

we work  
**together**  
we work



**women's aid**  
until women & children are safe

annual review  
2014-2015

# we work **together** we work

The title of this Annual Review was chosen because so much of what Women's Aid has achieved this year, we have achieved together — not just as a national body, and as more than a federation: as a movement.

The SOS campaign, which secured new funding for refuges, is a prime example. Survivors, local services and national organisations all came together at our candlelit vigil at Downing Street, and a matter of days later, at our 40th anniversary event, the funding was announced.

We work more effectively together than separately. This begins with working with survivors, working together for the best outcomes for each woman. And this ethos carries through into everything we do. That's why we are continually expanding our efforts to bring greater capacity-building support



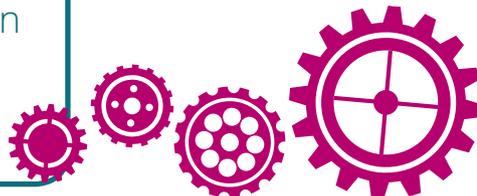
## Our impact statement

Women are believed, know it is not their fault, their experiences have been understood and responded to, and they feel safer and better able to make their own choices.

to local specialist services, and why we are developing our outcomes framework On Track. This will not only allow local organisations to evidence the change they support women and children to achieve, but will also allow a national picture to be built which proves the effectiveness of those organisations collectively. It's also why more and more local organisations are putting themselves forward for the Women's Aid National Quality Mark — which in turn leads commissioners to expect this sign of quality women's services, and ultimately strengthens our movement.

At Women's Aid we are proud to have the support of our local services, and proud when they call on us for support in turn. These are not easy times, but we are better together.

**Polly Neate**  
Chief Executive, Women's Aid



# A year in our community

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Women's Aid spends 88p in every £1 on charitable activities



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**43,698**

people in our Twitter and Facebook communities (up 39% from last year)



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**2,041**

new members joining our online Survivors' Forum



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**39,000**

people supporting our SOS petition which secured emergency funding of £10 million



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**52,229**

calls and emails handled by the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Helpline (run in partnership with Refuge)



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**95%**

survivors who experienced coercive control (which we successfully campaigned to make a criminal offence) before leaving their partner (Kelly, Sharp and Klein, 2014)

**220**

member organisations making up our federation



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**300+**

services the federation provides across the country



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**203,300**

women supported through community-based services\*



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**11,900**

women who stayed in refuge accommodation\*



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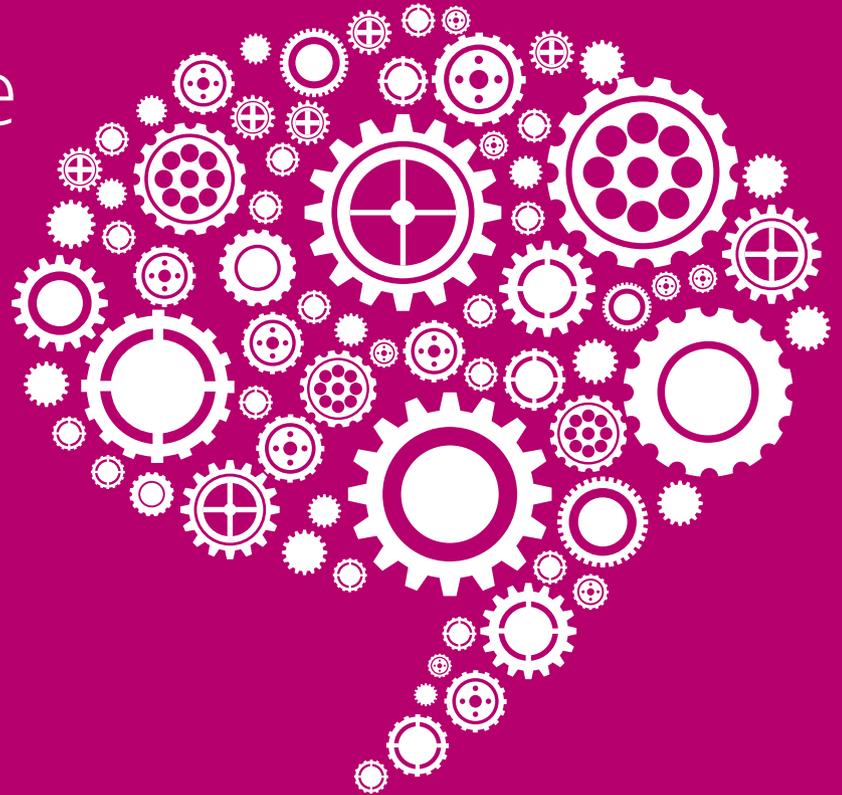
**43,700**

