



Annual Survey 2015

The findings

women's aid
until women & children are safe

Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015

Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children.

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, working with and for women and children by listening to them 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.

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Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015: the findings published by Women's Aid, May 2016

Foreword

By Polly Neate
Chief Executive, Women's Aid



Welcome to the Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015 Report. Thank you to all the services who provided vital data.

It is clear that the full range of specialist domestic abuse services, whether community-based or refuge, are desperately needed. Local commissioning must reflect this, both in the design of commissioning processes (we can see here that competitive tendering is a major challenge for small organisations) and in the way decisions are made.

More than this, any strategy, local or national, must ensure women can find help and support in a range of ways, whether or not they can stay at home.

This survey also shows that a large proportion of survivors of domestic abuse are not getting access to justice. This may be due to failures in the criminal justice system. In many cases, however, it will be a lack of choice. The criminal justice response is often put firmly at the centre of strategies to respond to domestic abuse, but it is not the focus of a woman's life.

Taking the survey data as a whole, it is clear that a shift is needed to an overall approach that opens up opportunities, both within and - crucially - outside the criminal justice system, for survivors to seek safety and support. As soon as possible after domestic abuse is identified, the woman's needs and circumstances must be understood and that understanding must inform the response of all agencies.

The findings are further evidence of the necessity of a needs-led approach that builds resilience and leads to independence - that's why Women's Aid has developed **Change that Lasts**. This is a new approach, developed and advocated by Women's Aid, that places the survivor at the heart and builds responses around her needs and the strengths and resources available to her. This is what specialist domestic abuse services deliver. We want to work with other agencies to help them deliver support in this way too.

For more information on Change that Lasts see the information on our web site:
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/our-approach-change-that-lasts/>

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Introduction and summary of findings

Background

Women's Aid conducts a survey of all domestic abuse services in England each year. The findings of this survey make up the largest collection of such data in the country, giving invaluable insights into the work of the domestic abuse sector and the experiences and needs of the women and children it supports.

The Annual Survey 2015 questionnaire was sent out in September 2015 to all domestic abuse services in England. At the time there were 356 services in England on the domestic abuse services database UK Refuges Online (UKROL). More details on methodology can be found in Appendix B. The data presented in this report are from the analysis of the 162 responses we received. In order to add some further context to this report we have also included some data from our UKROL Services Information: Summary of Updates 2015/16.

We asked services questions about their provision and service users over three main time periods:

- The **previous financial year** (1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015).
- A **census day** for refuge services called The Day to Count (Thursday 24th September 2015).
- A **census week** for community-based services called The Week to Count (Monday 21st September – Friday 25th September 2015 inclusive).

This sample of 162 service responses forms the basis of our analysis of the "census day" for refuges and "census week" for community-based services. The results present a snapshot of support available to women and children during one otherwise unremarkable day and week. We also collected some data about the previous financial year. From 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 these 162 services supported 6,189 women in refuge services and 44, 534 women in community based services.¹

Although the survey is carried out each year, the response number differ year on year. This should be borne in mind when making comparisons between years.

This report and analysis of the data is split into three main sections:

- The service users

- The capacity
- The funding.

Key findings

The Annual Survey 2015 highlights clearly that the group of survivors accessing domestic abuse services are highly diverse and have complex support needs. Services are sometimes struggling to meet these needs, and to a significant extent this is due to commissioning practices that look for low cost alternatives to specialist support services, as well as increasingly expecting women to access services via the criminal justice system and a risk assessment. This leaves specialist services to identify and meet needs which they are not funded to meet, and which the risk-based system has not identified or costed. The survey also found that only about one in five of domestic abuse service-users had seen criminal sanctions or ongoing criminal proceedings against the perpetrator.

The survey found that more than three quarters (77.6%) of women accessing refuge had travelled from a different local authority area, reflecting the need for the national network of refuge services where women can move across local authority boundaries to access support and safety.

On the census day services were providing mental health support to a third (33.7%) of the women in refuge, and 6.1% of the women in refuge had support needs for physical health problems (whether caused by the domestic abuse or not). About one in ten refuge residents had drug and alcohol misuse issues and an even higher proportion (13.3%) required multi-lingual support.

1. The service users

Both the census day and the census week elements of the Annual Survey provide the largest data set of the domestic abuse services and service users in England. This vital information is used to garner a greater understanding of the women and children who are using the national network of specialist services, what their needs are, how services are developing to meet these needs and their interactions with the Criminal Justice System.



Uprooted lives

Women must often uproot their lives and travel many miles to escape violent abusers and to find safe refuge. However, some local authorities stipulate that refuge services receiving local authority funds must be predominantly for local women and consequently refuges must cap the amount of non-local women using these services. The introduction and increasing use of "local connection" rules is concerning as it damages a national network of refuge services and potentially compromises women's safety if they remain in the same geographic area as the perpetrator, his family and friends. The government has communicated to local authorities and commissioners that refuges should be available to all women, not just women from the local authority area, as the ability to flee across local authority boundaries is a vital path to safety for many women and children, which if lost could put the lives of women and children at risk.

Our Annual Survey found that 77.6% of women using refuge services on the census day had come from a different local authority area, making clear the need for refuges to be open to women from any local authority area.² One study has described the internal migration patterns of women within this country escaping domestic abuse and found that there were 10,161 migration journeys in 2008 - 2009, across local authority boundaries, to access services in England because of domestic abuse.³

Meeting diverse needs

The services responding to our survey were meeting many different support and access needs. For example, on the census day and in the census week:

- Women with mental health support needs made up 27.82% of the women using community-based services and 33.74% of those in refuge accommodation.
- Women with physical health support needs accounted for 5.29% of women using community-based services and 6.12% of those staying in refuges.
- Women with drug and alcohol issues made up 10.24% of women using community-based services and 9.76% of women in refuge accommodation.
- Women requiring multilingual (interpreting) support accounted for 4.15% of women using community-based services and 13.25% of women in refuge accommodation.

The proportion of survivors with specific complex support needs is likely to be substantially more than the figures above suggest, given that many referrals for domestic abuse support are declined because the service does not have the capacity or the resources to meet their specific needs. There are also likely to be women not included in these data as they have never come into contact with a domestic abuse service for a range of different reasons, for example, they did not realise they were experiencing domestic abuse.

The capacity of the domestic abuse sector to meet what is often described as “complex needs” is limited. In March 2016, out of a total of 363 domestic abuse service entries on the UK Refuges Online (UKROL) database⁴, there were only 41 services with specialist drug workers, 38 services with specialist alcohol workers and 85 services with specialist mental health support staff. The fact that only a small proportion of services can provide this crucial support is alarming and must be addressed through commissioning and funding that recognises the importance of services being able to deliver support to women with additional vulnerabilities.

Access to justice

Domestic abuse cases account for a big proportion of the work of the criminal justice system. Domestic abuse accounts for 14.1% of all court prosecutions. The volume of prosecutions rose last year to the highest level ever - 92,779⁵. The 2015 HMIC report⁶ on the police response to domestic abuse stated that in the 12 months leading up to March 2015 in England and Wales:

- The police service received more than 900,000 calls about domestic abuse- this is roughly 100 calls per hour.
- Domestic abuse-related crime represented a third of all recorded "assault with injury" crimes.
- Domestic abuse accounted for 13% of all sexual offences.

Despite the high volume of domestic abuse cases going through the criminal justice system, it is widely accepted that many women experiencing domestic abuse will never come in to contact with the criminal justice system. This may be because they are too frightened to report the abuse, the perpetrator has threatened them, their fears about what will happen to their children if they report, or simply because they feel stigmatised and ashamed. Women may feel lacking legal empowerment or confidence to gather or provide evidence.

While not all women feel confident that the criminal justice system can provide them with the level and type of support necessary to keep them safe, specialist domestic abuse services are increasingly vital.

We asked services about criminal justice proceedings relating to the women in their services. Only about one in five of women resident in refuge (21.5%, 400 out of 1864) on the census day and of those using community-based services (22.4%, 1722 out of 7682) during the census week had seen a criminal case or ongoing criminal proceedings against the perpetrator. The most recent Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) report⁷ outlines that the number of police referrals of VAWG cases for charging decisions is increasing. In 2014-15, the CPS reports that 129,057 defendants (perpetrators of VAWG) were referred to CPS – a rise of 19,638 referrals (18%) from 2013-14. Of the cases referred to the CPS 68.5% were charged, and in total 107,104 VAWG crimes were prosecuted in 2014/2015. The role of domestic abuse services in supporting women who are involved in the prosecution of their abusers is vital and helps to reduce the level of attrition within the criminal justice system.

