

Stirling Women's Aid Annual Report 2016-2017



Welcome to Stirling and District Women's Aid Annual Report 2016-2017



Stirling Women's Aid celebrates 40 years in 2017. Over the years we have provided support for thousands of women and children over the years. Since we started in 1977 we have seen much change, such as the introduction of rape in marriage as a crime, the Children's Act increasing protection for children, Civil Partnership Act, the Equality Act and more recently the Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme and the recent Domestic Abuse Scotland Act.

Despite all of these changes and developments there is still so much to do. As a service we are busier than ever. Domestic abuse has become more recognized, and the devastating impact of domestic abuse better understood. However, working at the cold face of a service on a day to day basis with survivors of domestic abuse it often feels that the legal protection has been improved but that the implementation of these improvements takes too long. We welcome the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Bill that recognises coercive control, but it will be challenging for victims to prove in a court of law that coercive control is taking place. Domestic abuse in all its forms is a crime that is taking place behind closed doors where there are no witnesses, so proof will always be challenging as long as we are demanding the level and type of proof we traditionally look for. Maybe with the introduction of coercive control as a crime we will start to look at proof in a different way.

Domestic abuse is an issue that concerns everybody. It is something that happens on every residential street in the country, and in every school class there are pupils witnessing abuse. It comes with a huge economic impact, but the real impact is in the broken lives, physical and mental harm, and the fear and devastation that it brings. It cuts across all social, ethnic and cultural divides and effects individuals irrespective of ethnicity, age, faith, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

As an issue that concerns us all, we all have a role to play in ensuring the safety and support of victims. We also have a wider responsibility in standing up against abuse wherever we encounter it and in ensuring that our young people grow up to be strong individuals who recognise the damage of abuse, stalking, harassment and the gender stereotypes that are the root causes of this abuse.

From the Board of SDWA

The SDWA Board continues to meet regularly - 8 times during 2017 - to undertake the routine work of governance. For example, over the year, we have discussed and approved the annual budget and other large expenditure when required (for example, double-glazing was put into the Arcade Offices in December 2017, to reduce discomfort, and expenditure on heating in winter conditions), reviewed monthly accounts, updated and revised policies, received and considered reports from the executive manager, given approval for a tenancy/occupancy agreements and other governance related matters.

This year (2017), some members of the Board once again, joined staff members at one of their bi-annual development days. The Chair of the Trustees continues to meet regularly (every 6 weeks or so) with the executive manager to discuss questions of management, staffing, networking, funding, strategy and implementation across the organisation.

There is now general agreement that it is good practice to invite Board members to participate in the interviewing of new staff with the proviso that Board members volunteering are able to attend all interviews.

This year, in order to address the question of Board membership and expertise, we produced and circulated leaflets and paid for some advertising. This admittedly limited campaign, nevertheless, produced an encouraging response. We have appointed one new Board member with experience in fund-raising and hope to secure at least three new members in 2018 with a variety of useful expertise.

Our underlying aims in promoting recruitment to the Board are:

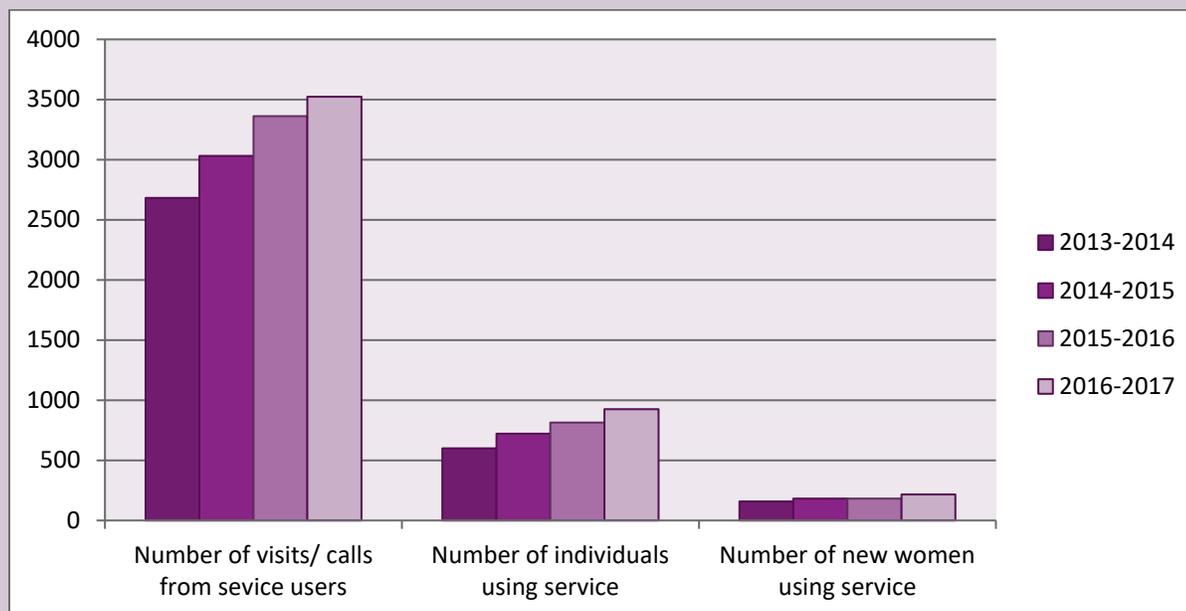
- fund-raising activities
- increasing scope for consciousness-raising and campaigning
- replacing Board members who are expected to reach the end of their tenure in Autumn 2018

