



# IMPACT REPORT 2023-2024

women's aid  
until women & children are safe

## A message from our **Chief Executive**

The publication of this year's Impact Report is especially moving for me, coming in our 50th year as a federation and my third as its CEO. It is undeniable that in 50 years, not only has our federation swelled to a sisterhood of over 180 organisations, but our impact has been significant and indisputable. I am incredibly proud of our many milestones and am deeply grateful for every woman in our federation – your dedication, commitment and passion make life-changing improvements to the lives of countless survivors of domestic abuse, helping them rebuild their lives and fight for justice.

It is a tragic reality that domestic abuse remains devastatingly common, with 1 in 4 women experiencing it at some point in their life. We know that there is no silver bullet to solve this significant societal issue, no easy template that we can apply to fix it. What we must do is come together – women, men, and young people, of all ages, from all over the country. Every single one of us has the power to initiate change. We have a responsibility to fight for those in our society who are denied a voice or struggling to exercise theirs – from migrant women, through to those battling the cost of living, and of course children, who are often unable to advocate for themselves. Call out misogyny and sexist attitudes where you see them. Learn about what to say to someone experiencing abuse – it isn't as simple as telling survivors to 'just leave'. Learn to listen to them and their experiences. In the end, what we can, and must, all do is act. Speak up, fundraise, help increase awareness, practice being empathetic! It is only by working together, by taking responsibility and accountability for the change that we can make happen, that we can create a society where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated.

This year, we came together to achieve remarkable successes – our Emergency Fund pilot with the Home Office resulted in the introduction of the Flexible Fund, which has continued to support survivors. The fund will help them not only flee abuse, but also rebuild their lives by providing funding for deposits, laptops to help women go back to work and financial support to help purchase white goods. I am also incredibly proud of the work we did when it came to shining a light on the financial hardships faced by specialist domestic abuse support services, with the findings from our



Annual Audit airing on Channel 4's evening news, reaching countless members of the public and bringing the challenges that face services delivering life-saving care to light. In addition to placing a member service at the heart of the Channel 4 piece, we continued to advocate for our members and speaking out about the difficulties they face when it comes to obtaining funding – including developing a briefing on the impact of local government finances on domestic abuse services and survivors, which has been disseminated to key government stakeholders and raised in the national press.

As we look forward to the future, I am of course hopeful that in the next 50 years, there won't be a need for us as an organisation in our current form and that domestic abuse will no longer be one of the most serious and prevalent crimes committed against women and children in this country. According to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, the police, on average, flag nearly a quarter (24 percent) of violent crime incidents as domestic abuse. There are already tentative signs that this could become reality – we are tirelessly working with children and young people to build the first generation who won't tolerate domestic abuse. Our campaigning efforts, our ongoing dedication to putting survivors at the heart of everything we do, as well as the invaluable work done by our members mean that more and more people are becoming aware of the horrors of domestic abuse. It is only by working together that we can finally eradicate domestic abuse, and, as we look ahead, I am more hopeful than ever that our mission will be achieved and women and children will finally be safe.

**Farah Nazeer**  
**Chief Executive, Women's Aid**



# COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE CULTURAL SHIFT

As Women's Aid enters its 50th year, domestic abuse is still highly prevalent within our society and remains a gendered crime that disproportionately affects women and girls. This is even truer for those from marginalised backgrounds, who face additional inequality and discrimination. We know that 1 in 4 women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their life<sup>1</sup>.

Women's Aid wants to see a cultural shift which makes domestic abuse something that is no longer tolerated in our society. Our research<sup>2</sup> showed us that a big part of this can only come through challenging and changing attitudes towards domestic abuse and the behaviours that underpin abusive relationships.

<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2023). Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2023. Published online: ONS Domestic abuse victim characteristics. England and Wales- Office of National Statistics. (ons.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Women's Aid. (2022). Come Together to End Domestic Abuse: a survey of UK attitudes to domestic abuse 2022. Bristol: Women's Aid

# Our Come Together to End Domestic Abuse campaign seeks to engage key audiences to challenge myths and reinforce Women's Aid's key messages

We used our voice in the media to make sure survivors are heard and raise public awareness of our work to reduce tolerance of domestic abuse

In the last year:



**1,100**

Our spokeswomen have been quoted in over 1,100 **articles**.



**12,343**

Women's Aid was **mentioned in the media** a total of 12,343 times.



**100 billion**

We secured press reach of **100 billion**.<sup>3</sup>



Our work to raise awareness in the world of football had a media reach of over 100 billion. Coverage that mentioned both Women's Aid and football reached over **18 billion**.<sup>4</sup>

**377,000**

Across our Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and LinkedIn, we have a combined **following** of over 377,000 people.



**30,000**

We welcomed nearly 30,000 **new followers** to our channels, joining our powerful **online community** and working together to end domestic abuse.



**▲ 78%**

78% more people than last year **viewed the Women's Aid website** for additional information **after visiting our socials**.



**5 million**

Our **posts on social media reached** over 5 million people.



## We engaged policy makers with our Come Together messaging

To engage policy makers with our ambition to make domestic abuse intolerable, we took our Come Together messaging to party conferences. Here, we highlighted the needs of 'by and for' services for Black and minoritised women, and how our work needs to always consider the barriers facing the most marginalised survivors in accessing specialist support.

<sup>3</sup> Reach is calculated by circulation, monthly visits and audience for each piece of media we are mentioned in.

