

Bromley  
& Croydon  
Women's Aid

Working to end domestic abuse



Refuge • Support • Prevention

Annual  
Review  
2018

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## Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid

Working to end domestic abuse

BCWA aims to empower anyone suffering domestic abuse so they can make informed choices about their future. Our services are confidential, non-judgmental and respectful of diversity.

BCWA puts anyone who contacts us for support at the heart of decision making, so that they can gain the confidence, strength and self-respect needed to free themselves from abusive relationships.

BCWA focuses on maintaining the independence, confidence and self-esteem of anyone it helps.

Chair of Trustees: **Jane Ward**

CEO: **Constanze Sen**

Director of Operations: **Lucy Pleass**

**Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid**

**PO Box 71159**

**London**

**SE20 9BW**

**020 8313 9303**

**info@bcwa.org.uk**

**www.bcwa.org.uk**

Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid is a charity registered with the Charity Commission (No. 1068007) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (Registered in England No. 3320296).

## Foreword by Chair



In 2017 austerity has proved a challenge for our crisis intervention organisation, and it is in that context that I first want to thank all our staff and volunteers who provide an excellent service for hundreds of women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Volunteers have become an integral part of the BCWA team reflecting our need to bridge the gap created by cuts.

I would like to thank our management team who remain inspired and motivational and continually focus on sustainability, development and improvement whilst maintaining our ethical and inclusive working practices, which all contribute to our success. Thank you to our funders and donors who have recognised the need to invest in our specialist service and who have been confident about BCWA's provision and our approach.

I would also like to thank Women's Aid Federation who has campaigned tirelessly to bring the issue of domestic abuse into public consciousness, after years of being a low priority issue despite its devastating impact on families. Thanks to our current partners who greatly strengthen the network of provision and improve our ability to respond quickly in crisis situations and access more additional services for our clients.

Our provision now encompasses support for young women, families without recourse to public funds, women with additional needs, EEA nationals, resettlement services, training and awareness and prevention work in schools. This breadth of approach has meant much greater accessibility to our service.

Recently abuse has hit the headlines bringing home how much things continue to need to change so women are respected as equal partners, and there is no better place to start than in the interpersonal relationships that we all share. However, reduced funding to all vulnerable people in supported housing continues to threaten domestic abuse services across the U.K.

Please continue to support us to make a difference in the lives of women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

With my very best wishes,

**Jane Ward - Chair**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Ward'. The signature is stylized with a large, flowing 'J' and a cursive 'Ward'.

## Refuge

### Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid have provided refuge accommodation since 1975.

Refuges are run by a committed, professional and experienced staff team to exceptionally high standards, with the invaluable help of volunteers.

We strive to offer a holistic support that meets the need of all survivors of domestic abuse. Over the years we have worked to cover the gaps in provision and to break down the barriers that women and children face when accessing support services.

Our refuge service provision now includes:

- One to one support for residents
- Safebeds scheme for women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)
- Resettlement support
- Complex needs support
- Volunteer Support
- Children's Support Services

### The new refuge service in Croydon:

We changed our name in 2016 to Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid to carry on the legacy of sister organisation Croydon Women's Aid, forced to shut after losing core funding.

In 2016 BCWA opened their first independent refuge in Croydon and since September 2016, Bluebell House has given refuge to 14 women.

### New support services in 2016/17:

Thanks to the Big Lottery's Women & Girls Initiative, BCWA have been able to start new specialist support for families with no recourse to public funds and women with additional needs.

We can now provide tailored support to women residing in our Safebeds refuge, who come from BME communities and usually meet several barriers when accessing services, as well as tailored support to up to 5 women who present a wider complexity of support needs, such as higher mental health support and substance misuse support, due to the abuse experienced.

### Children's services:

Children in refuge are supported by Child Support Officers funded by BBC Children in Need. This service provides 1to1 and group support to children residing in refuge, including in-house activities as well as outings and trips during school holidays.

Activities include art therapy, play sessions and after school clubs, as well as outings and trips during school holidays. Outings in 2016-17 included days out to Hop Farm, Broadstairs, Godstone Farm, Eagle Heights, Swanley Park, and Kent Life Museum.

### Refuge clients 2016/2017



**137**  
women  
**152**  
children

“ I leave this house with pride and happiness, but a heavy heart, as this was my safe house, my time to grow, shine and become who I am, who I was meant to be. ”

## Maria's story

### A day in refuge

08 refuges  
48 women  
60 children



"Life in refuge is very different to how I imagined it. Before I came into refuge I thought it would be very strict, I worked myself up into thinking it would be like a prison where I would have a curfew and my meals would be served to me and I would not be able to enjoy my life again. It was a really scary thought but I had no choice at the time.

