for other agencies to come and deliver talks to the group – for example we had the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service deliver a home fire safety session with the group. As a group we also have discussions on a range of topics such as budgeting and money saving tips and energy costs and energy saving ideas. We try to make sure that families also have access to fun activities which have included summer trips, an alpaca summer garden party, eco outdoor activities and lots of fun at Christmas including a visit to Mrs Claus's grotto.

The ultimate aim of refuge is to create a safe and secure environment for our families to feel supported and empowered to move on with their lives following their experiences of domestic abuse. When the time comes for families to move onto their forever homes following a stay in refuge, they are provided with follow on support to ensure that this next step is as smooth a transition as possible for them. If it is identified that further support is required, then these families have access to ongoing support from our family outreach service or our office based drop in services.



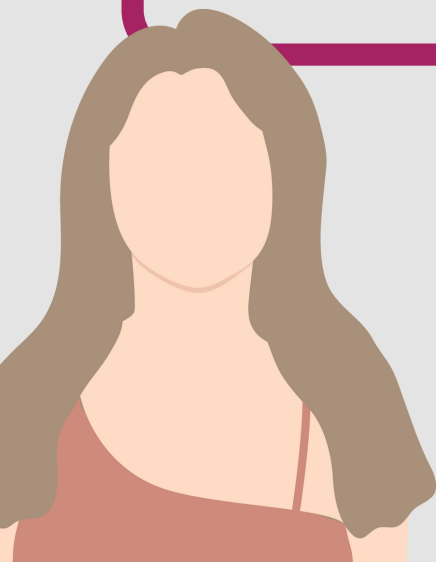
Outreach

Throughout the year Outreach has supported a growing number of families within the community, providing emotional and practical support to keep women and children safe in their own homes. Support has been provided within the home, in the wider community or through walk and talk sessions.

We have worked with rural health providers and partners within further education to build a rural drop in service. This has provided support to women in rural areas, as well as Stirling University and Forth Valley College Stirling who find they are unable to receive support within our offices. This drop in service has provided support in six different locations on a monthly basis and has helped the service work with other professionals and reach more women who need support from the service.

For those living in our rural refuge properties we continued to provide a high level of support. Working with women to create safety plans and ensuring that they have the tools, resources and support available to begin to heal from the trauma that they have experienced.

It's really difficult to put into a short paragraph how much our lives have changed. The kindness, compassion, advice, knowledge and wisdom we've received and the way that this has impacted, improved and influenced our lives is completely invaluable! At a time when I couldn't believe or have faith in anything better, I blindly led my children into the darkness of a new life that I could only hope for. We were beyond desperate, we had nothing and no one, we arrived in refuge and we were met with the most generous reception. The incredible people who've helped us will be forever in our hearts. We've learnt to trust, accept and have hope. We're not completely healed or without our nightmares but we owe our lives and our faith to the incredible ladies who took us in and saved our souls. My daughters owe you everything, including their mother, who you saved. Thank you will never be enough.



SDWA Counselling Service

The women who come to SDWA for help and support have inevitably suffered emotional upheaval following the physical, sexual, mental and financial abuse, as well the coercive control, that they may have endured during the relationships they are escaping. Many survivors are grappling with the effects of trauma, and frequently with the lingering effects of abuse suffered in childhood. They may be troubled by nightmares and flashbacks. Their kids may be struggling with the effects of having witnessed domestic violence and need a safe space to talk about it.

One of the many ways that Stirling and District Women's Aid supports women and young people is by providing counselling from a qualified therapist to those who need it. Quantitative data has shown improvements, sometimes very striking improvements, in the wellbeing of our clients over the course of the counselling we offer. A more important measure, however, is how the women who have had the benefit of the counselling at SDWA describe their experience. When we asked for feedback on the impact counselling had had on their life, these are some of the responses given by clients:

It has helped me understand why I ended up in an abusive relationship and why I stayed so long. It has helped me make peace with my past. It has helped me grow in confidence, it has reassured me that my feelings are valid and I understand why I was feeling so confused and desperate at times. I hadn't realised I had been through trauma and that it wasn't my fault. I no longer blame myself, I no longer need anyone to make me feel good about myself, I can do that for myself now.

I felt overwhelmed with life, no self-worth, and Donna helped me unpick things, gave me strategies to help me cope. I feel on track again and I like that I actually like myself.