Experiences of financial abuse

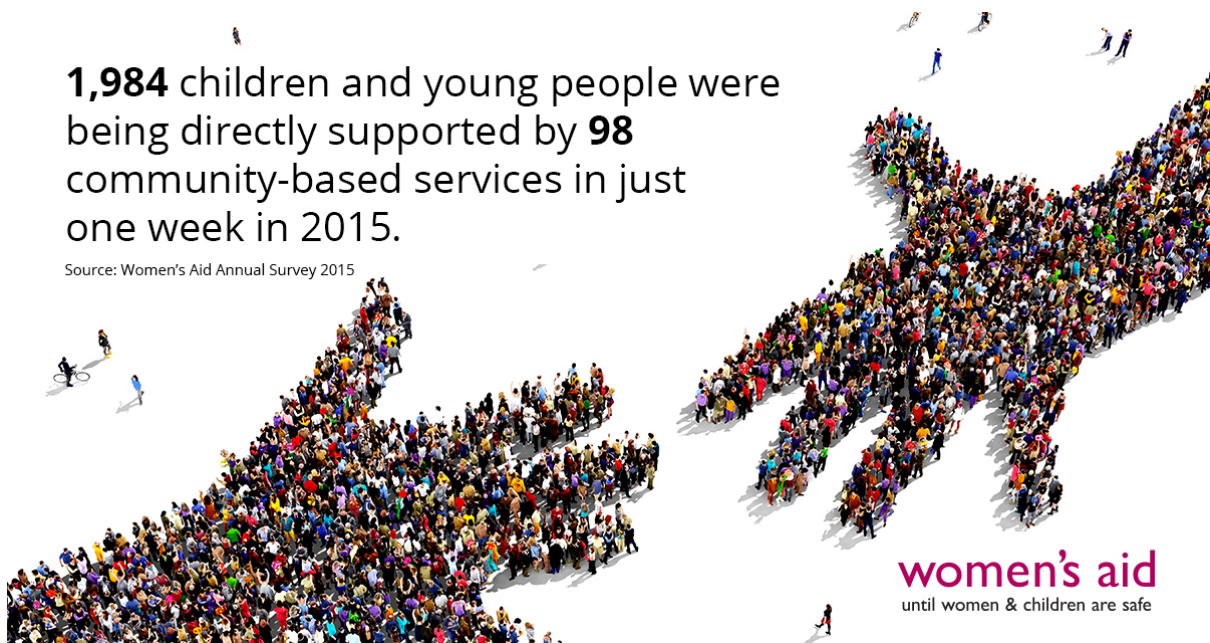
The Annual Survey unearthed startling figures on the prevalence of financial problems as a direct result of domestic abuse amongst women in refuge. Half (50.70%, 945 out of 1864) of women in refuge services on the census day and 29.98% (2303 out of 7682) of women using community-based services in the census week had financial problems resulting from the abuse. One in ten of the women resident in refuge on the census day had to give up paid employment in order to enter the refuge (198 out of 1864). There are a range of reasons why a survivor of domestic abuse would need to give up paid employment to enter a refuge, such as having to move to a different location and travelling to and from work may compromise the secret location of the refuge if she was followed, or because she may need to claim housing benefit to pay for the rental cost of the refuge and this cannot be done while she is in work.

A Women's Aid and TUC study found that around half (52%) of women who were still living with their abuser said they could not afford to leave because they had no money of their own.⁸ The Women's Aid and TUC research highlighted that many women have their access to money controlled by the perpetrator and some have their attempts to earn their own money sabotaged by a perpetrator, for example, by getting her into trouble at work by making her late or purposefully distressing her before a job interview. Financial abuse is a core element of coercive control, which became a criminal offence in 2015.

Census day and census week: a snapshot

1,984 children and young people were being directly supported by **98** community-based services in just one week in 2015.

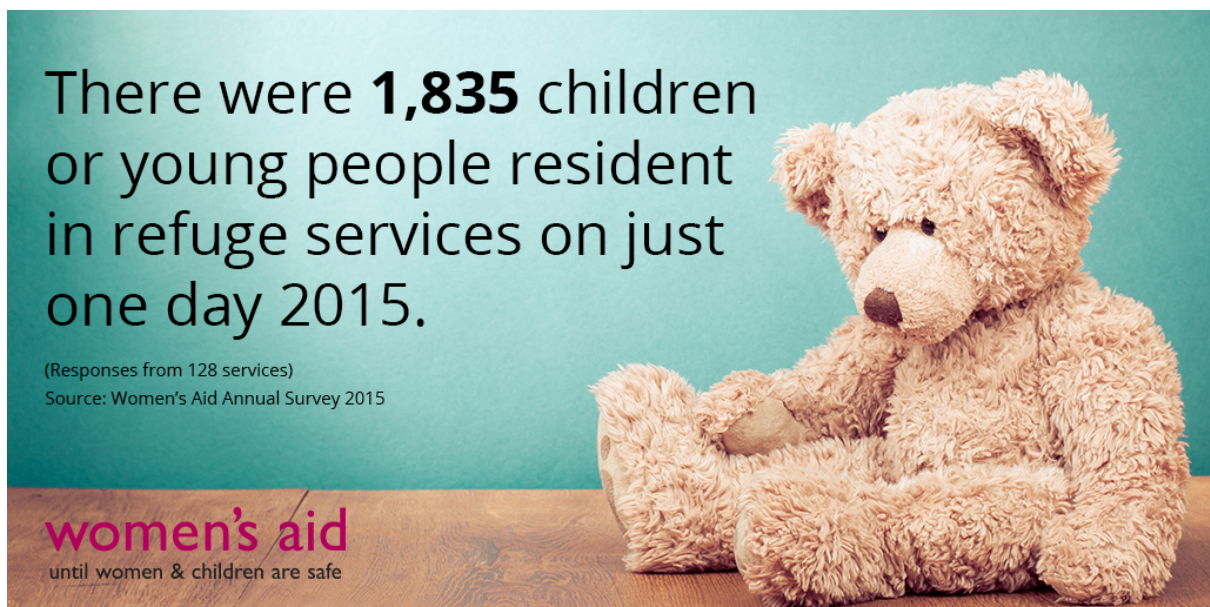
Source: Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015



There were **1,835** children or young people resident in refuge services on just one day 2015.

(Responses from 128 services)

Source: Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015



The **census week** element of the Annual Survey gives us an in-depth analysis of the sample of responding community based services and survivors over an entire week, from Monday 21st – Friday 25th September 2015 (inclusive). During this week 7,682 women and 1,984 children/young people were being directly supported (meeting with support workers, participating in programmes or projects) by our sample of services (responses from 98 services). 3.96% (304 out of 7682) of the women being supported were pregnant.

The **census day** – Thursday 26th September 2015 – findings provide a snapshot of refuge services and their service users on just one day. On this day in our responding sample there were 1864 women being supported by 133 services. About two thirds of women living in refuge had a child or children with them (66.95%, 1248 women) and 6.12% (114 women) were pregnant.

On the census day, 92 women and 75 children seeking refuge were turned away from a refuge they contacted⁹. Nearly half (45.65%) of these women were turned away because the refuge did not have capacity to support them. We know from services, and the women accessing them, that demand for refuges spaces always outstrips supply.

Untangling the “typical survivor” myth through the census

It is clear from this Annual Survey analysis that there is no “typical survivor”; the women using services during the census day and week were from a very wide range of age groups and ethnic groups and had diverse needs. We already know that some women face significant additional barriers to support when experiencing domestic abuse; for example, women who have limited use of the English language can often feel isolated from support and more dependent on their abuser for day-to-day interactions. For disabled women whose abuser is also their carer, opportunities to seek help when their abuser/carers is not present are extremely limited.

A range of ages

During the census week the 26-30 and 31-35 age groups accounted for the biggest proportion of service-users (15.36% and 15.39% respectively). Only 1.21% of women using community-based services were aged between 61 and 65 years old and 1.12% were aged 66 and over.

On the census day the largest group of women in refuge - 22.85% - were aged between 26 and 30 years. The smallest age group was aged 66 years and over which accounted for only 0.16% of the total sample. See *Chart One* and *Chart Two* on pages 16 and 17 for more details.