children directly supported by refuge and outreach services\*



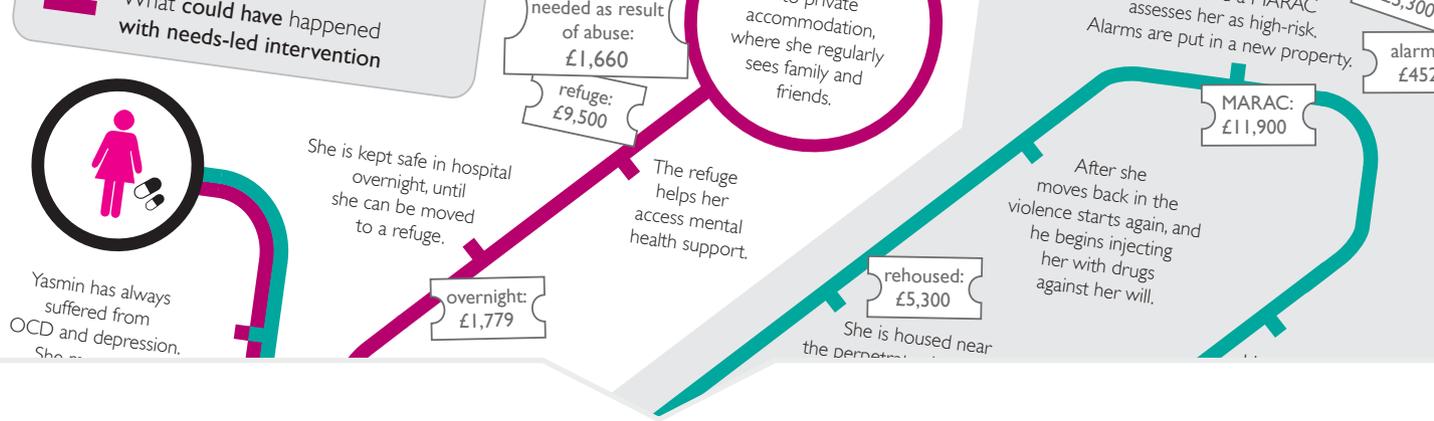
\*estimations calculated from Women's Aid Annual Survey data 2014

Working with  
survivors to  
make Change  
that Lasts



"It's so empowering and comforting to  
know that others are stood beside you."

Survivor



## Hearing what survivors need

Survivors using our services tell us that they want long-term independence and freedom from abuse, and for their children to be safe and protected from harmful influences. At every point on her journey a survivor should be given the tools she needs to get to its end. This might be her first phone call to the police, or even a conversation with a hairdresser. Too often these opportunities are missed or responded to in the wrong way; maybe she dropped the charges and was labelled “unreliable”, rather than being seen as somebody trying to protect herself from danger.

So what happens next? Perhaps she drops out of “the system” for a while, put off by an earlier response, scared she will lose her children. Perhaps she is overlooked because she is not considered “high-risk”, and the support she is given doesn’t help her find her own long-term solutions.

This is the reality for many women who find themselves in a system that focusses on “high-risk” and often views criminal justice outcomes as the most important. And even if she is deemed “high risk”, the system may still fail her, as seen in recent research (right).

This has to change. **Our new model, Change that Lasts, is a strengths-based, needs-led model that supports domestic violence survivors and their children to build resilience, and leads to independence.** We are working with services and policy makers across the country to make sure survivors are at the heart of every response, at every step.

### My Sisters Place: evidence for a needs-led approach

Women’s Aid member My Sisters Place has been spearheading the case for a needs-led approach with its research into the outcomes for women referred to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (Maracs). The project focussed on the cases which were repeatedly re-referred with no change to risk, and adopted an approach which focussed on survivors’ needs, asking, “what do they need, and can we help them achieve it?” Cases were tracked 12 months pre- and post- intervention and showed a 65% reduction in repeat incidents reported to the police.

My Sisters Place continues to play a key part in developing and establishing this approach.



## Being there to listen

Our forum has  
120 posts every day

*"Before coming to the board, generally, it felt like no one understood what was happening to me. It felt if ever I tried to tell anyone what was going on. It is a relief to know I am not alone."*

*"As some of you know I am gearing up to leave ... I have been reading the posts on here regularly and really take strength from all the courageous voices on here. Thank you, thank you!"*

*"I wouldn't be nearly as far on my road to recovery without this forum. It's like a club that no one wants to be in but we are all in this together. I can post and ask for reassurance on here. Especially in the early days when I thought I was going crazy. Wanting to get back with a man who raped and abused me for years. No one else understands."*



## Online support

Our Survivors' Forum is a safe, anonymous space where women share experiences and support each other. Women tell us that the value of support from someone who truly relates to your experience cannot be underestimated. The Forum also offers advice and information from trained Women's Aid moderators. The popularity of the forum grows year by year, with over **2,000 new members** joining in 2014-15.

