Routes to Support Information Pack

routestosupport

The UK violence against women and girls service directory

WOMEN'S AID

Contents

Introduction to Routes to Support

Summary

Launched in December 2002, Routes to Support 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. Routes to Support 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

- Routes to Support 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 UK 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 Routes to Support 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 Routes to Support 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:

- Referral policy and procedure, including a copy of your referral form
- Publicity materials/website defining service
- Needs assessment form
- Ongoing support plan
- Staff structure
- Safeguarding policies
- Complaints policy
- Statement of organisational aims
- Constitution
- If possible, a copy of your latest annual report
- If applying for access, a completed Service Level Agreement

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 inclusion has been approved you will need to 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

Routes to Support Co-ordinating Organisation: Women's Aid Federation of England

E-mail: routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

Routes to Support Fee Structure

Women's Aid is pleased to offer inclusion on Routes to Support free of charge and access to Routes to Support 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 Member you will receive up to **three service entries on Routes to Support free of charge** and 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.

Services that are required to pay fees for RtS agree that all invoices will be paid in line with the credit terms set out on the invoice. Failure to pay invoices in a timely manner may result in services' access to RtS being withdrawn. In this instance, access will be reinstated once the service has settled any outstanding fees.

Summary:

Women's Aid Members	Non-Members
3 free service entries to Routes to Support (Subject to meeting the access and inclusion criteria). No access set-up fees or annual maintenance for these 3 entries.	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 – more than 3 entries £25 per new service entry (50% discount)	Access set up fee- one off £50 per new service entry

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[1] *The average cost per service for maintaining the 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 Routes to Support

The Routes to Support system, the UK Gold Book and the information contained in the directory 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 eligibility criteria for inclusion and access to the system.

Quality of services listed

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

Access and Inclusion Criteria

Organisations and projects

Please note that in this policy, 'projects' refers to a dedicated VAWG service operating within an organisation that has wider aims or services. A dedicated VAWG 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:

- The project employs dedicated trained VAWG staff only in the provision of direct services to women and children.

- These staff only will have access to service user records.

- 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.

- To the extent that criteria are not complied with, access may be revoked in our sole discretion

Criteria for Inclusion

Organisations or projects which are a member of a Women's Aid federation, Imkaan or Rape Crisis England and Wales or Rape Crisis Scotland are granted **automatic inclusion** in the Routes to Support system, the public directory (Gold Book) and the Women's Aid website. If you are a member of one of these organisations, you do not need to complete this application form. Please email routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk expressing your interest to join Routes to Support.

Currently, there is a two-tier level system operating on Routes to Support for services that meet the Access and Inclusion Criteria. Some organisations or projects are listed on an 'inclusion-only' basis and do not have access to the system.

The criteria for inclusion in the Routes to Support system, the public directory (Gold Book) and the Women's Aid website for organisations or projects which are **not** a member of a UK Women's Aid federation, Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales or Rape Crisis Scotland are as follows:

1. **General criteria for VAWG services**
   a) The organisations or project's primary purpose is to provide support to victims or VAWG. *Note: an exception to this may be possible for services which provide dedicated support for a marginalised group, in recognition that other support may not be available anywhere (for example, a service providing a wider range of services in a specific language)*
   b) The organisation or project must be not for profit (e.g. registered charity, Community Interest Company, OSCR[3], statutory organisation etc.)
   c) Women accessing the service can choose to be supported by a female worker. Please note: this is not applicable to those services not delivered by a support worker, for example, a pet fostering service.

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[3] Registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

2. **Specific criteria for domestic abuse provision (as opposed to wider VAWG only provision)**
   a) Use a definition of domestic abuse which aligns with the official definition in the DA act.
   b) The support provided must meet one or more of the service types defined by Routes to Support (see Appendix One).
   c) Meet the following from DLUHC standards:
      i. Referral based service types: service users are assessed and offered services on the basis of their individual need for safety and support.
      ii. The physical, mental and sexual health needs of service users are addressed where relevant.
      iii. Service users are believed and listened to and service interventions are respectful of their rights to self-determination.
      iv. Service users are supported to take charge of decision-making processes in their lives.
      v. The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is addressed in risk assessment and support planning where applicable.
      vi. Are staffing levels appropriate to the levels of service provided, with volunteers used appropriately.