As soon as I set foot in the refuge I knew that my life would not be the same again but for a different reason. The staff were very friendly and everyone was trying to get me all the things that I needed to be comfortable. I wake up in the morning and I have breakfast with the other residents in the house that are awake. By this time my refuge worker comes in to say hello and we talk about life and nice things.

I have a lot of problems to deal with and worries such as my immigration status but being in a clean and comfortable environment makes it easier. Knowing I can trust my support worker and rely on her to get things done makes a big difference to me. During the day I will meet again with my refuge worker to go over

any updates with my benefits and housing. If there are things I don't understand she will help me. We phone the solicitor together and she comes with me to meetings.

When I am not dealing with important matters, BCWA helps me to relax by organising activities for us like baking or the freedom programme. I really enjoy these because I would not know how to find them otherwise. They have helped my confidence grow and I feel like a new person. There is no day that is the same in refuge. Even the days when I feel down, I look around and feel grateful for where I am. Thank you BCWA."



## Support

A key strand of BCWA service provision is community support services, a range of services for those experiencing domestic abuse in the community who require information, guidance and support to increase safety.

These services consisted of:

- Outreach Community Support
- Young People's Outreach Support
- Support Groups
- One Stop Shop

### New Young People's Services in 2016/2017:

Since summer 2016, BCWA have provided a new service for young women aged 13 to 20, funded by the Big Lottery's Women and Girls Initiative.

We provide specialist 1:1 support for young women who have been affected by domestic abuse. The nature of the support provided varies upon the needs of each client we work with. We can advocate on behalf of a young person, support them through the court process, or simply provide a listening, non-judgemental ear.

BCWA facilitate a peer support programme for young women (aged 16-25) who have experienced domestic abuse. The group covers topics such as healthy and unhealthy relationships, the impacts of domestic abuse and strategies for managing difficult emotions effectively.

BCWA support young women to rebuild self-esteem, helping them to recognise that the abuse is not their fault and that there is help available if they wish to access it. The group work's aim is to raise awareness amongst young women of some of the warning signs to look out for in future relationships, whilst also providing a safe space in which they can discuss some of their own previous experiences.

Please write a few lines to reflecting upon the impact this support group has had upon you

*It has made me not feel alone and at fault  
understand that this can happen to anyone  
and you can still live a happy life and  
not be sad forever!*

### In 2017...

BCWA were awarded a contract with London Borough of Bromley to run VAWG community services. We will be providing the IDSVAs service for high-risk victims, support groups, the One Stop Shop until March 2019, while the Perpetrator Programme is run by our partner organisation DVIP.



### Young people services 2016/2017

**28** outreach clients  
**19** group work clients

“ The group has made me less fearful of the future and future relationships. I feel more confident in myself and my strength because of this group. I feel less alone meeting people who have been in a similar situation. The facilitators made me feel so at ease and comfortable. I am now able to share and I feel supported. ”

## YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS OUTREACH WORK

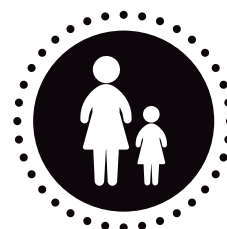


**321** women supported by Outreach Team

**47** girls supported

**131** women attended the Support Groups

**324** attended OSS



Support services  
**2016/17**

## Prevention

Prevention work is vital to accomplish our mission to end domestic abuse in Bromley and Croydon.

BCWA have therefore focused on expanding their prevention services provision, to make sure that the community is aware of how to tackle domestic abuse and recognise its signs. We also wanted to reach out to women and children from underrepresented groups in the community.

### Training & Awareness

Since autumn 2016 BCWA have been offering training packages for statutory and voluntary agencies, private organisations and community groups to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the services available. The new service, funded by the Big Lottery's Women and Girls Initiative has reached 300 people in the last months of 2016/17.

### Healthy Relationships in Schools:

BCWA have also been delivering sessions for children and young people in primary and secondary schools on healthy relationships in fun and interactive way. Children are tomorrow's adults, so we talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships, self-confidence, mutual respect, keeping safe, expressing feeling and how to find the right support.

BCWA have also run Helping Hands, a group programme for children in Bromley primary schools, who are exposed to domestic abuse in the home. The aim of Helping Hands is to boost children's confidence, help them understand how to build a support network, how to disclose unsafe secrets and understand how to manage conflict and keep safe.

