



Stirling & District Women's Aid

Annual Report

2021 - 2022



Artist: Service User SDWA

Stirling and District Women's Aid, 2021 - 2022

During the pandemic domestic abuse received more attention from the media and policy makers. As a result, domestic abuse services came increasingly under pressure to provide support to a greater number of victims with the same amount of funding. More victims of domestic abuse are coming forward and the year 2020-2021 has been our busiest year since we started to record and monitor.

As with most other services, this year has brought significant challenges for SDWA. Covid-19, lockdowns and related restrictions necessitated adaptations of service delivery as well as increasing pressure with the higher number 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.

We successfully recruited a new CYP worker who joined our team at the beginning of November 2021. This worker is employed on a short-term contract of one year to enable us to reduce our current waiting list and waiting time. Prior to this point our waiting list was significantly higher than usual due to reduced turnover of CYP during Covid. SDWA staff have done an exceptional job in what is still an extremely challenging period. The pandemic continued 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.

We anticipate this increase in demand for our service and for that demand to be of a higher level of concern to continue for some time, as the effects of the pandemic and increase in cost-of-living ripple throughout the community. It is a priority for the organisation to secure funding beyond these 12 months into the long-term so we can continue to meet increased need into the future. While funding is an ongoing challenge for all third sector organisations, we must also acknowledge the impact of overall reduction on public spending. This has impacted on many of our service users whose difficulties are exacerbated by ongoing financial hardship. We are grateful for the input and support of partner agencies such as CAB, Foodbanks, Home Start and many others, without whom many survivors of Domestic Abuse would be in an even more difficult and dangerous situation.

We are very grateful to our funding providers who enable us to provide the service we deliver. We have over this year been funded by Stirling Council, Inspiring Scotland, National Lottery, The Robertson Trust and Henry Smith funders and many individuals and groups who raise money for us. We very much value the many individual donations we receive from individuals and agencies and recognise that without this support we would not be able to deliver the service. Domestic abuse is an issue that concerns us all and we all have a role to play in ensuring the safety and support of victims.

We must also remember our wider responsibility in standing up against abuse wherever we encounter it and in ensuring that our young people are growing into strong individuals, able to recognise the damage of abuse, stalking, harassment, and the gender stereotypes and inequality that are the root causes of this abuse.

Lisa McGloin
Exec Manager

From the Board of SDWA

The 2021-2022 financial year was a challenging time for the women and children Stirling and District Women's Aid (SDWA) supports, which unfortunately looks as if it will continue. The ongoing effects of the pandemic and the growing cost of living crisis creates even more obstacles and vulnerabilities for women moving from the impacts of abuse. Sadly, abusers know all too well how to exploit those obstacles and vulnerabilities. So, the refuge and support SDWA provides are urgently needed.

Over the years, the local community has been enormously generous to SDWA. We are so grateful for the contributions our community makes to supporting women and children. We are also profoundly grateful for the funders who enable SDWA to provide the essential support 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.

As always, the Board is humbled by the professionalism and compassion of all the staff members who provide the direct support, as they continue to rise to the challenges that are thrown at them. They are the ones at the coalface. Our role as a Board is to support them.

In that role, the SDWA board met seven times in the 2021_2022 financial year in order to discuss routine governance matters including: finance and funding, operational issues, and organisational policies. We also occasionally held smaller group meetings to respond to specific issues and challenges. Our current board membership stands at nine members who bring a wide range of skills and experience, including in human relations, finance, law, policy, fundraising, management, and feminist activism.

On 21 November 2022, we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) where we approved the previous year's accounts and made adjustments to our governing document to ensure it remains relevant in the coming years. The service continues to work towards the priorities of the 2019-2024 strategic plan. The Board will continue strategic development and recruitment in 2022 to ensure the long-term health of the service. As our governing document allows members to serve only two three-year terms, I will be reaching the end of my tenure next year. Therefore, a key priority in 2023 will be to recruit a replacement for this humbling and rewarding role.

