

2014/2015



North Down and Ards Women's Aid

Annual Report

2014/ 2015



Chairperson's Report

In Women's Aid's view, domestic violence is physical, psychological, sexual or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic violence often includes a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are, in themselves, inherently 'violent' - hence some people prefer to use the term 'domestic abuse' rather than 'domestic violence'.

Domestic violence is very common: research shows that it affects one in four women in their lifetime. Two women a week are killed by their partners or former partners. All forms of domestic violence—psychological, financial, emotional and physical—come from the abuser's desire for power and control over an intimate partner or other family members. Domestic violence is repetitive and life-threatening, it tends to worsen over time and it destroys the lives of women and children.

The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers are dedicated in raising awareness of domestic and sexual violence, providing support services for women and children who are victims and ensuring a safe refuge for those who have to flee their home as a result of domestic violence.

We carry out all this work in a very precarious financial environment where sustainable funding for services is very difficult to achieve. It is hoped that the contracts with our statutory funders can be placed on a more secure footing in the future.

North Down and Ards Women's Aid is very fortunate however to be the beneficiary of donations from many organisations and the generosity is remarkable. We would like to thank all our funders, without whom the valuable work we carry out with women and children wouldn't be possible.

I would like to personally thank the staff and volunteers for their tireless work and to my fellow Directors for all their work and support.

Lesley Cairnduff

Chief Executive Officer's Report

2014/2015 has been a challenging year with many exciting opportunities. As in previous years we have seen a steady increase in demands for our services from all programme areas.

Children's Services programmes has established the Art workshop initiative and it is available for children throughout the year, providing a relaxed and fun introduction to services for children and young people of all ages. The Helping Hands programme has developed to incorporate 'family work' sessions, as requested by Mums. The number of families involved in the family work sessions has increased significantly. Children's Services has been very responsive to the needs of the Mums and the children as they develop the services offered.

Refuge services provides safe, temporary accommodation and support to women and their children, many who have complex needs. Staff continue to meet all the needs of women and families residing in refuge and work in close partnership with NIHE, PSNI, S.E. Trust, C.A.B, The Storehouse and many other community and voluntary agencies. Again this year, there was an increase in the number of families residing in refuge and an increase in the number of women/families we have been unable to accommodate as requested.

North Down and Ards Women's Aid continues to work with Choice Housing in an attempt to secure new premises in a new location. We received funding from the DOJ which enabled a badly needed refurbishing of the interior of the refuge, which has provided a modern and homely environment to the communal areas.

Floating Support services was successful in their bid for an increase in funding, providing this project with an increase in staff and a full time manager post. With the increase in capacity, North Down and Ards Women's Aid has been able to expedite the allocation of key support workers providing services more efficiently and effectively. Floating Support has seen a significant and sustained increase in the number of referrals into the service this year. In order to meet the diverse needs of women in the community, Floating Support also works in close partnership with NIHE, PSNI, S.E.Trust, C.A.B., The Storehouse, Solicitors and many other community agencies.

North Down and Ards Women' Aid staff have presented awareness raising sessions to local church groups, local women's groups, and presented training sessions to a number of professional organisations and statutory agencies during this year.

The new IT system is now live. Staff are using the system and becoming more familiar with its benefits. We are delighted to report that this year saw the launch of our Facebook page, which is very active and well followed.

North Down and Ards Women's Aid staff members are dedicated and committed to providing high quality professional services that meets the needs of women and families coming into our services. I would like to thank staff for their continued hard work and dedication. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors for their commitment, professionalism, leadership and dedication during a very busy and productive year.

Beth Scott

Funding Report

Thanks to the support of our funders we were able to meet the accommodation and support needs of women and their children using our services this year. The demand for services has continued to increase in all areas of direct service.

However, lack of funding continues to be an issue and unfortunately we are unable to change our approach of applying stringent measures to ensure continuing delivery of our much needed services. Funding shortages, budget cuts and potential budget cuts have had a serious impact on staffing, training, prevention work, courses for children and young people and renovations to our buildings.

Our search for new sources of funding continues to be a priority and we are always pursuing possible opportunities.

Thank You

North Down & Ards Women's Aid would like thank all our funders and donors for their on-going support and acknowledgement of our work and for enabling the continuation of all our vital services.

Ards Community Policing Safety Partnership
Awards for All
Children In Need
Council for the Homeless NI
NIHE Supporting People Programme (inc Floating Support & Housing Management)
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
Sure Start Ards
Henry Smith Charitable Trust
Lloyds TSB
OFMDFM
PSNI



We have also been very grateful for the generous financial support from local churches, schools, community groups, business and professional clubs and private donors, without whom our task would be very difficult.

