

Impact Report

2019-2020



women's aid
until women & children are safe

Our impact: 2019-2020

We support a powerful federation of local services nationwide, who are as passionate as we are about helping survivors of abuse. We use our national datasets and ground-breaking research to campaign for sustainable funding and to bring about life-saving changes in policy and law.

We help women and children escape abuse, and to recover. Our Live Chat connects survivors with expert support workers, and the Survivors' Forum brings together a community of women who stand together.

We are here until women and children are safe.

Our members

Sisters, doing it for ourselves

The National Women's Aid Federation (as we were called then) was set up in 1974. It brought together nearly 40 refuge and community-based services across the country, which had been set up by women, for women. For the first time there was a national body to co-ordinate the campaign for new laws and policies, and to improve domestic abuse support for women and their children.

As a national, feminist federation we were able to amplify the voices of thousands of women and children across England.

We continue to be entrusted with this representative duty today, alongside our sisters at Imkaan, Welsh Women's Aid, Scottish Women's Aid, and Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland.

Today we have 168 members, providing nearly 300 services. Our network also includes a further 64 organisations run by non-members, who are supported by and input into our Routes to Support database of services. 81% of our members are specialist services.



Who is supported by **local services**?

Local services support woman and child survivors in the community, in refuges, via helplines, support groups and so much more.

We collect data from services inside and outside of our membership, to build the full picture of service provision nationally.



[Read more about service provision and survivors](#)

“Every member makes the federation stronger.”

Nicki Norman Acting CEO at Women's Aid

What did we do for domestic abuse services in 2019-2020?

VOICE

Our campaigns are driven by our members and what they need. Developed over the decades, our rich evidence base and world-class reputation for research strengthens the domestic abuse sector and improves public policy.

This year we have worked hard with our allies in the wider violence against women sector to keep the domestic abuse bill at the top of the political agenda, in a year which saw a new prime minister, a general election, the maelstrom of Brexit, and, tragically, a global pandemic.

SOS success

After five years of our **SOS: Save Refuges, Save Lives** campaign, this year we secured a desperately needed government commitment to sustainably fund refuges. The domestic abuse bill will contain a statutory duty on local authorities to fund support in refuges.

Our research work with members developed the national estimate – £173 million per year – required to resource this.

National data

In November 2019, we published a landmark report on the cost of specialist women's domestic abuse services – making the case for the funding needed to underpin the statutory duty.

Read more about funding specialist services

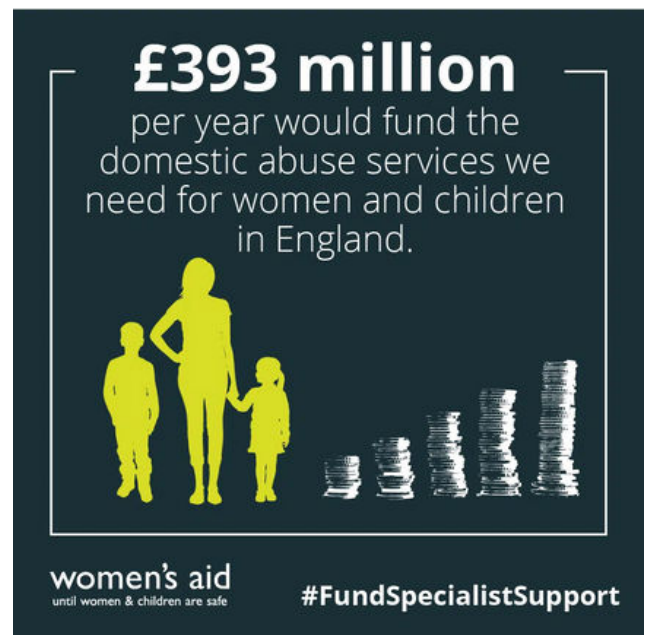
Westminster presence

Our influence in parliament allows us press the priorities of Women's Aid, our member services and survivors.

In 2019-2020 there were 121 mentions of Women's Aid in parliament.

We held:

- 15 meetings with government ministers;
- 46 meetings with civil servants; and
- 20 meetings with backbench MPs and peers.



QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

We help our members to evidence their effectiveness, quality and expertise as domestic abuse specialists.

This excellence has been the defining characteristic of Women's Aid member services for four decades.

We give specialised support to members in tendering for contracts and bids for fundraising. With our help, services are able to stay open, and ensure that the unique nature of their domestic abuse support is valued.

National Quality Standards

High quality women's services, accessible to survivors, are vital for women and children to get the support they need now, and to improve their onward journey to independence and safety. Historically the UK has been a leader in developing practice. Survivors engage with services when they experience a needs-led approach and feel safe.

We continue to assess, support, and work with our members so they can show their quality to commissioners for services, and to survivors.