One of the ironies of working to end domestic abuse is that we all hope for a world in which services like Stirling and District Women's Aid are no longer needed. Until then, the lifechanging and lifesaving work of Stirling and District Women's Aid staff is so vital, as is the contribution of all our supporters. We simply could not do what we do without this support.

Warmest regards,

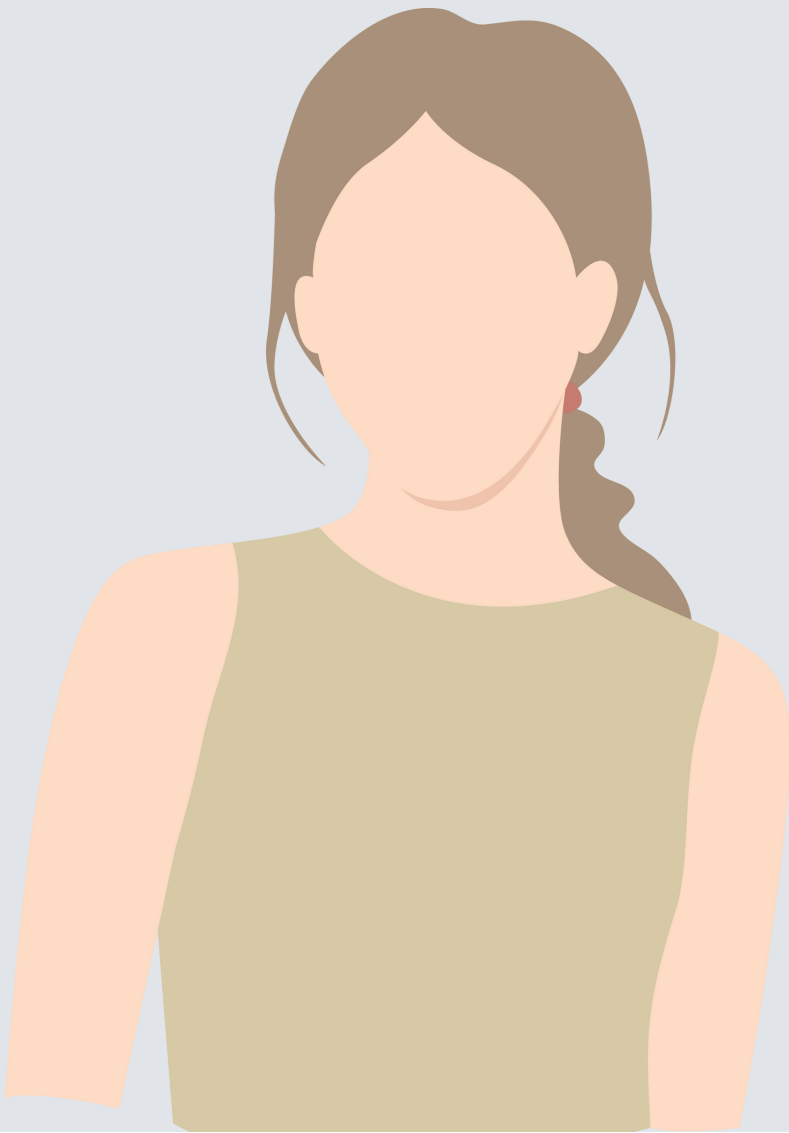
Dr Clare McKeown

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



"When I was asked to write a little something for this wonderful service I didn't know how to put into words the utmost respect and aww I have for this service. If it wasn't for woman's aid and all the people that work there I would have been trapped in this endless cycle that would have killed me, they protected me not just from my abuser but also myself! They showed me I was strong enough to protect myself and my children, that I could still have a life in the outside world with my own voice. For this I will be eternally grateful!"

