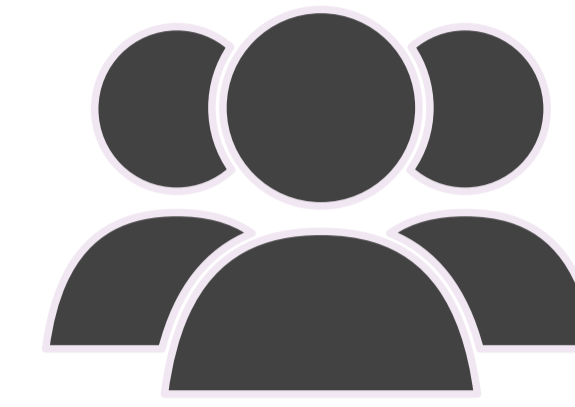




IMPACT REPORT

2020-21



2,171 women supported



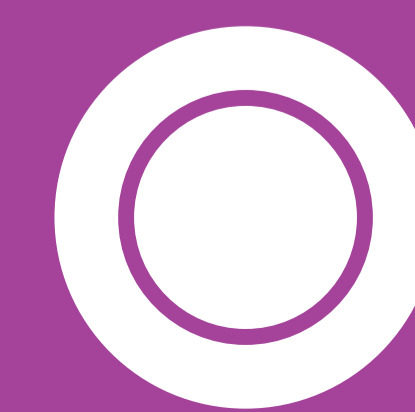
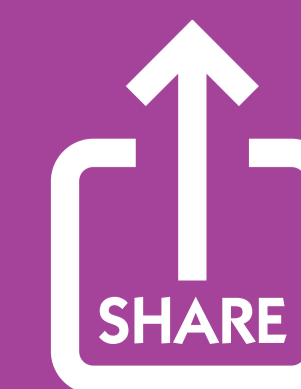
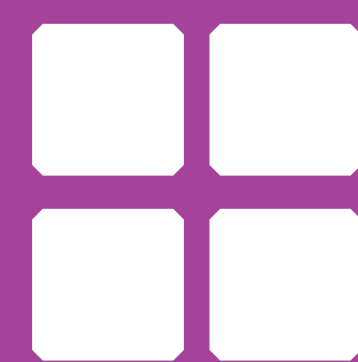
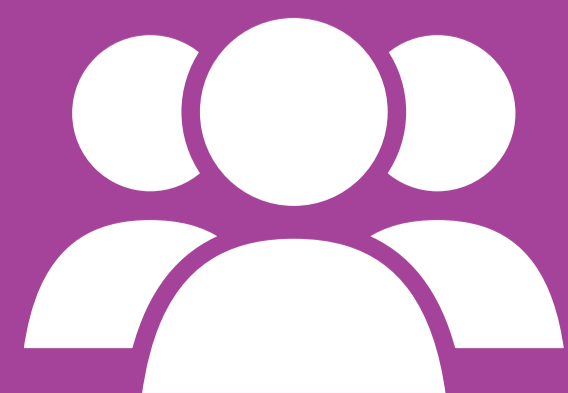
1,645 support calls to our mainline



235 women & children housed in refuge



105% increase in clients at high risk of harm



Welcome

In an extraordinary year, BCWA and its staff have worked exceptionally hard to continue to deliver its services, and support victims of domestic abuse.



The COVID-19 pandemic has not halted domestic abuse. In fact, perpetrators have taken advantage of the circumstances and domestic abuse has increased, resulting in growing demand for services. The needs of individual women continue to guide BCWA to provide valuable and tailored support as necessary for the pandemic.

The challenge of delivering services during the pandemic has seen unprecedented adjustments to BCWA's work to end domestic abuse. BCWA has been able to promptly and efficiently adapt its approach to ensure the consistent delivery of services. For example, supporting refuges required to isolate, providing first contact services online, securely moving in-person services, such as support groups and training, to online delivery.