<sup>4</sup> Reach is calculated by circulation, monthly visits and audience for each piece of media we are mentioned in.

## We used our expertise to align reporting on domestic abuse in the media with our messaging and address poor quality reporting

We delivered media guidance workshops to journalists and media organisations to improve how domestic abuse is reported and spoken about in the press.

We influenced a **change in the Independent Press Standard's Organisation's Domestic Abuse and Homicide clause**, directly impacting how domestic abuse is reported and spoken about in the press. This means that the culture of 'victim-blaming' is no longer acceptable, and survivors have a greater right to privacy by avoiding disclosures of location.

## Our patrons, ambassadors and supporters used their influence to support us to change attitudes by raising awareness of our work across society

Our patrons, ambassadors and supporters worked tirelessly with us to help end domestic abuse, sharing their experiences, expertise and voices across events, social media and the news.

We held a Come Together to End Domestic Abuse themed gala with Tina – The Tina Turner Musical. Our ambassador, Michelle Griffith-Robinson (pictured here with Elesha Paul Moses who plays Tina in Tina - The Tina Turner Musical), spoke to just under 1000 people in the audience about the lifesaving work of Women's Aid, our 50th anniversary, Come Together and the importance of the event in helping to #EndAbuseTogether.



Left: Loose Women launch domestic abuse awareness campaign, Facing It Together.

"Informative and educational session. It was particularly interesting to hear you remind us of the sensitives around photo use and reporting of roles within a family unit and avoiding a certain framing."

**Media guidance workshop attendee**



## Brutally Honest



We worked with our patron Melanie Brown MBE (left, appearing on ITV's Loose Women) on her Brutally Honest book launch as part of our International Women's Day campaign, also called Brutally Honest. **Our campaign received over 200 pieces of news**

**coverage**, with the majority featuring our CEO, Farah Nazeer, highlighting significant achievements from the last 50 years, and calling for continued change.

Our press coverage reached **2.4 billion<sup>5</sup> during the month of March** and increased our social engagement across our platforms, including a **345% increase on Twitter**.

"My story was so impactful and it's not just my story it's every other woman's story, ours are all exactly the same, abuse is abuse, we're all surrounded by it, so we need to do something about it, it just shows how much we are needing Women's Aid."

**Melanie Brown MBE  
Women's Aid Patron**

<sup>5</sup> Reach is calculated by circulation, monthly visits and audience for each piece of media we are mentioned in.



**We worked with leading employers to improve awareness and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse as well as the support available in the workplace**

We worked with employers to train their leadership and staff to improve understanding of domestic abuse and the impact of domestic abuse in the workplace through our corporate training offer which reached over 200 people through 6 organisations this year.



[www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training)

**We reached children and young people in education and online settings to improve their understanding of what makes a healthy relationship.**

We added to our evidence base on creating effective education about relationships for children and young people (CYP) with the launch of our *Influencers and Attitudes report*<sup>6</sup> in October 2023. This research explores CYP attitudes towards relationships and considered what influences these attitudes, particularly the digital space and social media. We put our learning into practice by:



Sharing our learning with **280 people** who attended our research launch event.



Reaching out to **2,573 children and young people** in schools through our Expect Respect training program, educating CYP about healthy relationships.



Improving Love Respect, our website for 14–24-year-olds looking to learn more about healthy and unhealthy relationships. New content added included information about online safety, intimate images, asking adults for help, and more. The site was visited by **10,348 users** last year.

Children and young people exposed to **misogynistic social media content like Andrew Tate** were almost 5x more likely than those not exposed to view hurting someone physically as acceptable if you say sorry afterwards.

**misogynistic social media content**

**5x more likely**

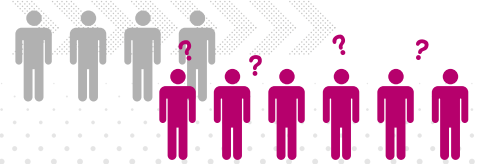


**1 in 3 women** experienced the RSHE they had in school as **rushed and awkward.**



**1 in 4 women** felt that it had **no understanding of pre-existing trauma.**

Whilst **70%** of children and young people said they **would seek support** if affected by domestic abuse, **61% of them were unsure or did not know where to turn for this.**



[www.womensaid.org.uk/influencers-and-attitudes-report](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/influencers-and-attitudes-report)



[www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/children-and-young-people/expect-respect](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/children-and-young-people/expect-respect)



[www.loverespect.co.uk](http://www.loverespect.co.uk)

<sup>6</sup> Women's Aid. (2023). *Influencers and Attitudes: How will the next generation understand domestic abuse?* Bristol: Women's Aid.



# COMING TOGETHER TO PROVIDE LIFESAVING SUPPORT

Women's Aid wants to see survivors able to access the right support for them, at the right time. To work towards this, we provided a range of support to the domestic abuse sector, our membership and survivors.



## We shared knowledge and resources with the domestic abuse sector to transform the future for survivors of domestic abuse

### Our 2023 national conference 'Transforming the future for survivors together' provided a space to bring the sector together to learn and influence on responses for survivors

We welcomed 277 people from across the sector to our national conference in July. We were joined by Women's Aid members, representatives from the wider women's sector, local government, commissioners, corporates, and academics. We provided spaces to strengthen the sector through networking, learning from each other and hearing from policy makers and other stakeholders – and, of course, to question and challenge decision makers!



**79%** of attendees reported that the conference helped them to **build new** or **existing relationships**.



**74%** of attendees said that they left the conference with a **better understanding** of how their work could influence **women's safety**.