We know that women of all ages experience domestic abuse with similar levels of frequency, so it is very likely that fewer older women are accessing services rather than the prevalence of domestic abuse being smaller amongst this age group.

The *Femicide Census*¹⁰, amongst other research findings, shows in stark figures that domestic abuse is an issue for women of all ages, including older women, so the small numbers of older women accessing support services is very concerning. In 2009 and 2010, 18 women were killed by their sons in a domestic violence incident, and 10 of these women were aged 66 or over. In the same time period, 19 women aged 55 and over were killed by a male intimate partner, including ex-partners (out of a total of 171 women killed by male intimate partners). There is a paucity of data in the UK on the prevalence of domestic abuse among older women, but a US study of 91,749 women concluded that post-menopausal women are exposed to abuse at similar rates to younger women.¹¹ This is an area of work that Women's Aid is continuing to explore, in particular through developing the "trusted professional" model for women with social care support needs, as part of our model of responding to domestic abuse, Change that Lasts.¹²

Chart One: The ages of women using refuge services on the census day

Number of services responding: 126

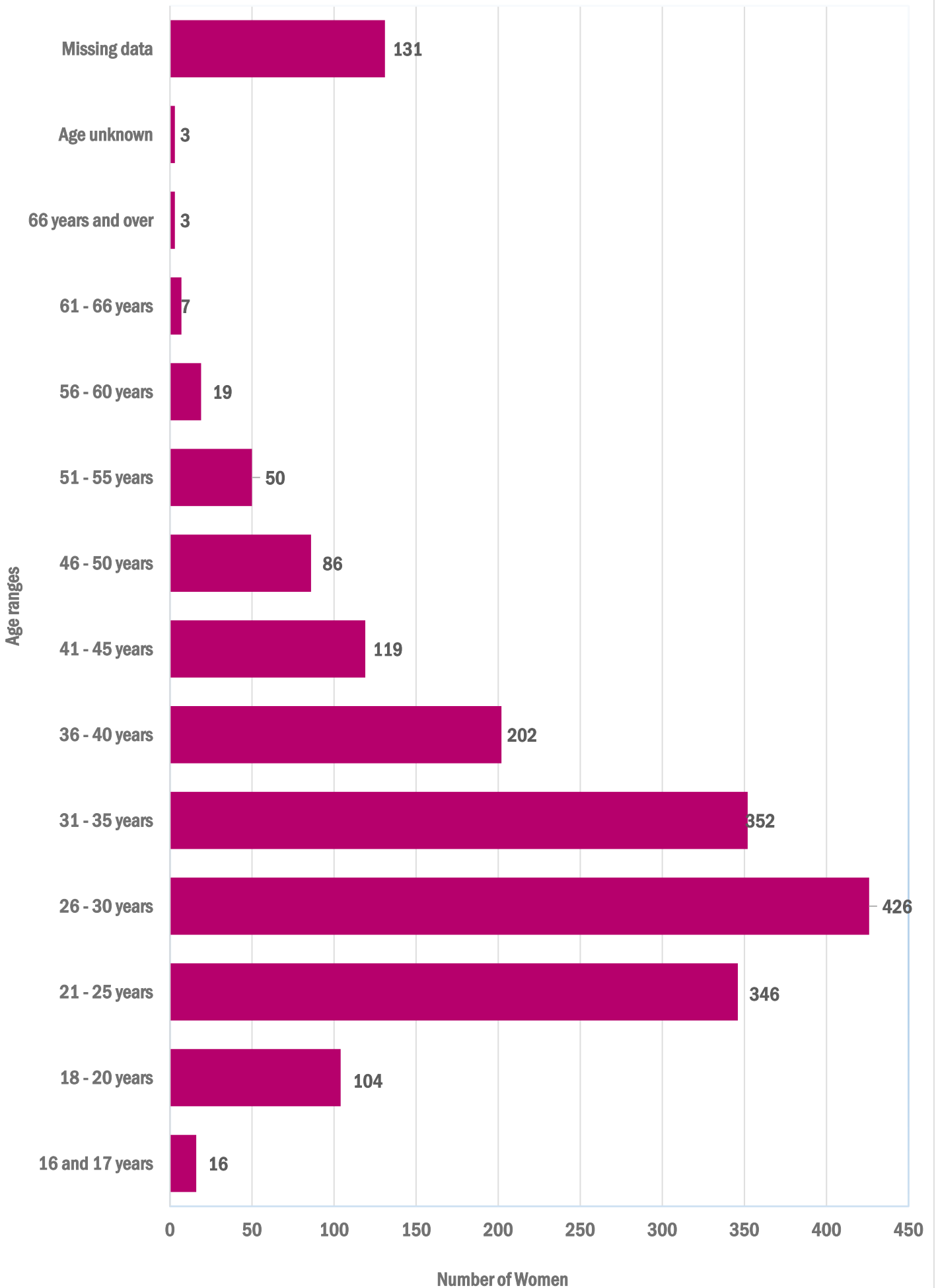
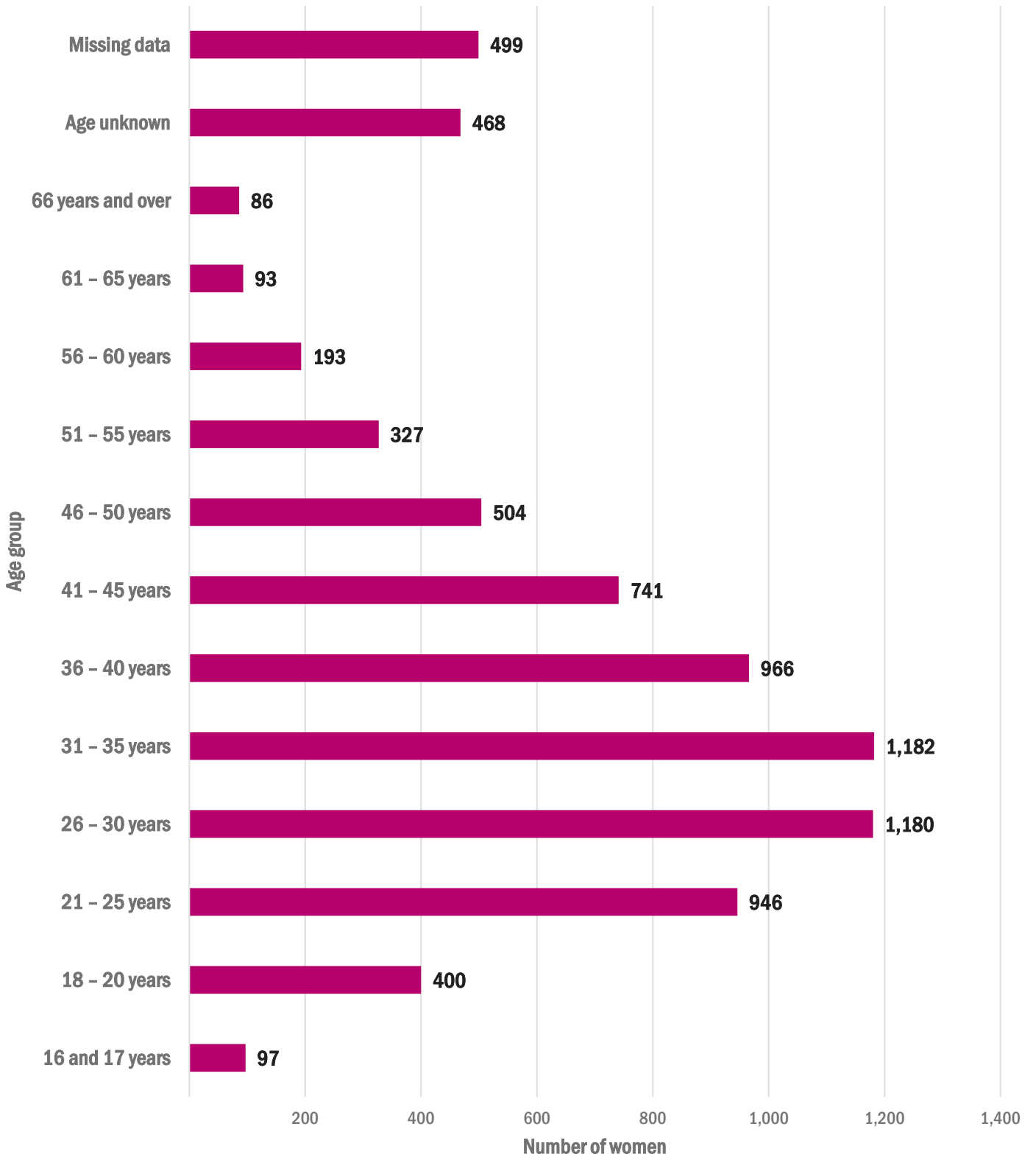