BCWA have delivered a bespoke package of assemblies and workshops in schools, colleges and other youth settings. The aim of our workshops is to raise awareness of teenage intimate relationship abuse and highlight some of the warning signs young people can look out for. 148 young people have so far accessed this service.



### Prevention services 2016/2017

**300** attendees  
**010** training sessions  
**017** talks in the community  
**060** delegates in secondary schools

“ Very Informative, I have learnt so much. I understand now where power and control plays such a huge part in domestic violence. ”

## Lucy's story

I phoned the helpline after receiving BCWA's number from my GP. At the beginning I wasn't sure what I was calling about. But then I was able to open up and the person on the phone gave me advice and support around the abuse I had experienced. I was suffering from 15 years of abuse from my ex-husband and harassment from his family.

Despite the separation, police involvement and court orders being in place, his abuse and threats were continuous and were affecting the children's wellbeing. A few days after making the first call to BCWA I received a copy of 'Living with the Dominator'. I read it that very same day, and that's when I understood that my ex-partner had been abusing me for years, and that I had to proactively seek more protection for me and my kids.

I started telephone and one-to one support with BCWA, and I later got in contact with a solicitor and the police. This helped me to successfully obtain a Prohibited Steps Order.

Thanks to the tailored and unconditioned support I received throughout this time, I was able to keep my job, involve the school in supporting my children, help them accessing counselling and later I attended BCWA's Freedom Programme where I had a chance to speak about my experience with other survivors of abuse.

I am still angry with him at times, but I also know that I'm free from him now. I am safe, my children are happier, I have gained self-confidence and I always keep my family's interest at heart. Last Christmas in our house was the best – no shouting, no walking on eggshells. We were safe and happy!



# The People

BCWA's work is possible thanks to all the people who volunteer, work, support and access the organisation.

## Beneficiaries

BCWA exists to support survivors of domestic abuse in the local community. We would not be here if it was not for all the brave survivors we work with every day, who seek help and with whom we co-produce services that are really tailored to women and children's needs. In 2016 roughly 1000 people accessed or benefitted from one of our services.

## Trustees

The developments in service provision in 2016/17 were made possible by the forward thinking approach of our trustees, who worked with the senior management team to ensure the sustainability of the organisation in the future, while maintaining high-quality standards in the provision of services for survivors of domestic abuse.



## Staff

BCWA services are provided by experienced and skilled support workers who put every effort in supporting survivors during their journey to recovery. All staff use a needs-based and listening approach and go the extra mile to support each survivor, in a time of austerity where more and more women face barriers in accessing services.

## Volunteers

In 2016 we further implemented a volunteer scheme to support survivors of domestic abuse across refuge, support and resettlement services. BCWA volunteers are an integral part of the organisation, come from all walks of life, share their skills and expertise to provide additional support to beneficiaries and are often survivors of domestic abuse who want to give back as part of their journey.

## Donors

The work we do is possible thanks to a wide range of statutory, corporate, voluntary and community organisations as well as kind individuals that have joined us in our mission to end domestic abuse in the local community.



## Diversity

Staff and volunteers' backgrounds reflect the diversity of our service users. Our staff are from a range of different backgrounds such as Black Caribbean, Black African, Asian and European. We speak 15 different languages, including Farsi, Dari, Azeri, Japanese and Afrikaans!

“ It’s vitally important for me as a volunteer to work closely with people in the local community to try to reduce the effect of domestic abuse on women, and it’s through making these personal connections that you become much more effective. I get a sense of connection, which is very important. ”

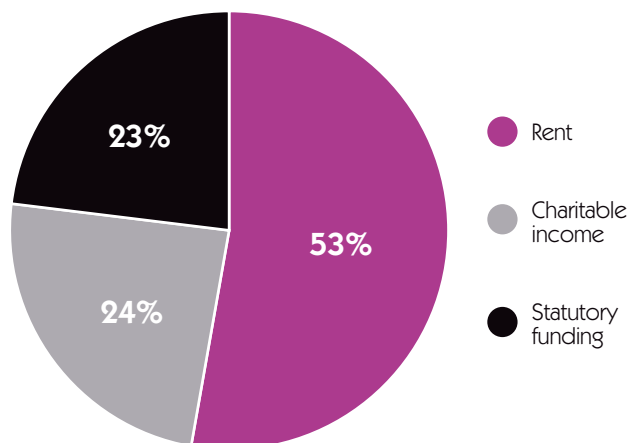


## Funding

BCWA's income is made up of three main sources:

- Rent and service charges from residents in refuge.
- Statutory funding from London Borough of Bromley, Croydon Council and DCLG.
- Charitable income from grant-making trusts, community groups and individuals, including Big Lottery Fund, BBC Children in Need, Zurich Community Trust, Wilmington Trust, Donald Forrester Trust, Bromley Community Fund, Rotary Clubs, Bromley Brighter Beginnings and many others.

