

Routes to Support Information Pack



The UK violence against women and girls service directory

WOMEN'S AID

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Introduction to Routes to Support (RtS)

Summary

Launched in December 2002, RtS is a database of violence against women and girls (VAWG) services across the UK. It provides VAWG agencies with up-to-date information on vacancies in refuges and availability of other VAWG services, such as outreach, drop-ins, counselling services and advocacy projects. RtS is an Internet based system but is not publicly accessible; access is only available to authorised staff in VAWG agencies. Each service has an individual record on the database, which includes key details - such as entry criteria and restrictions - that help determine whether the service is suitable for the woman being referred.

Benefits

- RtS aims to improve the services received by women and children experiencing VAWG in need of refuge accommodation and other support services.
- VAWG practitioners are able to access information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to seek support services and refuge vacancies for women and children in need.
- The service increases the speed and efficiency by which VAWG practitioners can refer women to suitable refuges and other services, as it negates the need to spend valuable time phoning around refuges and other agencies. This means that women at risk can access the services they need more quickly.
- The database also provides an agreed selection of data to the Gold Book Online which services are willing to share more widely. It does not contain vacancy data and services can choose not to share any information here. Basic public contact details are also included in the public directory on the Women's Aid website – again services can opt out.

Organisations involved

The RtS partnership consists of the leading domestic violence bodies across the UK: Women's Aid Federation of England; Welsh Women's Aid; Scottish Women's Aid and Northern Ireland Women's Aid. For the purposes of this document from now on 'Women's Aid' refers to the relevant Women's Aid Federation in your country. The technical system is managed by ITWorks.

How to apply

To apply for access to or inclusion on RtS you will need to complete, sign and return the Access and Inclusion Application at the end of this pack along with the following supporting information:

- your constitution or memorandum of articles
- your aims and principles
- safeguarding policy
- complaints policy
- copy of your organisation/project's referral form
- samples of any publicity you have and information about the domestic violence services you provide
- If possible, a copy of your latest annual report.

Please note that if you are also completing an application for Full Women's Aid Membership you need not send the above information twice.

Once access has been approved you will need to return a signed Service Level Agreement and complete an additional questionnaire giving us information to create your service entry (not included in this pack). Please note that we may request additional documentation from time to time.

Contact Details

RtS Co-ordinating Organisation: Women's Aid Federation of England.

Telephone: 0117 983 7136

E-mail: routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

ROUTES TO SUPPORT (RtS) Fee Structure

Women's Aid is pleased to offer inclusion on RtS free of charge and access to RtS at a very heavily subsidised rate (compared to the actual costs of running it – see footnotes).

In addition, Women's Aid is offering an enhanced subsidy to those organisations who are Women's Aid Members. We are pleased to inform you that if you decide to join Women's Aid, as a Full Member you will receive up to **three service entries on RtS free of charge**, a substantial further discount on any additional entries as well a range of other services. Membership fees are set on a sliding scale between £75 and £600 per annum depending on the annual income of your organisation. If you are a dedicated domestic abuse service and would like to join Women's Aid please visit our website for more information at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-member/> or contact membership@womensaid.org.uk

Please note inclusion as a member is at the discretion of the relevant Women's Aid Federation and may be reviewed from time to time.

Summary of the ROUTES TO SUPPORT fee structure:

Women's Aid Members	Non-Members
3 free service entries to RtS (Subject to meeting the access and inclusion criteria)	No free service entries
ANNUAL MAINTENANCE FEE ¹ - MORE THAN 3 ENTRIES Access and Inclusion £50/entry Inclusion only Free	ANNUAL MAINTENANCE FEE – ALL ENTRIES Access and Inclusion £100/entry Inclusion only Free
Access set up fee ² – one off £25 per new service entry (50% discount)	Access set up fee- one off £50 per new service entry

¹ The average cost per service for maintaining the RTS system is over **£350**.

