

# Stirling Women's Aid Annual Report 2015-2016



## Welcome to Stirling and District Women's Aid Annual Report 2015-2016

Stirling Women's Aid will be celebrating 40 years next year and when we reflect on the last 40 years of work it is amazing to see how much things have changed. Back in 1977 there was little protection for women and their children. Today we have just seen the introduction

of "Clair's Law" enabling women to find out if their partner has previous convictions of domestic abuse and continuing progress is being made in recognising domestic abuse and its impact. We have made progress in terms of legislation on stalking, harassment, coercive control, and offences in regards to domestic abuse.

There is still much more work to do. With domestic abuse receiving more attention by services and policy makers and services to victims improving, we also find domestic abuse services increasingly under pressure to provide a service to increasing numbers of victims with the same amount of funding. More victims of domestic abuse are coming forward and the year 2015-2016 has been our busiest year since we started to record and monitor. This year we had 815 individual women using our service. This is a figure higher than the official figure recorded by Scottish Government of 785 incidences in Stirlingshire in 2014-15. We know that approximately 75% of our service users have never called the police so the real number of victims far exceeds this.

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

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 also have a wider responsibility in standing up against abuse wherever we encounter it and in ensuring that our young people are growing up into 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 meet every 6 weeks to undertake the routine work of governance. In particular, we have updated and approved a wide range of policies and approved the budget as well as reviewing monthly accounts and receiving and discussing the hands-on work of the organisation. For the first time this year, some members of the Board joined staff members at one of their bi-



annual development days. At this meeting general trends in service use and overall strategy going forwards as well as the specific issue of a proposed change to legalise prostitution and the possible impact of Brexit, were discussed. Board members who attended also participated in a 'team building' exercise – a treasure-hunt on a particularly beautiful spring afternoon! The event being deemed successful by all, there is now agreement that Board members should be

invited to one of the two Development days each year to build on this initiative. Bringing the work of SDWA with service users into focus, the Board is also hugely grateful to members of staff who have taken the time this year to address their meetings and answer questions relating to themes such as children's and women's care and for a guided tour around the Refuge.

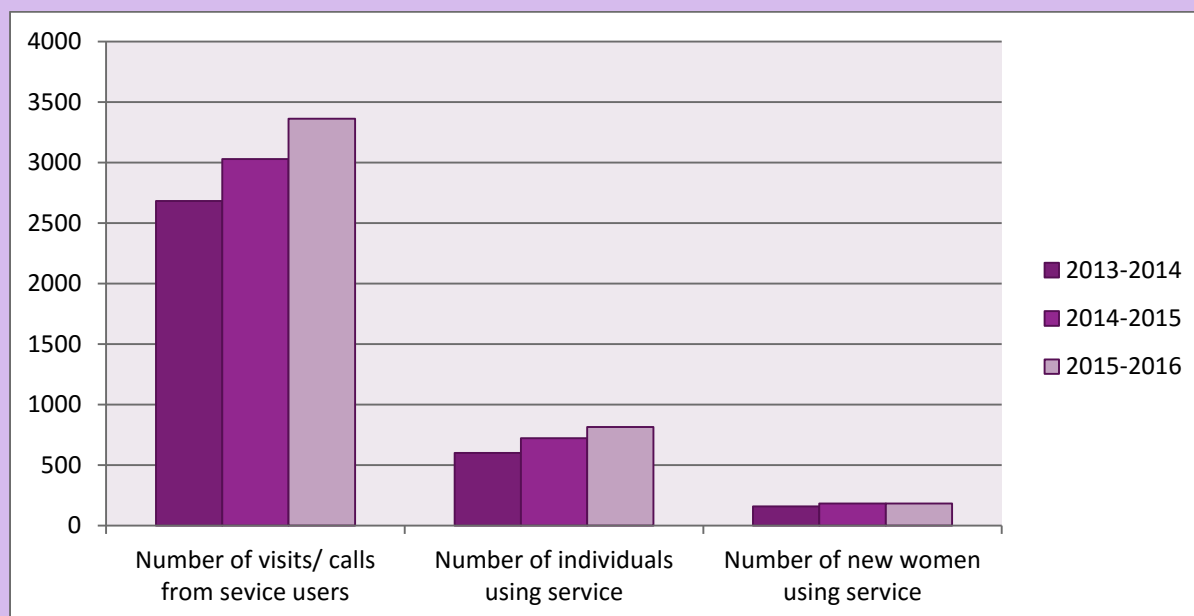
All serving Board members have now undertaken training. Most recently, two of our Trustees have attended training sessions for Board Trusteeship organised by Scottish WA. Looking towards the future we are planning to increase the number of Trustees on the Board over the next couple of years.