**92%** said that information from the conference would **influence their thinking**.



"This was my first time attending the conference and it was inspired to be around so many people willing to stand up and use their voices and actions to better the lives of women and girls"

"Meeting fellow colleagues within the sector really reignited passion for working within the sector."

*Women's Aid Federation Members*

### We created new ways to share knowledge across the sector

In November we launched our new Research Bulletin, which ensures access to timely information on the latest research across the sector. We now have **over 300 subscribers** including Women's Aid members, local and national domestic abuse services and VAWG organisations, academics, commissioners, researchers and government.

#### Research Bulletin

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Want to subscribe? Email us at [researchandpolicy@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:researchandpolicy@womensaid.org.uk)



## We upskilled the sector through the work of our Training and Education Team

### Nationally recognised qualifications to ensure quality responses for survivors using domestic abuse services

**The Certificate in Tackling and Preventing Domestic Abuse:** over 150 people completed the certificate, which is endorsed by the Home Office as suitable for the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) role.

**The Award in Tackling and Preventing Domestic Abuse:** this course provides a springboard for a career path in the domestic and sexual violence sector.

"I am now able to work in a more informed way, having the historical knowledge of domestic violence and the patriarchy helps to understand the way various statutory organisations currently work, and why this is problematic."

*Training attendees*

"I am better able to understand how to support my clients and what they are entitled to."

### Targeted training to improve responses for marginalised groups of survivors

We trained professionals working in the sector to improve understanding of the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC).

### Facilitator training models to increase capacity



**You and Me, Mum:** a programme to empower and support survivors by furthering their understanding of their role as mothers and addressing the needs of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse.



**Helping Hands:** for professionals working with children and young people. It addresses challenging issues around personal space, safety planning and awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, not only in others but also in themselves.

[www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training)



### Bursaries to increase access to training and reach

Thanks to our funding partners, **Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)** we were able to provide bursaries to 41 people to undertake one of our qualifications. An additional 48 domestic abuse professionals also received bursaries to access training on the MVDAC.

**Bursaries from the Home Office** enabled 143 people from 34 organisations to attend one of our facilitator training courses to member services (The Power of Change, Helping Hands, and You and Me, Mum).



"The facilitator was extremely knowledgeable and taught in a very understanding and supportive way. This was in-depth training but she made it enjoyable and engaging."

*Training attendee*

## We maintained and improved the Routes to Support directory and referrals database to enable survivors to find the right service for them

Routes to Support (RtS) is the UK violence against women and girls service directory which we run in partnership with our UK-wide Women's Aid sister federations. The online directory allows users to locate the right support for survivors they are helping throughout the UK, whether that be outreach, pet fostering or an up-to-date refuge vacancy. It also provides a UK-wide dataset on the scope and nature of domestic abuse provision giving vital insight into the sector.

“[Routes to Support] is absolutely crucial to what we do now. I mean, when it first came along we thought all of our Christmases had come at once. And it's our primary tool to enable us to deliver our services.”

**Lisa Johnson,**  
*Head of Direct Services at Women's Aid*



This year, we reached a huge milestone, celebrating **20 years of Routes to Support** providing a lifeline for survivors.

Routes to Support continues to be a vital resource for the sector:



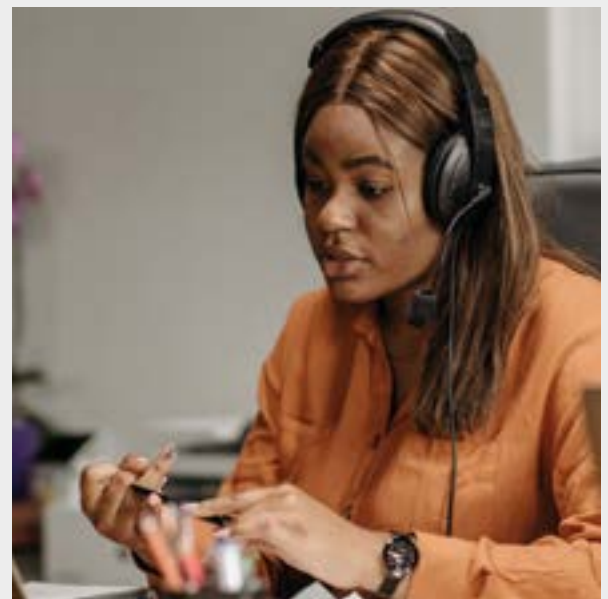
**97%** of users agreed that RtS **improves accessibility to services** for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.



**97%** of users agreed that RtS is an **essential resource** for the VAWG sector.



**96%** of users agreed that RtS is useful in **supporting their work**.



**routestosupport**

The UK violence against women and girls service directory

**We continually update and improve Routes to Support to make sure it is meeting the needs of the sector.**

This year, we launched our **RtS Referral Manager** which enables frontline organisations to instantly create and send referrals to services and refuges listed in RtS and track the status of that referral within On Track in a matter of minutes. Services receive external referrals directly to their On Track system, ready for processing and follow-up all in one place. The aim of the Referral Manager is to make life in frontline services easier and more efficient – leading to better support and outcomes for survivors.



**Want to know more?**

**Visit: [www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/i-work-with-survivors/routes-to-support](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/i-work-with-survivors/routes-to-support)**

## We used data to strengthen domestic abuse services through the development and promotion of On Track, Women's Aid's case management and outcomes measurement system

### On Track offers:

- Improved data quality and reporting data.
- Streamlined case work.
- Use of our outcomes framework to improve, measure and evidence outcomes for survivors.

