



Stirling & District Women's Aid

Annual Report

2020 - 2021



Stirling and District Women's Aid, 2020 - 2021

As with most other services, this year has brought with it significant challenges for Stirling and District Women's Aid.

Covid-19, lockdowns and related restrictions have put increased pressure on service delivery with higher numbers of women and children in need of support. It has also created difficulties in accessing some of our women, children and young people who were at times isolating with a perpetrator.

It has been an extremely busy year for the service, with numbers of service users increasing once again. Ongoing financial and funding constraints on third sector organisations continue to be a challenge. However, we received some much needed assistance, in terms of Covid Funding, to help us to continue to deliver this vital service.

Our team has continued to offer support throughout this time and remain as dedicated to supporting women and children as they have always been.

In order to continue to offer this service we had to adapt our delivery model. We offered more phone and video call support, participated in online multi-agency work, offered online training and awareness sessions and continued to develop ever more creative ways to engage with our children and young people.

One positive that has come from this year is the spotlight that has been shone on Domestic Abuse and wider Gender Based Violence. The world is talking about these issues more than ever before. It is our hope that this spotlight will not fade as we move towards the easing of restrictions. We hope that those in power continue these conversations and take action towards a society free from gender based violence. Here at SDWA we will continue to do our part.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to all those who have supported us throughout this year. Thank you to our staff team and board of trustees for their dedication to the vital roles they perform. To all those individuals and organisations who have donated much needed items, fundraised, liked and shared our social media, we could not continue this work without your ongoing support. It really does make a huge difference to us and to the women and children we support.

Lisa McGloin
Exec Manager

From the Board of SDWA

During the 2020-2021 financial year, the Stirling and District Women's Aid (SDWA) Board has met regularly to discuss routine governance matters including: financial and funding matters, operational matters, and organisational policies. We have also held extraordinary meetings outwith the regularly scheduled meetings to respond to specific issues and challenges (such as staff recruitment and updating policies).

We would like to express so much gratitude for the contributions of two board members who left during that period, Martyna Slowikowska and Jane Callaghan. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

In April 2020, the Board appointed the previous Children's and Family Outreach Manager, Lisa McGloin to the Executive Manager post. Lisa has done an exceptional job in stewarding the organisation in what is still an extremely challenging period. The ongoing pandemic continues to severely impact the lives and well-being of the women and children the service supports. The SDWA staff have risen to these added challenges, and the board has enormous respect for all of them and their hard work.

We are also profoundly grateful for the funders who enable Stirling and District Women's Aid to provide the essential service staff members deliver to women and children. The work this year has been funded by Stirling Council, Inspiring Scotland, the National Lottery, The Robertson Trust, and the Henry Smith charity. Our work is also very generously supported by many individuals and groups. We are humbled by this support which enables women and children to escape and heal from the trauma of domestic abuse. On 15 December 2021, we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) where we approved the previous year's accounts. The 2021 AGM also marked the end of the tenure of our longest standing board member, Ruth MacColl. Her thoughtful contributions to the board meetings will be very much missed. Again, we wish her all the best in the future. As of December 2021, our current board membership stands at eight members who bring a wide range of skills and experience. We were delighted at the AGM to formally appoint Camila Contreras-Langlois as Board Secretary. Clare McKeown and Rosaleen Burke will remain in their positions of Chair and Treasurer, respectively.

While the service delivery has had to adjust significantly to respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic, the service continues to work towards the priorities of the 2019-2024 strategic plan. The board is also planning a programme of strategic development and recruitment in 2022 to ensure the long-term health of the service. We also want to ensure that we continue to have a board with a wide range of skills and one that reflects the diversity of the community we support.

Our hope is to someday live in a world where no one experiences domestic abuse. Until then, the work of Stirling and District Women's Aid staff is so vital, as are the contributions of all our generous funders and supporters.

