

Always there for  
women in need



Bromley  
Women's  
Aid

Review

January  
2015

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## Refuges Save Lives



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.

Chair of Trustees: **Jane Ward**  
Interim Director: **Constanze Sen**  
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### Bromley Women's Aid

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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).

## Refuges Save Lives

### BWA run a Specialist Refuge Service.

BWA have been responsible for establishing and running this service in Bromley for 40 years. It is delivered by a committed, professional and experienced staff team to exceptionally high standards. Our incredible achievement has been enabled by the government's supporting people funding through Bromley Council.

BWA see themselves as serving the community by offering accommodation, protection, needs-based support, advice and counselling, to extremely vulnerable women and children locally, providing a vital safety net for women and families experiencing domestic abuse. Similar services available in surrounding boroughs, reciprocate with us by providing accommodation and support for women and children from Bromley that are at risk remaining in this area.

BWA provide an exemplary service that plays a pivotal role in community safety. We strive to offer a holistic, 360 degree approach, liaising and working with a wide range of local partners.

Violence against women and girls, remains a shameful facet of our society, with 2 women killed every week in Britain. The scars of this experience on women and on children who have lived through it are extreme and survivors need to be enabled to move on, emotionally and physically, with our specialist support and expertise.

### BWA provide Specialist support and Specialist expertise.

Our expertise ensures quality care and support for women living in the refuges with onsite child support and this expertise is extended within the community to support clients who are not in refuges, the co-ordination of the Bromley 'One Stop Shop' for advice and support, the delivery of programmes on healthy relationships in schools and the delivery of support groups, that enable women to move on and ensure that repeat victimisation does not occur.

BWA believe that we are best placed to continue to deliver the service locally going looking forward and hope that funding decisions will be made that reflect the understanding that **Refuges save lives**.

## Julie's story

**Read the inspirational story of one woman who uses her experience and unique insight into domestic abuse to help others.**

My name is Julie Lock. I am a survivor of Domestic Violence. I left my now ex-husband when I was pregnant with my daughter, who is now 12 years old. Although, I would say I wasn't really free of him until my daughter was one. Without going to a refuge when I was pregnant I'm not sure if my daughter would be here now.

My abuse started before we were married. In the beginning he was charming and I'm not sure when the belittling began but when it did it started off subtly. First the abuse was verbal and psychological. Then it was a little shove here and there, then the physical attacks got more and more. I left many times and always returned for one reason or another.

One of those times really stands out for me, at the time I hadn't heard of women's aid or refuges and the only place I could think of going was my local council. I went to the housing department and told them that my partner had moved into my housing association property and that he was violent and we had nowhere to go as I had already burnt all my bridges with family and friends. I waited around for hours and hours, eventually they sent me to a bed and breakfast. By this time it was really late and my son and I were tired and hungry. I was still shaken by everything my partner had done to me and when we turned up at the B&B there were strange, dishevelled looking men hanging around outside and it was really quite intimidating. The B&B owner then showed me to my room and then on the way

he showed me the shower room and toilet, it was so dirty I was scared to even touch the walls, he then showed me the kitchen area and it was dirtier than the toilet. It was late and my son and I were tired so all I could think about was getting to the room and getting some sleep. Once in the room the door wouldn't lock properly so my son and I pushed the bed against the door and slept in our clothes. As soon as it was light my son and I went back to my husband. At least there, my son would get fed and it was clean.

As usual it was nice for a while but not for long. I fell pregnant and I hoped that would change him but it didn't. One night while he was attacking me I ran upstairs and he then dragged me down the stairs backwards and that was it for me. A friend told me to contact women's aid. I did and it was one of the best decisions I made. My son and I left with just the clothes on our backs. When we arrived at the refuge, they gave us some donated clothes and food and showed us to the room we would be in. Without the help of the refuge workers I don't know where I would be. They helped me sort out my benefits, housing and getting my son into another school. The first night there, I watched my son sleep and for the first time in a long time, he looked calm and relaxed and he slept through the night.