² The average cost of setting up each new entry on the system is over **£100**.

ROUTES TO SUPPORT Access and Inclusion Application

About RtS

The RtS system, the public directory (Gold Book) and the information contained on the Women's Aid website are all intended to provide women and referring organisations with a listing of those organisations that currently provide services that specifically address the needs of women and children experiencing VAWG.

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the different eligibility criteria for:

- Access to the system so that the organisation listed can also view information about other services.
- Inclusion (listing on the system) so that other organisations can view information about the service and make referrals.

Please note that RtS should only be accessed by female staff of organisations or projects where the only activity is the provision of services to women and children who have experienced VAWG. This will mean that some services may be listed on the system but will not have access.

The purpose of RtS is to link to professionals and survivors to specialist support services and does not imply a recommendation.

Quality of Services Listed - Please note that although all RtS partners have a vested interest in raising and promoting the quality of VAWG services for women and children. However, it is not currently within the scope of the project to exclude services on the basis of the quality of the service provided. Exceptions made to this are (i) where notification has been received that (whether formal or informal) a safeguarding, child or adult protection or criminal concerns has been raised in respect of a service, or (ii) where a managing agent is formally notified that a regulatory body is conducting an investigation, either safeguarding, child or adult protection or criminal. In this instance managing agents have the right to suspend the organisation in their sole discretion. The Steering Group will make the final decision about permanent suspension or permanent exclusion of the service from the directory. For the avoidance of doubt, regardless of

whether any investigation has been cleared or dropped, the Steering Group reserves the right to take its own independent decision in the interests of Routes to Support.

Organisations and projects – Please note in this policy ‘projects’ refers to a dedicated VAWG service operating within an organisation with wider aims. A project can apply for access or inclusion on the basis that the VAWG service is run as a separate part of the wider organisation with the following conditions:

1. The project employs dedicated trained VAWG staff only in the provision of direct services to women and children.
2. These staff only will have access to service user records.
3. Primary users must not provide logins and passwords to staff working outside of the project in another part of the organisation. Organisations may be suspended if they are in breach of this term.
4. To the extent that criteria are not complied with, access may be revoked in our sole discretion

Access and Inclusion to RtS

Criteria for Access

Currently, there is a two-tier level system operating on RtS for services that meet the Access and Inclusion Criteria. The criteria for access to the RtS system are:

Either:

The only activity of the organisation or project is the provision of services specifically designed to meet the needs of women and children who have experienced VAWG.

Or:

The organisation or project is able to demonstrate that:

- the main activity of the organisation or project is the provision of services specifically designed to meet the needs of women and children who have experienced VAWG; and
- the organisation or project will not provide access to RtS for any male employees, contractors or consultants working in any part of their services.
- A named representative of the organisation or project must sign the RtS Service Level Agreement.

And:

To the extent such organisation or project changes its goals or activities, prompt written notification must be provided so that continued access may be re-assessed.

And:

The organisation or project must be able to demonstrate (for example, by providing the requested supporting documents listed on page 12) that they are either a registered charity, working towards charitable status or are another type of not-for-profit organisation.

Criteria for Inclusion:

The criteria for inclusion in the RtS system, the public directory (Gold Book) and the Women's Aid website are as follows:

The main activity of the organisation or project must be the provision of services specifically designed to meet the needs of women and children who have experienced VAWG.

An exception to the above criteria may be granted to other organisations e.g. organisations that provide a service to men and women who have experienced same-sex abuse or to those organisations that run a pet fostering service for the pets of women and children who have experienced VAWG.

To the extent such organisation or project changes its goals or activities, prompt written notification must be provided so that continued access may be re-assessed.

In addition, all organisations or projects applying for Access or Inclusion must:

- Support the following primary aim: "to promote the protection of women and children who have experienced VAWG".
- Complete all compulsory information in the questionnaire and update form and also provide information regarding the delivery of services by or for men.
- Provide, where further proof is needed, a copy of its latest annual report and where necessary, a copy of its Constitution including its aims and objectives, or Memorandum and Articles if it is company limited by guarantee.