This year, we completed seven assessments with nine underway. We supported seven members to improve equality and diversity, four to make governance more robust, and three to prepare for tendering.

"Thank you so much for the positive amazing feedback. Everything you have put in our recommendations are things which we will ensure happen and gives us the direction to achieve them. We strive to have a clean and welcoming refuge for survivors and I am thrilled you agreed. It's been a challenging time for us but we have always delivered an excellent front line service. Thank you for being fantastic to work with."

Women's Aid Member

Expert support for children and young people

Women's Aid's children and young people's officer has been working with member services to create a good practice guide that reflects the expertise and specialist support Women's Aid members provide around children and young people. This is still a work in progress and the completed guide should be available in late Autumn 2020.

In early 2019 we worked with Stirling University to create a free resource for our members with tools on how to support women and babies after domestic abuse. Over the last year we have successfully delivered training associated with this toolkit to member services across England.

"I feel empowered and the training enhanced my knowledge and skills."

Refuge Manager attending the Power to Change course

Training

The [Women's Aid National Training Centre](#) supports the sector with expert training and qualifications for domestic abuse workers. We were delighted to qualify 50 new advocates last year, taking the total to 550 registered professionals.

It also provides a range of facilitation training, so they can lead specialist group work and 1:1 sessions with the women and children that they support. This training is really valued by our members looking to provide the best quality support.

EVIDENCE

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 which support them. These tools are available for all services who work with survivors, regardless of membership status.

[Find out more about our Evidence Hub](#)

[How can On Track help you?](#)

On Track

On Track, our outcomes monitoring and case management system, is now used by over 80 organisations.

Services using On Track are supported to collect consistent, quality data on the outcomes that matter most to survivors. This year, they have used it to track the support they've provided to 46,032 women.

The data services collect is anonymised and amalgamated to create a powerful national dataset. The national dataset covers a range of topics including outcomes for women and children and young people, referral information, support needs, support provided, feedback and negative experiences of external services. This data provides an instrumental evidence base for influencing policy and practice.

Routes to Support – the UK directory of refuge vacancies

Routes to Support is the UK violence against women and girls directory of services and refuge vacancies, run in partnership by Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation of England and Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. It is relied upon by national helplines and local services for up to date service availability. The directory gives us comprehensive data on all domestic abuse services including, but not limited to, those run by Women's Aid members. It gives detailed information on refuge services and community-based services, including counselling, support groups, local helplines, floating support and IDVA/DAPA services. This includes the types of services provided, the number of bed spaces available in refuge services, the people supported by these services and changes to provision over time.

Routes to Support is part-funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Women's Aid Annual Survey

The Women's Aid Annual Survey is the most comprehensive collection of data on domestic abuse services in England and is sent to all domestic abuse services in England listed on Routes to Support. The survey looks at the work services have done during the previous financial year including work they are proud of, challenges faced and questions on specific issues that are relevant each year.

Findings are published each year alongside evidence from Routes to Support and On Track in our Domestic Abuse Report series of reports.

SAVINGS

Our members asked us to help with procuring goods to help them keep running.

In 2019 we began our ground-breaking Oak Foundation funded Procurement and Impact Programme, to procure and broker services and goods for our members. An exciting new agreement with an energy broker will generate income for every member's utility meter that is switched to a new supplier, and will provide members with much needed cheaper, greener energy. More news will come on this and many other money-saving deals in 2020.

Rail to Refuge

The Women's Aid Rail to Refuge scheme – offering free train tickets for women and their children to reach refuge – was launched in March 2020 with Great Western Rail and Southeastern.

Launching just before the Covid-19 crisis, we moved quickly to extend the scheme. The Rail Delivery Group offered our members nationwide access to the scheme for the duration of lockdown. We have now secured the scheme for the remainder of the financial year.

Already by the end of April, on average, one woman and any children with her were using Rail to Refuge each day to reach safety. Since the launch over 300 journeys have been made, with over 70% of women saying they wouldn't have been able to travel without the free ticket.

FOR SURVIVORS

For the year ending March 2019, an estimated 1.6 million women aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse. Over half the of residents in refuge are children.

We help women and children escape abuse, and to recover. We campaign for changes to law and improvements in agency responses to domestic abuse. We change attitudes so that no woman has to face her abuser on her own.

SERVICES

Women's Aid has been a trusted source of support for women and children for nearly half a century.

This year saw a digital evolution in our provision, with the launch of a suite of exciting new digital services.

Live Chat

Our new service was launched in October 2019. It was instantly a huge success, with **30-40 chats a week** despite only being able to operate for two hours a day on weekdays. Demand for the new service was high, but on International Women's Day we had to launch an urgent appeal to raise £200,000 to keep all our digital services, including Live Chat, running. Laura Winter, survivors and sports presenter, [supported our appeal](#), which was so successful we were able to **double our opening hours** on April 20th. As a result, we have also **now doubled the conversations** we are having to **60-70 a week**, and expect to see demand continue to rise.

