

# women's aid

until women & children are safe



## impact report 2021-2022





# a message from our chief executive

**FARAH NAZEER**



Following my first year as Women's Aid chief executive I could not be prouder of everything we've accomplished: from lobbying the government to raising invaluable funds for our work; from supporting, collaborating with and learning from our members to celebrating the MBE of our patron, Melanie Brown; from helping women via our direct services to never, ever letting the conversation about domestic abuse drop; from helping stop abuse before it starts, presenting in schools across the country, to speaking to every journalist, panel and webinar that will have us. We are determined and relentless, and we will not rest until every woman and child is safe. Together we will move domestic abuse from the tolerable to the intolerable.

We have come so far, but we have much further to go as we head towards half a century of being the national federation for domestic abuse charities in England.

While increased awareness of violence against women and girls is much needed, it has come at the cost of women's lives. Behind every headline is a woman, in pain. And the horrifying truth is that, for every Sabina Nessa, every Sarah Everard, every Bibaa Henry, every Nicole Smallman, every Angel Lynn, there are countless other women, whose names we don't know, terrified of losing their lives.

So while this report, and my recent anniversary, have prompted me to look back, I am resolute to look forward. In 2024, Women's Aid will celebrate 50 years of supporting survivors. As well as reflecting on our achievements, we are ambitious in our mission to end domestic abuse and the attitudes that underpin it. We will work to bring people together across society to do this. Domestic abuse needs to be a national priority, and we will campaign and raise awareness of behalf of our incredible member organisations, to ensure that it is treated as one.

# Our year in numbers

Women's Aid amplified survivors' voices and campaigned to improve their lives in parliament to ensure their voices are heard by policy makers.



**148**

mentions of Women's Aid in debates in Parliament



responses to government consultations and parliamentary select committee inquiries submitted

Women's Aid was able to support survivors by providing information and advice online, helping women identify abuse and know where to get support.



**110,000**

On average, over 110,000 monthly page views on the Survivors' Forum



**10,000**

We responded to just under 10k helpline emails



**15,000**

We were contacted just under 15k times through Live Chat

Rail to Refuge is a lifesaving project which helped 1,770 survivors to safety - more than 66% said they wouldn't have been able to afford the fare. Our training programmes help all agencies to support survivors.



**1,770**

survivors used our Rail to Refuge scheme



businesses received our bespoke domestic abuse and coercive control training

Social media enables us to campaign, educate and signpost.



**27,000**

Over 27k new followers on Instagram

**10,000**



Nearly 10k new followers on Twitter



**6,000**

We had over 6k mentions in the media

# together we get results



## IMPACT

Improved safety and wellbeing of survivors. We won't stop until all women and children are safe.

## Local services

Today, we provide support and guidance to our **168 members**, who provide nearly **300 services** to survivors. With our sister organisations, we were able to maintain our Routes to Support database of services and refuge vacancies. Our network also includes a further 72 organisations run by non-members. Local services support woman and child survivors in the community, in refuges, via helplines, support groups and so much more, helping survivors to recover and rebuild their lives after abuse.



**+ 168**

We provide support and guidance to our **168 members**.

For example, we provided members with a template to respond to a government consultation, supporting them to have their voices heard.

**+ 300**

Our members provide nearly **300 services** to survivors.

**+ 81%**

81% of our members are **specialist domestic abuse services**, allowing survivors to receive the vital specialist support they need.

## National Quality Standards

High quality women's services, accessible to survivors, are crucial for women and children to get the support they need when fleeing abuse and to improve their onward journey to independence and safety. The National Quality Standards helps support dedicated specialist domestic abuse services by providing a set of criteria against which services can evidence their quality. We continue to assess, support, and work with our members to ensure good practice and quality service – knowing survivors' safety and wellbeing depend on it.





### Rail to Refuge

Our Rail to Refuge Scheme, in partnership with Britain's rail companies, offers free train tickets to survivors escaping abuse and finding refuge. We know that economic abuse – where survivors are often isolated from their finances - is a huge barrier to survivors leaving their abuser, so we are delighted that this life-saving scheme has continued this year, allowing more survivors and their children to reach safety. More than two-thirds of survivors supported said they would not have been able to afford rail travel without the scheme.

