

Always there for  
women in need



Bromley  
Women's  
Aid

Review

January  
2014



# Review Contents

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Bromley Women's Aid is committed to supporting and empowering women to create change in their lives so that they and their children can live free of Domestic Abuse and improve their quality of life.

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

## “What would we have done without you?”

### One in every four women suffer some form of Domestic Abuse.

Stop and read that again slowly... Consider what that means by thinking of four women you know ..... or ... next time you go to a supermarket look around you – there will almost certainly be several women who have suffered, will suffer or are suffering now.

Domestic Abuse can take many forms. It is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or who have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality). It also affects all ages. Elderly people may suffer from Domestic Abuse, often from their adult children. Men also suffer from abuse, although most victims are women.

During 2013 we helped 104 women and 113 children in our seven refuges. We often hear “what would we have done without you”. Our Community team helped 306 women and one man (with 348 children) and we visited 15 schools to deliver 72 sessions reaching 1,897 children plus their teachers and (sometimes) parents and carers. We developed a Safebeds service to provide accommodation for women referred by Social Services Departments. We also moved to a new office which has a well-equipped training room that is available for hire.

In England nearly 10,000 women needed refuge accommodation in 2013 (with over 10,000 children). Occupancy rates are high. The UK is still not a safe place for many women because of Domestic Abuse.

**Read the about the experience of ‘Nina’ on the next page. 4**

## “What would we have done without you?”

My name is Nina. I have lived with domestic violence since I married. Then I moved into a BWA refuge last year and my life and my children's lives have changed for the better.

I got married in 2003. Three months into the marriage my husband became very controlling and verbally abusive. He started to be physically violent when I was pregnant with Mia. From 2003 until 2012 I lived with Domestic Abuse. During this period there were times of separation and then reconciliation. In 2005, I left home fleeing from the abuse. One month after this separation, we reconciled. The situation improved only for a month or so but then the violence resumed. Police were called to the home several times. It was only in 2012 that I finally decided to flee again.

I moved in with my relatives. They wanted me to go back but I decided to contact BWA. I moved into a BWA refuge in 2012 with my two daughters, Mia and Hannah. These children had been

brought up in a home full of strife and violence. When we moved into the refuge, the first thing they said was that at last we are living in peace, they do not live in fear any more. Christmas 2012 was the first Christmas we spent on our own, the children loved it. They said it was the best Christmas they have ever had all their lives. Every day they express how big a difference it is living where there is peace. They are happy children now.

The move into the BWA refuge has had a big impact on my two daughters. Not only do they live a peaceful life without fear, but their performance at school has improved very much. Hannah's performance improved so much that even I was surprised. She is doing very well. Her teachers say that she is a Grade A student. Mia was not very confident in all her subjects, but she has done so well that in January 2013 she got a Head Teacher's Award for working hard and good performance. Her teacher reports that she is one of the best performing children in her class. She also reported that Mia is a happy child.

BWA kept the children busy with outings, visits to places of interests, to the beach, museums, cinema and the theatre.

For myself, through the support of BWA, I regained my confidence. I am living positively and enjoying life without living in fear of being beaten or verbally abused. I am beginning to rebuild my life as a single parent. I have also started working.

I just want to express my gratitude to BWA for the support they give women who flee Domestic Abuse. Helping them to find peace and safety again and purpose for their lives. Also for the support they give to children who get caught up in Domestic Abuse. Thank you for helping the mothers with applications for schools and understanding what they have been through so they can move on in life.

I want to thank all individuals and organisations that support BWA. Their funding is really impacting the lives of women and children who seek refuge as they flee Domestic Abuse. Thank you for supporting the children's services provided by BWA. Your help goes a long way in supporting these children who are unfortunate to be victims of Domestic Abuse.