Looking forward, the Board continues to need to prioritise efforts

- to maintain and strengthen supportive relationship with the staff who are at the heart of the organisation, in whatever ways are possible
- to continue to reflect on the responsibilities of the Board in respect of SDWA beyond the tenure of the present executive manager whose efforts, in relation to raising money have been particularly impressive over the years since the Board was established in 2011
- to improve and increase our efforts at fund-raising

It should be said, nonetheless, that the story of SDWA over the last year has been one of strong success and steady growth in terms of financial stability and service provision in spite of the unpromising political/financial environment overall. This is in very large part due to the extremely hard work, effective leadership and efficient management of the staff team at SDWA.

Our Services in numbers 2013-2017



2016-2017 in Numbers

Number of visits and support calls to the service	3523
Number of individual service users supported	926
Numbers of new referrals not previously known to service	218
Amount of time spent in one to one support with women	2223 hours
Number of families supported through Family Outreach	58 families
Number of Children supported through Children's service	89
Number of women accommodated in refuge	22
Number of children accommodated in refuge	31

Working with Children

In the financial year 2016-17, the Children and Young Person's team worked with 89 children. We provided one to one sessions for all these 89 children on areas such as safety, relationships, feelings and effects of the domestic abuse they have experienced.

We receive referrals from schools, social work, family members, health visitors, and children and young people themselves, and we will work with these children and young people as long as is needed. It is important for the children and young people we see to have someone to talk to and with whom they can explore their feelings and thoughts in a safe and supported way.

707 One to one support sessions provided
24 Children were on the child protection register
46 Children had involvement with social work
46 Children were seen to have a marked improvement in their safety
55 Children showed improved confidence and resilience
44 Children had a marked improvement in their understanding of domestic abuse

We work with the children and young people and advocate on their behalf at meetings, core groups children's panels, and this is a 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 and their mothers, and 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. By working with the child at the same time as a women's worker is working with the mother the situation can improve quickly and mothers are more able to understand how the child has been impacted by the abuse.

Mother: They helped organise for my boys to enroll in a new school, and made sure the school understood our situation. They arranged for them to see a children's worker that is just for them.

Child: "My CYP worker takes me out sometimes to do an activity or to go for a hot chocolate to chat. It makes me feel like I matter and that I get some time to talk about things that matter to me away from all my siblings"

Child " I like having a special worker to talk to and talk about my feeling, someone other than my mum and friends. It's good to know that someone's there"



The Children's service was inspected by The Care Inspectorate in December 2015 and received grades of **6 Excellent** for Quality of care and support and **5 Very Good** for Quality of Environment, Quality of Staffing and Quality of Management and Leadership.

Refuge

We have our purpose built refuge with seven flats for women and children in Stirling as well 5 additional scattered properties across Stirling and the rural area. This year we have taken on an additional property which can be shared by two families or house a larger family and we are hoping this will make a difference and enable us to host more families needing our service. We currently have approximately double the number of requests for refuge than the properties we are able to provide. In refuge women and children find a safe space to rebuild their lives and they have an opportunity to work through their experiences in this safe space. On arrival the women meet the women's worker and have the opportunity to talk through what has happened and also deal with practical issues whilst the children are seen by the children's worker. The children meet up with the children's worker and get a tour of the playroom and the outside play area and mum gets to know settle into the house. Both women and children receive a welcome pack and the women's worker and the children's worker will work through this pack with them.