Finally, it should be said 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 a largely negative political/financial environment. In celebrating this we are more than ever grateful to the immensely hard work of all the staff – including volunteers, counsellors, technological, legal and accounting advisors.

**Alison Jasper, Chair, Board of Trustees**



## Our Services in numbers 2013-2016



## This Year in Numbers

<b>Number of visits and support calls to the service</b>	<b>3361</b>
<b>Number of individual service users supported</b>	<b>815</b>
<b>Numbers of new referrals not previously known to service</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>Amount of time spent in one to one support with women</b>	<b>2405 hours</b>
<b>Number of families supported through Family Outreach</b>	<b>56 families</b>
<b>Number of Children supported through Children's service</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Number of women accommodated in refuge</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Number of children accommodated in refuge</b>	<b>32</b>

## What have we been doing this year

### Working with Children

In the financial year 2015-16, the Children and Young Person's team worked with 86 Children. We had 672 one to one sessions with the children and young people we are involved with and during these sessions we are addressing issues 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.

Child- " My fear is better, like I sleep better. You have helped me not to worry about it so much". I like that we can just have a chat, without being interrupted"

We have very good feedback from the children and their mums 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. An important role that we do is to advocate for the child with other professionals and to be the voice of the child at times when they find it difficult to express their views.

Mother " I don't know what I would have done without the help of Women's Aid, my kids are really settled now and they enjoy their support sessions "

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 Team have delivered 3 days training to the pupils at Snowden School and 1 days training at Balfron High school. The senior CYP Worker attends the Stirling Family Forum's as well as The Third Sector and Voluntary Group meetings where local issues are discussed and plans are made for tackling local issues. We also attend the Forth Valley Schools group, which allows all appropriate agencies to develop and plan the delivery of Prevention work in the Forth Valley area.

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

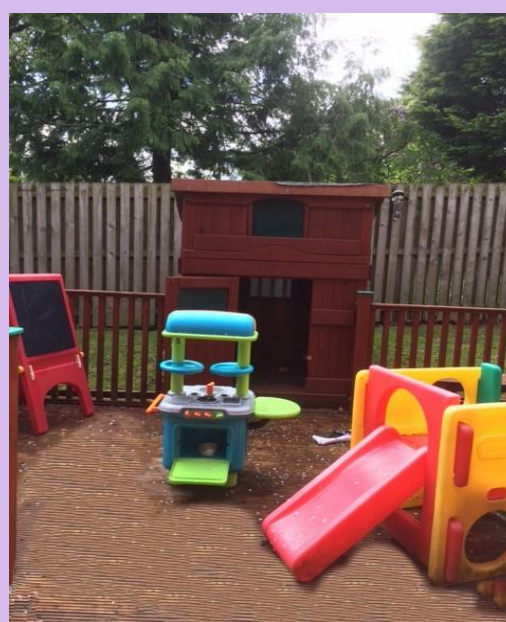


## Refuge

We have had another busy year in refuge housing 27 women and 32 children. We have been working intensively with these women and their children both in a one to one capacity as well as in a family support basis. We have our purpose built refuge with 7 flats for women and children in Stirling as well as 4 additional properties across the rural area. 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 the women's worker and 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. During the school break we run a "Pirate" club for children aged 6 to 9 in our Stirling office, this gives the children an opportunity to meet up with other children who have shared similar experiences and to work through a six-week programme that covers self-esteem building, healthy relationships and working through a variety of emotions and how to explore and express them in a safe way.

For the women in refuge there is a weekly house meeting where any practical issues are discussed and information concerning all women is shared. The women also 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.



## 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 users to feel relaxed and welcome enabling them to talk about their experiences. We are open 9-4.30 but 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 emotional support and can have access to counselling support as well. We also run 2 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 are working through their experiences over 10 sessions in a group context. Another group is a social group aimed at breaking social isolation as well as providing some interesting and fun activities for the participants to take part in.

**"If it hadn't been  
for you I would not  
have been able to  
escape the  
unbearable  
existence I was  
living"**



## Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy

This year marked the launch of our specialist service for high risk victims of domestic abuse funded by Comic Relief. Through this additional funding we have been able to employ two Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates who provide short term interventions to increase safety for those women who have been identified as being at significant risk of harm. Through these new posts we have been able to provide a better and more effective service to high risk victims that is responsive to their needs and able to respond quickly to changing circumstances. This work necessitates good partnerships with our colleagues in the police, housing and community safety so that we are all working together to reduce risk through comprehensive and holistic safety plans. Our service users have benefited from additional safety measures that we are able to offer them, such as GPS alarms through the police or welfare visits by the community wardens.