Sadly this story is typical of many of the women we help. Names and any identifying detail have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Thank you all – Nina



## Then and Now

### Jane Ward, BWA's Chair of Trustees, was there at the start for BWA She takes up the story:

BWA had its roots early in the 1970's, when a group of local women recognised not only the lack of support for women as victims of domestic violence, but also how the prevailing attitude in society preserved its continuation. General public opinion and social policy at the time did not place domestic violence high on any agenda. We wanted to make a practical and positive difference to women's lives. According to Bromley council 'it didn't happen here'. Our research highlighted the urgent need for refuge accommodation in Bromley, and this was replicated nationally by many women's groups.

We set up our first refuge in 1975, which we ran ourselves as volunteers. We determined that our accommodation and support would be of the highest standard, aiming to assist women and their families from a rounded perspective, empowering them by providing an opportunity to move on with their lives. The attitude

of the police then was 'it's just a domestic'. The law was patchy, with few measures available to women, and no real concept of safeguarding in the borough. We tended to talk of 'victims', but now use the word 'survivors'. We hoped we would make a difference and that this institutionalised crime would reduce, as women became aware of the positive choices they could make in their lives.

Since then we have learnt to provide a service of which we are justly proud. It has involved training, networking, partnership working, seeking to reflect on the experiences of our service users, developing strong community based outreach services, developing expertise in areas of the law, housing, health, benefits, therapy, educational preventative measures, financial probity, and fundraising.

I would like to thank the BWA team for being the best, the trustees for their support and our partners and funders for their continued backing. We need to continue to evolve and fully meet the support needs of women and their families experiencing this devastating crime.

## Fast Forward to 2014 and BWA now provides:-

- **Refuge Accommodation**
- **Safebeds – Temporary Accommodation for Social Services' Clients**
- **Outreach Advice and Support**
- **Support Groups**
- **A Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop**
- **Awareness of and Training about Domestic Abuse**
- **A Schools Awareness Programme**

One of our newer members of the staff continues the story:

I joined BWA because I have always been passionate about working towards ending violence against women and girls. BWA offers so many vital services for women and their children to enable them to live healthy lives away from danger.

In this country, one in four women have experienced domestic abuse and two women are killed each week by current or former male partners. Continuing the struggle to end domestic abuse is as vital today as it ever was. The desperate demand for our services highlights this.

BWA is one of places in this country where domestic abuse is not ignored, trivialised or excused. Women are listened to, believed and supported. I am privileged to be a part of an organisation where this happens.

## Shop and Help BWA

You can help BWA by shopping online using the [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) website. Just select Bromley Womens Aid when asked what cause you want to support and we will receive some cash when you make a purchase.

## Refuges – Why are they still needed

Since opening its first refuge 1975, Bromley Women's Aid has provided accommodation for thousands of women and children.

They have come from as far afield as Scotland, Devon and Cornwall. Whilst we help women from Bromley, it is often the case that others fleeing from Domestic Abuse have to move far away from their home.

Typically, a woman stays in a refuge for six months. A specialist Refuge Officer will provide help with claiming benefits and, if required, attend meetings such as Child Protection conferences with the woman concerned. Advice and support with resettlement is an important part of the process. We help women to manage their own budgets and plan their own lives.

We would like to see the need for refuges diminish but sadly they are essential for many women in Bromley and across the UK. Women

often arrive in a dreadful state. Perhaps they have suffered physical violence and/or have been emotionally tortured for years... perhaps they have completely lost their self-respect and confidence and are at their wits end. We provide them (and any children) with their own bedroom and communal living areas. They share a kitchen and laundry facilities. Above all, they are safe and supported.

Children have access to play areas and we have Children in Need funding for two Child Support workers. The Child Support Officers provide daily play sessions for pre-school children and those awaiting a school place. An afterschool/homework club takes place twice a week.

The new *Safebeds* programme offers an opportunity for Social Services Departments to place women in need of safe accommodation. We can accommodate up to five families and one individual.