From April 2021 to 2022, **1,770 survivors** used Rail to Refuge, taking the running total to **3,118 since the scheme's launch** in 2020.



### Community Calling

We joined the Community Calling scheme, in partnership with O2 and Hubbub, which has enabled the distribution of **1,000 refurbished smartphones – with six months of data credit included – to survivors**. This offers a lifeline for survivors to reach the support they need and rebuild their lives without being monitored or restricted by abusers.



## Westminster presence

Our influence in Parliament allows us to campaign for what matters most to survivors and member organisations.



148

In 2021-2022 there were **148 mentions of Women's Aid** in parliamentary debates.

We held meetings with MPs, shadow cabinet ministers and government ministers and submitted 14 responses to government consultations and parliamentary select committee inquiries. Our responses were formed from consulting with survivors and member organisations, including our response to the government's proposals for a Victims' Bill, where we highlighted the need for sustainable funding for community-based domestic abuse services, especially 'by and for' services for Black and minoritised survivors.

## Domestic Abuse Act

After years of delay resulting from Brexit and general elections, 2021 was the year that the Domestic Abuse Bill became law. We pushed to ensure this legislation met survivors' needs from the beginning. Our campaigning has delivered major changes to the Bill – including a guarantee that survivors will have priority need for housing, improved safety measures for survivors in the family and civil courts and recognition that children are victims, no longer 'witnesses' of domestic abuse. We also won government commitments to reform tenancy law for survivors, and to change dangerous 'local connection' rules that restrict access to refuge and housing for women who need to escape their local area.

## Child First: Safe Child Contact Saves Lives Campaign

We have continued to campaign for the systemic changes survivors and their children need in the family courts. During 2021-22 our focus has been on working collaboratively with survivors and others in the

domestic abuse sector to proactively push for the implementation of the Ministry of Justice Harm Panel's recommendations, and collect evidence of the continuing failures of the family courts to protect survivors and their children. We have worked on a powerful and impactful report filled with survivors' voices on their experiences from the last two years, due to be published June 2022.



safe child contact saves lives

women's aid



# supporting sustainability of key services



## IMPACT

We work together to ensure more survivors are given the specialised support they need.

Women's Aid supports our members to evidence their effectiveness, quality and expertise as domestic abuse specialists and we support them in tendering for contracts and bids for fundraising. With our help, specialist services are able to stay open and deliver their vital domestic abuse support to survivors.

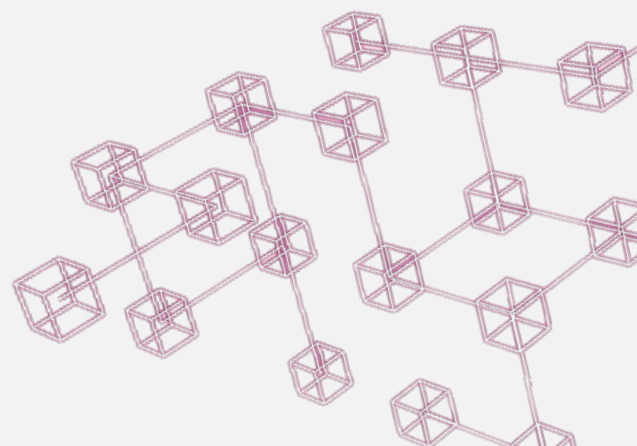
## Statutory Duty

We have continued to monitor the delivery of the statutory duty of the Domestic Abuse Act, which places a duty on local authorities to fund domestic abuse support in safe accommodation. We've done this through close engagement with member services on experiences in their local area, then using this information to engage with local stakeholders. This has helped us to facilitate direct interventions in areas where issues have arisen, as well as position Women's Aid as an authority on the statutory duty. Having built relationships with local stakeholders, we are in a better position to support our members.