-Service User



Drop-In & IDAA Service

Our drop in IDAA (Independent Domestic abuse Advocacy service) is open Monday to Friday 10-3pm and is open to all women seeking advice about domestic abuse. Our staff help service users to identify domestic abuse in relationship, assess level of risk, create safety plans, including accessing additional security for the home and priority police response times, provide emotional support and refer to refuge if needed. Staff can also help arrange legal support and offer some basic legal advice. We will never push anyone to call the police as we firmly believe that victims should be the one to decide the support they receive, as each person is the expert in their own experience. This service is confidential and open to all women.

This has been a very busy year for the Drop-In and IDAA service. As we have moved through covid, and services are opening their doors for face-to-face meeting, we have found that many women who were previously unable to reach out for support are now accessing this vital service. We are working with many new women as well as many we have worked with previously. The impacts of previous lockdown are certainly being noticed by staff and service users alike. There has been a significant number of service users supported through IDAA who are classed as High risk and referred to MARAC. As always we are grateful for the fantastic partnership working taking place within Stirling. Working alongside our statutory service partners as well as other third sector organisations, our Drop-In staff have been able to work in a collaborative way which allows us to put the safety of women and children first, while continuing the fight to have perpetrators held to account for their actions. We hope to continue to strengthen these vital partnerships into 2022-2023 and beyond.



IDAA 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 (IDAA) service at SDWA.

R was provided support regarding exploring and processing her experience of domestic abuse alongside ongoing emotional support. Safety planning and safety measures were carried out 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 with 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 IDAA 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 IDAA 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 IDAA 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 IDAA 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.



"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!"

"It is now a year since I had any contact from my former partner. A peaceful enjoyable year! I am back to full health and all is good with my family, dog and work.
Thank you again for all the support you provided, it was a bright light in a difficult time. I am very grateful"



New Post for 2020/2021: MARAC Coordinator

The MARAC is a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference where partners from statutory and third sector agencies come together to discuss the victim, the family and perpetrator, and share information to safety plan and to ensure appropriate intervention is provided to minimise the risk to them. An effectively run MARAC delivers a timely, efficient and proportionate response to a victim's needs and ensures professional accountability, but more importantly keeps survivors and children safe.

The role of the MARAC Coordinator is essentially to drive the process, to coordinate the meetings and to liaise and negotiate with partners to ensure they work together efficiently and effectively; to conduct research on the cases discussed, to create appropriate reports, to ensure actions are completed within relevant timescales and cascade results to each service involved.

An important part of the coordinator's role is to deliver advice and guidance on MARAC related issues, to educate staff members at every level and encourage and participate in delivery of training to staff to identify domestic abuse and thereafter how to appropriately signpost to relevant partners and refer to the MARAC process.

Domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility therefore we must educate and raise awareness of the potential signs of abuse, particularly in the absence of any direct disclosure which can be understandably difficult for victims to make.



Family Outreach Support

We entered this year still facing severe restrictions from Covid Lockdowns. We had learnt to manage this and had tailored our support to find a new normal. As restrictions began to ease we continuously risk assessed; adapted and changed to ensure that we could offer the best and most person centred support.

Whilst some clients remained cautious and wanted continued online or phone support, others were relieved to finally welcome us back into their homes albeit with social distancing and PPE in place.

For many women that one to one friendly chat provides invaluable emotional support. Many had missed that personal contact with services and missed welcoming a friendly face into their home.

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.

As we emerged from the pandemic we began to see a significant increase in the number of families that were requesting support from our service. We have worked with each new referral to meet their individual needs and ensure they are safe and supported within their own home.

Thank you so much for
your support for this past
year or so.
I'm so grateful for your
support

The staff are heroes with no capes

They build you back up to stand on your own
again

No judgement, with compassion,
empathy, kindness and understanding



HMP Cornton Vale

Following the end of the last lockdown, we started face to face support in Cornton Vale in February 2022. We provide emotional support with women who have experienced current or history domestic abuse. In some cases, domestic abuse has been a contributing factor in their offending. 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. We also work with other agencies to provide person centred support.