It also provides Women's Aid **with the largest anonymised dataset on domestic abuse in England**, which in turn informs all strands of our work.

In October, we reached the milestone of having **over 100 local domestic abuse organisations** using On Track. Ongoing development of the On Track database allows support workers to collect the information they need to support survivors.

We added new features to the system, including developing a **Cost-of-Living tab**, which enables services to record and report on the impacts of the crisis on survivors. So far, we've collected information on **how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting over 5,000 survivors** in our national dataset.



### We continue to improve our On Track user and Impact training offer to build capacity in the sector on talking about the impact of our work

Women's Aid's On Track team offers a series of On Track and Impact courses to support domestic abuse services to use OASIS On Track and build skills in data, analysis and evaluation.



We launched our new **eLearning platform**, which houses every step of the booking, attendance, and follow-up process for our training in one place, making engagement with our offerings more streamlined, efficient and accessible.



Our **On Track and Impact courses** were attended by over **200 staff** across the sector, over 20% of whom were from 'by and for' services<sup>4</sup>, with a total of 39 live webinars held, totalling to over **100 hours of training time**, in addition to our pre-recorded eLearning modules.



92% of all learners said their course **'Was useful for me in my role'**



91% of attendees to the On Track Staff Training course agree/strongly agree that they now **'Have increased confidence in using On Track'**



100% of attendees to the Reporting with On Track course agree/strongly agree that they now **'understand the importance of entering data into On Track so that reports will be more meaningful and useful'**

<sup>4</sup> Specialist 'by and for' services are run by and for the communities they serve, such as for Black and minoritised women, Deaf and disabled women and LGBT+ survivors. In doing so they offer a uniquely empowering experience to the communities they support, as the client group is reflected in staffing, management, and governance structures of these organisations.

# We supported our members to improve quality and capacity in their services

We are proud to be a strong and diverse federation of **187 organisations**, with **8 new members** welcomed over the last year. This includes **32 'by and for' Black and minoritised member services**. Over the last year, we have supported our membership in many ways:

## ■ We created a strong support network to increase resilience



We held **24 networking meetings** for trustees, senior leaders and operational staff - with over **200 attendees** facilitating peer support and sharing of best practice.



Our **CEO GoogleGroup** facilitated **over 350 conversations**, sharing knowledge and expertise.



Our Sector News e-letter was sent monthly to over **900 subscribers** from member services, updating them on developments within Women's Aid and the wider VAWG sector, as well as highlighting opportunities for training, consultation and funding.

## ■ Our National Quality Standards support the domestic abuse and VAWG sector to ensure the long-term safety and recovery of survivors, as well as the prevention of further harm

The NQS support the effectiveness and sustainability of the sector, are survivor centred and focus on the expertise, knowledge, and effectiveness of specialist domestic abuse services' ability to evidence, maintain and promote survivor led outcomes and demonstrate the quality of their service. **Our NQS are referenced in government's statutory guidance from The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as best practice.**



This year, 28 members have achieved National Quality Standard accreditation. An additional 7 members have been supported prior to undertaking NQS accreditation. This has ensured **members are delivering safe survivor-centred and needs-led services.**

## ■ We facilitated distribution of donations to local services to support their work with survivors

Thank you to **Avon** who donated pyjamas, jewellery, toiletries, makeup, slippers and more made to 40 Women's Aid members.



“I just want to say a big thank you to you all at Women's Aid for your generous Avon donation. Your contribution of loungewear, pyjamas, and bras for the women we support is so helpful and will make a significant impact on their lives. Thank you once again for your ongoing generosity and support.”

*Women's Aid member service*

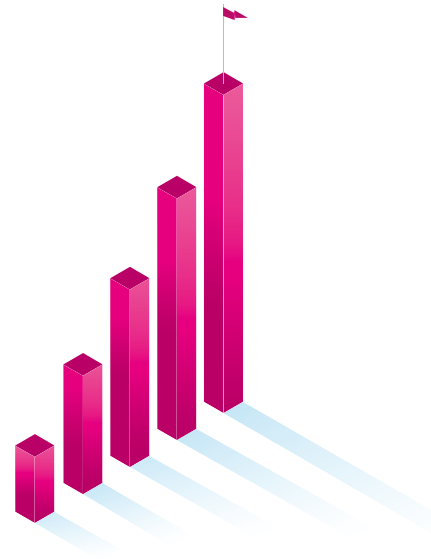
## We have continued to fight for fair funding for our member services

We have continued to fight for fair funding for our member services, challenging conventional approaches to procurement and commissioning, which are harmful for specialist domestic abuse services, particularly smaller or specialist 'by and for' services for Black and minoritised women.

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### We worked with local government and commissioners to demonstrate the value of using flexible commissioning practices for funding domestic abuse support

- We held two **workshops** exploring alternatives to procurement, on which we collaborated with public benefit lawyer Julian Blake. These were attended by over 50 members and commissioners.
- We produced **legal guidance resources** on flexible approaches to commissioning to raise awareness of appropriate, legally sound practices for funding specialist domestic abuse services.



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### Provided expert support to members facing funding and commissioning challenges to mitigate the impact on their services

- We provided **tailored 1-1 support** to members.
- We supported members facing severe financial pressures to **secure funding** from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport/National Lottery Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund. At least 17 members were successful in obtaining funding from the Cost of Living Fund.