During my stay at the refuge my son started to smile and laugh again, something I hadn't seen him do in a long time. There were times when it was hard, not having any of our

things with us but we were safe. Once my housing application had been sorted my son and I were moved to second stage. We went from sharing a kitchen, bathroom and living room to having our own space again but with the added extra of having the support of the refuge workers. The second stage helped my son and I start getting back into routines. At first, I was a little scared of being away from the main refuge, worried I wouldn't be able to cope. My pregnancy was really difficult and I really don't know how I would have coped without the support of the refuge workers. I believe all refuge's should have second stage, it was an important part of helping me and my son get our independence back, it helped me get ready to be able to cope with living alone, but with the bonus of having the support too. I don't think I would have been ready to live on my own with my son and being pregnant without the support from the refuge workers. At approximately 34 weeks pregnant, I moved into my new home.

A few years after moving into my new home I was introduced to 'the Freedom Programme' by my support worker. Going on the support programme helped me in so many ways, I stopped blaming myself, and it helped me heal mentally. It helped me start to get my self esteem and self love back. It helped me see I wasn't alone. The strength that I got from the programme was an amazing feeling. It was a real eye opener. I also saw what it did for the others on the programme. I completed this programme twice and also went on to do other support groups. After doing these programmes I was so grateful and thankful for what they had done for me, I decided I wanted to give back. I then went on to be trained as a facilitator and now

volunteer to run these support programmes for BWA. It is very rewarding watching others grow in strength as I did. I believe support groups like this are an essential part of the healing process, to help women go from being victims to survivors.



## Life in Refuge – By a mother of two girls, Survivor of Domestic Abuse

Thinking back, I ask myself one question – Would I do it all again to be here, where I am today? And it's a simple answer, YES!

The day I left my home with two young daughters was, to say the least, nerve wracking and worrying. What lay ahead was unknown but I knew in my heart it was the right thing to do and I would be safe once and for all.

Life couldn't be any worse, than being around someone who was controlling every aspect of my life. At least I could be free, to live the life I wanted now and not always be looking over my shoulder. My daughters and I arrived with nothing but a few possessions carried in bin bags. I felt so apprehensive, but as soon as the refuge officer took us in, I instantly calmed down.

The house was big and seemed strange at the time, but as soon as we sat together and had a cup of tea I felt such a strong feeling of protection and safety. This lady who I barely knew, gave me so much comfort and reassurance in such a short time. I knew that we would be okay.

I was feeling very low and vulnerable at the time. Who would have believed I would become the stronger, happier, more contented person I am today, six months on?

I saw my children were happier, playing with lots of other children, making friends. It showed in their faces. They have since been on trips to the cinema; to the beach and have started schools & nursery. They are fulfilled and contented. They know Mummy is safe, happy, stronger and more empowered and their whole life has changed for the better. The women I have met in the refuges are independent, courageous women of different ages and backgrounds, who have stood up to domestic violence and all have a story to tell. Behind them is BWA, a team of wonderful women who are there for support and guidance, truly caring for the welfare of vulnerable women and children.

I will not forget this experience and would always urge women to leave and never look back. The road ahead is so much brighter.

For more information on our refuges ring

**020 8313 9303**

during office hours. For emergency refuge placements, please ring the National Domestic Violence Helpline on

**0808 2000 247**

for information and refuge referral 24/7.



These pictures and memories are from a 6 year old girl drawn during a one to one support session within the refuge.

# Domestic Abuse in the Community

## Support Groups

Providing support in the community is essential for those 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, as well as their friends, family and any professionals.

Read the story of one of their many clients in Bromley:

"For over two years I have been living with Domestic Abuse. I am separated from my partner, but like so many other couples due to financial reasons we continue to live in the same house. I am subjected to psychological, emotional and financial abuse. My ex-partner often uses silence, aggressive verbal outbursts, mind games and money as a means of control. People often ask "how do you cope?" or "why do you put up with this?" I have grown a thicker skin and have lived with this behaviour for so long, that it almost seems normal.