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

Our Service in Numbers, 2020 - 2021



Number of Visit & support calls to the service	7898
Number of individuals service users supported	1456
Number of new referrals not previously known to the service	225
Amount of time spent in one to one support with women	4589 hours
Number of families supported through Family Outreach	65 families
Number of Children supported through Children's service	71
Number of support sessions with children	1021
Number of women accommodated in Refuge	19
Number of children accommodated in Refuge	32

Drop-In & IDAA Service

As the world continued to change and adapt due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so too did our services. Physical contact with women had to stop, creating real challenges in our Drop-in and IDAA service. Support continued instead via the phone and video calls. Of course this meant that women could no longer “Drop-In” to the service, instead they could phone and speak to a staff member or pre-arrange a call. For some women this was very positive and they enjoyed receiving support over the phone, for others it was a challenge.

Many of our women’s stress and anxiety was severely affected due to court dates continually being postponed. This in turn had a significant impact on women’s risk and mental health. As a service, we experienced the knock on effect from this as support was required for a longer period of time. This meant that women were not moving through the service as they would have previously. This coupled with the increased demand for the service placed a much greater than normal strain on the service. Staff however remained committed to supporting our service users while also supporting each other through these unprecedented times.

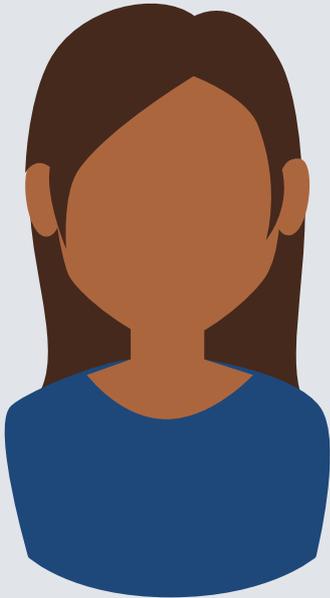
With our offices being temporarily closed, there are some women who feel that they are unable to phone us and would prefer to be able to pop into the office when they are in town. Similarly, there are many women who are not able to phone or email us for support, due to perpetrator being furloughed or working from home - many women have reported that they feel there is no escape. This has certainly posed a significant risk to our women and children as many are isolating with perpetrators.

Drop In and IDAA staff are hopeful, as restrictions begin to ease, that we will move forward towards being able to support more women in person, reducing their risk, increase safety and helping them heal from the trauma of Domestic Abuse.

Number of Women who have accessed the Drop-In or IDAA service	1180
Number of high risk survivors supported through IDAA service	80
Number of MARAC referrals	45



"Good Morning K! I was going to send you a message to say that I am feeling much better. Our chat really helped me understand what I was going through and gave me some perspective, therefore I feel like I am in control again, less scared etc. As long as I can understand what is going on, then it gives me the tools to deal with it! You really helped with that!"



I wanted to say a big thank you for all your help and the care you've shown over the past 10 months or so and for the counselling referral. It has made all the difference. I think very highly of you and Women's Aid.



Family Outreach Support

When lockdown was announced, this dramatically changed the way family outreach has supported families and impacted on workers ability to provide normal support. Women that we support often welcome the home visits that we provide; it is a time where a friendly face comes to listen and validate their experiences and provide much needed emotional support. Some clients have struggled to adapt to support over the phone and they miss the personal touch of a home visit. For many, this type of communication often became problematic with children being home from school or nursery and the time and privacy required to access this support was often compromised or no longer the priority. At the same time, other support services were closing their doors and taking away support that had been previously offered with little or no substitution available; this lack of other available services left them seeking additional support from us.

For other clients however, they enjoyed the regular phone support and felt able to speak openly with staff in a non face-to-face conversation.

For those supported living in rural refuge, it was about maintaining that contact in the safest way possible, whether garden visits or doorstep chats. Women who were already feeling unsafe and vulnerable due to their experiences were often feeling further overwhelmed with the fear and uncertainty that the pandemic brought into people's lives. As Women's Aid staff, we understand the importance of providing that supported safe space to help our clients move forward and heal from the trauma they have experienced. Though the pandemic created extra challenges, our staff have remained committed in their vital roles.