Women's Aid has also continued to work with **Netmums**, the online community for parents with over a million members, giving specialist domestic and sexual violence support for the Netmums Coffee House Chat message board.

## Phone support

The 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, receives an average of **493 calls a day**. This safe, confidential service offers expert advice to survivors, friends, families and professionals. Women's Aid's unique, secure database **UKrefugesonline**, developed and maintained with our sister federations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, allowed the helpline to refer over **11,484 women and their children** to refuge accommodation this year.

[www.womensaid.org.uk/  
get-help](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/get-help)

# Breaking down barriers

Survivors repeatedly tell us that they face barriers at every turn when they seek help. We represent those survivors nationally, and we get results.

This year, Women's Aid joined forces with the Sara Charlton Charitable Foundation and Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service to create the **Domestic Violence Law Reform Campaign**. Together we fought to criminalise the coercive control that underpins so much domestic abuse — something 98% of survivors we surveyed said should happen. As a result, the government created a **new offence of coercive and controlling behaviour** in the Serious Crime Bill in March 2015.

Women's Aid is the secretariat for the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence**. In 2014-15, with Rape Crisis England and Wales as partners, the group conducted an inquiry into the state of local domestic and sexual violence services. It received written and oral evidence from more than 100 survivors of domestic and sexual violence and over 60 organisations. The main recommendation was that the government must introduce a sustainable and secure funding model for specialist services; one far more responsive to survivors' needs.

Women's Aid has:

- campaigned for **statutory relationships and sex education** in schools;
- supported the successful calls for **revenge porn** to be **criminalised**, providing expert analysis and recommendations to government;
- lobbied the government to **ratify the Istanbul Convention**;
- demanded the **widening of the legal aid evidence gateway** – which the Ministry of Justice reviewed and widened in April 2014;
- worked with **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for England and Wales (HMIC)** to improve the **police response** to domestic violence, developing police training on coercive control and ensuring HMIC directly hears the voices of survivors;
- put survivors at the **top of the agenda ahead of the general election** with an event held jointly with **Girlguiding** at Speaker's House in Westminster, to highlight the needs of women and girls to MPs and parliamentary candidates.



[www.womensaid.org.uk/  
appg](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/appg)

[www.womensaid.org.uk/  
dvlawreform](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/dvlawreform)

# Stronger local services



“It felt so good getting everything out at my first Women’s Aid meeting last week. Someone really understands and believes me...”

Survivor

# Local support for every woman, at every stage

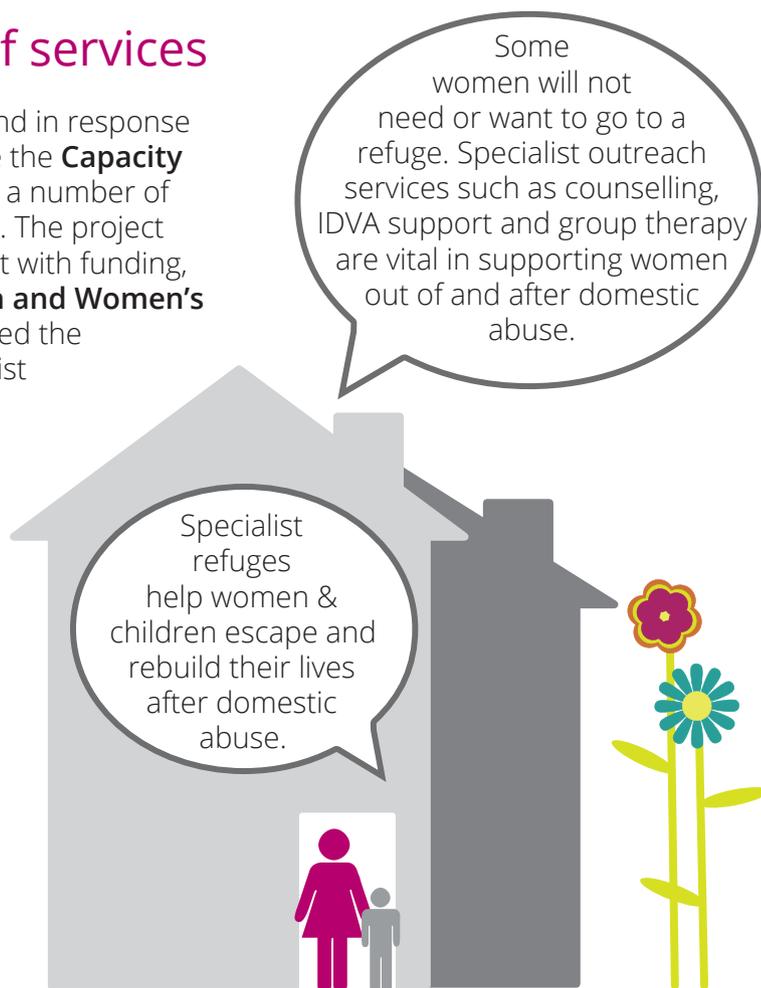
Women's Aid is a federation of hundreds of organisations, dedicated to supporting women in their own local area, or away if they are forced to flee. Each year we run a programme of **member consultations** to make sure we are helping our members in the way they most need. Based on what local services say they want from Women's Aid, our work for members has three main strands:

## 1. Promoting sustainability of services

This was the highest priority for our members, and in response Women's Aid joined forces with Imkaan to create the **Capacity Building Partnership**, which has driven forward a number of significant national initiatives during the last year. The project has delivered individual capacity building support with funding, tendering and sustainability issues to **42 Imkaan and Women's Aid member organisations**. It has also supported the building of partnerships and consortia of specialist services in **eight local areas**.

We help commissioners too. This year we ran **six National Commissioning Workshops** in partnership with the Home Office, Rape Crisis England and Wales, Respect, SafeLives, and survivors. These gave commissioners and services the chance to understand the challenges facing both groups and discuss ways forward.

We have also continued to establish **regional networks** for the federation, to strengthen relationships, share skills and experience, and equip organisations to succeed together in a competitive environment. So far, networks are working in the South East, South West, London, West Midlands, East Midlands and the North West.



## 2. Evidencing the impact of services



It is essential that local services can prove the difference they make. This year we have continued to roll out the **Women's Aid National Quality Standards**. Organisations applying for the quality mark must prove themselves against criteria that promote positive survivor outcomes such as: physical and emotional recovery; rights and access; safety and dignity; and sustainability and autonomy. **We have awarded the quality mark to 21 applicants this year.**

The National Quality Standards are more frequently being referenced by commissioners, and the government used them as assessment criteria for the £10 million fund released as a result of our SOS campaign (right).

*"[The Standards have been an opportunity to] look afresh at our policies and procedures to ensure good, women-focussed practice. The feedback ... and recommendations ... have promoted important discussions within the staff teams about the history of the movement, the ethos of our organisation and how we balance holding true to our primary purpose alongside meeting service specifications for contracts. A difficult balancing act but one which the National Standards will support us in."*

Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Service



Women's Aid is also piloting its national outcomes framework and database **On Track**, developed as part of the Imkaan and Women's Aid Capacity Building Partnership. On Track is a package of resources to help local services collect data and evidence quickly, simply, and as part of their everyday work. Using simple case management forms, data is collected at referral, assessment, review and exit. On Track helps services to communicate their value locally; each service owns its own data, and is given support from Women's Aid to maximise its use. On Track will also create a live, sector-wide, national dataset covering survivors' needs, support delivered and outcomes achieved. It will inform research into "what works", and permit benchmarking regionally and nationally.

### Ashiana: leading the way

Ashiana, a service specialising in helping Black and Minority Ethnic women aged 16-30 years who are at risk of domestic violence and sexual violence, recently successfully achieved both the Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards and the Women's Aid Quality Mark. The assessors particularly commended its unique and innovative service for young women fleeing forced marriage and "honour-based" violence, and its involvement in the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime Harmful Practices pilot in East London. Too many commissioners fail to understand the specific experiences and needs of BME women and girls, and Ashiana's work proves specialist support changes lives.

### 3. National voice for local services

Finally, our consultation across the federation showed that members value Women's Aid's clear strategic impact on national policy and public awareness, and they want more.

#### Case study: SOS campaign

The last five years have not been easy, and by the end of 2013 it was clear that our federation of local services was facing a crisis like never before.

- Out of 167 domestic violence services in England, **48% said that they were running services without funding**. Six refuge services were being run without dedicated funding and using up their reserves to keep their services going.
- Between April and July 2014, **ten specialist domestic violence services across England lost funding for services they were providing**. All but one of these nine services lost their services to a non-specialist service provider.

Thanks to the Roddick Foundation's support, the SOS: Save Refuges, Save Lives campaign was born in September 2014, calling on the government to protect the national network of domestic violence refuges and commit to a new model of sustainable funding.

We worked with campaigning website 38 degrees to launch a petition which attracted over **39,000 signatures**. It was handed in to Downing Street on 20th November during a candlelit vigil. Workers and residents of refuges from around the country showed their solidarity and shared their vigils on Twitter.