## Refuge Life

### Finding a place

Information about our refuges is available online and by calling 020 8313 9303 Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. The National Domestic Violence Helpline offers advice and information on available refuge spaces 24/7.

Women may apply themselves or be referred by another agency.

Once a woman (or agency) has asked for a refuge place an assessment (often by telephone) will take place to ascertain the need and suitability of BWA's services.

### Living in a refuge

An initial discussion with a Refuge Officer will establish practical needs and provide support in claiming benefits, obtaining school places etc. An occupancy agreement will be signed together with BWA's resettlement policy as refuges are only meant to be temporary solutions.

Women pay rent and a service charge, receive ongoing support and have a chance to play their part in refuge life in residents' meetings etc.

### Moving on

During their time in a refuge, BWA staff will have provided emotional and practical support with the aim of securing an independent future.

“

“Thank you so much, for helping me to get onto the road to putting the pieces of my life back together – something I will never forget.”

”

## Action for the Community

Providing support in the community is essential for those many women who will not seek a refuge place.

BWA's Outreach Team provides emotional and practical support and advice to anyone suffering from domestic abuse. Expert advice is also available to friends, families and professionals.

We provide telephone support, but can also arrange face to face meetings if needed.

We also accompany women to court, attend Child Protection conferences, access social assistance and signpost to other services.

### Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop

This free and confidential drop in session takes place every Thursday between 1.30pm and 4pm.

**Community House, Relate Office,  
South Street, Bromley BR1 1RH**

Representatives from BWA and the following agencies are there to help and advise:

**Bromley Housing Options**

**Local Solicitors**

**Police**

**Bromley Victim Support**

## Support Groups

BWA runs Support Groups for survivors of domestic abuse. These offer a broad overview of the psychological and emotional effects for women and their children who have lived with domestic abuse in any of its forms. Attendance also helps women move on from domestic abuse.

Support Groups are based on either the Freedom or the Keys to Freedom Programme and are run in 12 weekly sessions. Individuals may apply directly and agencies may refer clients.

These courses bring together women who have been affected by domestic abuse. They support each other, listen and share

experiences. A trained Facilitator helps them explore and learn about what domestic abuse is and come to understand that the perpetrator is responsible for it. Women learn about the impact domestic abuse has on children and on health and society.

They go on to explore what healthy relationships look like, how to build up self-esteem and confidence as well as how to be more assertive.

Women say that attending the groups made them realise they are not alone, they are not to blame and they can put themselves first in a safe space where they can be heard without being judged.

“

“I just want to say a huge thank you for helping me to get back to the person I was 4 years ago. I always remember the 1st Freedom Programme session when you said it was not to make us better people but to get back to being the people we were before we met the dominator. I am slowly returning to being that person, have managed to get a job back up north, so am returning to be with friends and family, I'm smiling more now instead of crying and it feels good. So thank you for giving me back my life.”

”

## Back to School

### Just how would you broach the subject of Domestic Abuse with a nine year old? Would you think it appropriate to do so?

Working with schools is one of the most important parts of BWA's work.

BWA runs an hour long awareness session for children in Primary Schools in Years 3-6. In an appropriate, interactive and child friendly manner, children are taught about healthy relationships, online safety and how to stay safe if there is an incident at home between adults. There are games and activities which have been designed to challenge role stereotypes.

Our Child Support Officer visits schools to work directly with children and also their parents. She often uses a DVD produced by the CEDAR Project in Scotland called 'Mikey and Jools keep safe'. This

sensitively produced video tells the story of two children who are in a family where their father, sadly, loses his temper on a regular basis.

By watching this and taking part in class conversations afterwards children are reminded that they need to find ways to stay safe in difficult situations and tell a trusted adult if there are problems. Crucially, this also teaches children that it is important to treat others with respect and is part of the wider need to enable them to avoid becoming perpetrators or victims when they grow up. It is important to complement other school based work that encourages healthy relationships.