Family outreach staff have continued to provide support through a variety of means and have adapted this as restrictions have changed. Using our judgement, we have determined when a home visit is necessary and completed risk assessments to carry these out. Most importantly, clients have experienced support as ongoing and this has not faltered; it has been different, but their safety has and will always remain our priority.



"I couldn't be more grateful for Women's Aid, and the passionate, empowering work that is done by all of you has been a shining light in my mental health darkness!"

HMP Cornton Vale

We have continued to support women in the prison over the phone, to understand how domestic abuse works and how it has impacted on them. In doing this, we aim to build their self-assurance and resilience to enable them to be more able to resist patterns of behaviour which makes them vulnerable and break the cycle of abuse.

We use different resources with women we support, such as understanding the dynamics of abuse, the impact of abuse as well as working to build self-esteem and resilience. Other work is informed by the women's individual circumstances and reflects their individual need. The work is service user led and will be led by what areas of work the service user want to address.

Case Study

B was supported by Women's Aid in Cornton Vale prison. She was serving a sentence for a drugs related crime. B had been forced to commit this crime by her abusive partner and his family and was being threatened. B was feeling scared of him and his family, she confessed to the crime without mentioning her partners involvement. She accepted her punishment and decided to use her time in prison to deal with unresolved emotional issues such as her experiences with childhood domestic abuse from her father towards her mother and domestic abuse from her current partner.

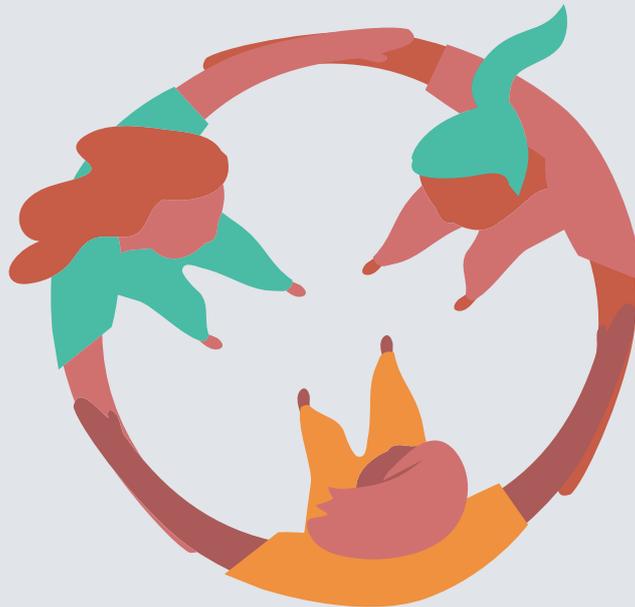
B wanted to talk about the recent abuse she had experienced and whilst dealing with this she also became increasingly aware of her low self-esteem due to the past. We worked on her self esteem issues and she became aware that the way she was describing herself was in a very negative way and that she portrayed herself as unworthy and worthless. This self-image was a result of emotional and physical abuse she had experienced as a child.

B, her mother and her two older sisters were physically and emotionally abused by her father. He would make her do homework for 6 hours after school and once this was completed he would make her do it again or tell her this was not good enough. We spent time looking at the impact of Domestic Abuse on children and the effect this has had on B throughout her life. B was the youngest of her sisters and the last to leave home, the abuse heightened when her sisters left as she became the main focus along with her mother. B felt very vulnerable and emotional whilst looking at the Power and Control wheel and started to see links from the abuse she suffered as a child and the abuse she recently experienced as an adult. From there we went on to look at B's adult relationship and how they had been affecting her and how her childhood experiences and here adult experiences connected. We worked on issues of how her adult experiences of domestic abuse had been retraumatising for her and how her reactions as a result often were the same reactions she had as a child. She described being controlled all her life, that her self-esteem was so low she did not know how to look after herself. This led to work on self-blame and an overblown sense of responsibility for what had happened to her.