Refuge Report

North Down and Ards Women's Aid Refuge continues to provide safe, temporary accommodation to women and their children affected by domestic and sexual violence. Refuge accommodates women and children from all areas who wish to ensure their safety by placing a distance between themselves and their perpetrator.

This year there has been positive changes to the refuge staffing team. The team now consists of a Refuge Manager and 4 Refuge Workers. Three of the refuge workers work on a rota covering evenings and weekends providing improved staffing hours. Two Children and Young Persons Workers continue to support the children and young people while they reside in refuge. For the first time this year, refuge has a family worker post. This post, although temporary due to funding, proved very valuable as it enabled additional support to families.

The refuge team continues to provide support and advocacy required to meet the individual and sometimes complex needs of the women and children using the refuge services. Our support services include:

- Support and safety plans
- Help in establishing/stablising benefits
- Applications for housing
- Liaising with PSNI, solicitors, and other agencies
- Working together with Social Services
- Parenting support
- Advocating with medical professionals

Our occupancy has been consistently high over the last year. In the past year 45 women and 23 children were accommodated in refuge. The majority of referrals to refuge were from the 24 hour domestic and sexual violence helpline along with referrals from Women's Aid Floating Support.

Throughout the year refuge has facilitated a space for professionals such as health visitors, social workers and students to come to refuge to find out more about our service and to have a tour of the building.

Refuge was very fortunate to receive funding, enabling an upgrade of the communal areas. We purchased 2 new dining tables and 2 sofas, bedding and replacement kitchen items and small appliances. The interior of the building was painted proving a fresh, modern and homely environment.

Floating Support: The Growth

April 2014-March 2015 has seen major but exciting changes and development for the Floating Support Service. The growth to the team has ensured that all women and their children experiencing domestic and sexual violence within the North Down and Ards area are more able to benefit fully from the specialist support service Women's Aid provide .

During the period of April 2014 – March 2015, 373 women with 352 children were referred through the Bangor Advice Centre into Floating Support to provide information, advice and further ongoing support. Over the last year there has been significant growth, improvement and development to the Floating Support team and operational service within the North Down and Ards area. The extension of funding by Supporting People secured the appointment of three additional members of staff, a full time Floating Support Manager, a full time and a part time Floating Support Worker all in post by September, 2014.

Service provision and improvement.

The additional staff enabled the team to resolve the extensive list of women waiting for support in September 2014 with many being allocated immediately to workers for essential support.

The numbers of clients engaging in ongoing Floating Support has steadily risen from 29 women in April 2014 to 75 women in March 2015, operating above the funding requirements of 60. There were 20 women awaiting allocation for further floating support at the end of March 2015.

This has been attributed to the additional post of a full time assessment worker operating within the Floating Support team assessing the majority of initial referrals and also to the introduction in October 2014 of individual case management. This has notably improved in all areas of individual caseload management and overall effectiveness in the service offered to women.

The comprehensive assessment of women at the first point of entry into service continues to be a very valuable and necessary element of floating support and has also seen recent improvements. The introduction of an additional Risk Assessment Procedure in January 2015, devised from guidelines of the Northern Ireland MARAC Protocol has ensured women are now allocated to a worker within an acceptable time frame and monitored effectively according to the immediate and ongoing risk presented.

The Floating Support team continues to deliver a comprehensive, safe and confidential service to all women affected by domestic and sexual violence within the North Down and Ards area, working hard to provide ongoing risk assessment, safety planning, one to one support, court support to engage with the civil and criminal justice system, support with housing issues, budgeting and ongoing personal development.

The Floating support team are continuing to maintain and develop strong statutory links, working in partnership with South Eastern Health Services, Social Service Gateway and FIT teams, PSNI, NI Housing Executive and Courts whilst developing partnership working with the relevant voluntary agencies within the area.

Development of Floating of Support Service.

The majority of referrals coming through the project in April 2014 were identified from the Bangor area. Increased efforts in statutory and voluntary agency networking and partnership working by Floating Support staff and additional organisational awareness raising means we are seeing a steady increase in referrals from the wider North Down and Ards area and women from BME groups. This is an extremely encouraging and exciting development for the Floating Support service and we aim to continue to put efforts into developing this further, particularly within the rural communities and wider geographical area.

Journey to Freedom

The Journey to Freedom programme continues to be a core element of support for clients availing of Floating Support, offering a safe and supportive group process to enable women to explore their domestic violence journey. An additional programme was set up in March 2015. We are currently running 3 Journey to Freedom Programmes.