The children's worker has created a fun and safe environment for the children to play in and an outdoors area with many age appropriate toys and activities for them to explore and therapeutic play. In refuge the children will have individual one to one support sessions with the Children's Refuge worker as well as being able to take part in play sessions in the play room. Some of the are able to provide a creche for children when their mum's have important meetings and appointments.

For the women in refuge there are a weekly house meeting where any practical issues are discussed and information concerning all women is shared. The women, like the children, have their own one to one time with their worker and this provides the opportunity to discuss and work through their experiences of domestic abuse. The women also have the opportunity to attend a relaxing Saturday brunch group, an activity group as well as a therapeutic issues-based group. In school holidays we try to arrange outings and activities for the families in refuge.



Drop in Support

Our drop-in and phone-is the first port of call for most of our service users and any calls, visits and referrals pass through the drop-in. The drop-in support service provides a safe space for women who are affected by domestic abuse to explore their experiences, create safe plans to leave an abusive relationship and to have a space in which they can recover from their experiences. Support can be provided on a structured basis with regular support sessions and a mixture of practical, emotional and legal support. It can also be provided on an ad-hoc basis which enables us to provide support to those who are hard to reach and have chaotic lifestyles.

The drop-in service is flexible and sensitive to individual's different needs and wishes and the aim is for the service and service users are made to feel relaxed and welcome. We are open 9.00-4.30 but we are happy to see individuals outside of these hours if needed.

In the drop-in service we offer a combination of emotional support and practical support. Women are given clear information about their housing options and entitlement to benefits, and we can accompany them to their appointments and advocate on their behalf to ensure an optimal outcome. Drop-in support workers use the Safe Lives Risk Indicator Checklist to assess the level of risk that a woman is facing and work with her to create an integrated safety plan. If she is assessed as facing a significant risk of harm she will be referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to utilize a multi-agency process to maximize her safety and ensure that relevant information is shared.

Women also receive the emotional support and can have access to counselling support as well. We also run two groups in the drop in. One is a support group looking at issues of domestic abuse and its effects, and in this group the participants work through their experiences over ten sessions in a group context. The other group is a social group aimed at breaking social isolation, and provides some interesting and fun activities for the participants to take part in.

Now, I have my life back. The support I have had from the Outreach Service has given me confidence that I can deal with things myself. I feel like a person again. They have been absolutely amazing. They gave me hope.



Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy

This year our Independent domestic abuse advocacy service funded by Comic Relief has been embedded. The service adds specialised support for high risk victims of domestic abuse and we have found that this service adds a focus to those most at risk that is very valuable. The service provides short term interventions to increase safety for those women who have been identified as being at significant risk of harm. The IDAA workers work in close partnership with police, housing, community safety and social services to keep those at risk safer. They are in post to advocate for the high-risk victims and act as the go-between different services aiming to coordinate support that helps to keep survivors safe.

This year the IDAA's have been working with 56 high-risk victims ensuring they are more safe and they have provided:

50 Survivors provided with individualised safety plans
28 Marac referrals for multi-agency support
52 Survivors given housing support
53 Survivors supported with advocacy with other services
18 Crime care referrals
19 Referrals for specialised legal support
46 Individuals reported feeling safer
43 Individuals recorded a reduction in violence on the severity of violence grid
49 Survivors felt more able to voice their needs with services
43 Survivors reported being better at identifying positive and negative relationships

“For me – wow, they helped in so many ways. They helped me move to safety, and do the planning that I needed to do for me and my kids to be safe. Because I relied on my husband for money, I had nothing when I left. They helped me with that too – getting benefits sorted, and even getting food.”

Rural Family Outreach Support



“Woman's Aid is rebuilding a broken, ill me from the person that was squashed, abused, bullied, mentally tortured and physically abused into the real happy mother I can be.”

Our family outreach service funded by Big Lottery provides the opportunity for women and children to get support whilst either still living at home or in temporary accommodation or still being at home but wishing to move to safety. We work all over Stirlingshire with specific focus on the rural areas. We visit women in their homes, and give them the opportunity to get advice and support in relation to domestic abuse. Many women are not sure what they are experiencing, it is important that they have space and the correct support to explore this.