Chart Two: The ages of women using community-based services in age categories during the census week

Number of services responding: 97



Women from diverse backgrounds

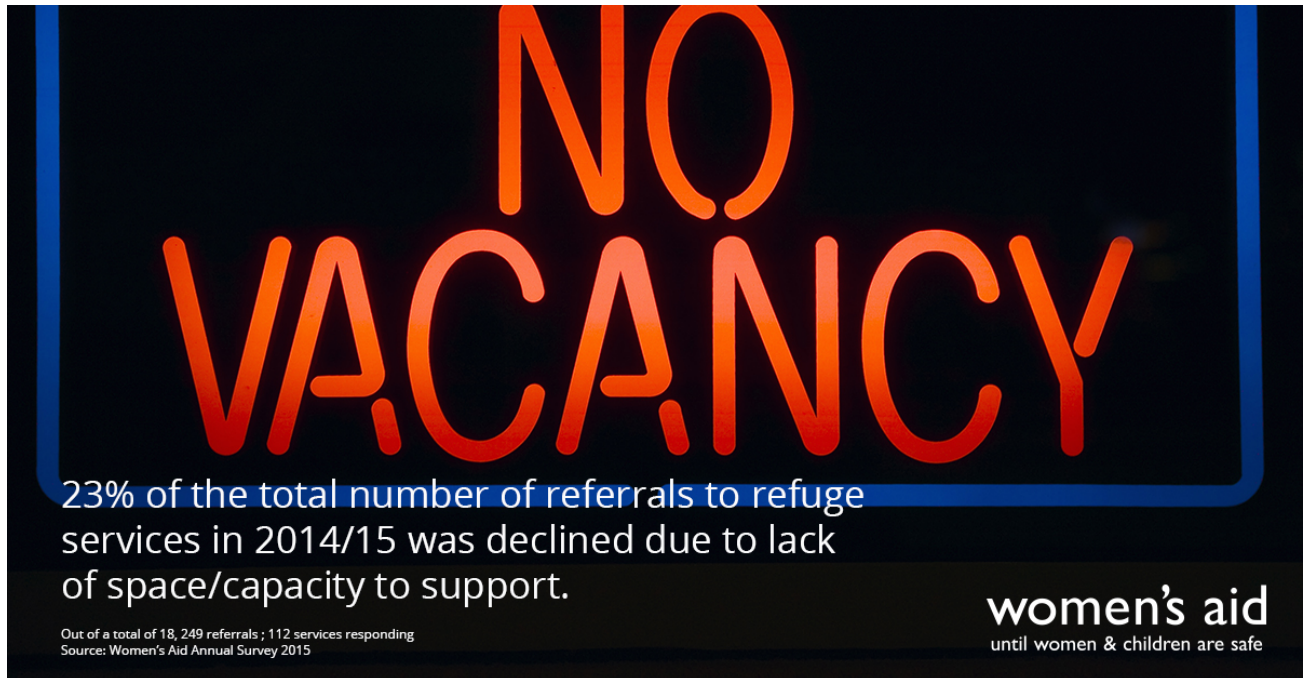
Over the census week in community-based services and the census day in refuge services, women came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. For full details of the ethnic groups of service-users see the *Table One* and *Table Two* on the following pages.

The role of specialist BME women's services and practitioners that can meet the specific cultural and language needs of women from ethnic minority backgrounds is crucial, yet these services are often not widely available due to limited funding and a lack of recognition by commissioners of the importance of this very specific and very important subset of services.

Table One: The ethnic groups of the women using refuge services on the census		
Ethnic Groups	Number of women	Percentage of total
White British	758	40.67%
White Irish	17	0.91%
White Gypsy or Irish Traveller	11	0.59%
White Any Other White background	136	7.30%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean	48	2.58%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups White and Black African	15	0.80%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups White and Asian	19	1.02%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background	24	1.29%
Asian/Asian British Indian	60	3.22%
Asian/Asian British Pakistani	146	7.83%
Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi	49	2.63%
Asian/Asian British Chinese	17	0.91%
Asian/Asian British Any other Asian background	70	3.76%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British African	161	8.64%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British Caribbean	56	3.00%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	39	2.09%
Other ethnic group Arab	30	1.61%
Other ethnic group Any other ethnic group	54	2.90%
Unknown	10	0.54%
Missing data	144	7.73%
TOTAL	1864	100.00%
<i>answered question: 128 services</i>		

Table Two: The ethnic groups of the women using community-based services in the census week. (Sept 2015)		
Ethnic Groups	Number of women	Percentage of total
White British	5,163	67.21%
White Irish	51	0.66%
White Gypsy or Irish Traveller	23	0.30%
White Any Other White background	378	4.92%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean	94	1.22%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups White and Black African	40	0.52%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups White and Asian	32	0.42%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background	62	0.81%
Asian/Asian British Indian	176	2.29%
Asian/Asian British Pakistani	308	4.01%
Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi	95	1.24%
Asian/Asian British Chinese	24	0.31%
Asian/Asian British Any other Asian background	73	0.95%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British African	198	2.58%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British Caribbean	113	1.47%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	55	0.72%
Other ethnic group Arab	65	0.85%
Other ethnic group Any other ethnic group	87	1.13%
Unknown	203	2.64%
Missing data	442	5.75%
TOTAL	7,682	100.00%
<i>answered question: 96 services</i>		

2. The capacity



Services under pressure in 2014/15

The findings of Women's Aid 2015 Annual Survey paint a picture of services working to full capacity; struggling to meet demand and the full extent of women's complex needs with the resources available. Despite the short-term injection of funding into domestic abuse refuges and accommodation-based services from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), demand for refuges still outstrips supply. Women's Aid is aware that additional bed spaces have been made available by this funding, but a full analysis of the additional resources that this funding has provided the sector is not currently available.

Many domestic abuse services are trying to navigate an almost impossible path by scaling back their services and staffing levels to meet funding cuts and cost savings whilst experiencing an increase in the referrals for women with complex and multiple support needs. It is absolutely critical that if a woman with, for example, mental health support needs or problematic drug and alcohol use issues, is accessing a refuge or community-based service, that the service is able to meet her needs appropriately and help her on the path to

recovery and independence. These same women were more than likely let down or an opportunity was missed to identify them at a much earlier and more cost-effective point of intervention.

The Annual Survey findings paint a clear picture of an emerging paradox in the relationship between women's needs, the services they can access and the costs involved: for a woman with complex needs, her problems are usually started or exacerbated by domestic abuse, and it is likely that due to these issues she will already be known to some professionals or statutory agencies. As a result of her high support needs and the intensity of the support she requires, her needs are often unable to be met by the services that are designed to support her as they have been scaled back, so she becomes an "intractable" (and expensive) case or bounces from service to service to find help. One likely outcome will be that she will return to the perpetrator and the danger she fled, and at a later date possibly reach out once again to the services in her local community. Sustainable funding and a model of responding to domestic abuse that looks for the earliest point of intervention for a woman and bases a response around her needs and resources is a crucial step towards mitigating this paradox.

Community based services – over one financial year

During 2014/15 our sample of responding community-based services received 54,141 referrals¹³. Of these referrals 82.26% were accepted, but 17.74% were declined¹⁴. We discovered that 6.17% of the referrals were declined due to the services being unable to contact the survivor, this may be because she has found help elsewhere, and just over 5% were declined because the survivor changed her mind about accessing support. Please see *Table Three* on the following page for a further breakdown of these reasons.