The purpose of this questionnaire therefore, is to clarify the different eligibility criteria for access and inclusion.

Organisations or projects that are not constituted for the primary purpose of providing VAWG services cannot be included in or gain access to RtS. Where such organisation or project changes its primary purpose, it is required to promptly inform and notify us without undue delay. Therefore, it is not possible for an organisation to have access to RtS if they are not listed as a specialist provider on the system, or if they no longer remain a specialist provider.

The current RtS policy is that this system should only be accessed by female staff providing services to women and children. Therefore, some services may be listed on the system, but will not have access to it.

In line with the access and inclusion criteria in this document, access will not be granted to pet fostering organisations.

For those services that are not eligible for access to the system, please refer to the Gold Book Online, an online database of service information which includes that information from RtS which services are happy to share more widely. For more information on this resource contact Goldbook@womensaid.org.uk

Questionnaire

Please note that 1 box **must** be ticked in each section:

Inclusion

a) Please answer the following questions if you wish to be INCLUDED in RtS, the Gold Book Online and the public directory on the Women's Aid website (please tick):

1.
 - ☐ Our main activity is the provision of services specifically designed to meet the needs of women and children who have experienced VAWG
 - ☐ **Or**, we provide a service to men and women who have experienced same-sex abuse
 - ☐ **Or**, we run a pet fostering service for the pets of women and children who have experienced domestic violence/abuse
2.
 - ☐ We agree to complete all compulsory information in the service questionnaire and also provide information regarding the delivery of services by or for men.
3.
 - ☐ We agree to provide Women's Aid with a copy of our Constitution or Governing Document including our aims and objectives and, when available, the latest annual report and any publication material along with this questionnaire.

4. ☐ We agree to provide Women's Aid with any additional documents that they may reasonably require subsequently for maintaining our inclusion in the directory
5. ☐ We confirm that we are not currently the subject of an on-going formal complaint or investigation, nor have been the subject of, a formal complaint or investigation in the past 3 years
6. ☐ We confirm our organisation are either a registered charity, working towards charitable status or are another type of not-for-profit organisation

Access

b) Please answer these further questions if you wish to also have ACCESS to RtS (please tick):

1. ☐ We confirm that the only activity of the organisation or project is the provision of services specifically designed to meet the needs of women and children who have experienced VAWG
- ☐ **Or, we confirm that:**
the main activity of the organisation or project is the provision of services specifically designed to meet the needs of women and children who have experienced VAWG;
2. ☐ We can confirm that the computer used to access RtS will be based in a female-only space and that female staff only will be given access to the system.
3. ☐ We agree to complete all compulsory information in the service questionnaire and also provide information regarding the delivery of services by or for men.
4. ☐ A named representative of the organisation will sign the RtS Service Level Agreement.
5. ☐ We confirm our organisation are either a registered charity, working towards charitable status or are another type of not-for-profit organisation

PLEASE COMPLETE

Name of
project:

Named representative:

Address:

Phone No:

Fax
No:

E-mail:

Type of organisation (e.g.
refuge/helpline, etc.)

Signed:

Date:

Please send the completed questionnaire to:

routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

You should also enclose:

- your constitution,
- aims and principles,
- safeguarding policy
- complaints policy
- a copy of your organisation or project's referral form
- a sample of any publicity you have and information about the domestic violence services you provide
- if possible, a copy of your latest annual report.

You may be asked to provide any other document that Women's Aid may reasonably require to evidence the satisfaction of the admission criteria for the directory.

(Please note if you are also including a Full Membership Application or are already a member of Women's Aid you do not need to provide this information twice)

ROUTES TO SUPPORT Service Level Agreement

The objectives of the project are to ensure that the Routes to Support (RtS) system remains effective and secure and helps violence against women and girls (VAWG) VAWG services provide a better service to women and children experiencing VAWG. This Service Level Agreement is intended to enable this. It sets out each party's obligations including your organisation's responsibilities in using the system.