3. **Specific criteria for refuge accommodation**
   a) The accommodation provided meets the Routes to Support definition of a refuge service[4].
   b) Refuge services must confirm they provide 'exempt accommodation', that is women are able to apply for enhanced housing benefit in your refuge if eligible[5].
   c) Residents can access crisis support and receive a timely response.

4. If the organisation or project changes its goals or activities to the extent that the criteria above may no longer be applicable, prompt written notification must be provided so that continued access may be re-assessed.

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[4] Other types of accommodation-based provision may be listed on a case-by-case basis so please contact us if you are unsure)

[5] The Housing Benefit Regulation (2006) defines 'exempt accommodation' as shared accommodation that utilises the 'exempt' provisions of current Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Regulations and is *"provided by a non-metropolitan county council, housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation where that body, or person acting on their behalf, provides the claimant with care, support or supervision" (*Paragraph 4 (10) of Schedule 3 to the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Consequential Provisions) Regulations 2006)

Criteria for Access

In order to gain access to the system:

- Organisations or projects applying for access must meet the criteria for inclusion outlined above
- In addition, a named representative of the organisation or project must sign the Routes to Support Service Level Agreement (see Appendix Two).

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 Routes to Support which services are happy to share more widely. For more information on this resource contact Goldbook@womensaid.org.uk

Application Questionnaire

By completing this questionnaire you confirm that (to the best of your knowledge) the service you are making the application for meets the criteria for Routes to Support.

1. **Which type of subscription are you making an application for (please tick)?**

   ☐ Inclusion on Routes to Support
   ☐ Access and inclusion on Routes to Support

2. **What type of organisation is the service you are applying for (please tick)?**

   ☐ Registered charity
   ☐ Community Interest Company
   ☐ OSCR (Registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)
   ☐ Statutory organisation
   ☐ Other (please state below)

3. **Are you able to provide the following supporting documentation along with your application[6]? (please tick):**

   ☐ Statement of organisational aims
   ☐ Constitution

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[6] Please note 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.

☐ Staff structure

☐ Publicity/website defining service

☐ Referral policy and procedure, including a copy of your referral form

☐ Needs assessment form

☐ Ongoing support plan

☐ Safeguarding policies

☐ Policy for external complaints

☐ If possible, a copy of your latest annual report

4. **If you provide a refuge service, please confirm whether you are registered as an exempt accommodation provider with the local authority:**

☐ We do not provide a refuge service

☐ We provide refuge but are **not** registered as an exempt accommodation provider

☐ We provide refuge and we **are** registered as an exempt accommodation provider

5. **Please complete the following:**

Name of project:	
Named representative:	
Date:	
Address:	
Phone number:	
Finance email:	

Please send this completed application questionnaire along with your supporting documentation and (if you are applying for access to the system) a completed Service Level Agreement (see Appendix Two) to: routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

Appendix One – Service type definitions

Support area	Service type	Definition
Refuge	Refuge	Offers accommodation and support only for women experiencing domestic abuse which is tied to that accommodation. Accommodation can be in any or all of shared, self-contained or dispersed housing to meet the diverse needs of women and children accessing the service. The address will not be publicly available. It will have a set number of places. Residents can access crisis support and receive a timely response Residents will receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff and access peer support from other residents. This will include: • Access to information and advocacy • Emotional support • Access to specialist support workers (eg. drugs/alcohol misuse, mental health, sexual abuse) • Access to recovery work such as counselling and support groups/group work programmes • Access to support for children (where needed) • Practical help • Key work & support planning (work around support needs including e.g. parenting, finances and wellbeing) • Safety planning
Refuge	Resettlement	This is a support service which is only available to refuge residents moving on to independent living. Support is available to women staying in the refuge prior to move on and post move on.

Support area	Service type	Definition
Community based services	Floating Support	Tied to accommodation, but the accommodation is not offered as part of the service. Will also have a set number of places. These services are primarily about supporting women and children to maintain their accommodation.
	Outreach	Not offered in the project's building and it does not have a set number of spaces. The support offered is broader and not focused on accommodation. Women can access these services in a range of community centres or the service may come to the women in their home or other venues (e.g. cafes or neutral meeting places).
	Domestic abuse advocacy project	Involves the provision of advice, information and support to survivors living in the community based on an assessment of risk and its management. Operates within an inter-agency context, and is usually part of a multi-agency risk management strategy or MARAC process and focuses on providing a service to victims judged to be at medium to high risk of harm to address their safety needs and help manage the risk that they face.
Open access services	These services are available without a planned programme of support and can be accessed anonymously as and when the woman needs to.	
Open access services	Helpline	A helpline is a support and referral service that is accessed by phone and can be accessed anonymously to receive the service. It needs to have a designated telephone line and be a specific service offered at fixed advertised times by dedicated staff or volunteers trained for that purpose and not engaged in other tasks.