Table Three: Reasons for declining referrals to Community Based Services in 2014/2015		
Responses from 75 services		
Reasons for declining referrals	Number of referrals declined	% of total referrals received (n=54, 141)
No space/capacity to support the survivor	320	0.59%
Survivor does not want support	2600	4.80%
Unable to contact survivor	3343	6.17%
Ineligible for support (age)	14	0.03%
Ineligible for support (from out of area)	361	0.67%
Ineligible for support (needed a different service)	737	1.36%
Unable to meet support needs around language	8	0.01%
No space/capacity to support large family	0	0.00%
Unable to meet support needs around mental health	29	0.05%
Unable to meet support needs around disability	0	0.00%
Unable to meet support needs around no recourse to public funds	0	0.00%
Unable to meet support needs around drugs and alcohol	13	0.02%
Previous convictions for violent/sexual offences/arson	41	0.08%
Other <u>Common themes:</u> Advice needed; conflict of interest; Left area/disengaged; Not domestic violence: Perpetrator not victim: referred to IDVA; Several complex needs; Supported elsewhere; Unsafe area; Uncategorised: (mostly no reason given)	852	1.57%
Missing Data	1289	2.38%
TOTAL	9607	17.74%

Refuge services – over one financial year

The refuge services responding to our survey had received 18, 249 referrals to their services in 2014/15¹⁵. Of these referrals over two thirds (66.1%) were declined and only a third (33.9%) were accepted.¹⁶

We asked services to indicate why referrals were declined. Nearly a quarter (23.27%) of the referrals were declined due to the refuge's lack of available bedspace. Nearly 10% of referrals were declined because the service was unable to meet the woman's mental health support needs, support needs around language, additional support needs around drug and alcohol issues, additional support needs due to a disability or additional support needs around a previous conviction. A further 8.43% of referrals were declined because the survivor did not want support; for example she might have found a refuge space elsewhere or been able to stay at a friend's or family member's house, or she may have changed her mind and no longer felt able to leave. Please see *Table Four* for a further breakdown of the reasons women were declined from refuge accommodation.

Important information about what happened to these individual women after they were declined from refuge is not currently fully available. However, the recently commenced Women's Aid *No Woman Turned Away* project, funded through the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), helps women who are unable to access refuge accommodation after an initial call with the National Domestic Violence Helpline and who still need to find a safe place to stay. The project aims to support the women who may have previously fallen through the net or found it very difficult to access refuge. This is usually down to the lack of availability of suitable bedspaces or some complex support needs. The project continues to work with these women until they are in safe accommodation or have found a suitable alternative, such a living in safety with a friend. The data collected from this project will provide a much more detailed insight into the reasons why women may be declined a refuge space, who these women are and where they are eventually able to access support.

<i>Table Four: Reasons for declining referrals to refuge in 2014/15</i>		Responses from 112 services	
Reason for declining	Number of referrals declined	% of total referrals received (n= 18, 249)	
No space/capacity to support the survivor	4246	23.27%	
Survivor does not want support	1538	8.43%	
Unable to contact survivor	759	4.16%	
Ineligible for support (age)	17	0.09%	
Ineligible for support (from out of area)	199	1.09%	
Ineligible for support (needed a different service)	872	4.78%	
Unable to meet support needs around language	114	0.62%	
No space/capacity to support large family	313	1.72%	
Unable to meet support needs around mental health	564	3.09%	
Unable to meet support needs around disability	195	1.07%	
Unable to meet support needs around no recourse to public funds	662	3.63%	
Unable to meet support needs around drugs and alcohol	610	3.34%	
Previous convictions for violent/sexual offences/ arson	189	1.04%	
Other <u>Common themes:</u> Advice only: 1; Found alternative accommodation: 6; Area Unsafe: 22; Did not arrive: 2; Not crisis: 1; Not domestic violence: 3; Pets: 2; Previous tenant 2; Several Complex Needs: 2; Teenage Son:1; Unknown: 5; Women in employment: 1; Uncategorised: 74 (Analysed from free text responses. Figures here represent number of services providing each response.)	1172	6.42%	
Data missing	610	3.34%	
TOTAL	12060	66.09%	

We asked our sample of refuge services what they did with referrals they had to decline, and for over a third of referrals (35.8%) the woman was referred to another refuge. See *Table Five* for more detail on what happens when referrals are declined.

<i>Table Five: How refuge services responded to declined referrals to refuge in 2014/2015</i>		
Responses from 110 services		
How responded to declined referrals	Number of referrals	% of total referrals declined (n=12, 060)
Referred to another refuge	4324	35.85%
Referred to National Domestic Violence Helpline	2362	19.59%
Referred to another service/organisation (not specialist in domestic abuse)	1541	12.78%
Referred to a specialist domestic abuse community-based service	968	8.03%
Referred to another specialist violence/abuse against women and girls service	662	5.49%
Referred to a local domestic abuse helpline	504	4.18%
Other Other responses by respondents were generally categorised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred back to original referral agency. • Unable to contact woman. • Alternative accommodation found. • Advice given. 	990	8.21%
Data missing	709	5.88%
TOTAL	12, 060	100.00%

A sector in flux

Throughout 2015/16 Women's Aid also conducted an intensive research project to inform an update of our online database of domestic abuse services, UK Refuges Online (UKROL), and explore any changes in provision. The findings highlighted that the domestic abuse sector in England is undergoing constant and substantial change which needs to be continually monitored to provide an accurate picture of provision. Specific elements of services, such as a refuge or outreach service, are often moved between providers/organisations and in some cases services are not recommissioned which impacts on the quality, continuity and extent of provision.

There is a notable increase in the number of England entries on UKROL now recording a helpline service. It is worth noting that this can sometimes be to replace other face-to-face services which are more costly to fund, which is highly problematic as a helpline service, whilst an important part of the service network, cannot provide the same level of intensive and consistent support.

170 out of the 361 entries on UKROL at May 1st 2016 provide services for male and female survivors. Of these 170 services 29 told us they had started providing services to male victims during our 2015-16 information update of UKROL. Of these 29 only ten showed a corresponding increase in staff. Eight showed a decrease in staffing numbers, demonstrating that services to men are diverting resources from women's services.

We also looked at the information we received from services who had added a new service type to their UKROL entry and checked this against whether their update had shown a corresponding increase in staffing numbers. Of the 60 entries who had added one or more service type only 38% showed an increase in their staff team, and in fact 23% of these entries showed a decrease in staff despite now delivering more services. This again exacerbates the tension between the need to deliver high quality services for women with increasingly complex needs and continually reducing resources.

During 2015/16 there was a small increase in the total number of bed spaces at refuges in England from 3,563 to 3,686. The changes also indicated a move to smaller rooms, making

it more difficult for larger families to find refuge space. Finding refuge for larger families is an on-going problem which often leaves large families having to access less appropriate emergency accommodation options, such as homeless shelters, or staying with friends and family which is often unsafe. The net change for each room size is shown in *Table Six*. However it should be noted that the number of bed spaces is changing throughout the year as service providers change, some services close and some new ones open.

Table Six:	
Bed spaces, change in number and size in 2015/16 *	
Room size	Net change
1 bed	49
2 bed	36
3 bed	7
4 bed	-48
5 bed	-12

*Some changes may have happened before 2015 but the service did not update their entry on UKROL at the time.

Case in point: looking for refuge space on just one day

There is a hugely diverse group of women in England who are seeking support from domestic abuse services at any one time. The struggles that women face to access refuge accommodation are well documented, however the Annual Survey of domestic abuse services gives us a unique opportunity to dig deeper in to:

- the numbers of spaces available on a census day;
- the women who are able to access these vital services; and
- the women for whom their additional support needs combined with the limited capacity within refuge services serves as a sometimes insurmountable barrier to accessing support.

At **10am on 24th September 2015, the census day**, we took a snapshot of the available refuge bedspaces through the online referral system UK Refuges Online (UKROL). We then analysed the specific details of each bedspace to build a picture of availability.

The morning snapshot showed a total of 190 bedspaces listed on the site. Two thirds of women accessing refuge have dependent children. Rooms available were of various sizes so of the bedspaces listed:

- 103 could accept a single woman;
- 119 could accept a woman with one child;
- 83 could accept a woman with two children;
- 26 could accept a woman with three children;
- Six could accept a woman with four children; and
- 61 could fit a cot for a child under two years old.

Looking for refuge space for a woman with mobility needs

There were also added barriers to availability for women with mobility needs. Of the bedspaces listed:

- four had full wheelchair access; and

- 13 were on the ground floor or suitable for women with some limits to mobility.

Services specified other restrictions which would need to be considered before referring a woman to a vacant room. Of the bedspaces listed:

- 12 stipulated that one child must be old enough to sleep in a top bunk; and
- One stated that only children over 13 would be suitable for the self-contained flat.

Looking for refuge for a large family

Large families (women with four children) faced particular barriers to availability. While there were six rooms listed that were large enough to accommodate a family of this size, none had wheelchair access and only two could take a family with a male child of 13 or older.