About RtS

RtS is a UK-wide online information system that contains information about VAWG services available for women and children and refuge vacancies.

The RtS system comprises a carefully passworded website with a strict level of security that is available only to refuge and VAWG service providers and, via a confidentiality agreement, to those who are responsible for building and administering the system. The system includes:

- information about services and accommodation provided by domestic abuse refuge and VAWG service providers;
- up to date information about vacancies (bedspaces) available in domestic abuse refuges;
- accurate and up-dated public and non-public contact details for referral process;
- search functions to enable searches for specific support services, geographical areas and vacancies;
- permissions for inclusion in the UK Gold Book and the online Domestic Abuse Directory.

It does not contain confidential address information and will not be linked to any publicly accessible database that stores confidential addresses.

The RtS project as a whole is managed by the “Project Partners”, namely: Scottish Women’s Aid, Welsh Women’s Aid, Women’s Aid Federation of England and Women’s Aid Federation of Northern Ireland who act as Managing Agents for their respective countries. For the purposes of this document from now on ‘Women’s Aid’ refers to the relevant Women’s Aid Federation in your country. The technical system is managed by ITWorks.

Each Women’s Aid organisation “owns” and is responsible for the data and information collected within its remit. Managing agents will use data from relevant country to produce anonymous statistics to help with research. Each Women’s Aid organisation is responsible for ensuring these data are held in accordance with their organisational privacy policy, which are available to view by clicking the links below:

[Scottish Women’s Aid](#)

[Welsh Women’s Aid](#)

[Women’s Aid Federation of England](#)

Women’s Aid Federation of Northern Ireland (please contact for privacy policy)

RtS roles and responsibilities of the Managing Agents:

The four Women’s Aid federations are also responsible for the following in their respective countries:

- monitoring and carrying out daily telephone reminders to ensure that refuge vacancy information is inputted on a daily basis by participating refuge organisations;
- undertaking annual research to ensure the update of information about services on the system;
- where necessary, suspending services in accordance with the access and inclusion policy (see Appendix 1);
- providing telephone support for user management and any ongoing training issues including:
- set-up, update and discontinue user logins for organisations in their respective countries;
- search for and view current vacancies;
- obtain information on admission practices and referral procedures;
- perform more advanced searches on other criteria;
- update vacancy information.

Women’s Aid Federation of England is also responsible for:

- maintaining the public directory, the Gold Book Online, in accordance with Steering Group decisions. This directory will provide information and contact details of VAWG services for women and children throughout the UK;

- In addition, the Partners delegate to Women's Aid Federation of England, until further notice or until alternative arrangements are agreed by the Steering Group, project co-ordination which includes:
- co-ordination and administration of the Steering Group;
- liaison with Technical Contractors;
- liaison with funders;

Each Project Partner has agreed to these conditions as outlined in the Joint Venture Agreement.

Technical support/contractors:

The Project is currently supported by ITWorks. ITWorks, or any other technical support/contractors as appointed by the Steering Group, will be responsible for:

- providing ongoing technical support for the RtS system;
- hosting the RtS system on the internet and providing technical support for the hosting of the system;
- ensuring data is securely and regularly backed up.

RtS Roles and Responsibilities of Service Usergroups:

By signing this Service Level Agreement, you are agreeing to each of the following conditions. Failure to adhere to these conditions may result in your service being suspended from the RtS site. Managing agents also reserve the right to suspend services in accordance with the access and inclusion policy (see Appendix 1). In addition, your service may be removed from any the Gold Book Online. If your service is removed from the site an administrative fee may be required in order for your service to be reinstated.