If you would like more information, or you would like to book these sessions for your school, please contact Bromley Women's Aid on **0208 313 9303** or at **[info@bromleywa.co.uk](mailto:info@bromleywa.co.uk)**.

Comments received from teachers:



“Thankfully, because of the work you now do, a multitude of children are being given a chance I never had”

“It was presented very well. I learnt things about the class that I wasn’t aware of. It has given us a lot to talk about in class”

“Very good. Pitched at a good level for the children. Quite eye opening to see which jobs the children thought men & women could do – will follow this up!”

“Able to engage children that we felt were quiet about home environment”



## Funding

Bromley Women's Aid is funded from three major sources:-

- **Rent and service charge income from residents of the refuges which, in turn, is often derived from housing benefits**
- **Statutory funding in the form of a large Supporting People contract with smaller amounts for facilities like the central Bromley One-stop Advice Shop and Freedom/Keys to Freedom programmes**
- **Charitable income from grant-making Trusts and Foundations as well churches, community groups and businesses in Bromley.**

Almost all of the statutory funding has to be used for refuge related work, as does all the money that comes from rents and service charges. This means that Community Outreach and Schools Work has to be funded from reserves or by voluntary donations, as does the Welfare Fund.

Accounts are produced and audited for each financial year. Those for the year ending 31st March 2013 are available on request. They can also be viewed online in the BWA section on the Charity Commission's website as well as on the BWA website.

The cost of running BWA services in 2012/13 was £796,649.

We were fortunate to receive an £88,000 donation from St Jude's, a refuge provider in Sussex, that has helped fund our new Safebeds property. This is largely why our income in 2012/13 (£888,588) exceeded expenditure. The property has now been purchased, refurbished and is operational.

We are very grateful for all the help we have received and thank our supporters – their help has made it possible to be there for so many women and children.

## The Future

### We have secured a two year extension to the Supporting People contract with the London Borough of Bromley to provide refuge services.

Through the provision of additional refuge places, we will help more women and children and also increase our independent income through the provision of safe and high quality accommodation under our new Safebeds programme.

We will work closely with partner agencies towards developing resources, providing additional facilities and improving access to services. We will continue to work closely with the London Borough of Bromley's Child Safeguarding teams, the Bromley Children's Project and other relevant groups in our community.

We will further develop the children's service currently funded by Children in Need and our outreach services to schools. Other activities will be developed to improve opportunities for women to achieve good health and independence including parental support, healthy living, financial inclusion, training, volunteering and employment.

The Community service will continue to provide group courses as well as telephone support. We will engage with hard to reach communities and provide greater accessibility to our services.

It is clear that we must develop our fundraising activity as there is so much urgent need in our community. Community Outreach, the Schools Programme and the Welfare Fund all depend on voluntary giving to continue.



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Charity Number: 1068007

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## Three ways to help BWA

- 1** Consider making a Personal Gift
  - £25 will help pay for the telephone helpline
  - £50 will pay for a week's food for a mother and her children entering a Refuge with no money and no immediate access to benefits
  - £75 will help provide a school session reaching an average of 26 children and their teachers

Gifts can be made by cheque (made out to BWA and sent to our address). If you are a taxpayer then please authorise us to use Gift Aid as that increases the value of your gift by 25p for every pound given. Regular gifts by Bank Standing Order are extremely helpful as they help us plan with certainty. Please ask us for a form.
- 2** Tell people about BWA. Give them this Review or suggest they might invite a representative to visit their group to talk about the urgent need to reduce Domestic Violence and help women and children in need.
- 3** Raise funds with an event or sponsored challenge. Invite friends round for a meal; sell cakes; run a marathon (or perhaps something shorter!); climb a mountain; or go for a bike ride. There are lots of ways to have fun and help BWA's vital work at the same time. Call us if you would like to talk it over.

Telephone **020 8313 9303** for further information, advice and support