Donna has been amazing. Wasn't sure at first about counselling but it's the best thing I have ever done.

Counselling has really allowed me to be more self-aware, to analyse the negative way I have been responding to things and to change that. I now feel more self-confident, more able to make the right decisions for myself and to navigate my own life path - one that I want

Case Study Drop-In & Counselling

Julia was referred to SDWA by the police, after an incident in which her ex-husband, Pete, had forced entry to the marital home and assaulted her, resulting in him being charged and given special bail conditions not to approach her.

At her first appointment with a drop-in worker, Julia expressed concern that Pete had been making threats on social media about what he would do once these special bail conditions were lifted. She also requested information about the court process.

Julia's worker focussed first on safety planning, checking that a storm marker was in place to ensure an immediate police response should Pete breach his bail conditions. In subsequent sessions she supported Julia to liaise with other agencies to arrange a court visit and screens to support her giving evidence. She also helped her request a non-harassment order from the court in response to Pete's threats. Pete was eventually found guilty and the NHO was granted.

Once these practical issues had been dealt with, Julia identified a need for emotional support. Years of being subjected to controlling behaviour had left her without a sense of who she was and what she wanted, while the trauma of the forced entry and assault resulted in her experiencing extreme anxiety. Her support worker referred her to the SDWA counselling service to work on her anxiety. Emotional support then focused on exploring how much of her routine behaviour was a response to abuse, experimenting on changing elements of it and working towards a new sense of self.

At a final support session after the completion of counselling, Julia reported how much her life had moved on since her referral to SDWA. She was now enjoying going out with friends and felt confident staying in her home alone. She offered the following feedback:

“

Without Kathy and Donna at WA I feel I would still be unable to move forward with life, still stuck being terrified. I now feel I have been pointed in the right direction to live a life I chose freely. Thank you both!

”

**I did not think I would be moving on from my abusive relationship.
I now feel heard and able to use my voice.**

Prison

**Anon
HMP Stirling**

Support in Cornton Vale was steady throughout 2022, although the prison was due to close. In January 2023, HMP Cornton Vale closed and prisoners were accommodated within other SPS facilities. We hoped to continue support to women during this time but were unsuccessful. SDWA worked with the prison service to improve support and opportunities for women to access support without barriers. Support will be available in the new HMP Stirling from June 2023.

“

**After amazing support from Stirling Women's Aid
I am now making positive steps to improve myself
when I am released.**

HMP Stirling

”

“

**I did not think I would be moving on from my
abusive relationship. I now feel heard and able
to use my voice.**

Thank you Stirling Women's Aid

**Anon
HMP Stirling**

”

Children & Young People's Service

Children and young people can be affected by domestic abuse happening in their home or their parents' relationships. They can be affected by witnessing the abuse, or by being abused themselves.

Abusers can also try and diminish the bond between parents and children and encourage them to be part of the abuse.

Parents often think they are hiding the abuse from their kids, but actually they may be picking up on more than you realise. This can sometimes lead children to feel scared, worried and like the abuse is all their fault.

We know how hard the person experiencing the abuse might be trying to keep her children safe.

We also know how important it is for children who are experiencing domestic abuse to have space to talk about how they are feeling. This is true also for young people who are experiencing abuse within their own relationships.

The heart of our work with children and young people are our one to one sessions supporting children to manage difficult feelings, express emotions, deal with trauma, understand healthy relationships and make safe choices including identifying safe adults in their lives. In addition to this, we can advocate on their behalf at meetings, core groups and children's panels. This is very important as it provides a voice for the child in a situation where the child often feel powerless. We have very good feedback from the children. We know that the work we do enables children to make sense of their experiences, work through fear and trauma and be able to express their feelings better. Most of these sessions are carried out either in schools, refuge or at any other location that is suitable and preferred by the children. Sessions take place in a private and safe space, to ensure that the children's or young person's confidentiality is respected.



"Having support sessions has helped me feel happier, relaxed and able to enjoy myself again"

What our Children and Young People say...

"I like that I can talk about feelings and worries without others finding out"

"The sessions are also fun"

"Meeting with you has helped me feel calm"

"It helps when you are worried about things, things will be sorted."

"If I had not had sessions with you I would have gone back to my abusive boyfriend."