The campaign led to a **£10 million fund being created by the government for local specialist refuge services**. With support from the Lloyds Bank Foundation, Women's Aid and Imkaan's Capacity Building Partnership played a key role in assisting **43 member organisations** to claim support from the fund. The SOS campaign was also repeatedly discussed in Parliament and in national media, and led to a Women's Refuges (Eligibility and Provision) Private Member's Bill.

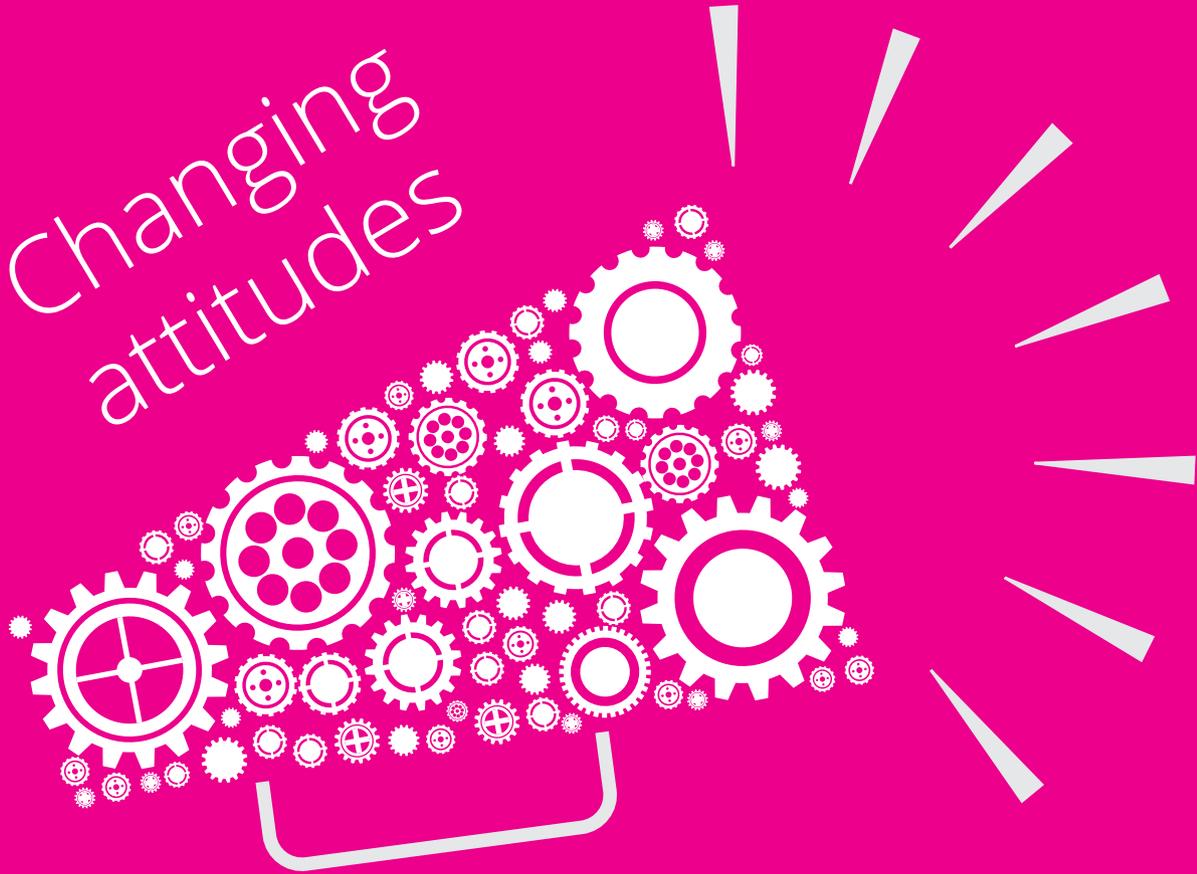


[www.womensaid.org.uk/sos](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/sos)