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### Used our voice to increase awareness of financial pressures on the sector

- We developed a **briefing on the impact** of local government finances on domestic abuse services and survivors, which has been disseminated to key government stakeholders and raised this issue in the national press.



**We supported survivors through our range of online and telephone support services, to ensure that they receive the right support, at the right time, for their needs.**



### Survivors' Forum

Our Survivors' Forum provided a safe, anonymous, space for women who have been affected by domestic abuse to come together, share their experiences and give one another practical and emotional support on their recovery journey.



**15,189** people registered



**1,701** new registrations



**97%** said the forum has helped them gain a better understanding of domestic abuse



### Live Chat

Our Live Chat service connected survivors of domestic abuse to a specialist support worker for advice and support.

**14,887** Live Chat sessions were held



**1,241** people were engaged in conversations every month on average

Email support helped survivors who prefer not to remain online to chat with a support worker, or who want a written response they can keep.

**11,350** contacts were responded to through our email service



### Survivors Handbook

Our Survivors Handbook provided practical support and information for women experiencing domestic abuse, with simple guidance on every aspect of seeking support.

**195,053** views of the Survivors Handbook



[www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/the-survivors-handbook/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/the-survivors-handbook/)

### Professional's service

Our Professional's Service supported those working with survivors to provide an improved response to the survivors they support.

On average, we've supported **53 professionals every month.**



When asked, **100%** of those who used the service **would recommend** Women's Aid's service for professionals to a coworker who was working with a woman experiencing domestic abuse.



**95%** said that after contacting the service, they **felt better equipped** to support their clients.

## Our No Woman Turned Away (NWTa) project offers support to the most marginalised women to find safe outcomes in spite of the barriers they face

**The practitioners provide advocacy and support to women who have not been able to find refuge space due to one or more barrier.**

We received a total of **330 referrals** in the reporting period. Of these, 230 (70%) went on to receive support. A total of **211 women with 207 children** completed their period of support during the year.

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**The practitioners found safe housing for many of the women they supported.**



By the end of support from the NWTa project **47%** of women had a new housing outcome.

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**Practitioners increased safety for many women in vulnerable positions.**



For **60%** of women, there had been an improvement in their safety compared to intake.

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**The NWTa practitioners referred and signposted women to other specialist support services to meet their needs.**



**35%** of women (74) went on to access support from another VAWG organisation and **37%** of women (77) went on to access support from another type of (non-VAWG) organisation.



**To access the service go to:**  
**[www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/i-work-with-survivors/no-woman-turned-away/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/i-work-with-survivors/no-woman-turned-away/)**



We can see the difference our NWTa project can make in our Nowhere to Turn report series and through Imani's story:

Imani\* experienced further abuse from the perpetrator while waiting for safe accommodation, including a physical assault which required a hospital visit. Imani slept rough at a police station and on a bus, and stayed at a stranger's house. When Imani asked the police for help, they said they were unable to do anything as she had no recourse to public funds. Imani only had £5 left when she was referred to NWTa and had very limited mobile phone credit to make calls. The NWTa project supported Imani to understand her options and applied for a Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC)<sup>5</sup>, which was successful. Imani initially stayed in a hostel before accessing refuge after extensive support from the NWTa practitioners including safety planning, referring to immigration support, asking local domestic abuse services to provide support on the ground, and making referrals to refuges.

*\*The name and other identifying information from this survivor has been changed to protect her anonymity*

<sup>5</sup> Now known as Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC)

## Emergency Fund and Flexible Fund



### We piloted a new approach.

On 10th May 2023, Women's Aid launched a pilot **Emergency Fund** to support survivors of domestic abuse in England and Wales by offering one-off payments. designed to address financial barriers and support them to flee an abuser and to remain independent. The Home Office awarded a fund of £300,000 to deliver flexible grants for survivors of domestic abuse as part of the previously announced Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan<sup>6</sup>.

The evaluation<sup>7</sup> of the pilot gave us valuable insight into the difference this funding had made to survivors. The pilot demonstrated the demand and need there was for this type of funding, we saw:

**626**

successful applications.



**70%** of applications were for **women with dependants**.



**78%** of applicants used their grant to replace or purchase **essential goods** for themselves or children.



**83%** of applications said that the funding would be used to **flee an abuser**.

The most notable impact seen by referrers was on the **mental health and wellbeing** of women they support. The funding was able to alleviate pressures and worries, relieve economic stress and made survivors feel valued.

<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-domestic-abuse-plan](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-domestic-abuse-plan)

<sup>7</sup> Women's Aid. (2024) *Emergency fund evaluation report*. Bristol: Women's Aid



### We launched a new iteration with learning from the pilot.

In January, Women's Aid announced the launch of the **Flexible Fund** in partnership with the Home Office. This is an additional **£2 million** to support survivors and for the first time, survivors could also apply for a further one-off payment of up to £2,500 to help secure a sustainable independent future. The fund opened in February and will continue until March 2025, one recipient talked about the difference it made to her:



"Today, I have received a message saying I have been awarded £1,500 by Women's Aid fund. I am really over the moon. .... Your award hasn't only provided me with financial aid, but it has also reminded me of the importance of kindness and compassion in this world! Your willingness to go above and beyond to help me during my difficult situation means more to me than words can express. ....I hope I, Inshaallah, one day have the opportunity to pay it forward and make a difference in someone else's life, just as you have done for me!"