1. Each service must nominate one user for the role of **Primary User**. Primary users are responsible for ensuring that:
 - a. Service information is up-to-date.
 - b. All new staff members who require logins are provided with one
 - c. All individual users within their usergroup are registered with a valid email address
 - d. Passwords are not shared by staff within individual services
 - e. Female staff only are provided with logins and passwords
 - f. Staff or volunteers who leave their organisation are suspended and/or deleted from their usergroup, otherwise they will be in breach of the security measures
 - g. Training materials and contact information for the Routes to Support team are disseminated to all staff members who use RtS
 - h. If the primary user leaves the organisation, before they leave another member of staff is nominated as the new primary user and signs the SLA

2. You agree to use RtS as the key source of information on vacancies in refuges and to obtain information regarding VAWG services.
3. Services will not sell, trade, or pass on to a third party (other than individual clients) information obtained from RtS without the express permission of the Steering Group.
4. Services will follow the specified referral procedure for each service contained on RtS, when making referrals to other VAWG service providers.
5. Services will follow the specified referral procedure contained on RtS, when providing a service.
6. Services will keep confidential all non-public information, including non-public contact numbers and numbers of vacancies contained on RtS.
7. Research Update - It is the responsibility of individual organisations to ensure that information on their services is checked and updated when any changes take place and when requested by the Managing Agent.
8. Once trained it is the responsibility of individual organisations to ensure that that training is disseminated within their organisations. Charges may be levied for additional training.
9. In accordance with the criteria for access and inclusion (see Appendix 1) you must inform the relevant Women's Aid federation for your country if your services change, particularly if you begin offering services to men and/or employ male members of staff.
10. You should inform your Managing Agent of any problems with accessing the RtS system.
11. You should request the permission of the RtS Steering Group before any form of publicity or promotion of the system – in line with the PR protocol and before sharing any information.
12. All general public enquiries about RtS should be passed on to the main line numbers listed below.
13. You agree to keep confidential the direct lines and identity of RtS staff (especially in relation to enquiries from other non-domestic violence/abuse service provider organisations and the general public).
14. You should refer all enquiries about RtS to your RtS contact person by taking details and passing these on by phone or email.
15. Services must update vacancy information as soon as possible, at least once a day by 10.30 each weekday morning. This is essential even if the number of vacancies have not

changed as this informs other service users that the information provided is up to date and therefore accurate.

16. You should contact the relevant RtS vacancy monitoring staff immediately if you are unable to update your vacancies or add a note the system.
17. Your service may be required to pay a fee to be reinstated on the system should you be suspended from the site for repeated, consistent and unreasonable failure (as defined in the RtS vacancy monitoring protocol) to update your vacancies and/or inform your managing agency of problems doing so.
18. Services must have separate entries for each geographical region in order to maintain the efficiency of the search functions on RtS and the provision of services to survivors.
19. You further agree that you will immediately notify the relevant Women's Aid organisation of any notice from any public or regulatory body which commences any investigation in your organisation. The Steering Group reserves the right to take any appropriate steps as it sees fit in respect of maintaining any membership or retaining any service on the directory listing.

You should contact the relevant Partner depending on your needs (please see general roles and responsibilities above):

Scottish Women's Aid: 0131 226 6606

Welsh Women's Aid: 01286 882 733

Women's Aid Federation of England: 0117 983 7136 or
routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland: 02890 249 041

RtS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT DECLARATION

Our organisation agrees to adhere to all the points listed above and understands that failure to do so may result in our service being suspended from the RtS site with an administrative fee being charged in order to be reinstated. We also state that we support the following primary aim of the system: "to promote the protection of women and children who have experienced VAWG".

Signature: _____ Date: __/__/__

Signed by (name): _____

Job title: _____

Organisation: _____

Contact phone: _____

Contact email: _____

RtS Primary user name: _____

* The Primary user name given should be the individual who has permission to manage your usergroup and provide/confirm information about the services you provide.

Policy reviewed and agreed on: 23rd September 2020