Our role as a member of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' National Expert Steering Group (NESG), enabled us to secure important changes to the data monitoring form for the statutory duty to include specific fields to capture data on the provision of 'by and for' services for Black and minoritised women. Women's Aid are clear that this money should go to specialist domestic abuse services who have the specialism, expertise and cultural competency to support survivors in the communities which they serve. While we welcomed the annual £125m pledged by the Government to fund the statutory duty, we want to ensure that this money is provided on a multi-year basis, and that it is used by local authorities to preserve the existing expertise within specialist domestic abuse services.

## Freedom of Information

Our membership team conducted a Freedom of Information request of all local authorities in England, to build a picture of the funding landscape for domestic abuse services across the nation. This allows us to identify how domestic abuse services are being commissioned and enables us to work with member services to identify any support needs around upcoming tenders. The data was analysed by our research and evaluation team and included in Women's Aid's Annual Audit, to ensure decision makers are aware that the refuge network is made possible by a large number of services that aren't commissioned.



## Covid 19 Support Fund Bursaries

### Funded by The Association of British Insurers (ABI)

Our membership team worked closely with our research and evaluation team to identify members that would benefit most from bursaries. These bursaries are important for strengthening members' sustainability by supporting them with opportunities for showing impact and evidence.

We were able to issue ABI funded bursaries to support organisations with their use of technology, including purchasing IT equipment and case management systems.

  
**£10,500**


Seven organisations that were already using our case management system, On Track, received bursary payments totalling £10,500 towards their On Track subscription. Two of these organisations were 'by and for' led organisations.

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**£28,299**

An additional 12 bursaries were awarded for technology totalling £28,299, and nine of these were for 'by and for' led organisations. This year On Track data contributed to our flagship report *The Domestic Abuse Report 2022: The Annual Audit* and was further used to support our work. For example, it was used in the launch of the Deserved Campaign where our On Track data showed almost half of the women in refuges (45.6%) say they have experienced depression or had suicidal thoughts as a result of the domestic abuse they experienced.

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**£6,959**

We also issued bursaries to support organisations with understanding and evidencing their impact. These are being spent on training around evidencing impact such as monitoring and evaluation and data visualisation.

12 bursaries issued totalling £6,959 for training around impact, nine of which were for 'by and for' led organisations.

## Regional and national networks:

### Fostering collaboration and feminist leadership

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Women's Aid facilitates a range of networking spaces for member services, which enables the federation to unite in tackling the challenges faced by the sector.

Due to the pandemic, digital communication became more vital than ever. In March 2021 we launched the new **members only website**, which over the past year has provided exclusive resources and tools and a 'front page' of news items from our members to share with each other.

Our **CEO Google Group** provides a safe online space for our feminist leaders across the federation to support one another, sharing advice and best practice. There are currently more than 100 women signed up to the CEO Google Group. We hold **bi-annual Regional Network Meetings** where Farah Nazeer and other CEOs, senior staff and trustees from member services discuss key areas of work and the challenges that members are facing, to identify how best Women's Aid can support members and specific regions over the next year.



## Working to embed an anti-racist approach throughout our work

In recognition of the intersectional challenges faced by our 'by and for' Black and minoritised member services, in 2020 Women's Aid launched our **'By and For' Members Action Plan**. Since then, all teams have collaborated on this vital work. Women's Aid meet regularly with our Black and minoritised member services in order to identify challenges and needs and provide regular feedback on our progress.

We know that 'by and for' members tend to be smaller organisations that are chronically under-funded, leaving fewer resources for activities such as staff training and fundraising. In 2020-21, only 33.3% of 'by and for' refuges were commissioned by local authorities, compared to 69.5% of all refuges. In response to this, our **training team** offer relevant members free On Track case management training, and a 20% discount on all training in addition to their 10% membership discount. Our **fundraising team** also supported these members to identify funding opportunities, helping to sustain these vital services. We also know that Black and minoritised voices are frequently under-represented in research and decision-making. Our **research and evaluation team** worked to ensure that the voices of Black and minoritised survivors are heard in our research. As

well as showing the disproportionate funding gaps in the 'by and for' sector in our Annual Audit, our *Nowhere to Turn 2021* report highlighted the impact of structural inequalities on access to services for Black and minoritised survivors. This vital evidence enables us to centre the voices of Black and minoritised survivors when we speak about barriers to services.