*Survivor who received funding from the Flexible Fund*



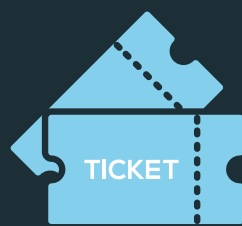


**We provided support to survivors with the cost of travel to refuge through our Travel to Refuge schemes**

Last year, we launched the Road to Refuge scheme to add to our existing Rail to Refuge scheme. This new scheme supports survivors fleeing to refuge to access free travel by coach and is delivered in partnership with National Express.



**We also continued to support with the delivery of Rail to Refuge this year:**



**2,679**

**survivors**, including **702 children** over the age of five, accessed the Rail to Refuge scheme.

**85%**

of survivors reported that they **would not have travelled** had the journey not been paid for.



"I was very stressed. My daughters were getting ill. There was nowhere for them to play. We were stuck in the hotel, I had no friends and was getting depressed. I contacted [Women's Aid member service]. They help me with the coach ticket. I had no money. I was told I do not need to pay to travel. The ticket was booked and I travelled the next day."

*Rail to Refuge user*



**COMING  
TOGETHER  
TO PUT  
SURVIVORS'  
NEEDS AT  
THE HEART  
OF POLICY**

## We engaged with decision makers to ensure that survivors' needs are at the heart of national policy

### We successfully campaigned for an amendment to the Victim and Prisoners Act to recognise that survivors should have access to a breadth of services depending on their need

Clause 15 had originally named only Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVAs) on the face of the Victim and Prisoners Act. This did not recognise advocacy roles that did not fit this model, such as those provided 'by and for' Black and minoritised services, and also failed to recognise the broader work of community-based support services. The government ultimately agreed with Women's Aid that this could lead to the unintended consequence of a hierarchy of support services and replaced the clause to more broadly name 'specified victim roles', which reflects the wide range of services survivors rely on and ensures that the specialist 'by and for' sector were recognised and included.

### We coordinated and collaborated on joint work across the sector to ensure a strong VAWG voice in public affairs

Collaborations such as our VAWG sector monthly calls, which we jointly chair with the End Violence Against Women Coalition, and the General Election and Victims and Prisoners Act sub-groups, are vital to ensure breadth of voice across the full spectrum of VAWG services, with true regional and local expertise feeding into public affairs. These have extended our influence by:

- Publishing a joint general election manifesto, signed by over 70 organisations.
- Attending joint meetings with MPs and Peers.
- Submitting joint letters, amendments to Bills and responses to consultations.

By supporting organisations to undertake joint work, we can ensure the sector stands together with a strong voice and share our expertise and knowledge, which informs our priorities. This includes advocating for the needs of, and specific support needed for, criminalised survivors and removing the many additional barriers faced by migrant survivors.



Our General Election 2024 manifesto called for all political parties to commit to three pillars to improve outcomes and responses for survivors and services:

#### INVEST to save:

fund specialist women's services to save lives and money.



#### SUPPORT survivors:

deliver the right response the first time.



#### PREVENT abuse:

transform societal attitudes and understanding.



## **We have campaigned for legislation to protect survivors of domestic abuse from poor practice**



Influencing change in policy and practice plays a vital role in reducing barriers to fleeing and ensuring survivors get the support they need.

We responded to 18 consultations and inquiries, representing survivors' and members' needs to Parliamentary committees, government departments and other agencies.

We have worked with members of the House of Lords and other VAWG sector organisations to table amendments on:

- Defining community-based support domestic abuse services.
- Creating protection for survivors from unregulated experts in the family courts.
- Prohibiting unsupervised contact for children with perpetrators.
- Signposting survivors to specialist services in the Victims Code.

## **We have voiced the concerns of survivors and services on failings in the family courts and worked with decision makers to ensure the family justice system is safe for survivors and their children.**

It has been almost four years since the publication of the Ministry of Justice's pivotal 'Harm Panel' report, which found systemic failures in how the family courts responded to domestic abuse. The panel made a number of urgent recommendations – but the pace of change remains slow.

We campaigned on the harmful potential impact on survivors of plans for compulsory mediation in the family courts. In February 2024, the Government reversed these plans.

In June 2023, we coordinated an open letter from our patron Mel B, which was signed by almost 3,000 people, calling for the panel's recommendations to be



implemented urgently and in full to improve the safety of the family courts.

We have also responded to consultations by the Ministry of Justice, Family Justice Council and Review of Civil Legal Aid, advocating for policy and decision making in the family courts to be designed around survivors' needs.

Beyond political audiences, our Experts by Experience shared powerful quotes about their family court experiences on social media to mark Time to Talk Day in February and Mothers' Day in March. These reached around 40,000 people and compellingly demonstrated the need for urgent reform.



## We also stepped up our influencing work with local decision makers to ensure they prioritise survivors and the lifesaving specialist support services they need

### We connected and supported local stakeholders so that best practice to end domestic abuse can be shared

We launched our **Domestic Abuse Councillor Network** in October. We shared newsletters with the network with the aim of raising awareness of the needs of survivors and the challenges facing domestic abuse services, helping councillors improve local practice to better support survivors and services. Network members, who now number over 160 and include councillors and Police and Crime Commissioners across political parties, benefit from tailored communications and events. The newsletter has an open rate of 70%.