The increase in domestic abuse during the COVID-19 crisis has raised awareness of a continuing pandemic of abuse. Whilst the government's extraordinary COVID-19 funding for charities supporting victims of domestic abuse was welcomed, and BCWA has worked hard to benefit from it, the funding was temporary in nature. It is of continuing critical concern that the VAWG sector is still under-funded and under-resourced. This funding is key to ensuring the delivery of crucial, specialist services.



The Black Lives Matter movement this year has rightly highlighted the prejudice and hurdles faced by BAME communities and individuals. BCWA continues to recognise the critical need for specialist services and it remains our priority to deliver individual, person-centred support. BCWA supports the work of the VAWG sector's Anti-Racism Working Group. This year BCWA has also continued to support those women with no recourse to public funds; no woman should be prevented from access to services because of her ethnicity or legal status.



As we enter a new year we continue to focus on ensuring the delivery of our services, despite the unfolding pandemic. We are mindful that the long-term impact of the pandemic on survivors and the sector will be significant. At BCWA we are buoyed by our achievements in 2020 and are positive about what we can and will deliver in 2021.

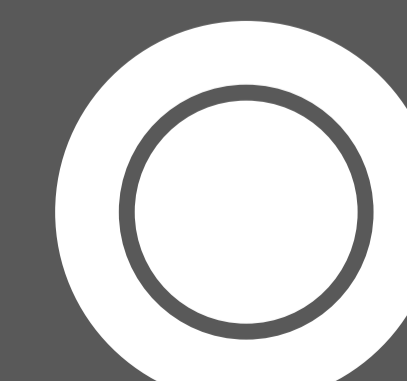
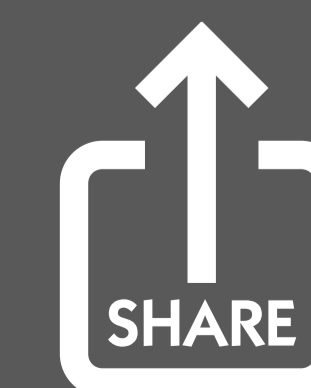


Stepping into Jane Ward's position as Chair of Trustees during this period and supporting BCWA during such a challenging year has been a privilege.



As Co-Chairs we would like to thank Jane, all Trustees, the Executive of BCWA and all staff and volunteers, and all of BCWA's funders for their commitment during an unprecedented year.

Elaine Esteen & Amy Wareham
- Co-chairs of Trustees



An Extraordinary Year

146% increase in clients supported overall

1,645 support calls to our Helpline

Domestic abuse kills two women every week in the UK, and 1 in every 4 women have experienced or experience abuse from their partners.

This was the backdrop to which the global pandemic arrived in 2020, having a major impact on already struggling women living with domestic abuse. As part of the wider spectrum of violence against women and girls, domestic abuse is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Women are more likely to be low paid key workers and take on childcare duties in any case, and took on the majority of burdens associated with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic at home. All this while many were experiencing violence, coercive control, financial, emotional or psychological abuse exacerbated by lockdowns and other restrictive measures.

Covid-19 Impact

Our clients have shared with us what a devastating impact the pandemic has had on their mental health, adding to the trauma some have lived with for many years. Multiple factors directly relating to Covid-19's impact on the UK can be pointed to as significant additional challenges for them during 2020-21.

For all survivors of abuse, uncertainty in government measures, feeling locked in, isolation from support networks, concerns for personal safety, financial pressures, poverty & destitution & limited support services; together with delayed responses from the Home Office, Child Maintenance Service and Criminal Justice System are likely to have contributed to increased distress and mental health issues.