As outreach workers we support women by providing emotional support, help in applying for grants or benefits, housing rights, support with appointments, access to counselling, information about legal rights, legal protection and safety planning, support at court and guidance on what other agencies offer. Our aim is to support women to build on their strengths and move on positively in the future.

This year we worked with 57 families in the outreach programme and the outcomes were very positive.

54 families report taking on work, studies, counselling, hobbies and become involved in community activities
54 families report being able to look forward and plan for the future
55 families report feeling more confident and able to do daily activities
57 families report having a better awareness of domestic abuse and their options for support
54 families report feeling safer in their own homes
54 parents report an improvement in their relationships with their children
55 parents report having the confidence to seek information and support they need
53 families report having a safety plan

Prevention Project

The Prevention service within SDWA began in Autumn 2016 and has continued to build throughout 2016-17. This service provides training and awareness raising, as well as providing direct one-to-one support in HMP and YOI Cornton Vale. Over the year we have been working with approximately 24 prisoners providing one to one support. This year Cornton Vale has undergone a lot of changes which has been challenging for the project due to many staff changes. It has been an unsettled time for both prisoners and staff at the prison. We hope that next year will be more settled and bring an increase of service users to the project as it is much appreciated and valued by those who are taking part.



“I have taken a lot from our sessions and have felt empowered by being able to talk to someone and not feel inadequate judged or a failure as a wife, mother and a person”

Training and Awareness Raising

We believe that the more people who understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, the more responsibility society will take collectively to tackle it. Our Prevention service provides practitioner based training and awareness raising to other agencies, community groups, local colleges and schools. As well as providing targeted multi agency training, sessions can be tailored to individual groups.

This free programme is available to any relevant group organisation or school who feels it would benefit and can be tailored to a full or half day or even shorter, bespoke inputs on specific aspects of domestic abuse.

Over the past year, we have delivered sessions to social work, housing and community safety, Forth Valley College, Stirling Young Carers, The Bridge Youth Homelessness Service, local Church Groups, youth groups and several local schools. These sessions have focussed on the dynamics of domestic abuse, as well as helping professionals best approach and support women experiencing domestic abuse. Sessions in schools and youth groups have looked at gender, what domestic abuse is, what controlling behaviour is and giving young people a chance to think about how domestic abuse might work in their own relationships.

“The sessions were really helpful and eye opening. I now feel more confident to discuss the subject of domestic abuse with the children and young people I

“I’ve gained a better understanding of power and control tactics that may be used by abusers – how subtle they can be!”

Income	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted	Total Funds 31.3.17	Total Funds 31.3.16
Income and Endowments				
Donations and legacies	4193		4191	6723
Charitable Activities				
Children and Young People funding		74064	74064	74064
Women's Support funding	134225		134225	138028
Refuge Income	113239		113239	127064
Lottery Outreach Program funding		62278	62278	60658
Comic Relief IDAA funding		31687	31687	32572
Prevention		33056	33056	
Other activities				480
Investment income	5678		5678	5175
Total	257335	201083	458418	444768
Expenditure On				
Raising Funds	261		261	1203
Charitable Activities				
Children and Young People		78813	78813	86980
Women's Support	99266		99266	91849
Refuge	81455		81455	74135
Lottery Outreach		62066	62066	57546
Comic Relief		31581	31581	28097
Prevention		32730	32730	
Other	66409	0	66409	83175
Total	247391	205190	452581	422985
Net income (Expenditure)	9944	(4107)	5837	21779
Transfer between funds	(4748)	4748		
Net Movements in funds	5196	641	5837	21779
Total funds brought forward	86603	2114	88717	66938
Total funds carried forward	91799	2755	94554	88717

Reserves policy: The restricted funds received during the period were used for the specific purposes laid down by the donors. The remaining general fund which is the free reserves of the charity, represents the unrestricted funds arising from the organisations past operating results. We have now reached a sufficient level of reserves to support three months operating costs and any necessary refurbishment of the refuges.

Finally

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

Our funders:

- Stirling Council
- Violence against Women's Fund
- Big Lottery Fund
- Comic Relief
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Members of the public, local faith groups, schools and businesses for their invaluable contributions at Christmas and throughout the year.

Our Volunteers and Trustees

Drummond Laurie our accountants

