

NOWHERE TO TURN, 2025

Findings from the ninth year of the No Woman Turned Away project

The NWTa project supports survivors to navigate barriers to fleeing abuse and accessing safe accommodation by working directly with survivors and collaborating with, supporting and challenging other services. This report evaluates the NWTa project in 2024 and utilises insights from the project to inform research on the experiences of survivors facing additional barriers to accessing safety and support. This year's report includes an in-depth exploration of the experiences of survivors with insecure immigration status, the impacts of the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) and the vital need for improved responses from statutory services.



67 Women's Aid member services referred survivors to the NWTa project in 2024.

39 (58.2%) of these services were **'new referrers'** and had not made referrals in 2023.

342 women engaged with and completed support from the NWTa project in 2024, a 67.6% increase compared with 2023.



Women received a range of support from the specialist practitioners including:



Survivors had a range of support needs and the percentage of women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) has increased year-on-year since 2020.



The most common reasons for referral were:



51.5%

NRPF (an increase of 6.4 percentage points from 2023)



37.1%

mental health support needs



19.6%

substance use support needs



15.5%

language or cultural support needs



15.2%

one or more disabilities



This year's report also recorded the barriers experienced by women with a **disabled child** and women who had made a **recent suicide attempt**.



There is a **significant shortage** of refuge spaces able to accommodate women with diverse characteristics, circumstances and support needs.



For **23.7%** of women, the NWTa practitioners searched Routes to Support **at least once** to try to find a suitable refuge vacancy and **none were available**.

Women experienced further abuse and hardship while waiting for refuge.



28.4% spent time **sofa-surfing**, up from **17.2%** in 2023.



24.0% experienced **further abuse** from the perpetrator.



7.0% experienced abuse from (an) **additional perpetrator(s)**.



13.2% did not have **enough money** to pay for essentials.



13.2% were **scared** to go outside.



8.8% **slept rough**, up from **2.9%** in 2023.

Statutory services often failed to meet their legal duty to support survivors and the NWTa practitioners played a key role in holding these services to account.



Over two-thirds (67.4%) of inadequate and unsafe responses to survivors recorded by Women's Aid direct services were regarding **statutory services**.



24.7% of failings recorded were regarding **police**, including failure to arrest perpetrators and giving advice which put survivors at further risk.



81.8% of failings recorded about local authority safeguarding teams were regarding **children's services**.



The NWTa practitioners inform women of their rights and, sometimes with the support of solicitors, ensure statutory services meet their legal duties.



By the end of support, 60.5% of women had at least one positive outcome.

Almost half (48.0%) of women had a new housing outcome including:



refuge (22.5%)



emergency accommodation (18.7%)



private rental (4.4%)

Women had a range of other outcomes:

immigration (**21.3%**)

health (**15.8%**)

finances (**15.5%**)

justice (**12.6%**)

parenting (**8.2%**)

social and community life (**8.2%**)

employment, education or training (**2.0%**)

Over half of women (55.4%) felt **safer**.



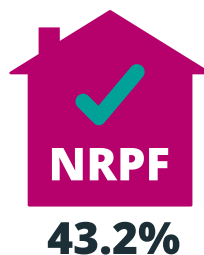
The MVDAC replaced the DDVC¹ in 2024, increasing the risks for survivors and exacerbating barriers to accessing refuge.

Changes to the concession made dependants on their partner's student or worker visa eligible for the MVDAC but not the DA Rule. These survivors are at risk of having no further immigration route when the MVDAC expires. It is crucial that survivors access immigration advice before making an application, but many are unaware of this or unable to access advice.

Refuge workers are now more uncertain whether survivors with the concession can apply for the DA Rule. This has led to **more refuges declining referrals for survivors with the concession** or requesting a solicitor is in place to make a further immigration application and/or the survivor is already accessing benefits.