Focus Group

On the 10th March 2015 a Focus group was held for all women accessing support through the Floating Support service. The aim of the focus group was to provide opportunities for women to have a safe, confidential group discussion with staff on the services they had engaged with through Floating support. One major outcome from the women's voices was the need for support after the Journey to Freedom programme ended. The floating support team are devising a specialist support programme to empower women to move forward to exit Floating support services with confidence.

PSNI Student Officer Training

Floating support continue to be involved in the delivery of essential domestic violence awareness training with student police officers at Garnerville. This also continues to be a vital opportunity to work in partnership with the PSNI and develop strong links within the NDA community.

Silence
the
Violence

Childrens' Services



Refuge

Over the last year there has been an ongoing significant increase in referrals for women's support services which has increased the demand for crèche provision, group work programmes and individual support for the Children's Services within the Refuge and Centre setting. This year the Refuge team and Children's Workers have continued to work in close partnership with the PSNI, Social Services, Scrabo Children's Centre, and Health Visitors/Professionals to provide additional support for several of our families within the Refuge. The Childrens Workers posts have enabled the team to continue to meet the educational and recreational needs of all children and young people by developing and advancing the Children's Services programmes. The Team provide childcare support for mothers attending support sessions and provide fun and recreational activities for all the children and young people within the Refuge setting. The Helping Hands programme is available for all children and several young people this year have availed of individual support through the Transformers programme. These programmes have improved the relationships and attachments between the children and their mothers. This year we have provided 351 individual support sessions for children and young people and 21 sessions for the Helping Hands program. The Children's Workers also provided 143 support sessions for mother's requiring support for childcare and family issues

Crèche provision in the Centre

This year the Crèche provision has increased due to the provision of childcare for three Journey to Freedom Women's Groups. Individual childcare support for mother's attending appointments with the Assessment Worker and Floating Support Team have continued throughout the year. Due to the increase in referrals the afternoon appointments for childcare have increased. This year there has been a total of 79 children (37 female/ 42 male) availing of the Crèche facilities. These sessions have been delivered by the Crèche Worker and the two Children's /Young Person's Workers.

Helping Hands

The Helping Hands Family Work programme has continued to develop over the year with a total of 29 families and 41 children attending and completing the programme. This year we provided a group work programme with 3 mums and 3 children completing the sessions. The group work programmes are no longer running due to the demand from clients for family work.

Helping Hands has also been adapted to meet the needs of many children who have presented with special education needs. A total of 9 children with special needs have completed the programme. There has been an increase in referrals from Floating Support, Social Services and Scrabo Children's Centre for the programme. This programme has encouraged positive interactions between mothers and their children in an environment that meets each child's educational and individual needs.

Art Workshops/Transformers

The Art Workshop programme has been developed to offer additional support for children who have attended the Transformers and Helping Hands programmes. This year we have ran 3 groups with 12 children completing the programme. Family Work was introduced to a family of 2 children who had attended the family Helping Hands programme. The art activities were adapted and delivered to meet the needs of the youngest child who had special educational needs.

The family Art Workshop programme has been introduced to our service has a first step approach. This approach has encouraged families to come together to participate in interactive art activities. These activities introduce the families to the Children's Workers who they will then be working with while attending the Helping Hands and Transformers programmes.

This year we have delivered several Stage 1/Stage 2 groups and several children have attended individual support sessions for the programme. The family work programme has been introduced to our service and several children have attended and completed individual support work. The programme is adapted to meet each child's educational and individual needs.

Streamvale Farm - Easter2014

This Easter we enjoyed a visit to Streamvale Farm for all families within the Refuge and Centre setting. A total of 20 children, 9 mums and 2 staff attended. The farm provided tractor rides, horse riding and leisure activities for all the families. The children were able to participate in activities including feeding the small farm animals. The farm has become a popular event for all our families and is always well attended.

Snakes and Ladders - Summer 2014

This summer our families participated in fun activities at Snakes and Ladders which is an adventure play area for children. This was successful and the venue provided a variety of activities for each age group. A total of 14 children 6 mums, and 2 staff attended.

Streamvale Farm - Christmas 2014

At Christmas, all our families within the Refuge and Centre visited Streamvale Farm. A total of 32 children and 19 mums and 3 staff attended. The children were treated to the themed story, followed by a visit to the reindeers and farm animals. Santa was there to provide presents and activities for all the children followed by hot dogs and ice-cream. This event was well attended and the evaluations feedback was extremely positive.

Happy Town - February 2015

During the half term break, we organised a visit to the adventure play area Happy Town in Newtownards. A total of 14 children, 8 mums and 3 staff attended the event and all of the children participated in the activities.