### We engaged key health stakeholders to secure domestic abuse, and specifically survivors' mental health, as a strategic priority within the health sector

We engaged **Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)** to highlight the importance of including domestic abuse and VAWG in their Joint Forward Plans. These plans will inform future commissioning priorities and we hope greater attention will be paid to specialist services, whose amazing work to support survivors often has no dedicated funding. In June 2023, we held a Health Summit with over 40 attendees from a range of VAWG sector organisations, the NHS and health commissioners. Sharing knowledge and best practise helps drive improvements to the domestic abuse response from health organisations.

### Our Experts by Experience network strengthened survivor voices in our own work and the national agenda

Our **Experts by Experience** network of survivors has gone from strength to strength, welcoming five new members last year. Through speaking at different events, the diverse community of survivors has collectively reached over 70 family lawyers, 30 health professionals, 20 councillors and many more decision makers and professionals, sharing their expertise to improve policy and practice.

### Our survivor engagement guide supports others to better centre survivors' voices meaningfully across all sectors

We worked with **Imkaan and Women's Aid sister federations** in the devolved nations to develop our guide to meaningful survivor engagement. This was published in March and has already been downloaded over 4,000 times and will help professionals across sectors to better centre survivors' voices.

"An inspiring group of strong women [...]. I just wanted to say thank you again and reinforce how important the work you do is and reflect on the impact and strength you provide"

*Survivor who attended our IWD survivor event*

# We led the way in evidence and data on domestic abuse to ensure responses to domestic abuse are grounded in evidence and the voices of survivors and services



[www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/research](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/research)

## Publications

Over **21,000 people** have downloaded our reports and publications from our website.

We published three reports this year: **Nowhere to Turn 2023** shines a light on the perilous and difficult journeys that many survivors who face structural barriers or inequalities in accessing refuge must undertake to escape abuse;

**Influencers and Attitudes** gives new insight into children and young people's perceptions of domestic abuse; and **The Domestic Abuse Report 2024: Annual Audit** brings together the most comprehensive set of data on domestic abuse in the country, including both Women's Aid datasets and findings from our Annual Survey and FOIs.



### The Domestic Abuse Report 2024: Annual Audit

Our annual publication used data from On Track, Routes to Support and the Annual Survey, and shows that 49% of domestic abuse organisations had been running an area of their domestic abuse service without any dedicated

funding; and 63% of services reported that survivors couldn't afford to leave the perpetrator.

Provision in London was explored as an example of how good commissioning can work in practice, using findings from the London Refuges Data Collection Project.

The report was launched this year through an exclusive with **Channel 4 News**. As part of this, Channel 4 filmed at a Sheffield Women's Aid refuge with their CEO Hollie Venn, to demonstrate the effect of local funding cuts. Our CEO, Farah Nazeer, also appeared in studio, and spoke more about the Audit's findings and what they mean.

Findings were disseminated to **129 policymakers and practitioners through a webinar in March** and shared by Dawn Butler MP in the House of Commons, highlighting the value of specialist services, need for good practices in commissioning and greater funding for specialist domestic abuse services.

## Our campaigning and awareness raising has kept our key messages in the news and public awareness, both nationally and internationally

### Our 2023 16 Days of Activism campaign called for the national prioritisation of domestic abuse

Over **1,700 people** signed our open letter calling on the leaders of all political parties to commit to invest in specialist domestic abuse services and pledge support to the **'Invest to Save'** pillar of our general election manifesto.



**30 MPs from across the political spectrum attended our parliamentary drop-in**, demonstrating cross-party support for our calls to 'Invest to Save'.

**We coordinated, along with End Violence Against Women (EVAW), substantial sector reports to help international bodies effectively monitor the UK's performance on tackling VAWG**

Our report to **GREVIO**, the Council of Europe body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (the landmark international treaty on violence against women), was endorsed by **58 VAWG sector organisations** and comprehensively set out issues facing women in England and Wales – particularly marginalised women. GREVIO will make recommendations based on the evidence they receive, so our report will help ensure that **key gaps are identified** and the **Government is held to account** when it comes to supporting survivors.

**We built on the success of our short film “He’s Coming Home” to establish the footballing community’s valuable role in ending domestic abuse during International Women’s Day**

We held our **cross-party parliamentary football match** while receiving a £3,000 donation from the team, which helped **support 300 survivors through the Women’s Aid Live Chat**. We also collaborated with **Fulham FC** on an International Women’s Day feature about Women’s Aid in their match day program for the Fulham v Brighton game.



**We looked to inspire inclusion during our International Women’s Day (IWD) celebrations and called for action to invest in services**



We celebrated with **Airbnb**, who showcased how businesses can contribute to ending domestic abuse through training, staff support, and fostering a culture intolerance of abuse. With representatives from companies like **Netflix** and **Spotify** in attendance, Airbnb took the lead in demonstrating the significant impact businesses can have in standing against abuse.

*Victoria Newton, Editor at The Sun chairs a panel discussion achieving the first generation where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated. She is joined by Amanda Cupples, General Manager at Airbnb for Northern Europe.*

# COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

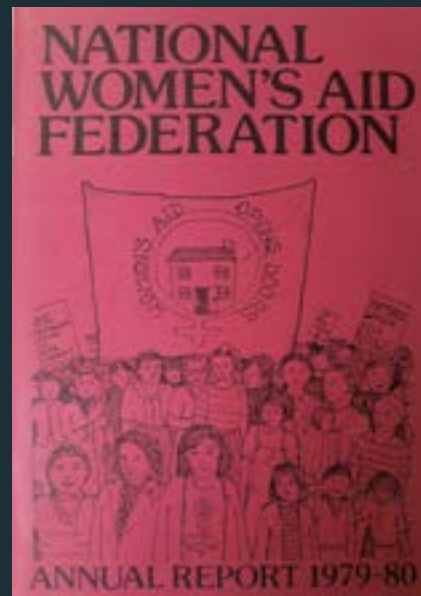
In honour of our 50th anniversary, we delved deep into our vaults to transform art and posters from the beginning of the federation into a new range of merchandise. The 'Archive Collection' features bold messaging that's underpinned Women's Aid's campaigning over the years and is designed to start conversations. The way we talk about domestic abuse may have changed, but the sentiment behind it has not; and this collection looks back at some of the statements that have resonated most powerfully with audiences to date. We have been delighted by the reception to our collection so far!