There is a **national shortage of legal aid solicitors and free immigration advice services**. The NWTa practitioners successfully signposted or referred many survivors to immigration advice; however, less than half (47.4%) accessed advice by case closure, highlighting that significant barriers remain even with specialist support.

Professionals who are not regulated to provide immigration advice gave advice to 29 survivors and for a quarter (24.1%) of these, the advice was inaccurate. Non-regulated professionals submitted immigration applications on behalf of 12 survivors. This is illegal and has serious implications on survivors' immigration options.



The NWTa team delivered support which directly contributed to accommodation outcomes for 43.2% of survivors with NRPF.



For 61.5% of families with NRPF, **children's services failed to provide adequate support** including failure to fund accommodation. For 35.7% of families where children's services funded accommodation, the accommodation was unsuitable.

For at least nine women with NRPF, the **actions of children's services put them at increased risk of abuse**.

¹ The Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) replaced the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) in 2024. The MVDAC allows survivors who have leave to enter or remain in the UK as a partner to gain temporary leave to remain in their own right and access to public funds if their relationship has broken down due to domestic abuse. Under the MVDAC, dependent partners of a migrant in the UK on a worker or student visa and people with pre-settled status based on their partner as a family member or joining family member, were made eligible for the concession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The NWTa project supports Women's Aid to identify emerging issues from across the country and identify appropriate recommendations to address these issues.

Statutory agencies:

1. All statutory service staff working with survivors should receive training developed and delivered by specialist domestic abuse organisations. Training should align to the legal definition of domestic abuse, be refreshed regularly and respond to the full breadth of survivors' needs including survivors with insecure immigration status.
2. Commissioners should undertake mandatory, regular training, developed and delivered by specialist organisations, on commissioning survivor-centred support.
3. The impact of this training should be evaluated to ensure statutory services meet their legal duties to survivors.

Local domestic abuse services:

1. Ensure frontline workers access training on supporting women with insecure immigration status.
2. Ensure frontline workers support survivors to access immigration advice from a qualified professional and only give advice themselves where they are qualified and regulated to do so.
3. Develop funding pots to support women with NRPF while they receive support to access public funds.
4. Where appropriate and possible, refer survivors to 'by and for' services.
5. Refer women to the NWTa project and work together with the NWTa practitioners to support women.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government:

1. Continue to work with Women's Aid to develop and resource the NWTa project and support the implementation of recommendations from the Nowhere to Turn reports.
2. Implement reforms to the oversight of the statutory duty to ensure it is delivered in line with statutory guidance, delivers value for money and meets unmet need.
3. Consider commissioning a mapping exercise on the availability of legal advisors.

HM Treasury:

1. Invest a minimum of £502 million per year for specialist domestic abuse services in England. £150 million should be ring-fenced for 'by and for' services, £222m for refugee services and £280m statutory funding for community-based support services.
2. Introduce a children and young people (CYP) Support Fund of £46 million.

Home Office:

1. Abolish the NRPF condition for all survivors. Extend the eligibility of the MVDAC and DA Rule to all survivors and extend the MVDAC from three to six months.
2. Fund training on supporting survivors with insecure immigration status for staff at statutory services and local domestic abuse services.
3. Ensure Home Office immigration officials receive training on domestic abuse and sexual violence, delivered by specialist services.
4. Guarantee multi-year funding for the Flexible Fund beyond 2026.
5. Build on the pilot of Raneem's Law to ensure that survivors are protected and perpetrators are held to account.
6. Implement a firewall between immigration enforcement and statutory services.

Ministry of Justice:

1. Reinstate legal aid for alleged perpetrators and all survivors and ensure that there are sufficient legal aid solicitors to meet demand including immigration solicitors.
2. Ensure funding for VAWG funds and programmes are protected and increased in line with demand, population changes and inflation.

For more information on the NWTa project, please visit the [Women's Aid website](#).

Copies of all editions of the Nowhere to Turn report series can be downloaded for free [online](#).

For information on training delivered by Women's Aid, please see [our website](#) or [email us](#).