What others have to say about our CYP Service

"X really looks forward to your visit each week. It is unusual for him to engage with external services but he is always excited to see you and I have noticed he is calmer in class since he started working with you."
-Class Teacher

"It has made a huge difference for my boys having you to speak to, thank you so much for helping us, we desperately needed your help."
-Parent

" I am glad the boys have you to speak to as you have clearly built a good relationship with them where they trust you and are able to share their feelings and have your support."
-Social Worker

" I am surprised at how X has engaged with you as he struggles to engage in class and with other support services. It is good to know he is able to share his feelings and emotions and be given support that will hopefully make him feel safer and happier and allow him to engage in school and home life more positively".
-Head Teacher

Prevention

On top of the work we do supporting Women, Children and young people each year, we have also put a lot of work into our prevention service. As a staff team, we agree it can be very disheartening to continue to provide support service users while not seeing the change that we need to see in the wider community regarding gender based violence. Therefore our prevention service aims to engage with our wider community at every given opportunity.

Currently we deliver a number of training and awareness raising sessions to professionals, community groups, businesses and organisations. We also offer bespoke sessions to groups looking to focus on specific topics within Gender Based Violence. We also work extensively in schools with both staff and students. It is our belief that the more we talk about Domestic Abuse and Wider Gender Based violence, the more we educate others on the gender inequality that underpins it the faster we will reach the goal of a society which is equally safe for all!

“
Really enjoyed today's session. A difficult subject but handled in a very sensitive way, though still encouraging us to challenge our own thoughts and behaviours. Thanks
”

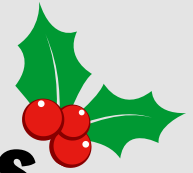
“
I do think it is really important for young people to be educated on these issues. We should all be safe!
-s3 pupil
”



Summer Activities



Christmas Celebrations



International Women's Day & 16 Days of Activism

Each year we as a service make sure to amplify the conversations about Domestic abuse and wider Gender Based Violence taking place on notable days. We aim to engage with our wider community and shine a spotlight on violence against women and girls while also reminding people that this fight is ongoing all 365 days of the year. We must work together to end Gender Based Violence!



Raising Awareness

16 Days Of Action!

Stirling & District Womens Aid

16 Business Challenge!

What is 16 Days of Action?
16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day.

16 Business Challenge!
Attention all businesses in Stirling!
We are looking for 16 motivated Businesses to sign up to a free Training session with Stirling Women's Aid!
Tackling Gender Based Violence is everyone's responsibility. So whether you are a small local business or one of Stirling's biggest employers...you all have a role to play!
The 2 hour session will take place online during this years 16 Days!
29th Nov: 10am-12noon or 2pm-4pm
6th Dec: 10am-12noon or 2pm-4pm
If you or your team are up to the challenge then please get in touch to book your place:
Tel: 01786 469818
Email: info@stirlingwomensaid.co.uk
Please Share and Tag Businesses in Stirling



Raising Our Voices

Accounts

STIRLING AND DISTRICT WOMENS AID STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2022 £
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	5	11,108	-	11,108	11,759	1,600	13,359
Charitable activities	6	339,775	314,716	654,491	260,155	309,074	569,229
Other trading income	7	-	-	-	500	500	1,000
Investment income	8	253	-	253	48	-	48
Total Income		351,136	314,716	665,852	272,462	311,174	583,636
Expenditure on:							
Costs of generating funds	9	-	-	-	1	-	1
Charitable activities	11	306,894	333,339	640,233	293,965	332,316	626,281
Total Expenditure		306,894	333,339	640,233	293,966	332,316	626,282
Net income		44,242	(18,623)	25,619	(21,504)	(21,142)	(42,646)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	(37,578)	37,578	-
Net movement in funds		44,242	(18,623)	25,619	(59,082)	16,436	(42,646)
Total Funds brought forward	18	150,602	51,349	201,951	209,684	34,913	244,597
Total Funds carried forward	18	194,844	32,726	227,570	150,602	51,349	201,951

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.



Finally,

We would like to thank everyone who has supported the organisation over this last year, including:

Our Funders:

Stirling Council
The Robertson Trust
Henry Smith
The National Lottery
Inspiring Scotland

Members of the local community, local faith groups, schools and businesses for their invaluable contributions.

Our Volunteers and Trustees

Wylie & Bisset
Drummond Laurie
Haines Watts

We could not do the work we do if not for your vital support!

*Thank
you!*



Stirling & District Women's Aid