B was very engaged and gave me feedback that our sessions were really helping her to make sense of her life. She was visiting the library and educating herself within the prison and was determined to change her life around when she was released. She also received bereavement counselling in the prison to help her grieve a father she had mixed feelings for.

After we had worked on the trauma and abuse for a while, B decided she would like to focus on the future. She believed that discussing what had happened in the past was useful, but she really wanted to change some of her negative thinking and plan for her future. At this time we started to work on personal boundaries, healthy relationships and self-esteem. We also addressed her unhelpful thinking and used some self-esteem resources to build up her resilience and create a more positive opinion of herself.

B engaged well during her time in Cornton Vale and the officers were commenting on the change they could see in her. When she was released from prison she contacted Women's Aid in her local area because she felt she would benefit from ongoing support as well as some practical support to settle into her new life. B felt that her time in prison and having had access to the support she had enabled her to get the strength to make the changes to her life outside of the prison.



Refuge Accommodation

Throughout the year, Refuge has been kept busy with families moving in and out even with the additional challenges of the pandemic.

Additional measures we have taken to ensure the safety of staff and those in need of refuge included waiting 72 hours after a family has left before staff, cleaners or families can enter a property, moving from face-to-face support to phone/video call support and garden support when restrictions allowed.

When admitting a family to refuge during COVID, the procedure has had to be adapted to meet the current social distancing and hygiene guidelines. As support workers, we have certain exemptions and can still do face to face support where necessary as long as this is risk assessed, social distancing is adhered to and full PPE is available.

With the help of additional funds and generous donations we have now provided refuge families with iPads/laptops so we can have virtual meetings and support sessions. We aim to introduce more groups, as well as chat and coffee days to build on our refuge community and to keep moving forward until we can resume normal face-to-face support as standard.

Throughout the year, we found that many families were experiencing high levels of anxiety about moving during the pandemic. Entering refuge can be both a relief and a challenge in normal times, never mind with all the addition struggles COVID has brought. We must also acknowledge that, for many women, it is currently more difficult to move out of the family home as the perpetrator may be furloughed or working from home. These challenges were a day to day struggle for our staff and service users during what is already an extremely difficult experience. However, safety of our women, children and young people has remained our priority. Refuge is a vital part of our service and our experience throughout the pandemic has only served to highlight that fact.





Working with Children & Young People

Initially, COVID changed our Children and Young Person (CYP) provision dramatically. The early days of lockdown in March 2020 were uncertain, and while we were quick to work out creative and innovative ways to see our children and young people, the families we support were also struggling to adapt to the changes and some struggled to engage as well as they had previously. Originally, we used phone and video calls; this moved to garden support as the weather and restrictions allowed. As restrictions eased, we were able to follow strict hygiene and social distancing measures to allow young people face to face sessions in our office then eventually schools. Our workers creatively implemented this in their timetabling, organisation and other ways of checking in with the children and young people.

As a team we have met all of the challenges that 2020 and beyond has thrown at us with ingenuity and passion to continue to deliver excellent and necessary support. As we moved into 2021 and a new lockdown with school closures, we began setting up a virtual support groups for our children and young people with individual resource packs that they can have at home. We raised vital funds in order to provide electronic equipment to allow families who need it to be able to communicate with us in this way too.

Our hours of CYP support looked slightly different this year . This is for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we support children and young people from ages 4 up to adulthood. During lockdown, it was not appropriate or possible for a number of these children to maintain their usual weekly contact with us, this was due either to their age (too young to engage in video or telephone sessions); no access to a private or confidential space; not being in a supportive environment (for some young people school is their safe space to talk openly with a worker); or because life at home was too stressful/difficult/or busy.

Secondly, when schools returned, in order to reduce community spread of COVID and in line with our risk assessment completed in collaboration with schools, we were only able to work in one school per day. Though this was a positive step forward in allowing us to meaningfully engage with our young people, it also reduced the number of children and young people we were able to see.

Over school breaks, such as Summer, October and Christmas, staff were able to speak to and work with many of our CYPs, but not all. This was an ongoing challenge for the service where children were at home in environments which could not be managed by staff, as it would be in the school.