#saverefugessavelives

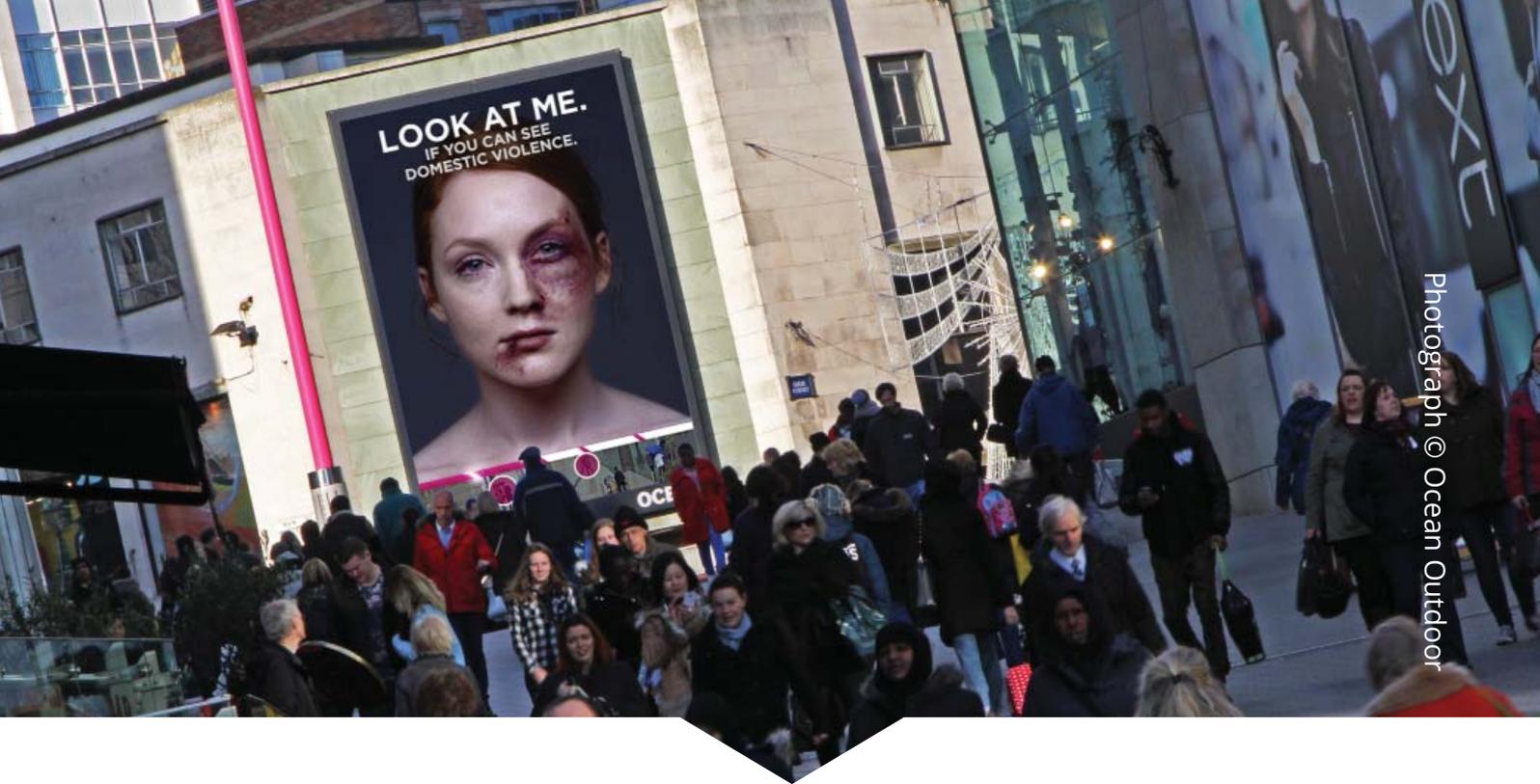


Changing  
attitudes



“Women’s Aid offers not only a voice, but a loud, confident and strong one. So let’s stand together unified and call out the unacceptable.”

Jahméne Douglas, Children and Young People’s  
Ambassador for Women’s Aid



## If you can see it, you can end it

It's all too easy to turn a blind eye to domestic abuse. So in a UK first Women's Aid used the power of groundbreaking interactive technology to turn people's heads, and change their minds. Huge billboards in prominent shopping and business areas showed a woman's face covered in bruises, alongside the simple text 'Look at me'. As more people look at her face, facial recognition technology picks up the images of their faces and her bruises start to fade.

The **Look at Me** campaign was conceptualised by creative agency WRCS, and won first prize in the Interactive Category of Ocean's annual Art of Outdoor Digital Competition. This gave us premium space across Ocean's network of outdoor

advertising billboards in London and Birmingham, and the campaign was launched for International Women's Day (8th March) 2015.

The initiative was supported on Channel 4 with two 30 second prime time TV spots, and videos showing how it worked were displayed in other locations across the UK.

The campaign won awards and was talked about across social media. But most importantly it stated loud and clear that everyone has a part to play in ending domestic abuse.

[www.womensaid.org.uk/blind-eye](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/blind-eye)



# Uniting communities against domestic violence

Football United Against Domestic Violence is our campaign with football fans, clubs and national footballing bodies to send a clear message that domestic violence is always unacceptable. Together we will call out sexist behaviour that can underpin violence towards women and girls.