BCWA income in 2016/2017:



We would like to thank all the people who supported us by holding an event, running, campaigning, making a donation or volunteering. Thanks for your continued trust and for giving us the opportunity to accomplish our charity's mission of ending domestic abuse in our community. You make the change in the lives of women and children possible!



## We need you!

Sadly, in this time of austerity, survivors of domestic abuse face increasing challenges and barriers in accessing specialist services. 1 in 4 women suffer from domestic abuse in the UK, and 2 women are killed in the UK every week. We have many projects that need support and are unfunded. If you would like to get involved with BCWA's work, please get in contact with us.

To all the wonderful people at Bromley Womens Aid, that have helped us in all we have been through, We want to say thank you.



## Welfare Fund

BCWA's Welfare Fund helps survivors of domestic abuse who come into refuge with nothing but the clothes they wear, those with emergency needs or whose benefits are delayed.

Thanks to the Welfare Fund we can fund essential living expenses, bedding, food, travel costs to enable women to attend benefits appointments, meeting with solicitors or GPs and necessary clothing when needed.

The Welfare Fund is used to fund children's activities in refuge, as well as trips and outings for children and their mums during Christmas, half terms, summer and Easter holidays.

Donating to our Welfare Fund means funding the first day out for a family, or activities such as craftwork, Fun Days, after-school clubs, outings to theatres and museums or trips to the seaside, farms or amusement parks during school holidays.

Each story of domestic abuse is different from the other and each survivor needs a tailored and holistic support. The Welfare Fund allows to meet these different needs and support families during their journey.



Please get in contact with us on

**020 8313 9303**

or email

**info@bcwa.org.uk**

for more information.



“ The days out together have given myself and my daughter a chance to see that there are good things out there for us, and have given us the chance to bond. We really enjoyed ourselves and think that after everything we have been through, days out are a good way to escape the stress we went through. Really a good way to help our relationship as mother and child... thank you!

”



## What's New

Since the end of 2016/2017, we have been busy working with survivors to break down barriers in accessing domestic abuse services and ensuring that all women and children are supported when in need.

### Bridging the Borders

Bridging the Borders is a new 12-month project funded by Dept for Communities and Local Government across Bromley, Croydon and Bexley, in partnership with Croydon Council and Bexley Women's Aid. We provide specialist support for women who have experienced domestic violence who are European Economic Area Nationals (EEA) or have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), as well as resettlement support to women in refuge.

The aim is to maximise refuge spaces and provide resettlement support up to 6 months after leaving refuge, reduce barriers and improve access to services and support BME women, provide bespoke support for marginalised and isolated women and strengthen cross-borough work to improve support to victims leaving refuge.

Since July 2017, the service has helped 135 women, 55 clients with No Recourse to Public Funds, 23 EEA Nationals and 57 Resettlement clients.

### Bromley VAWG Services

In June 2017 BCWA was awarded a contract with London Borough of Bromley to run all the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) services in Bromley. Until March 2019, BCWA will provide the

Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocacy programme for high-risk victims of abuse in the community, a peer support group for survivors of domestic abuse, a weekly drop-in domestic abuse One Stop Shop in Bromley and the perpetrator programme, which is run by partner organisation DVIP.

### Volunteer Programme

BCWA received MOPAC funding in Spring 2017 to run a volunteer scheme to increase the support provided to all clients at BCWA. We currently employ 25 volunteers who help across a wide range of services, including refuge, resettlement, the helpline, support groups and the One Stop Shop.

### Bridging the Borders 2017/2018

**135** Bridging the Borders clients

**055** NRPF clients

**023** EEA National clients

**057** Resettlement clients

“ I was so broken as a human because of my husband and the shameful acts he did on me and my son. Because of the support of your project I am able to stand confidently again. ”

## Priti's story

My name is Priti. I came to the UK on a spousal visa with my son to marry my husband. Within two months of arriving in the UK, my husband physically, sexually, verbally and emotionally abused me and my son.

My son witnessed much of the violence. I endured the abuse as I believed there was no escape due to our immigration status being dependent on my husband's. After two years of abuse, that had escalated to the extent that it was daily, my son found the courage to call the police. My husband was arrested and placed on bail.

This is when I accessed Bridging the Borders (BtB). They supported me in taking steps towards a life free from violence and fear. I was not aware there was dedicated emotional support, immigration pathways and legal avenues to enable me to build a life in the UK for myself and my son, separate from my husband.