Outside of school, our younger CYP's are reliant on an adult in their home supporting them to engage with us via video call or phone and many of our families were struggling with mental health, motivation, financial pressures or other issues that prevented them from being able to support their young person from engaging in remote support.

As we moved forward, due to the ongoing uncertainty, we established some online support groups (Pirate Group) for children. These require packs being sent/taken out to children so that they can interactively join in. These certainly seem to have been a success and very much enjoyed by many of our children.

CYP staff continue to work creatively and find new ways to meaningfully engage with those children and young people in need of the support.

It feels really nice having someone to talk to
- Age 11

I feel more confident with talk to Mum now and talking with K made me talk to Mum more with how I feel about things
-Age 12

I definitely know how to handle my feelings in a better way now. Well just reading about different conversations has made me know how to express them.
-Age 12

Reading through the scenarios helped me understand what a healthy relationship is like and what an unhealthy relationship is like AKA red flags.
-Age 12

"You have done an amazing job with *insert name*. Seeing the changes in him has spurred me on to get counselling for myself .It's made me see that that could be me too."
(Mum of 7-year-old)

"Remember when I couldn't talk about anything. That's when we were in the big room... and now (wow!),now I can do it! You helped me understand my feelings."
-Age 8

Training & Prevention Service

As face-to-face training was no longer allowed due to pandemic restrictions, we continued with our training calendar virtually using Microsoft Teams for professionals. The core training we deliver includes: MARAC, Domestic abuse and Coercive Control, Domestic Abuse and the intersection with mental health and substance misuse (trigger trio) and Responding to Trauma. As training continues to be advertised and promoted through council services, we are seeing a significant uptake in numbers as well as how training is approached by the local authority. Facilitating training virtually has been a positive step and has made training more accessible.

With all previously planned training/awareness raising sessions being cancelled, as they were in person sessions. This then meant a period of adjustment to develop necessary skills and confidence to move to online delivery. A particular challenge was in upskilling prevention staff in using online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Many avenues for prevention were also closed to us as a service due to restrictions; for example, our school programme with S3 pupils (which was due to be implemented in 2019) had to be put on hold, with only individual CYP staff allowed in to do one-to-one work. Similarly, we had sessions planned in HMP Cornton Vale and had begun work on developing our rural prevention services. COVID restrictions meant much of this work was temporarily suspended due to the current pandemic crisis. We also found that as the months went on, demand for online training increased. We discovered that many people, particularly council staff, made domestic abuse training a priority. As online sessions tend to be condensed versions of the full session, our hope is that attendees use the online training as an introduction to domestic abuse training and return for more in-depth sessions when face-to-face sessions recommence.

We have trained/supported 281 employees over the last year through 29 online sessions. Mostly Clackmannanshire and Stirling, Social work, Education, NHS, Police, Fire service and students. Throughout the training component we are making connections with a variety of agencies and organisations and this has been very valuable to the organisation as a whole. We are looking at mainstreaming the training we deliver to Stirling Council's HR department and managers staff training programme. In the last few months of the year, we have been working on a partnership training programme, collaborating with Rape Crisis to work with local high schools; unfortunately this has been put on hold throughout the pandemic as we have no access to full classes in schools, but we hope to get this started once schools become more open.

We have built more informal contacts with a number of individuals and organisations through our work with community groups through social media platforms. This year, we have been developing our Facebook and Twitter page to help grow our community. We use social media platforms for a variety of purposes such as raising awareness, fundraising, support and advice.

Training and awareness raising has continued to develop and be embedded throughout the year, even with the pandemic, as we have significantly increased our online/social media presence. This online presence has allowed us to reach out to more people in the community and help provide support to those who need us most. We were still able to provide input through the 16 Days of Action online campaign. We used video clips allowing us to explore various aspects of domestic abuse, wider gender-based violence as well as elements of our own service. Online engagement increased significantly with Facebook reporting at times up to 93% increase in engagement with our content.