We have spoken out loudly against sexism and violence against women by those involved in football and other sports.

Women's Aid has been working with the Premier League, Kick It Out, and the Football Supporters' Federation to engage fans and clubs, and was supported by the Parliamentary Football Team who hosted the first Football United celebrity football match.

The campaign aims to:

- **Motivate** — encouraging football audiences (male and female) to take action now, signpost to help and create public awareness through films and match day activities.
- **Educate** — to achieve long-term change by working with young people/working with clubs on workplace policies/training.

we are working closely with the Premier League to roll out the campaign to clubs. We were delighted to welcome Bristol City as one of our first signed teams and are looking forward to announcing more developments over the coming year.

[www.footballunited.org.uk](http://www.footballunited.org.uk)



Photograph by Tim Jones  
for Women's Aid



## A better future

"I'm still here and life is better in many ways for me and my amazingly strong beautiful daughter. We're getting there slowly so I know others can too."

Survivor

# Training for a strengths-based, needs-led response

We know that the first response for survivors is vital and life-changing, whether it is from police, healthcare practitioners, domestic abuse workers or housing teams. This year, the Women's Aid National Training Centre has worked alongside a wide range of professionals to improve the quality and accessibility of support for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

## Working with domestic abuse specialists

By ensuring that survivors are heard, understood and believed from the start, we can be confident they will receive the support they need throughout their journey. Our training encompasses all the skills and knowledge for any specialist role in our sector. As well as **professional qualifications**, we also offer a variety of **continuing professional development** courses to enhance existing skills, or broaden people's knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse (for example, to cover parenting or support for children and young people).

## Working with other professionals

We have supported Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) with its national inspection of responses to domestic violence, and have delivered bespoke, comprehensive training to two police forces. We are currently working with the College of Policing and SafeLives to train **1,000 police officers** and **200 College of Policing coaches and supervisors**.

We respond to **any profession** that wants to enhance its knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse – from social workers to midwives to name just two. We have worked closely with Research in Practice for Adults and the Local Government Association, for example, on workshops for professionals in adult safeguarding covering domestic abuse, particularly coercive control.

"The theory backed up everything that I was doing in practice and therefore added to my confidence and wider understanding of the experiences of survivors and children experiencing domestic abuse."

Trainee (and now qualified) Domestic Abuse Prevention Advocate

Find out more: [www.nationaltrainingcentre.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrainingcentre.org.uk)





“As a child I experienced my Mum going through domestic violence for 10 years. If these things were spoken about in school then it would allow children to open up and ask for help. I remember feeling very embarrassed as a child to talk to anyone about what was happening at home.” Child Survivor

# Safer futures

Supporting children and young people to understand and recover from their own experiences is a fundamental part of preventing abuse. Whether its addressing the harm caused by abuse in the home, or discussing healthy relationships from an early age, working with children and young people is vital.

## ICAP Safer Futures Project

In 2014, we launched Safer Futures thanks to funding from our corporate partner ICAP. This national project builds networks between local schools, specialist domestic violence services and Local Authorities to ensure that healthy relationships education is delivered responsibly and effectively in schools. Since the project started we have delivered **13 Safer Futures workshops** to train School Advocates, giving them the tools to engage and support schools to tackle domestic abuse. We have also worked **directly with schools**, through training sessions with groups of school staff, and delivering a series of workshops to help professionals using the **Expect Respect Education Toolkit**.

We were delighted this year that the Expect Respect Toolkit was awarded the **PSHE Association Quality Mark** and has been promoted to over 5,000 of their members.

### Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid: Think Family Programme

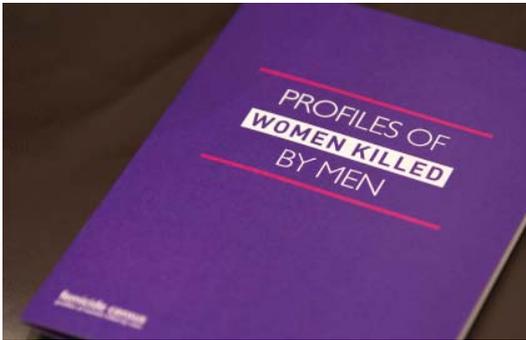
Think Family is Birmingham City Council’s name for the national Troubled Families initiative, which aims to work with whole families to turn lives around. Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid delivers intensive support to women, children, and sometimes their extended networks, where children need support for a range of social issues, as well as domestic abuse. The dedicated workers provide practical hands-on support, and plans are developed for the whole family, as well as each individual within — underpinned by a persistent, motivational and sometimes challenging approach.

They have achieved real outcomes for the 129 families they have worked with in the first phase, such as getting children off child protection plans and regularly attending school, mothers regaining confidence to parent effectively, and strengthening relationships between mums and their children in the aftermath of abuse.