As part of the Deserve To Be Heard campaign we commissioned a literature review on the mental health experiences of Black and minoritised survivors, to ensure that their voices were centred in the evidence base for the campaign. **Campaigns and policy colleagues** used this report throughout their influencing work, including to inform Women's Aid submission to the APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse's inquiry on mental health and domestic abuse, and the literature review was referenced in the final report.

Our **communications team** shared stories from Black and minoritised survivors on our Deserve to be Heard microsite and we hosted a webinar with member organisation Al-Hasaniya on amplifying the voices of Black and minoritised survivors.



## SOS success

Women's Aid has been leading the Save Our Services Campaign to secure a long-term funding solution for life-saving services. This year we pushed the government to increase funding for life-saving women's refuges. The new legal duty on local authorities to fund support in safe accommodation for survivors will be backed by **£125 million in its first year**.

While that falls short of the £173 million we estimate refuges need annually, it demonstrates the major impact that our research and campaigning has had in pushing the government to act. Securing sustainable funding for specialist domestic abuse services, including 'by and for' provision for marginalised groups, continues to be a priority for Women's Aid.

## what we learn, we share



### IMPACT

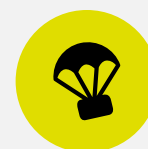
Women's Aid's expertise and evidence are shared widely so that member organisations, survivors and professionals benefit from what we learn. As a result, they are better able to support survivors, identify abuse and prosecute abusers.

## Training

Our National Training Centre supports the sector with expert training and qualifications for domestic abuse workers. We were delighted to qualify a further 216 new advocates last year, taking the total to 766 registered professionals who work in varied roles within the sector.

Raising awareness of domestic abuse and coercive control is a key part of what Women's Aid do, and over the last year, we delivered bespoke training on this to 15 businesses, with over 40 deliveries. Staff were also supported with workplace domestic abuse policies, meaning those businesses are now equipped to support survivors in their employment.

**216**  
new advocates  
trained



**workplace  
policies  
supported**



We trained many professionals whose work relates to the **civil and criminal justice system**, giving survivors a better and safer experience when attending court - which we know from our research is desperately needed.

This year we also delivered training for **police, Jobcentre Plus managers, criminal compensation judges** and many more. We know that knowledge is vital to improve systems which compound abuse, which is why we call on the government for regular, mandatory training for police forces and the judiciary.

## Change That Lasts

Ask Me, the communities strand of our Change That Lasts programme, delivered in partnership with Welsh Women's Aid, continues to flourish.

There are now **more than 1,250 people** trained by the Ask Me scheme across England, who have been given the skills to raise awareness about domestic abuse, challenging victim blaming and sexism, and helping survivors share their stories. Ask Me is delivered by us and member services.



“I finished the course with a better vision about what I have to do. I felt I was in a safe place that guided me to talk about abuse in a healthy way.”



## Expect Respect

Since Women's Aid launched Expect Respect in partnership with YSL Beauty in 2020, there has been huge interest from professionals working with children and young people. This project helps raise awareness of the root causes of domestic abuse against children and young people and the need to challenge sexism and gender stereotypes from a young age.



**10,571**

**245 Expect Respect Advocates** delivered the Expect Respect toolkit in schools and educational settings, **reaching 10,571 children and young people.**

Children emerge from these sessions with the tools they need to recognise abuse when they see it, and help their peers get support.

Some of our brilliant celebrity ambassadors and supporters - including **Michelle Griffith-Robinson** and **Phoenix Brown** - have taken part in these informative school sessions.



## Live Chat

Our Live Chat service, available weekdays 8am-6pm and weekends 10am-6pm, gives survivors access to fully trained support workers who can help them make safe choices for themselves and their children- without having to speak on the phone. The service uses expert support workers, rather than volunteers, to ensure survivors get all the relevant information they need to take action in the absolute safest way possible. Over the last year, we were **contacted over 14,900 times** through Live Chat. Of those, more than 85% were survivors getting in touch, while others included concerned friends and family, or professionals working with survivors.