Within the first two weeks of lockdown, there was a 41% increase in users visiting the Live Chat site.

The Survivors' Forum

This amazing community of survivors provides support at every stage of a woman's journey. Supported too by Women's Aid moderators, it provides a lifeline for thousands of women.

Last year the Survivors' Forum had an average of 1,568 active users per month

"I still feel like this is the place where I am understood the most and I'm so grateful for it and for Women's Aid for helping me to get free and to survive."

Email support

Our email service continues to provide a service women can access conveniently and discreetly. 80% of the emails are from survivors, and the most common reason for getting in touch is for more information about rights and options to help them leave.

Over 1,000 emails a month were responded to by our team of dedicated support workers

[Go to the Survivors' Forum](#)

Love Respect for young women in their early relationships

We launched this site for women in their early relationships in September 2019 with best-selling author Holly Bourne. In the first month we had over 20,000 views of Holly's 'Red flags' video. **There were 6,000 visitors to the website in the first month since the launch.**

[Go to the Love Respect website](#)

Practical, clear advice online

Our online resources, such as the Survivor's Handbook, continue to be the go-to place for women and professionals. We responded quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic to provide help online, seeing a +241% spike on the 17th March 2020. We had a **+34%** increase in use of our website in 2019-20, with **1,470,144 visitors**, and a **+96%** increase in page views in our "Information and support" area. [Go to the Survivor's Handbook](#)

No Woman Turned Away

In this unique government funded project, our specialist caseworkers support women who are facing barriers to accessing a refuge space. Without help they face homelessness and further abuse. 243 women received and completed their support between 12th January 2019 and 11th January 2020, 43% of whom were BME women. [Find out more about No Woman Turned Away](#).

SURVIVORS' VOICES

This year we have strengthened our commitment to putting the views and priorities of survivors at the centre of our work. We campaign for the things women tell us matter most, and create groundbreaking new projects to amplify their voices. [Read more about Child First](#)

"No parent should have to hold their children and comfort them as they die or be told that their child has been harmed in an act of revenge or rage. There are often many facets to one family's breakdown, and all too often children's voices are not heard or acted upon."

Claire Throssell, whose sons, Jack and Paul, were murdered at the hands of their father

Justice in the family courts

Our *Child First* campaign saw major progress this year, with the Ministry of Justice finally recognising the scale of harm that family court proceedings and unsafe child contact pose to women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Our campaign brought about a **major review of the family court response** to domestic abuse. We sat on the expert panel leading the review, ensuring survivor evidence was heard. We have also continued to press for the domestic abuse bill to deliver meaningful family court reform. Our concerns about the limitations of the bill have led to significant reforms to improve survivors' safety in the family courts.

Engagement in research

Last year we worked closely with 17 survivors who had used the No Woman Turned Away project to create a unique report on women's experiences. In addition to carrying out statistical analyses of all survivors' experiences, the group of women took part in interviews and used art to document their experiences of trying to find a safe place to live. The report, published in June 2019, offered an extensive insight into survivors' often long-drawn-out and harrowing journeys.

"By the end of it I was just broken and there's just pieces of me ... I don't know whether my perpetrator was worse or this was worse..."

Mumtaz (name changed)

Law In The Making

Survivors of abuse are 'experts by experience', and Law in the Making is a project delivering unique and meaningful opportunities for survivors to engage with decision makers as law is developed. Workshops helped participants to understand how legislation is developed, and gave them opportunities to assess the detail of the domestic abuse bill. We facilitated events, briefings and evidence sessions for the joint committee to hear their priorities for reform.

This project won Nesta's 'Democracy Pioneers' award for our innovation in civic participation and everyday democracy.

Welfare reform

We continued to press for changes to the welfare reforms which are negatively impacting survivors.

In 2019/20 this has resulted in:

- our National Training Centre training **Jobcentre Plus managers** on domestic abuse;
- supporting the **'All Kids Count'** campaign calling on the government to end the two child tax credit limit, including authoring a chapter of CPAG's report on the impact of the policy; and
- an exemption on the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) for victims of domestic abuse.

AWARENESS

Changing attitudes and understanding are key to ending abuse. We work at every level of society to make sure survivors get the right response, no matter who they talk to.

The national conversation

Our media presence amplifies survivors' voices in the news. Our campaigns grab global attention and forge partnerships. As advisors to Eastenders and Coronation Street's abuse storylines this year we have truly made domestic abuse headline news.

We had 6,294 mentions in the media from 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020

Here, Ian Bartholomew, who plays Geoff in Coronation Street, raises awareness of abuse and supports survivors in his video, which had a reach of over a million on Facebook!