Looking for refuge with an older male child

Age was apparent as a barrier to availability for women under the age of 18 and for families with an older male child. Of the vacancies listed:

- 113 could accept a family with a male child of 15;
- 62 could accept a family with a male child of 15 and one other child; and
- 142 could accept a woman aged under 18.

When combined with other factors such as regional availability the numbers could be considerably impacted.

Looking for refuge in a specific region

To show the challenges with seeking refuge in a particular area, so exemplifying the importance of having a national network of services, we used the system to search for refuges in the East Midlands.

- The full list of vacancies available to a woman looking to access refuge in the East Midlands was 19.
- This would have been reduced to nine vacancies if she had one child with her and further reduced to just two if she also had a baby needing a cot.
- One of these refuge bedspaces was at a rural service which specified only low level support was available.

Women with no recourse to public funds

Only 18 vacancies were available to women with no recourse to public funds and, of these, six stipulated that funding must be in place from other sources before they could consider a

referral. Typically other sources of funding would be from charities, social services or other local funds and would be very scarce.

Women with drug or alcohol misuse support needs¹⁷

Of the vacancies listed:

- 128 were at services able to accept women with alcohol support needs.
- This reduces to 78 if the woman also has one child with her.
- 120 were at services able to accept women with drug support needs.
- This reduces to 73 if the woman also has one child with her.
- Six of the 73 vacancies stated that only women with low support needs would be considered.

Women with mental health support needs

Similarly, not all services are able to accept a woman with mental health support needs and if they have dependent children there are even more limited options.

Of the 158 vacancies listed which were able to accept women with mental health support needs¹⁸:

- 88 could accept a single woman.
- 99 could accept a woman with one child.
- 69 could accept a woman with two children.
- 25 could accept a woman with three children.
- 5 could accept a woman with four children.

3. The funding



Challenging times

Women's organisations have been greatly impacted by recent and current local authority budget cuts and some poor local commissioning practices, as outlined in the Women's Aid **SOS: Save Refuges, Save Lives** campaign. Alongside this we are hearing more and more from our service users that they are experiencing higher volumes of referrals from women with multiple and complex needs and they are finding it increasingly more difficult to support these women with the resources they have available.

We already know that specialist domestic abuse services in England are under considerable pressure when it comes to funding, with many closing either in part or completely: our SOS Campaign highlighted that 17% of dedicated providers of specialist refuges stopped running between 2010 and 2014¹⁹. Last year's survey highlighted that 37% of responding services were running an area of their work without dedicated funding. 44% (72 services) of this year's responding services were running an area of work without dedicated funding during the previous financial year. Alarming, 19 refuge services in the current sample are being run without dedicated funding, so are at risk of imminent closure. Taking domestic violence

services as a whole, many are reducing the services they provide, or are running services using their reserves or voluntary contributions, which is not sustainable. The areas of service in the current sample being run without dedicated funding are listed in *Table Seven*.

As a result of the SOS Campaign the Government provided an additional £13.2 million in funding for specialist refuges and accommodation-based support in 2014/15 and 2015/16. This very welcome funding has supported many services that were on the brink of closure. However, this survey shows that the challenges associated with funding cuts and reduced resources are acute. We asked services to complete the following sentence in 50 words or less: *The most challenging issue our service faced in 2014/15 was...* The most popular response (48.6%) to this question was related to lack of or uncertainty of funding, including the challenges of the commissioning process and the need to meet increased demand with reduced resources. Other issues mentioned were:

- 22.5% of services stated pressures on capacity and the challenges of meeting increased demand with fewer resources were their key challenges;
- 15.5% stated difficulties in supporting women with no recourse to public funding (usually as a result of their immigration status) was their key challenge;
- 11.3% stated pressures of taking part in a competitive tendering process was their key challenge.

One service typifies eloquently many of the responses we received: *The most challenging issue our service faced in 2014/15 was ...*

"trying to source funding. This has taken up the vast majority of the time that the manager has. It is a constant merry-go-round of funding applications. Ensuring we collect the right data to support and evidence our worth is getting more and more important too."

Table Seven: Which area of your service were you running without dedicated funding in 2014/15?

Responses from 72 services.

Answer Options	Number of areas of service
Children and Young People's Services	31
Community-based services for women	30
Prevention/educational work	28
Refuge provision	19
Specialist BME services	19
Services for women with complex needs	17
Specialist LGBT services	2
<p>Other</p> <p><u>Common Themes:</u></p> <p>Counselling/workshops (n= 6)</p> <p>Helpline (n =3)</p> <p>Pets (n=2)</p> <p>Resettlement (n=3)</p> <p>Staff/Admin (n=1)</p> <p>Uncategorised (5)</p> <p>Answers here are categorised from free text given by respondents – numbers in brackets are numbers of services responding.</p> <p>Responses may have more than one category assigned to them.</p>	20

Please note that respondents could tick more than one option

The added value that specialist domestic abuse services offer

Specialist domestic abuse services add significant value to their local communities, not only through supporting some of the most vulnerable women and children, but also by providing locally focussed awareness raising, training and education. 30 of the responding services were providing these “added value” services to their local communities, despite receiving no dedicated funding to undertake these activities. This vital local outreach means more professionals, agencies and related services will provide more appropriate, in-depth and helpful advice and support to survivors of domestic abuse locally and identify domestic abuse at an earlier stage.

Furthermore the results from the sample show that over a quarter of responding services have refuges that are running without dedicated funding – 19 in total, providing vital support to local and non-local women. Without dedicated funding these 19 services could be forced to close at any time. It is interesting to note that some community-based services are also being sustained without statutory funds, despite the government’s continued funding of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors. This suggests that in order to meet women’s needs, a different model of provision is desperately needed which is not restricted to those women assessed as “high risk”.

Children and Young People’s services are those most frequently being run without dedicated funds, which indicates that these services are not seen as high priority by either public sector commissioners or other funders despite the wealth of research showing the long term impact that domestic abuse has on children. This echoes the findings from last year’s data which clearly highlighted the specific challenges that children and young people’s services were facing.

Services running with no dedicated funding (detailed in *Table Seven*) were kept running by the following means, see *Table Eight*:

Table Eight: How did you fund this service(s)? (service without dedicated funding in 2014/15)

Responses from 72 services

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Using reserves	54.2%	39
Run on a voluntary basis	23.6%	17
Housing benefit²⁰	16.7%	12
Other Other responses specified included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising/donations • Local government • Service revenue 	36.1%	26

Please note that respondents could tick more than one option, so the answers will not add up to 100%.

Local authority funding

We asked domestic abuse services about their sources of funding in 2014/15 to ascertain whether we could identify any key patterns or trends. The proportion of the funding services received from a local authority varied considerably between the responding services.