**99% of survivors** who filled in the feedback form said they would **recommend the service**.

## Survivors' Forum

The Survivors' Forum is an incredibly supportive community of survivors of domestic abuse. The peer-to-peer support on the Survivors' Forum, particularly over the last year, has been invaluable to so many women. There are now over **11,800 members** signed up to the forum and we've been working on digital developments to improve the accessibility of the community.



On average, there were over **110,000 page views on the forum each month** over the last year.

## Email service

Between May 2021 and April 2022, we responded to over **9,700 emails**. Over 75% were from survivors. We also supported over 1,600 professionals, friends and family members who were concerned about survivors they know.

— “ —

“I think it's an amazing service. I was feeling isolated and wasn't sure who to talk to about my situation. But they listened and provided links to support. They made me realise that [his] controlling, aggressive behaviour is not normal or acceptable.”

“

“The forum is the only place where I can meet women who understand exactly where I am coming from and I understand them. I learnt everything I know about abuse either from the forum or from sources recommended by the forum. The women have been my wisdom and my strength. In giving back to the forum by supporting other women, I feel that I can make a small difference in the fight against domestic abuse.”

“

“The amount of information and support you've provided is incredible and I'm sure I'll find the help I need now. This may only be an email, but this has helped me so much and made such a difference. When I can afford to I will donate to ensure you can continue providing this essential service. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.”

# building the bigger picture

## IMPACT



Better understanding and awareness of domestic abuse ultimately helps eradicate abuse.

One of the most important elements of campaigning for change is identifying the gaps in survivor support. Our national databases provide professionals with the tools they need to support survivors. They also provide us at Women's Aid with comprehensive data on the needs and experiences of survivors and the provision of the wide range of local services who support them.

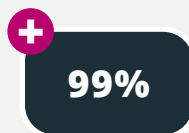
## Routes to Support

Routes to Support is the UK-wide online database for domestic abuse and other violence against women services, run in partnership by Women's Aid Federation of England, Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid, and Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. National helplines and local services rely on this information for up-to-date service availability to ensure women can leave abusive situations as quickly and safely as possible. This includes information about the types of domestic abuse services provided, the number of bed spaces available in refuge services, the people supported by these services and changes to provision over time.

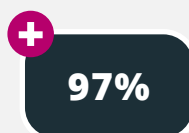
The 2021/22 Routes to Support user evaluation found that:



Users told us they like that Routes to Support provides **instant access** to refuge vacancy information, is **easy to use** and **saves them time** when supporting survivors.



99% of users (taking part in the evaluation) agreed that Routes to Support **improves accessibility** to services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse by providing live data on available refuge spaces, meaning women can get to a safe space quickly.



97% of users agreed that Routes to Support is an **essential resource** for the VAWG sector, allowing professionals to ensure fast and appropriate support for survivors.

### On Track

The On Track programme includes a series of workshops, designed to support our members in evidencing the value and impact of their work to commissioners, funders and other stakeholders. This year we delivered 21 On Track workshops to 153 people from organisations who use On Track. More than 98% of attendees said their training was facilitated well and 93.5% agreed that the training will be useful in their role.

On Track is now used by over 85 organisations to collect consistent, quality data on the outcomes that matter most to survivors. This year, organisations have used it to track the **support they've provided to 60,969 women**. The national dataset covers a range of topics including outcomes for women and children and young people, referral information, support needs and support provided. This unique insight into the experiences of women using domestic abuse services provides invaluable insight to inform our work. On Track data is also published in our Annual Audit, which has influenced government and other decision makers to prioritise domestic abuse.



### Annual Audit

The Women's Aid Annual Audit gives the most comprehensive collection of data on domestic abuse services in England, providing detailed, accurate and up-to-date information for policy-makers. It includes key data from Routes to Support and On Track along with the findings of the Women's Aid Annual Survey. Our Annual Audit is published each year in our Domestic Abuse Report series of reports. Research from the Annual Audit series is used to inform consultation responses throughout the year, allowing us to incorporate our evidence into the policy making process both at a national and local level.