[www.womensaid.org.uk/safer-futures](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/safer-futures)

# We work together - join us

## Inform



On the 12th February 2015, Karen Ingala Smith (chief executive of nia) and Women's Aid launched the UK's first census on women killed by men, in partnership with Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP and Deloitte. The Femicide Census is a database containing a wide range of information about the women, the perpetrators and the incident itself, including the date, names, police force area, and information about children, recorded motive and the weapon. It will fill the huge knowledge gaps on domestic homicides in the UK.

We need as much information as possible on femicides to continue developing the database. If you have any knowledge about cases of women killed by men, please email [femicidecensus@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:femicidecensus@womensaid.org.uk).

## Transform



Join our new network of local campaigners. We're looking for passionate individuals, specialists, professionals from all fields and local organisations who want to raise awareness, change attitudes and end domestic abuse.

We have already delivered campaign workshops to some of our local specialist services. Whether you've never campaigned in your life, are a seasoned activist, or just want to know more, look out for more opportunities in the coming year on our website and follow us on Twitter ([@womensaid](https://twitter.com/womensaid)) and Facebook ([facebook.com/womensaid](https://facebook.com/womensaid)) for up-to-the-minute news on all our campaigning activities. We have a strong voice already, but together we can be even stronger.

## Support

We need your help to continue our work. Could you run a marathon? Are you a budding baker? There are so many ways you can get involved – host a dinner party, climb mountains, or brave a skydive. The list is endless. We hold places in many sporting events including the British 10k and Ride London 100. But you don't need trainers to join Team Women's Aid. You could hold a cake sale, a quiz night or dress down day at work. Whatever you do, we'll provide you with a fundraising pack and support along the way. Go to [www.womensaid.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/get-involved) to find out more about fundraising and our latest campaign, **Invisible Prison**.



Photo: Sue Zentani

## About Women's Aid

Women's Aid is the national charity for women and children working to end domestic abuse. Over the past 40 years Women's Aid has been at the forefront of shaping and coordinating responses to domestic violence and abuse through practice.

We empower survivors by keeping their voices at the heart of our work, listening and responding to their needs. We are a federation of over 220 organisations who provide more than 300 local lifesaving services to women and children across the country.

We provide expert training, qualifications and consultancy to a range of agencies and professionals working with survivors or commissioning domestic abuse services, and award a National Quality Mark for services which meet our quality standards.

Our campaigns achieve change in policy, practice and awareness, encouraging healthy relationships and helping to build a future where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated.

The 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (run in partnership with Refuge) and our range of online services, which include the Survivors' Forum, help hundreds of thousands of women and children every year.

## Where to get help

Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership with Refuge):  
**0808 2000 247**

Survivors' Forum:  
[www.womensaid.org.uk/survivors-forum](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/survivors-forum)

Survivor's Handbook:  
[www.womensaid.org.uk/survivors-handbook](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/survivors-handbook)

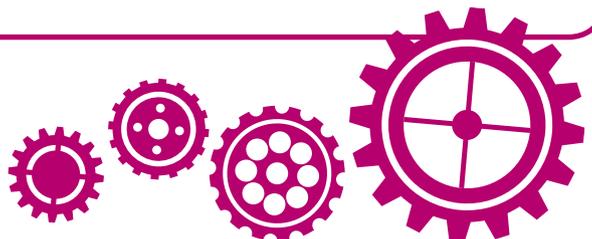
The Hideout (for children and young people):  
[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

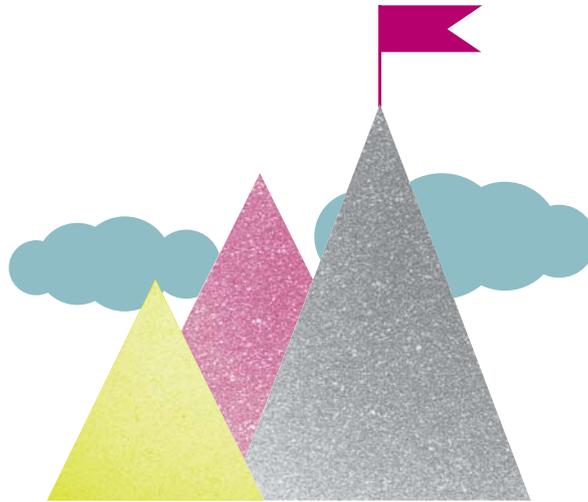
### Support our work

Our work is only possible with your support.  
You can donate online at:

[www.womensaid.org.uk/donate](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/donate)

Thank you.





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Women's Aid Federation of England  
Registered charity no: 1054154  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

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