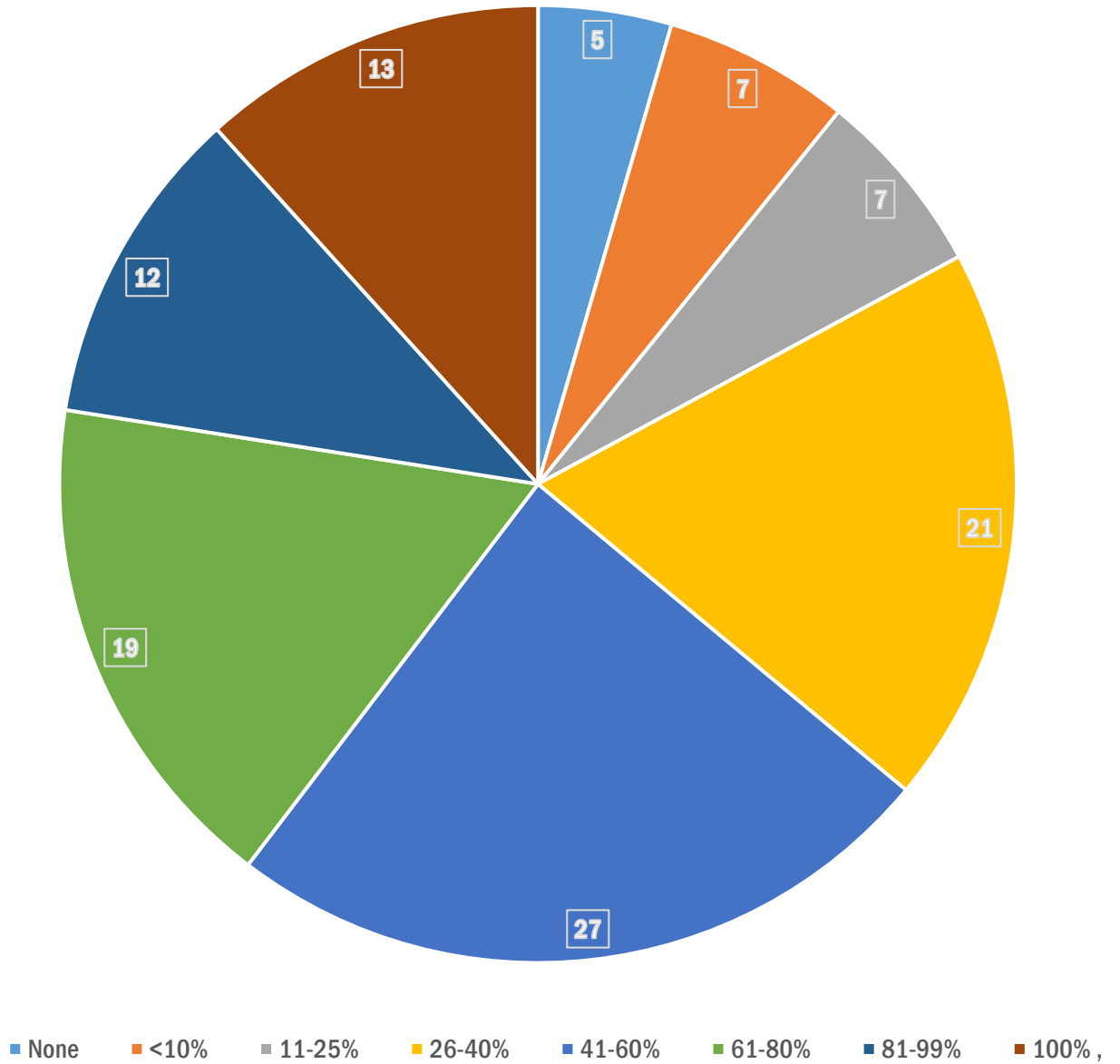
On average the responding services received 54.53% of their funding from the local authority, however there was a huge range as some services received 0% of their funding from the local authority and some received 100% of their funding from their local authority. About a quarter of services stated they had received between 41% and 60% of their funding from a local authority. 11% stated they received between 81% and 99% of their funding from local authorities. 13 services (12%) had received 100% of their funding from the local authority. Five services had received no funding at all from the local authority; one of these was a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) specialist service. (For more information, see *Chart Three* on the following page.)²¹

For a sample of 31 refuge services²² who responded to the question about funding, we found that their proportion of funding received from housing benefit was, on average, 27.63%.

A current key concern for services is the impact of the proposal to cap housing benefit in the supported accommodation sector to Local Housing Allowance rates. This would have a huge negative impact on refuges, who are reliant on housing benefit to cover their rental costs and eligible service charges. For example, for a service in one region of England this will decrease their rental income from around £300 per room per week to £60 per room per week, leaving them in an unviable financial position²³.

Chart Three:
Percentage of funding received from a Local Authority in 2014/15

Responses from 111 services
Numbers in pie chart equate to the actual number of services in each category.



A report published by Imkaan in late 2015 describes how BME domestic abuse organisations face particular difficulties in obtaining local authority funding. Over two thirds (67%) of Imkaan members state that they are being forced to move away from local authority funding sources for direct service provision. The report stated that out of 17 BME refuge providers, almost a quarter receive 100% of their funding from charitable trust and foundations²⁴. It is of considerable concern that some local authorities do not consider these services to be a priority in terms of funding. This may well be due to the “local connections” principles applied by local authorities, which Women’s Aid has long argued cannot be considered appropriate to domestic abuse services. This is particularly important for BME women, for which a highly specialised services – irrespective of its location – is frequently the only one of its kind in the country.

Other sources of funding

Our findings illustrate the increasingly fragmented nature of domestic abuse service funding and the variance in funding between services. Domestic abuse services have to contend with various different income streams at any one time to keep their services afloat; this is exemplified by the breakdown of funding sources in the survey findings.

On average, services received the following proportions of funding²⁵:

- 54.53% from a local authority
- 14.68% from Charitable funding (e.g. from Trusts and Foundations)
- 9.74% from other government/statutory grants.

The responding services received on average between 1% and 2% of their funding from each of the following sources respectively:

- private donations;
- resident’s personal contributions (in refuge services);
- charitable reserves; and
- community fundraising events.

The responding services received on average less than 1% of their funding from each of the following sources respectively:

- corporate funding/sponsorship;
- legacy income;

- charity shop revenue; and
- revenue from delivering training or consultancy work .

Conclusion

The Annual Survey findings paint a picture of a still fragile domestic abuse sector, with services often struggling to survive in a sector challenged by fragmented funding and financial uncertainty, and where demand for services often exceeds capacity. Responding to the number of women and children needing to access domestic abuse services is a big challenge for the sector, but so is being able to effectively meet women's specific access and support needs, for example around mental health, alcohol and drug dependency, and no recourse to public funds. This survey found that nearly 10% of referrals to refuge are declined due to women's additional mental health, drug and alcohol, disability and language needs, or previous convictions. The current landscape of commissioning and funding does not make room for these additional support needs and the required expertise: the creep towards a blanket coverage of low-cost generic services puts women and children seeking help and sanctuary at increasing risk.

Unsurprisingly, and often as a result of domestic abuse, survivors of domestic abuse have numerous and often very complex needs, both when they are in an abusive relationship and when the relationship has ended. Despite some common patterns and trends, every woman's experience of domestic abuse is unique and can have vastly different consequences, for her and any dependent children, depending on the scale, nature and extent of the abuse and her own resilience, strengths and resources. Domestic abuse services have developed over the last 40 years to meet the needs of women and most have adapted over time to meet an increasingly diverse sets of needs from an increasingly diverse group of women. This analysis of a sample of domestic abuse services shows that the ability of services to support a diverse group of women with complex needs is crucial.

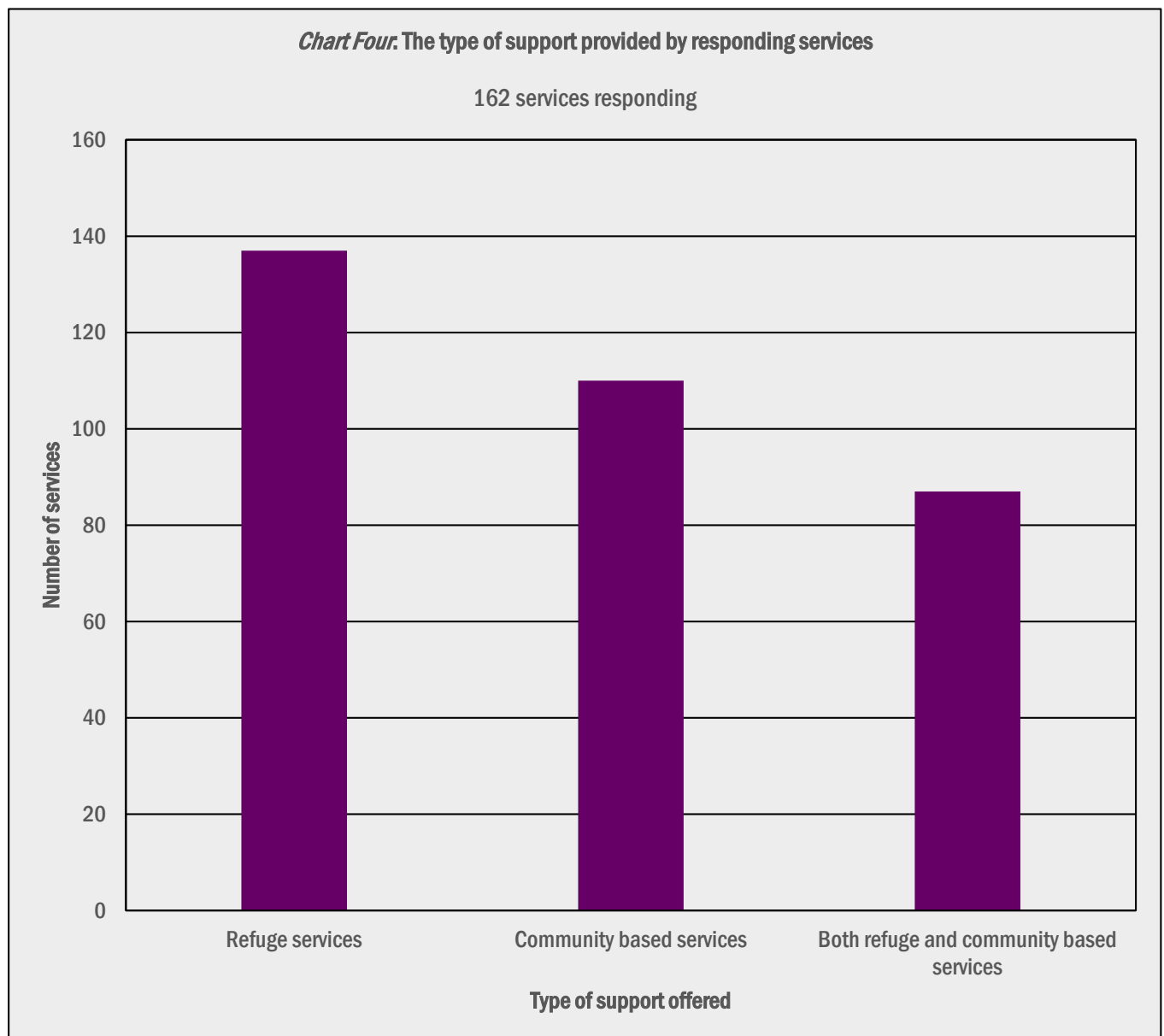
Many of the services that now receive funding only deliver support to women who are considered to be "high risk", assessed as such by a risk checklist that is highly problematic. The current approach of triaging what services women can access according to a rigid risk-focussed framework, based primarily on their interactions (if any) with the criminal justice system, does not fit with women's experience and needs. This survey reinforces the need for a new model of responding to domestic abuse that reflects a needs-led approach to