For example, this year findings from our Annual Audit and Nowhere to Turn report series were used for a joint briefing with Shelter to influence Parliament on the issue of the benefit cap; to inform our response to the MHCLG consultation on the Statutory Guidance and Regulations Consultation; and to inform a Part 4 Whole Housing Approach Strategy Template. Locally, they were used to provide updated information on the delivery of the statutory duty and bedspaces to commissioners and local authorities.

### No Woman Turned Away

The No Woman Turned Away project provides dedicated support and telephone advocacy for women experiencing domestic abuse who face barriers in accessing a refuge space or safe accommodation. More than 360 referrals were received over the last year and we supported 166 women to find refuge or another safe solution.

By monitoring this project and interviewing survivors, we learn what barriers there are to accessing refuge, forming a detailed evidence base for our campaigns.

— “ —

“If I had known about Women's Aid or No Woman Turned Away, I would have [left sooner] because many times I get my stuff in my suitcase and try to get out but he would stop me, telling me 'There's no place to turn to.' I thought there was no other way to live if he wasn't sponsoring me.”



### Gendered experiences of domestic abuse report and #Flipthesexistscript social media campaign

Women's Aid and the Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol worked together to update the evidence base on the gendered nature of domestic abuse. The research we conducted showed that gendered stereotypes play a significant role in women's experiences of domestic abuse. The report, together with our social media campaign #Flipthesexistscript, delivered the message that until we challenge sexism and misogyny and their prominence in our society, we cannot effectively tackle domestic abuse.



### Experiences of Financial Hardship report

This report, which formed the basis of our International Women's Day 2022 communications campaign, was published as part of our No Woman Turned Away project, to give us further insight into the impact of financial barriers to seeking support. We liaised with three refuge providers, where we interviewed survivors who had experienced being unable to afford to pay for essentials while waiting for a refuge space. The unique value of this report is the way that it centralises the voices of survivors, offering them a platform to share their unique experiences, including experiences of economic abuse. This form of abuse includes sexual exploitation, the difficulty of fleeing abuse when in financial hardship, financial hardship whilst waiting for a refuge space, and long-term impact on women and children.

### Media and Communications

Our media work is an invaluable tool for raising awareness both of domestic abuse and the support Women's Aid can offer. Our responses to high-profile cases such as the deaths of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, as well as public allegations of abuse, such as those concerning footballer Mason Greenwood, reached a huge number of people – the general public, journalists, decision-makers and supporters – with accurate insights and signposting to support. From April 2021-April 2022, we had **more than 6,000 mentions in the media**.

Our social media channels have gone from strength to strength: over the past 12 months, Women's Aid gained **27,063 new followers on Instagram and 9,800 new followers on Twitter**. As well as our responses to the news agenda, content included information on when a relationship is unhealthy, and how women can get the support they need. Every touch point furthers our mission to change attitudes, educate the public and ensure domestic abuse remains central to the national conversation.



**27,063**

We gained over **27,063 new followers on Instagram.**



**9,800**

We gained over **9,800 new followers on Twitter.**



**6,000**

Over **6,000 mentions in the media.**

# changing hearts and minds



## IMPACT

Together, we're changing the way society reacts to abuse and survivors.

## Telling stories that change lives

Women's Aid collaborates with television production companies to inform the content of programmes about domestic abuse. We consult on scripts to ensure factual accuracy and work with actors to speak about violence against women and girls. **This work publicly challenges misogyny and sexism – the roots of all violence against women – to change the way society views and responds to abuse and survivors.**

This year, we provided consultancy for **Netflix** on programmes relating to violence against women and provided supporting information for their website. This included the series **Anatomy of a Scandal**, where we worked with the team and actors including Sienna Miller and Rupert Friend ahead of the media launch.

We also worked closely on **Eastenders**, **Coronation Street** and ITV's **Angela Black**, consulting on storylines and scripting to raise awareness of coercive control and the barriers survivors face, reaching thousands of homes.

Women's Aid have maintained a significant media profile with just under **20,000 mentions in the media** this year, and the continuation of the **Give Me Shelter** campaign in The Sun and the launch of **#NoMeansNo** which focused on consent.