### Case Study

Hannah was referred by the domestic abuse unit at the Police because her ex-partner was in custody for a breach of the peace. Her neighbour had phoned the police having heard a disturbance, but Hannah was very reluctant to speak to the police and they described her to us on referral as a 'hostile witness'. An IDAA from Stirling and District Women's Aid was able to phone her the same day, and through working with her at her own pace completed a risk assessment with which made clear that Hannah was at significant risk of harm: her partner had assaulted her on a number of occasions leaving her with injuries, he was extremely jealous and controlling and prevented her from seeing her friends and family. Hannah is a drug user, and her partner used her drug use as a means to control her including threatening to expose this to her family and friends. The IDAA supported Hannah to liaise with the police and helped her to gain an understanding that their priority was her safety. At this stage Hannah did not feel ready to end her relationship with her partner as she was very frightened of what he might do. As her partner controlled her movements and she was unable to come to the Women's Aid offices, so the IDAA was able to link in with her drugs worker to make appointments to see her at her appointments with the drugs worker. The IDAA supported Hannah to work through her feelings about her relationship and to support her to put in place strategies to remain as safe as possible while they were still together. After a period of time Hannah felt able to trust the IDAA and they put in place a plan for Hannah to leave her partner and move to refuge in a different area in order to improve her safety. In refuge Hannah had support from refuge staff but the IDAA remained in contact to ensure that Hannah was kept informed about the court proceedings against her ex-partner as they progressed.





## Family Outreach Support

Our family outreach service 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, giving 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

Women's aid outreach service offered me the opportunity to be able to move on with my life and feel happy again. Due to the advice and support I was given I was able to keep myself and children safe by moving on, I am extremely grateful to women's aid outreach service

As outreach workers we support women by providing emotional support, help applying with 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. Out of the families 61% felt more able to do daily activities and felt they coped better and 42% took on work and studies, hobbies, voluntary work and started to do new activities.

The support I have been given is above and beyond what I ever imagined getting..... and for that I will be forever grateful, without women's aid outreach support and encouragement, I would not be where I am today

In this year we worked with 56 families in the outreach programme. Of these 90 % reported having a better understanding of domestic abuse and their options for support and and 77% felt more confident and able to seek the supports they needed. 90% of the families had support to draw up a safety plan and 68% of the families felt safer in their homes.

As part of our outreach service this year we offered support to women in Cornton Vale Prison and this year we worked with 24 prisoners. This was a something they greatly benefited from. We have an agreement in place to continue this support and offer more domestic abuse awareness in the future.



## Annual Accounts

Income	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted	Total Funds 31.3.16	Total Funds 31.3.15
<b>Income and Endowments</b>				
Donations and legacies	6720		6720	8559
<b>Charitable Activities</b>				
Children and Young People funding		74064	74064	69390
Women's Support funding	138028		138028	137968
Refuge Income	127064		127064	123942
Lottery Outreach Program funding		60658	60658	59137
Comic Relief IDAA funding		32572	32572	
Other activities	480		480	444
Investment income	5177	1	5178	6818
<b>Total</b>	<b>277469</b>	<b>167295</b>	<b>444764</b>	<b>406258</b>
<b>Expenditure On</b>				
Raising Funds	1203		1203	216
<b>Charitable Activities</b>				
Children and Young People		86980	86980	93195
Women's Support	91849		91849	95792
Refuge	74135		74135	85358
Lottery Outreach		57546	57546	59137
RS Macdonald				3151
Comic Relief		28097	28097	
Other	77446	5729	83175	45093
<b>Total</b>	<b>244633</b>	<b>178352</b>	<b>422985</b>	<b>381942</b>
Net income (Expenditure)	32836	(11059)	21779	24779
Transfer between funds	(13172)	(13172)		
Net Movements in funds	19664	2115	21779	24316
Total funds brought forward	66938		66938	42622
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>86602</b>	<b>2115</b>	<b>88717</b>	<b>66938</b>

**Funds Carried Forward:** The funds carried forward this year will be invested in our counselling program which has been dormant for some time. It will enable us to employ a sessional counsellor to work with women who need more in depth mental health support. Funds carried forward will also be used for our reserves and this SDWA have managed to reach the level of reserves of approximately 3 months running costs that are needed according to our reserves policy.



## Thanks

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

Our funders:

- Stirling Council
- Scottish Government/ Children's Fund
- Big Lottery Fund
- Comic Relief

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





# Stirling & District Women's Aid