One real positive which has come out of the Pandemic, in terms of our prevention service, is that there has been such a light shone on the issue of Domestic Abuse and Wider Gender Based Violence.

Our Hope is that Domestic Abuse and GBV continues to be highlighted as restriction ease and long after! After all , tackling it is everyones responsibility!

Number of Training and Awareness sessions	33
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Number of Individual Attendees	303
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Thank you, really great training! very helpful for myself as a women's worker to understand things better from the child perspective and to look at some of the work done by our children's services.

Thanks so much for a very insightful session today, I have taken lots of learning. Thank you

Great presentation - very helpful and informative. Many thanks B

I found today session really good - lots to think about and consider. The use of breakout rooms, videos and discussion was really good.

Really enjoyed the training and will definately use the resources within my work practice, thanks!

Excellent session.. thanks

Excellent training! Knoweledgeable facilitator and great resources! Really helped me think about the bigger picture of GBV in society. Really useful in my role. Thanks B

Really informative and relevant. Lots of info to take in and process.

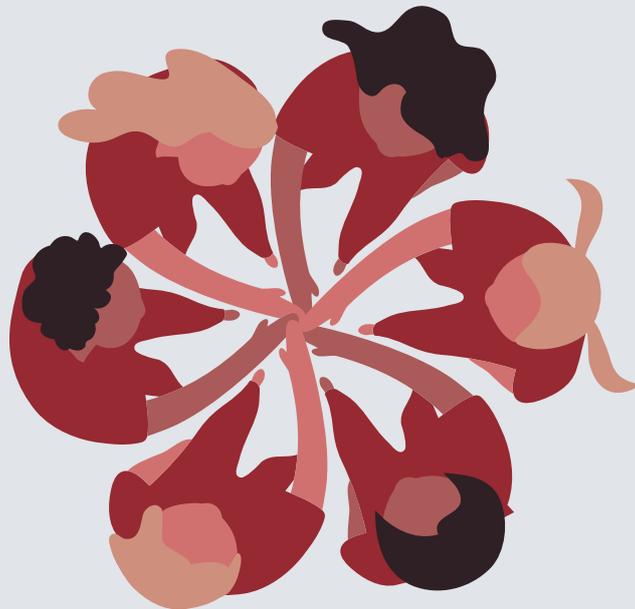
SDWA Statement of Financial Activities

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)

for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	31.3.21 Total Funds	31.3.20 Total Funds
Income & Endowment				
Donations & Legacies	24,537		24,537	10,123
Charitable Activities				
Children and Young People Fund		74,064	74,064	74,064
Women's Support	141,978		141,978	138,028
Refuge Income	93,699		93,699	107,586
Lottery Outreach Programme		92,345	92,345	82,837
IDAA & MARAC		58,550	58,550	10,060
Prevention		44,246	44,246	44,246
COVID Support	65,948		65,948	
Other Trading Activities				1,950
Investment Income	91		91	6,754
Total	326,253	269,205	595,458	473,648
Expenditure On				
Raising Funds	113	1	134	278
Charitable Activities				
Children & Young People		87,994	87,994	78,539
Women's Support	101,639		101,639	79,592
Refuge	30,588		30,588	24,612
Lottery Outreach Programme		99,976	99,976	83,081
IDAA & MARAC		45,767	45,767	46,247
Prevention		22,116	22,116	43,227
Other	83,219		83,219	98,588
Total	215,579	255,854	471,433	454,164

Net Income	110,674	13,351	124,025	19,484
Transfer Between Funds	(21,562)	21,562		
Net Movements in Funds	89,112	34,913	124,025	19,484
Reconciliation of Funds				
Total funds brought forward	120,572		120,572	101,088
Total funds carried forward	209,684	34,913	244,597	120,572



Finally,

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

Our Funders:

- Big Lottery Fund
- Henry Smith
- The Robertson Trust
- Inspiring Scotland
- Stirling Council

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

Our Volunteers and Trustees

Cameron Accounting

Drummond Laurie Accountants

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