"Thank you for giving me a safe place to talk about my ex-partner. I feel I have released a lot of pain and fear after our sessions"
- Service User

"At last I feel I can talk without being judged. For the first time I felt I could trust a professional. She listened to what I had to say and gave me back my voice"
-Service User

"We can see a huge difference in X, she has grown in confidence and appears happier"
-Prison Warden

Refuge Accommodation

Stirling & District Women's Aid has 7 purpose built refuge flats in the Stirling area as well as 7 scattered properties in the extended Stirling region. This is an increase in properties from last year, having taken on new safe accommodation early 2022. There are also plans to take on further properties in the near future

The purpose built properties consist of a 1-bedroom accessible flat, a 3-bedroom flat and five 2-bedroom flats, with the scattered refuges all being able to accommodate families with varying needs and sizes. These spaces provide women and children fleeing Domestic Abuse safe and secure shelter as well as ongoing support and advocacy from the Women's and Children's workers.

The families all have their own self-contained accommodation, some have their own garden space, some have access to a shared garden, all well stocked with play equipment, outdoor seating and a drying area.

When in safe accommodation, the families are provided with ongoing support to cover any safety issues, practical support and emotional wellbeing, to help them on the way to recovery from trauma. Support is tailored to suit the women's and children's needs and provided on a regular basis, whether it is in schools for the children, or in the safe accommodation for the women.

Post-pandemic, support workers have noticed a great increase in mental health issues in women approaching the service. When women leave an abusive situation, there are often associated issues such as anxiety and stress, but there appears to have been an increase in more challenging concerns. These cases have been tricky as it is not our support staffs usual area of expertise, and they have generated more partnership working in order to understand how to support complex mental health conditions as well as domestic abuse.

The long-term aim of support from Women's Aid is to empower survivors of domestic abuse to move on and to live without fear. Once they leave refuge accommodation, they can receive ongoing support to ensure this continues.

Our Saturday Food Share started back in February of this year after an absence of almost two years due to Covid. The food share provides an opportunity for the women and children to socialise on a Saturday and to benefit from the food that is provided by SDWA.

The food share is popular with the participants and occasionally activities are arranged for the women and the children. For example, we sometimes do seasonal activities such as an Easter egg hunt or making Halloween decorations. Other activities can include making jewelry or decorating cup cakes.

This is a great opportunity for peer support between all our women and children.



Working with Children & Young People

Our Outreach CYP workers work with children affected by domestic abuse. The sessions take place in the child's school. They are confidential and our CYP workers DO NOT take sides with either parent – our CYP workers are on the children's side. They offer children a safe space to talk about their feelings and process their emotions. The sessions are always child led and we do not ask direct questions, instead the support takes place through play, drawing and talking. We also have a dedicated refuge CYP worker who works with all of the children living in our safe accommodation.

April 2021 saw the re-opening of schools, albeit slowly, and with this re-opening, our CYP workers were able to get back into schools and work face to face again with those children and young people who needed it most. Showing our usual creativity and flexibility, we were able to follow Covid guidance while still meeting the needs of the children and young people in our community. Our waiting list at the start of this period was longer than we had ever seen it due to backlogs from lockdown, school closures and then strict protocols which prevented workers from visiting more than one school per day once schools reopened in 2020. We worked hard to clear this backlog and in Oct 2021 we secured funding for an additional 12 months CYP post. By end of March 2022 our waiting list times were significantly improved thanks to all of this hard work.

"I wanted to thank you from T & I for the support you gave T during the Spring & Summer. I really believe that you being there for her & talking through her emotions & feelings helped her more than you realise. I feel that, knowing she was getting additional support from Womens aid, I could feel supported too & could see positive changes in her behaviour but mainly her happiness. It's been a really tough time and ,as you know, my priority has always been to help T navigate through all the changes as unscathed as possible. I'm forever grateful."



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

"The sessions are also fun"

"I feel safe again"

"I feel happy when I see you."