Support area	Service type	Definition
	Drop in service	Women can access support at a specified venue without a pre-arranged appointment from trained staff.
	Online chat	Online chat is a support and referral service that is accessed via the web. It needs to be a specific service offered at fixed advertised times by dedicated staff or volunteers trained for that purpose and not engaged in other tasks.
Refuge and/or Community-based services	These services do not offer accommodation, but may be offered to refuge residents. A woman and/or child has to attend the project's building to access these services.	
	Counselling	Counselling is formal counselling offered by qualified practitioners
	Group work programmes/ Support groups	Group work programmes are defined groups facilitated by trained staff
Refuge and/or Community-based services	A dedicated children/young people's service	Staffed by trained children's and/or youth worker. A service where they provide emotional support, group work, activities, after-school clubs or holiday clubs for the children/young people or do specific outreach work.
Community-based services	Prevention work	Work carried out in community groups such as schools aimed at prevention/awareness raising. Clients do not self-refer but the service may be booked by professionals.

Appendix Two - Routes to Support Service Level Agreement

The objectives of the project are to ensure that the Routes to Support (Routes to Support) 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 Routes to Support

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

The Routes to Support 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 Women's Aid Directory.

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

The Routes to Support 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)

Routes to Support 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;
- providing telephone and email support for user management and any ongoing training issues including:
  - setting-up, update and discontinue user logins for organisations in their respective countries;
  - searching for and view current vacancies;
  - obtaining information on admission practices and referral procedures;
  - performing more advanced searches on other criteria;
  - updating vacancy information.

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

- maintaining the public directory, the UK 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 Routes to Support system;
- hosting the Routes to Support system on the internet and providing technical support for the hosting of the system;
- ensuring data is securely and regularly backed up.

Routes to Support 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 Routes to Support site. Managing agents also reserve the right to suspend services in accordance with the access and inclusion policy. In addition, your service may be removed from any the UK 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 at least one user for the role of **Primary User**.
2. 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. 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
   f. Training materials and contact information for the Routes to Support team are disseminated to all staff members who use Routes to Support
   g. If the primary user leaves the organisation, before they leave another member of staff is nominated as the new primary user and signs the Service Level Agreement

3. You agree to use Routes to Support as the key source of information on vacancies in refuges and to obtain information regarding VAWG services.

4. Services will not sell, trade, or pass on to a third party (other than individual clients) information obtained from Routes to Support without the express permission of the Steering Group.

5. Services will follow the specified referral procedure for each service contained on Routes to Support, when making referrals to other VAWG service providers.

6. Services will keep confidential all non-public information, including non-public contact numbers and numbers of vacancies contained on Routes to Support.

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, 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 Routes to Support system.

11. You should request the permission of the Routes to Support 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 Routes to Support should be passed on to the main line numbers listed below.

13. You agree to keep confidential the direct lines and identity of Routes to Support 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 Routes to Support to your Routes to Support 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[7]. 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 Routes to Support 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

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[7] Please note services can make use of functionality on the system to mark their service as 'full for the week' in order to meet this commitment.

the Routes to Support 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 Routes to Support 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 its sees fit in respect of maintaining any membership or retaining any service on the directory listing.

If you have any questions or concerns about the role and responsibilities outlined above you should contact the relevant Partner depending on your needs (please see general roles and responsibilities above):

Scottish Women's Aid: 0131 226 6606 / routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

Welsh Women's Aid: 01286 882 733 / info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

Women's Aid Federation of England: routestosupport@womensaid.org.uk

Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland: 02890 249 041 / routestosupport@womensaidni.org

Routes to Support 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 Routes to Support site with an administrative fee being charged in order to be reinstated.

Date	
Signed by (name)	
Job title	
Organisation	
Contact phone	
Contact email	
Routes to Support primary user(s) name *Your primary user should be the individual who has permission to manage staff access to the system and can act as our main point of contact, for example to confirm information about the services you provide.*	
Routes to Support primary user(s) email	

Policy reviewed and agreed on: 16th November 2022