I believe psychological and emotional abuse is equally as devastating as physical abuse, because it is persistent in nature and chips away at your spirit. Being in this type of situation has been soul destroying, but having access to the professionals at Bromley Women's Aid, has helped to alleviate some of the pressure.

Over the years, I have come into contact with many organisations geared towards helping people like me. However, none have been as supportive as Bromley Women's Aid. The Outreach Support Workers are knowledgeable, highly supportive and quickly made me feel at ease. The caring nature and listening ear provided was so important, because it allowed me to gather my thoughts and make sound choices during this highly emotive time. Also, I was given strong, practical advice and coping strategies that I use whenever faced with a confrontational situation.

The support provided by Bromley Women's Aid is helping me to move forward with my life. Having this organisation on side, has made this overwhelming situation more bearable and has given me new hope for the future."

To access outreach support, call **020 8313 9303** or visit the **Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop** every Thursday between 1.30pm and 4pm at  
**Community House**  
**Relate Offices, South Street**  
**Bromley BR1 1RH**

This is also attended by representatives from Bromley Housing, Solicitors, Police and Victim Support.

BWA run Support Groups for survivors of domestic abuse.

These offer a broad overview of the psychological and emotional effects on women and children, who have lived with domestic abuse. The groups also look at healthy relationships and confidence building. Groups are run in 12 weekly sessions.

The groups bring together women who have all been affected and who all have a story to tell. To listen and share their experiences, can often have a healing effect and offers survivors the unique and inspirational insight, of others.

“ Keys to freedom has helped me understand things I have been through and I now know its not my fault, so has helped me a lot.

I have learnt that I am not on my own! To spot warning signs in a relationship. Stand up and be more assertive.

During the course I left my abusive partner, and I don't think I would have had the courage to do this had it not been for the course

To book a place call **020 8313 9303**

## Healthy Relationships Programme for Schools

BWA has been successfully running, a healthy relationships programme for children in primary schools.

Our session in schools lasts approximately one hour per class and is held in the children's classroom. During this time, we begin our presentation with a warm up activity, challenging gender stereotypes. This often provokes much discussion amongst the boys and girls.

The children are asked whether they think our friend is a male or female. For example, our friend is a nurse; the children have to choose whether to stand by the male or female sign. It never fails to surprise us at how many children think, that men are doctors and women are nurses.

The children are asked what they do when they feel angry and we then discuss ways to calm down. This discussion is led after showing a short DVD about a dad getting angry with the mum, we also point out that mum's can get angry too.

The children really engage with us and we always point out that we all get angry at times but it's how we manage our anger, that is important. We talk about dad's actions making the relationship unhealthy and what he could have done, instead of scaring the mum and the children.



## Junior Citizen Events

BWA has been working alongside partner agencies from the Safer Bromley Partnership to deliver Junior Citizen Events for Year 6 students in primary schools.

During part of our session at the Junior Citizen Event, we hand the children cards with different relationship scenarios or pictures with captions on. We usually have between 6 – 8 children in a group. We then ask the children to stand and read out their card scenario and then as a group discuss, where it should be placed on our traffic light signs. For example; red means this is an unhealthy relationship/bad sign, amber means unsure/warning sign and green means a good/ healthy relationship.

The children really enjoy this activity and it can often provide much discussion amongst us and the group. By the end of their short time with us, the children can identify the differences between Emotional, Physical and Financial abuse.

'The teachers were impressed with the way in which you open the discussion about what constitutes a 'healthy relationship' and also how all the children are involved in the discussion. I think that your calm, matter-of-fact approach, will have helped introduce you and your organisation to the schools.'

Personally, I think that it is very important that at this young age, they start to evaluate how they choose their friends and girl/ boy friends - it also gets them questioning the adult relationships that they see on a day-to-day basis and perhaps think about whether the behaviour they see, is 'normal and acceptable'.