BtB supported me in obtaining an immigration solicitor and the BtB worker accompanied me to these appointments for moral support, as it is difficult and traumatic to repeatedly talk about the abuse. The solicitor submitted an application under the SET DV Rule for Indefinite Leave to Remain on my behalf.

Whilst pending, I was supported in getting a non-molestation order against my husband as my husband was threatening me and my son and I was concerned about our safety. The BtB worker also accompanied me to court to support me while I testified against my husband.

We are finally safe now. We live safely in our own home, and I have now got a full time job. We have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK as survivors of domestic abuse. We even went for a “British” day out when it was granted and celebrated with an afternoon tea.



## The Future

BCWA's mission is to provide support, care and refuge for women and children fleeing domestic abuse whilst empowering clients to build safer futures for themselves. We work hard to ensure that we will be here until every woman and child is safe from abuse.

To achieve our mission and aim, we will listen to and work with our service users to co-produce client centered services and to ensure that women and children's voices are heard. We will actively reach out to partner organisations to help provide holistic services and we will improve our communications to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the support available as well as broaden our volunteer, supporter and donor base.

Whilst we have been successful in implementing new services throughout 2016/17 and beyond, much of our funding relies on short-term grants and there is a need to establish sustainable funding sources for these vital new services.

We are currently seeking secure funding for 2018/19 and beyond for the following services:

- Support for women with No Recourse to Public Funds
- Support for EEA nationals
- Resettlement support for women moving on from refuge
- Volunteer management
- Prevention programme for children in primary schools

New services planned for 2018/19 and beyond include:

- Specialist support for women from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BAME)
- Establishing a sustainable independent refuge in Croydon
- Extending existing provision for children and young people to include prevention, early intervention and support in one to one and group settings



“ I want you to know how much I appreciate the help & support you all provided to us. Our lives have been so blessed with some of the most amazing people. Thank you all for being part of our journey. ”

## Gina's story

I met my ex-partner several years ago. No words are good enough to describe this man. The closest one is monster, who used and abused me in every possible way; I became his punch bag, his maid, his slave and his toy.

Life became a never ending cycle of poison and medicine. Whenever he was abusive, I felt like I was being given a dose of poison and whenever he would calm down, then that was my medicine.

Whenever I wanted to leave, he pulled the chains and controlled me; escape wasn't possible. I was a prisoner but the chains were invisible. One day, after an attack, I grabbed my 4 year old son on my hip and ran into the nearby pub to hide.

I then faced homelessness. I was told by a housing officer to find shelter in a mosque as we are Muslims; they advised me to go back to Devon as there was not any actual threat of domestic violence; he told me to call my friends from Devon to ask for help even though I severed contact from my community there.

I wanted to throw myself in front of a bus as I couldn't bear anymore pressure. But when I looked at my son I pushed these horrible thoughts away. We stayed in a B&B for 9 days and then we finally came to Bromley.

Our refuge was the best. They provided my son and I with a roof over our head and I am ever so grateful. From the start with the referral to the actual move in, from child support to resettlement support, I felt safe, protected and supported hand in hand.

There was a mountain on my shoulders but it wasn't heavy. The staff took away my burden. My support workers were inspirational and empowering. Their input was very important as without them I would not be where I am today.

The refuge playroom was our sanctuary, a place where all our worries disappear for both my son and I. The refuge was where my son was given his first birthday cake and his first birthday party.

It was also our first Eid on our own, far from family and friends. But the house was filled with laughter, I wasn't lonely. I discovered happiness and my new family.

Summer activities contributed a lot to our well-being. Whilst domestic violence leaves us with scars and stressful memories, the outings organised by BCWA gave us the opportunity to discover new places, learn to travel independently, release stress and build new memories. Life is beautiful and worth living.

I moved out of the refuge at the end of November last year. Despite suffering from anxiety and depression, I am now enjoying a peaceful life with my son in a modern apartment with access to a private garden. We celebrated our 1 st Christmas and New Year on our own. The best part was seeing so much happiness on my son's face when he found his presents under the Christmas tree. We will create new memories, we will be happy and we will have a good life.



# BCWA's Achievements

Women  
in  
refuge:

137

Children  
in  
refuge:

152

Refuges:

08

Young women &  
girls outreach  
clients:

47

Languages  
spoken  
at  
BCWA:

15

Clients at  
One Stop Shop:

324

Attendees at  
talks & training:

300

Young people  
in secondary  
schools:

60

Number of  
outreach  
clients:

321

Women who  
attended support  
groups:

131