We have continued to work closely with journalists to promote best practice in reporting domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. Training has been delivered to journalists at Reuters and The Sun, and the charity has worked with IPSO to feedback on the guidance that is available to the public.

## Public awareness campaigns

### ALL MEN

We released **All Men**, a powerful film, after the devastating murders of Sabina Nessa, sisters Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, and Sarah Everard, which aims to encourage men to help change the society women face today. Featuring 14 well-known British actors, it shows that all men have a responsibility to stand in opposition of violence against women and girls.

### SPOT THE ABUSE

Launched during 16 Days of Activism, **Spot The Abuse** shows the signs of coercive control by using the popular format of a TV game show - albeit one where the questions are anything but entertaining, to demonstrate that women often don't realise their relationship is abusive. The advert was created by our pro-bono advertising agency, Engine UK.

### SINKING

A short film made with support from survivors of domestic abuse, **Sinking** follows one survivor's journey as she experiences both mental and physical trauma through long-term domestic abuse.

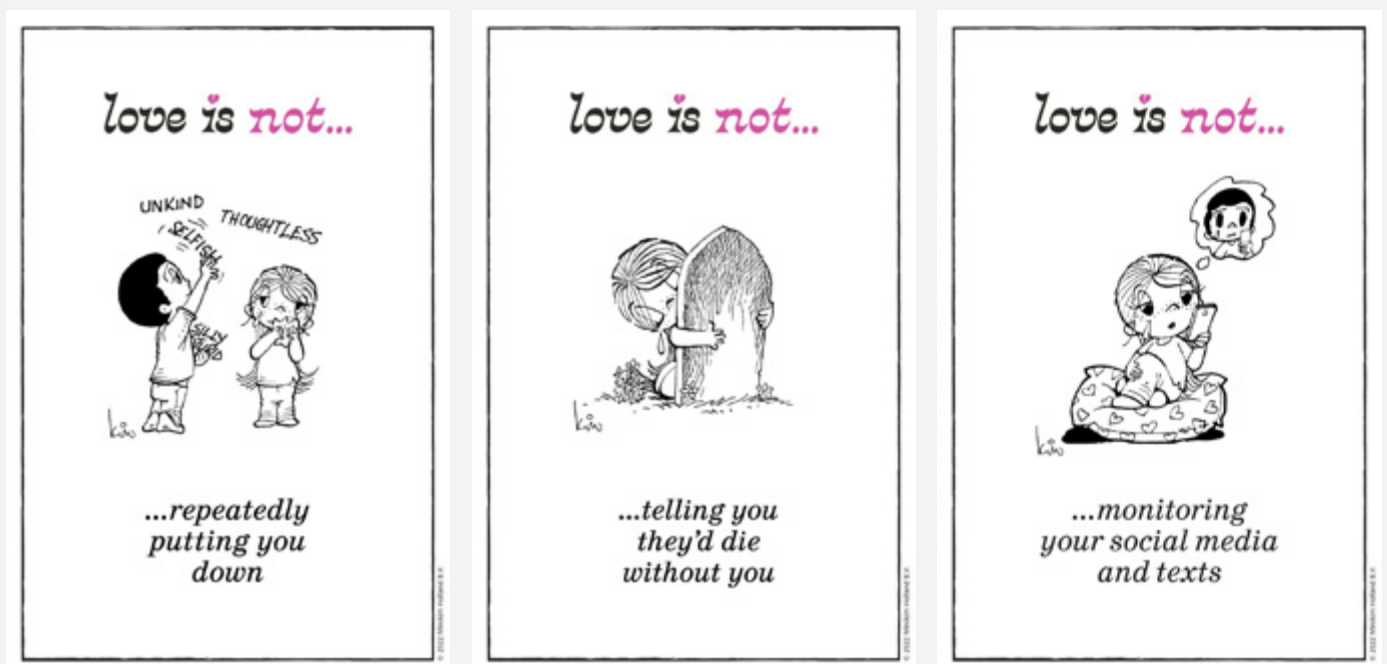


### RESPIRE (above)

Our awareness raising advert Respite, produced by Engine, highlighted the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown on survivors.