supporting survivors of domestic abuse, putting the woman at the centre and building on her own strengths and resources.

Women's Aid's model of responding to domestic abuse-Change that Lasts²⁶- aims to redress this balance, and ensure that women experiencing domestic abuse receive the help and support they need, at the earliest possible and most cost-effective point, based around her existing strengths and resources. This model is currently being piloted. Meanwhile, however, we are seeing women with complex needs being referred to services that are not equipped or funded to meet their needs, leaving many women and their children at risk of further harm. These women have often had several opportunities for intervention and support missed by statutory agencies or other professionals, such as drug and alcohol workers or GPs. The unintentional consequence of a focus on "high risk" at a time of austerity has been that by the time some women access a service their level of need is higher than that service can possibly meet or they are seen as an "intractable" case, trapped in a revolving door of "actions" recommended by the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. Whereas if the support was offered and tailored to her needs at an earlier point, the outcome for the woman could have been more positive, more expedient and at a lower cost for her community.

Appendix one: our sample

162 domestic abuse services responded to our survey, 137 of these services ran refuges and 110 ran community-based services. 87 services ran both refuge and community based services²⁷.



Over half (55.6%) of the sample were services that are part of a larger organisation, such as a housing association or a larger charity. Where services were part of a larger organisation we asked for responses from each individual service, rather than one overarching response

on behalf of all services within the larger organisation. Additionally, just over 10% of this sample (17 services) are BME specialist services.

The services that responded were from all regions of England as shown in the *Table Nine*.

<i>Table Nine: What region is your service based in?</i>	
Region	Number of services
East of England	14
East Midlands	14
London	38
North East England	6
North West England	22
South East England	30
Yorkshire and Humberside	14
South West England	9
West Midlands	11
Several Regions Covered	4
Number of services responding: 162	

Appendix two: methodology

We sent a link to an online survey to all the domestic abuse services in England. At the time there were 356 services in England on the domestic abuse services database UK Refuges Online (UKROL). We asked for responses from each individual service listed on UKROL. This included both refuge services and community-based services. We also gave services the option to fill in the form via an electronic document and email or post it to us; we then manually entered the answers online.

The survey was in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire and asked questions about the previous financial year (1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015), how services are funded, and details about the service-users on a specified census day for refuge services (the Day to Count) and during a week for community-based services that might not be running every day of the week (the Week to Count). The Day to Count was the 24th September 2015 and the Week to Count was Monday 21st September – Friday 25th September 2015 inclusive. We also made a telephone call to all services to remind them to fill in the survey and to ask if they had any queries about it, and finally we also sent reminder emails.

The data we received were analysed using SurveyMonkey and Excel. Any free text answers were categorised according to identified common themes.

Most responding services answered all the questions relevant to their service, however some services did skip some relevant questions. We give the number of respondents alongside our findings in tables and graphs in this report.

We were unable to verify the information given or control for any inputting errors by service respondents.

Endnotes

¹ These numbers are the number of referrals accepted in the previous financial year.

² 1, 447 out of 1864 women.

³ Bowstead, JC, Why women's domestic violence refuges are not local services, *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 35(3): 327–349, p. 335, 2015

⁴ UKROL is for both refuge and community-based services

⁵ Crown Prosecution Service, Violence Against Women and Girls Crime Report 2014/15 (London: CPS, 2015)

⁶ HMIC, Increasingly Everyone's Business, (London: HMIC, 2015)

⁷ Crown Prosecution Service, Violence Against Women and Girls Crime Report 2014/15 (London: CPS, 2015)

⁸ Howard, M and Skipp, A, *Unequal, trapped and controlled. Women's experience of financial abuse and Universal Credit* (London: Women's Aid and TUC, 2015), p. 40. [52% of 124 women responding to this survey question.]

⁹ Some women may be counted more than once when they are referred to more than one service. For instance, a woman may be referred to five services but only the fifth one is able to accept her referral.

¹⁰ Femicide Census, which has been developed by Karen Ingala Smith, Chief Executive of nia, in partnership with Women's Aid, with support from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP and Deloitte LLP.

¹¹ Mouton, C., Rodabough, R., Rovi, S., Hunt, J., Talamantes, M., Brzyski, R. and Burge, S., Prevalence and 3-Year Incidence of Abuse Among Postmenopausal Women, *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 94, No.4, April 2004

¹² <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/our-approach-change-that-lasts/>

¹³ These are counting instances of referral, not the number of women. Some women will be counted more than once when they are referred to more than one service. For instance a woman may be referred to five services but only the fifth one is able to accept her referral. There may also be women who would have benefitted from a referral but were never referred as the referring agency already knew services were full or that couldn't meet her specific needs.

¹⁴ We excluded 19 service responses from our analysis because the numbers given for referrals accepted and declined did not add up to the total number of referrals. The responses remaining were from 75 services.

Endnotes

¹⁵ These are counting instances of referral, not the number of women. Please see the explanation in footnote 15.

¹⁶ We excluded 20 service responses from our analysis because the numbers given for referrals accepted and declined did not add up to the total number of referrals. The responses remaining were from 112 services.

¹⁷ In order for services to be able to provide safe and appropriate support for survivors of domestic abuse who have alcohol or drug misuse issues, they must be properly resourced, have the level of staffing and skills within staff team as required – this can be costly and not all services are able to provide this enhanced and intensive level of support or they may only be able to support one woman with drug or alcohol misuse issues at a time.

¹⁸ In order for services to be able to provide safe and appropriate support for survivors of domestic abuse who have mental health support needs, they must be properly resourced, have the level of staffing and skills within staff team as required – this can be costly and not all services are able to provide this enhanced and intensive level of support or they may only be able to support one woman mental health support needs at a time.

¹⁹ Women's Aid, *Why we Need to Save our Services* (Bristol: Women's Aid, 2014)

²⁰ This is specifically for refuge services which are run without dedicated funding – as a portion of refuge rental costs are normally funded through housing benefit.

²¹ Information from 111 services responding to this question. 12 responses were excluded as the answers on funding sources did not add up to 100%.

²² We excluded responses from 3 refuge-only services whose answers on funding did not add up to 100% or no numbers were given.

²³ From data collected by Women's Aid, January 2016.

²⁴ Imkaan, *State of the Sector: Contextualising the current experiences of BME ending violence against women and girls organisations* (London: Imkaan, 2015), p. 19.

²⁵ Responses from 111 services. We excluded responses from 12 services whose answers on funding did not add up to 100%. The mean average was calculated from all the responses to each funding stream. As this is an average for each separate funding source, the results together will not add up to 100%.

²⁶ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/our-approach-change-that-lasts/>

²⁷ Women's Aid will continue to work to improve the response rate to the Annual Survey and is constantly striving to improve data collection and analysis through this survey and in all of our research work.



Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015

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