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

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

"It's helpful, you can talk about private stuff and not tell anyone, I feel I can tell you anything."



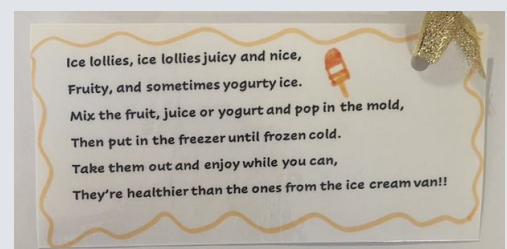
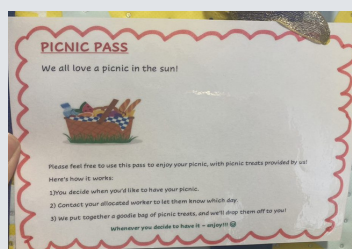
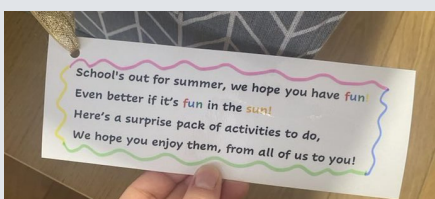
Summer Activity

Summer is an important time for all our families! We were unable to provide a summer programme with trips and group activities as we normally would due to Covid restrictions, however, we were fortunate enough to be able to buy a number of passes and vouchers for various family attractions locally which we gave out to families receiving support through our CYP and family outreach services giving them the choice to go out on a family day themselves or invite a worker for additional support. We also made up 'summer hampers' for all of the families living in our safe accommodation.

Our hampers included:

- Full recipes, ingredients and instructions for making slime
- Ideas and items needed for fun ice play
- A build-your-own birdhouse
- Ice lolly moulds and recipes kit
- Cup cake kits and items needed
- Colouring books, pens and pencils
- A picnic caddy and a voucher for each family to receive a full picnic made up by us and delivered to them on a date of their choice (to coincide with a day out)
- A pass for a family day out or activity
- A gift voucher for the family to purchase any additional items needed or to repeat an activity
- Water toys
- Some outdoor garden toys

These were beautifully presented in a reusable box and each activity had an accompanying poem with directions for use.



Christmas Activity

With Covid restrictions still in place, we decided to make a switch from our usual Christmas party to a Christmas Grotto. We followed Covid guidelines by running this event over several days with an attendance limit for each time slot. Children and their parents were invited to come along and meet Mrs Claus where each child was given a gift. The families took part in Christmas themed activities in our activity room and were able to take home their crafty tree baubles, cards and photo frames. They also enjoyed hot chocolate, mince pies and Christmas biscuits. The event was a huge success and a real high point for the staff team as well as the women and children. It was so successful that we have made the decision to hold a Grotto even again in 2022 even without Covid restrictions!

Thanks to our amazing community partners, local businesses and individual donations, we were able to provide 127 children in our community with gifts and selection boxes. What an amazing achievement!

Mrs Claus made a special visit to SDWA



Women's Activity Group

The experience of domestic abuse frequently leads to social isolation and loss of confidence, as women are often prevented from meeting friends and family and engaging in work and general social activities. We therefore offer service users the opportunity to participate in an activity group. The group aims to aid recovery from domestic abuse by reducing isolation, promoting peer support and increasing confidence. It is service user led, with the women themselves suggesting and sometimes leading the activities.

After an enforced break because of Covid-19, we were pleased to start the group again in July 2021, focusing initially on outdoor activities and with a limited number of participants. Over the summer and following spring we visited Cambuskenneth Abbey and did a number of nature walks and picnics in the local area.



In autumn and winter as Covid restrictions eased, we had crafting sessions in the office, made jewellery and Christmas cards and enjoyed a group Christmas lunch.



I have gained confidence, friendship, to have faith in myself to speak up and to relate to others in a similar situation. Also peace, time to be me and discovering who I am. I look forward to the group and the wonderful support workers

What I get from the group is continued support from my support worker and the support we give to each other. We can relax at the groups and just be ourselves and forget about the outside world for a little while.