### LOVE IS... (below)

Our Valentine's Day ad campaign was designed to raise awareness of what coercive control can look like and show people that #LovelsNotControl.





# survivors' voices are at the heart of everything we do



## IMPACT

We create the change that matters the most to survivors.

We campaign and fundraise for what survivors tell us matter most, and our media presence amplifies survivors' voices.

## Deserve To Be Heard

When we asked survivors and our members what they wanted to see us campaign on, mental health was their top priority. Their voices and experiences informed the development of our flagship campaign, Deserve To Be Heard.

The campaign highlights the huge barriers that survivors of domestic abuse face in accessing services – from long waiting times, victim-blaming and communication barriers, to the stigmatisation of mental health, and a lack of trauma-informed responses and services.

All survivors Deserve To Be Heard but we know that Black and minoritised survivors face even greater barriers to support due to racism, ableism, and homophobia, amongst other factors. This campaign aims to ensure that all women have access to the mental health support they need to heal – no matter what their background.

Every month, Women's Aid has shone a spotlight on the experiences of women facing these barriers to amplify survivors' voices and change public perceptions of the issues. We have featured relevant survivor stories in the media and on social media platforms, so that readers of Grazia, the Metro and politics.co.uk learned the campaign's key messages, and shared artwork, poems, videos and blogs by survivors, on our brand new online survivor space for Deserve To Be Heard – empowering survivors to take control of their own stories.

More than **1,600 people have signed up to be Deserve To Be Heard community campaigners** – all committed to ensuring that survivors get the mental health support they deserve. Campaigners' activity includes sending letters to their local MPs and amplifying survivor voices on social media to raise awareness.

Our political influencing has helped the campaign gain support from a number of crucial stakeholders. From over 30 MPs pledging to listen to the voices of survivors, so they get the mental health support they deserve at our parliamentary drop-in session, to 12 parliamentarians including four government ministers attending our Deserve To Be Heard International Women's Day event – we have ensured that domestic abuse and mental health are high on the government's agenda. We have also secured 5 inaugural Parliamentary Champions for the campaign, who have committed to amplifying survivors' voices in Parliament.



As a result, the campaign has already seen a number of key policy successes, including:

- violence against women and girls and mental health have been included as two of the government's six priorities, laid out in the Vision for the Women's Health Strategy;
- the Home Office have made a commitment to invest up to £7.5 million over three years to provide healthcare professionals with skills to better identify and refer domestic abuse cases in the recent Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan; and
- the Health and Care Act sets out that a mental health specialist must sit on the NHS's new Integrated Care Boards.

We look forward to continuing this campaign into 2023, so that all survivors can get the mental health support they deserve.



## Survivor Advisory Board

Our Survivor Advisory Board, set up in partnership with sister organisation Imkaan, is made up of survivors from diverse backgrounds, including women experiencing multiple forms of oppression due to their race, sexuality, disability, and other factors, which create even greater barriers to being heard. It is an empowering space for survivors to use their lived experience to campaign for change, and provides opportunity for healing through activism.

Women's Aid organises staff members and external experts to deliver quarterly skills workshops to the Board on media training, campaign techniques and the ins and outs of parliament. We also provide quarterly wellbeing workshops and regular catchups with Farah Nazeer to share areas of concern, ideas and ensure survivors are centred in all of our decision making, which are also open to our Experts by Experience Network and Survivor Ambassadors. Participants have said the impact is empowering, enriching and enables them to raise awareness of violence against women and girls.

## Mel B MBE



Our patron Mel B was awarded an MBE this year in recognition of her work with Women's Aid, for her services to charitable causes and vulnerable women. For the last three years, Mel has powerfully used her voice to represent and campaign for other survivors, calling her work with Women's Aid her 'proudest achievement'. Keeping survivors' voices at the heart of everything she does, Mel dedicated her MBE to other domestic abuse survivors, saying:

“It's amazing to have but it's not just for me - it's for all those other women... I've got an army of women behind me that need help and need to be heard. So I'm their voice because we've all been through exactly the same story, so I don't take it as it's my award because it's our award, because we've survived.”

# thank you

## to all our amazing fundraisers, donors and regular givers

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