[Find out more about Change That Lasts](#)

Change That Lasts

The Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid partnership Change That Lasts programme continues to flourish with investment from The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and The Community Foundation.

There are now over 1,000 Ask Me Ambassadors raising awareness across England, challenging victim blaming and sexism, and helping survivors talk about their experiences when they are ready.

Our Trusted Professional programme works with organisations of professionals who come into contact with victims of domestic abuse. It builds on women's experiences, and tackles systems as well as training people within those organisations. In Sunderland and Nottinghamshire we have piloted this with Early Help services and in Surrey we have piloted with the Department for Work and Pensions, covering **150 frontline staff**.

[Find out more about The National Training Centre](#)

Expert Training

Knowledge is vital to improve systems which compound abuse. This year the National Training Centre delivered training for police, family court staff, Jobcentre Plus managers, and many more.

- We obtained the College of Policing Licence in 2019 to deliver its Domestic Abuse Matters Programme. Between September and December 1,200 police officers were trained in the programme and a further 120 officers to become Domestic Abuse Champions.
- Our Domestic Violence in the Workplace training with the Kering Foundation has gone from strength to strength, with more of their brands, including L'Oreal and Yves Saint Laurent, receiving training.
- Around 300 staff in Personal Support Units for family courts received bespoke domestic abuse training with a focus on family court proceedings.

Social influencers

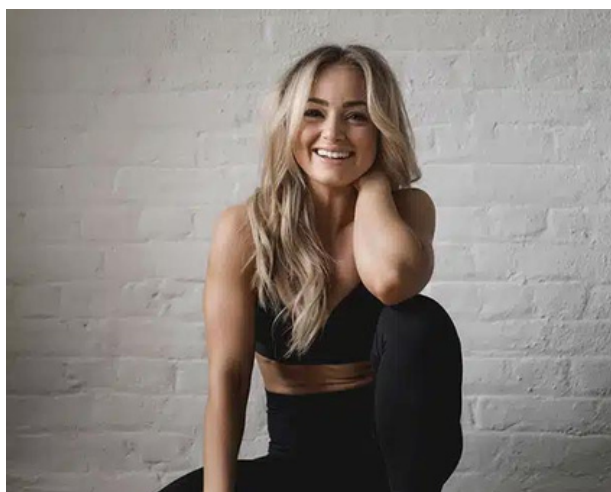
With over 68k people following us on Facebook, 123.9k Twitter and 28.6k on Instagram, our reach on social media spreads advice, campaigns, and changes attitudes. We are proud to be supported by an array of influencers, standing with survivors.

Our most successful Facebook post, sharing Ian Bartholomew's video above, reached 1.5 million people.

Rallying support during Covid-19

2019-2020 ended, of course, with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a huge impact on survivors and services. It continues to be a difficult time, but we are grateful for the support that has been shared. Our ambassador, **Alice Liveing (pictured)** has hosted Instagram Live discussions and workouts in support of survivors and Women's Aid both on her own Instagram channel (685k followers) and on Pantene's channel with **Katie Piper**.

The music industry has also been supporting survivors. **Marina Diamandis** hosted a live song writing class to her 1.4 million Instagram followers as part of Bose's #MusicGivesBack campaign and **Abbie McCarthy's Unity 2020** virtual festival raised awareness and funds with online sets from artists such as dodie, EverythingEverything and Years & Years.



THANK YOU

None of this would be possible without the ongoing support of the survivors who share their stories, the campaigners who stand alongside us, the fundraisers who climb mountains, bake, and shave heads, and the corporate supporters who fund so much of our work.

[Avon](#)

[Chartered Institute of Housing](#)

[Dinny Hall](#)

[Bloom UK](#)

[Bristol University](#)

[Comic Relief](#)

[David Family Foundation](#)

[The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport \(DCMS\)](#)

[Dischma Charitable Trust](#)

[Edward S Smyth Trust](#)

[Frank and Elizabeth Robertson Charitable Trust](#)

[Frank Litchfield General Charitable Trust](#)

[Home Office](#)

[Ian Mactaggart Trust](#)

[John Coates Charitable Trust](#)

[Jusaca Charitable Trust](#)

[Kering Foundation](#)

[Legal Education Foundation](#)

[Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales](#)

[London Councils](#)

[Matrix Causes Fund](#)

[Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government](#)

[Mind](#)

[National Lottery Community Fund](#)

[Nesta](#)

[Oak Foundation](#)

[People's Postcode Trust](#)

[Souter Charitable Trust](#)

[Sylvia Adams Charitable Trust](#)

[The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust](#)

[The Grace Trust](#)

[The Hon M L Astors 1969 Charity](#)

[The M S Watson Charitable Trust](#)

[The Mrs Wingfield CT](#)

[The Rest-Harrow Charitable Trust](#)

[The Zochonis Charitable Trust](#)

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