[Learn about our Archive project](#)



As we come into our 50th year we've been able to look back at how far we have come. The Women's Aid Federation of England Archive has been compiled by the **University of Leeds Special Collections Team** and documents the history of the organisation, from its origins as the National Women's Aid Federation in 1974 through to present day. The Archive is a major resource for understanding the formation, development and running of the organisation, its contribution to health and society, changes in the law, and cultural shifts in attitudes towards domestic abuse.



▶▶▶ Explore Women's Aid's archive: [https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/2963/womens\\_aid\\_federation\\_of\\_england\\_archive](https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/2963/womens_aid_federation_of_england_archive)

**As we move into our 50th year, we worked on creating a sustainable organisation. This was possible thanks to the support of our fantastic donors, fundraisers and corporate partners. In 2023/24:**



An amazing **3,588 supporters** made a monthly donation.

- We took part in the **Big Give's Women and Girl's match fund** in October, which meant that all donations made through the campaign page that week were doubled. This campaign raised a total of **£29,498** - including £10,000 match funding from **The Big Give** and £15,000 from the **Bloom** network!
- Over **450 fundraisers** took on challenges, completed sky dives, hosted dinner parties, organised community events and laced up their trainers to raise funds for Women's Aid.



*Sharing our work at Bloom Fest 2024*



*#TeamWomensAid after the Royal Parks half*

- **524 individuals** set up fundraising pages for our **1.7 a Day, Your Way Challenge**, moving 1.7 miles every day in September! The challenge raised over **£36,850 total**. This was over £15,000 more than the 2022 challenge.

- On International Women’s Day, we challenged our supporters to **‘Freeze for A Fiver’** and take on a cold-water swim to raise money.

- Over the period of our **winter appeal**, **we raised over £60,000**. Centred around ‘When Home Isn’t Safe, We’re Here’, as part of the appeal we shared powerful videos of survivors Lucy and Yasmin sharing how Women’s Aid services had made a difference for them.



*Freeze for a Fiver cold-water swimmers*



*Winter Appeal, ‘When Home Isn’t Safe, We’re Here’*

**Finally, we are so grateful for the generous donations we received this year from supporters who left us a gift in their will.**

Did you know that you can leave Women’s Aid a gift in your will that will help fund our future? Legacy gifts allow us to plan for our future and grow our vital support services for women and children impacted by domestic abuse.

▶▶▶ Contact [fundraising@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@womensaid.org.uk) to find out more.

## Corporate giving

**We are grateful for all companies who choose to support Women’s Aid in whatever way. We would love to mention you all, but a couple of highlights this year include...**

- Law firm **Lee & Thompson** who, having chosen us as their charity of the year, organised some amazing fundraising activities, including a 42km night hike through the streets of London, raising over £10,000.
- On top of their generous funding supporting our work with children and young people, **YSL Beauté** (left) furthered their support this year by hosting a series of activities for Citizens Day, including a sponsored walk.
- **L’Occitane** continued to demonstrate their commitment to empowerment by providing vital funding for our Survivors’ Forum.



## What's next?

As we move into our 50th year we are excited to celebrate our organisation and federation. We want to come together to end domestic abuse, therefore, in 2024 and 2025 we will be working towards:

- 1 Culture shift:** creating a cultural and knowledge shift on tolerance of domestic abuse across society.
- 2 Support:** providing support to survivor's and members with what they need to thrive.
- 3 Influence:** working with stakeholders to create an enabling policy environment for survivors and strong effective services.
- 4 Sustainability:** building on becoming a more sustainable, resilient organisation.

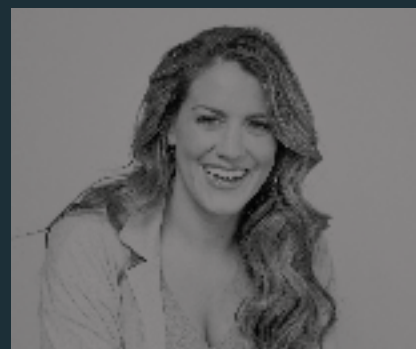


## Acknowledgements

We would like to say thank you to our supporters, our members, survivors and others we have worked with this year for your continued support.

We would like to thank Ellen Malos and Jalna Hanmer, whose incredible work and dedication to the VAWG sector has had such an impact in shaping our cause to end domestic abuse.

*In memory of our Love Respect Ambassador, **Maddy Anholt.***



# THANK YOU

to all our amazing and generous supporters

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## Multi-Year Funders:

Charities Aid Foundation  
Association of British Insurers  
Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing and Communities (DLUHC)  
Home Office  
The Mayor's Office for Policing and  
Crime  
London Councils  
Sister's Charitable Trust

## Corporate Funders:

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## 2023-2024 Funders:

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