**Helen Andrews**  
Junior Citizen Scheme Co-Ordinator  
Community Safety Unit  
London Borough of Bromley

## Child Support Services

BWA and its Service Users are incredibly grateful to Children in Need for their continued funding of our Child Support Workers.

This service is crucial to the 100+ children, who stay in our refuges on average every year. For many it is the start of their journey, to a happier and safer life. The Child Support Workers help not only the children but are an important link in allowing mothers and their children to re-bond and for the first time, experience quality time together.

Additional funding by our many supporters towards our welfare fund, allows us to organise holiday activities such as trips to farms, the seaside and the cinema as well as art and craft activities and parties to celebrate a number of international holidays and a trip to see a pantomime in the Christmas holidays.

The child support workers offer one to one support to children in refuge and in the community. They use a range of techniques including drawing and talking therapy to help the children, come to terms with their traumatic experiences.

One to one sessions with children are important, as it may be the first time they have actually had someone to talk to, about what has been happening in their home. They often feel lonely and isolated and need emotional support. It's an opportunity to discover a child's individual needs.

This picture opposite was drawn during my first one to one session with R who was 8 years old at the time.

We spoke about his family and he drew a picture of his mum first, followed by his dad, after drawing his dad he scribbled over the drawing and told me "my dad is bad, I don't want him."

R continued to tell me that he didn't want his dad and wrote "so I don't get moaned at. He kicked me in my face and hit me and Katie (R's baby sister)."



## Funding

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

- Rent and service charge income from residents in refuges, which in turn is often derived from housing benefits**
- Statutory funding in form of a Supporting People grant to provide support to clients in refuge, as well as smaller amounts to coordinate the Bromley One Stop Shop and to deliver Support Groups to survivors of domestic abuse**
- Charitable income from grant-making trusts and foundations as well as churches, community groups and businesses in Bromley.**

All the services provided by Bromley Women's Aid rely on statutory or voluntary funding. Our main objective for 2015 and beyond it is to maintain the number of refuge spaces and the quality support provided to families in refuge and in the community by seeking continued funding for all our services.

We are very grateful for all the help we have received and we would like to thank our supporters, the charitable trusts, statutory and voluntary groups, churches, schools, individuals and the London Borough of Bromley, who have all provided substantial support in 2013/14 which has enabled us to support, a large number of women and children in Bromley, who are affected by domestic abuse.

### Staff and Volunteers

BWA's services are run by a team of committed staff members and volunteers. Many of our staff and volunteers are survivors of domestic abuse, with a unique insight and understanding of the issues faced by women and children, suffering from domestic abuse.

Andrea Kilvington, our director is leaving the service to study for a doctorate researching into domestic abuse services. We would like to express all our thanks for her excellent leadership and achievement with BWA and we hope to continue our relationship with her in this context. Her programme of continuous development and professional impact on BWA during her tenure, has produced an exceptional legacy, which we are confident we will continue to progress.

A huge thank you to all our staff team and volunteers, you are a magnificent team.

We would like to pay tribute to June Duffy, who as a survivor of domestic abuse herself, dedicated her life to supporting women suffering from domestic abuse. June worked for BWA for over 25 years and supported and changed the lives of many hundreds of survivors of domestic abuse during that time. June passed away in November 2014 after a short severe illness and will be sorely missed by the many women and children, whose lives she touched and her colleagues at BWA.

## BWA's Achievements in 2013/14

Number of healthy relationship sessions held in schools:

**65**

Number of children supported in refuges:

**114**

Number of clients advised at the One Stop Shop:

**300**

Number of women supported in refuges:

**105**

Number of volunteers:

**18**

Number of outreach clients:

**277**

Number of children seen in schools:

**1774**

Number of schools visited:

**15**

Number of children seen at Junior Citizen Event:

**223**

Number of refuges in Bromley:

**7**

## 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 Abuse 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.

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