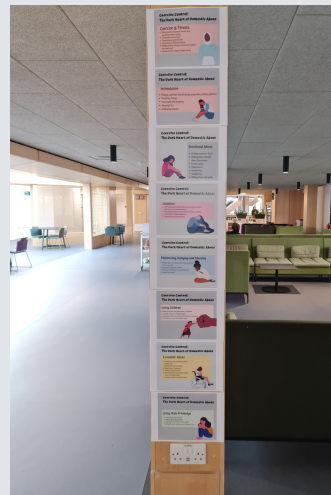
Despite being 7 years free, I do sometimes get flashbacks and the group is always there to listen and make me feel better. I do not feel alone in these groups as we have all been through same thing and we understand each others problems. I'd be lost with the groups and continued support we give to each other

Training & Prevention Service

2021-2022 has seen real forward momentum for prevention services both within SDWA and the wider Stirling community. We have continued to provide online core training for statutory and third sector staff, worked alongside community groups as well as Stirling University student groups.

Our schools programme, in collaboration with Forth Valley Rape Crisis, has made real progress in engaging with children and young people across Stirling schools. This year we have completed 3 week inputs for 6 out of the 7 Stirling High Schools. Similarly we (SDWA) have delivered sessions for a number of primary school classes across Stirling. Overall the feedback has been very positive, with young people reporting that they learned more about Domestic Abuse and wider gender based violence. Some of the areas mentioned included, how and where to get support, identifying abusive behaviors, better understanding consent and healthy vs unhealthy relationships. Schools across Stirling have been very supportive of our efforts to engage with young people on the important topic of Gender Based Violence, including this as part of their yearly PSE programme. We look forward to continue to work alongside our education colleagues for the benefit of our young people.

As we look to 2022-2023 our aim is to increase our community engagement particularly within rural areas, while continuing to deliver input to statutory and other third sector groups in a blended online and face-to-face approach.



"Really powerful session, lots to think about - Thanks"

"Interesting, engaging, powerful - Thank you"

"Thought provoking training, delivered very well"

"Really enjoyed the session 10/10"



"Really made me think about my own work practice"

Stirling and District Women's Aid

Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

		Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	31.3.22 Total funds £	31.3.21 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM	Notes				
Donations and legacies	2	11,759	1,600	13,359	24,537
Charitable activities					
Children & Young People		-	111,201	111,201	74,064
Womens Support		54,353	-	54,353	141,978
Refuge		190,332	-	190,332	93,699
Lottery Outreach Programme		-	79,535	79,535	92,345
IDAA & Marac		-	67,250	67,250	58,550
Prevention		-	51,088	51,088	44,246
Covid support		15,470	-	15,470	65,948
Other trading activities	3	500	500	1,000	-
Investment income	4	48	-	48	91
Total		<u>272,462</u>	<u>311,174</u>	<u>583,636</u>	<u>595,458</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds	6	1	-	1	134
Charitable activities	7				
Children & Young People		-	121,184	121,184	87,994
Womens Support		72,177	-	72,177	101,639
Refuge		170,894	-	195,945	30,588
Lottery Outreach Programme		-	109,227	109,227	99,976
IDAA & Marac		-	63,875	63,875	45,767
Prevention		-	38,030	38,030	22,116
Other		50,894	-	25,843	83,219
Total		<u>293,966</u>	<u>332,316</u>	<u>626,282</u>	<u>471,433</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(21,504)	(21,142)	(42,646)	124,025
Transfers between funds	16	<u>(37,578)</u>	<u>37,578</u>	-	-
Net movement in funds		(59,082)	16,436	(42,646)	124,025
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		209,684	34,913	244,597	120,572
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>150,602</u>	<u>51,349</u>	<u>201,951</u>	<u>244,597</u>

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!





Stirling & District Women's Aid