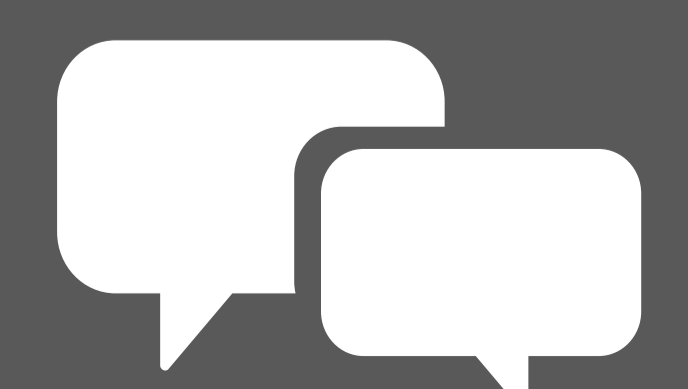
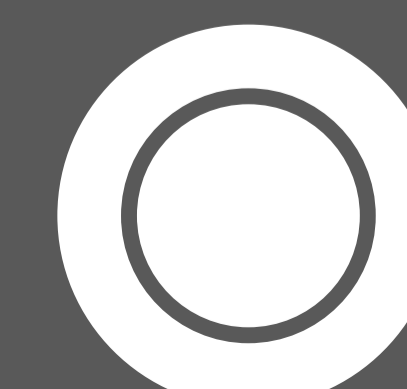
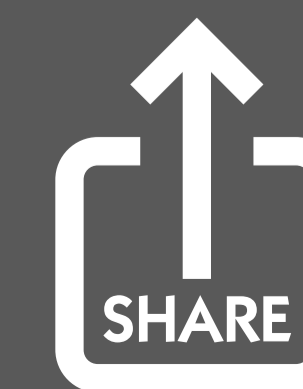
In many cases women were locked down with their abusers making it extremely difficult to seek help. The impact on victim-survivors' mental health in particular was significant, due to increasing abuse and severe isolation; mental health support has been identified as a number one priority for victim-survivors seeking help during and after the pandemic.

Challenges



Thanks to the hard work of the team and unwavering community support, BCWA was able to support more victim-survivors than ever before, with a 146% increase in women supported as clients and on our support line compared to 2019/20. In March 2020 the organisation was able to switch to remote working seamlessly, with all services remaining open and delivered remotely or digitally.

Growing Need



Refuge

The measures implemented by government to tackle the pandemic had the unintended effect of making it extremely difficult for victims to leave their abuser and seek refuge accommodation. 'Work from home' orders increased pressure in already volatile domestic situations; and lockdowns hugely increased isolation as well as offering more opportunities for control and surveillance of victims. This made reaching out for support, being reached by services, or accessing telephone support to plan safe departure, for example, even more difficult.

Women in refuge often arrive severely traumatised, having suffered physical, emotional or mental abuse with most of our service users also having experienced coercive or financial control. This leads to low self-esteem and confidence and severely impacts mental health & wellbeing.

Leaving a BCWA Refuge:



68% of women felt more confident



84% are clear the abuse was not their fault



83% felt better able to recognise abusive behaviour

Yaseera's story

Yaseera had an arranged marriage by her family, but soon afterwards she found herself a domestic slave, forced to cook and clean her husband's house. She was controlled 24/7 by her mother-in-law, had no money or access to friends and was prevented from leaving the house aside from giving birth to her son.

When a midwife made a home visit she spotted Yaseera doing strenuous housework straight after a caesarean section and, together with the atmosphere of animosity and other signs, suspected abuse. IDVAs were able to get her out of her prison and she came to BCWA refuge.

The day after Yaseera arrived during lockdown, the refuge had to go into isolation with all residents in their rooms, and it felt like she was restricted again. However, her refuge support officer was available on the phone, Facetime and WhatsApp every day for key working, emotional support or just chatting to alleviate loneliness and anxiety – both of which can exacerbate mental health issues and extend trauma recovery time.

As well as being 'locked down' again, isolation measures also meant the usual refuge 'house meetings' that bring residents together and encourage peer support were unable to go ahead, but our innovative refuge officer ran house catch-ups via video chat as well as arranging quizzes and social events remotely throughout isolation.

After the isolation period, the residents bonded well and Yaseera left refuge with a new support network as well as safety and a new start for herself and her son.

Residents' Ethnicity

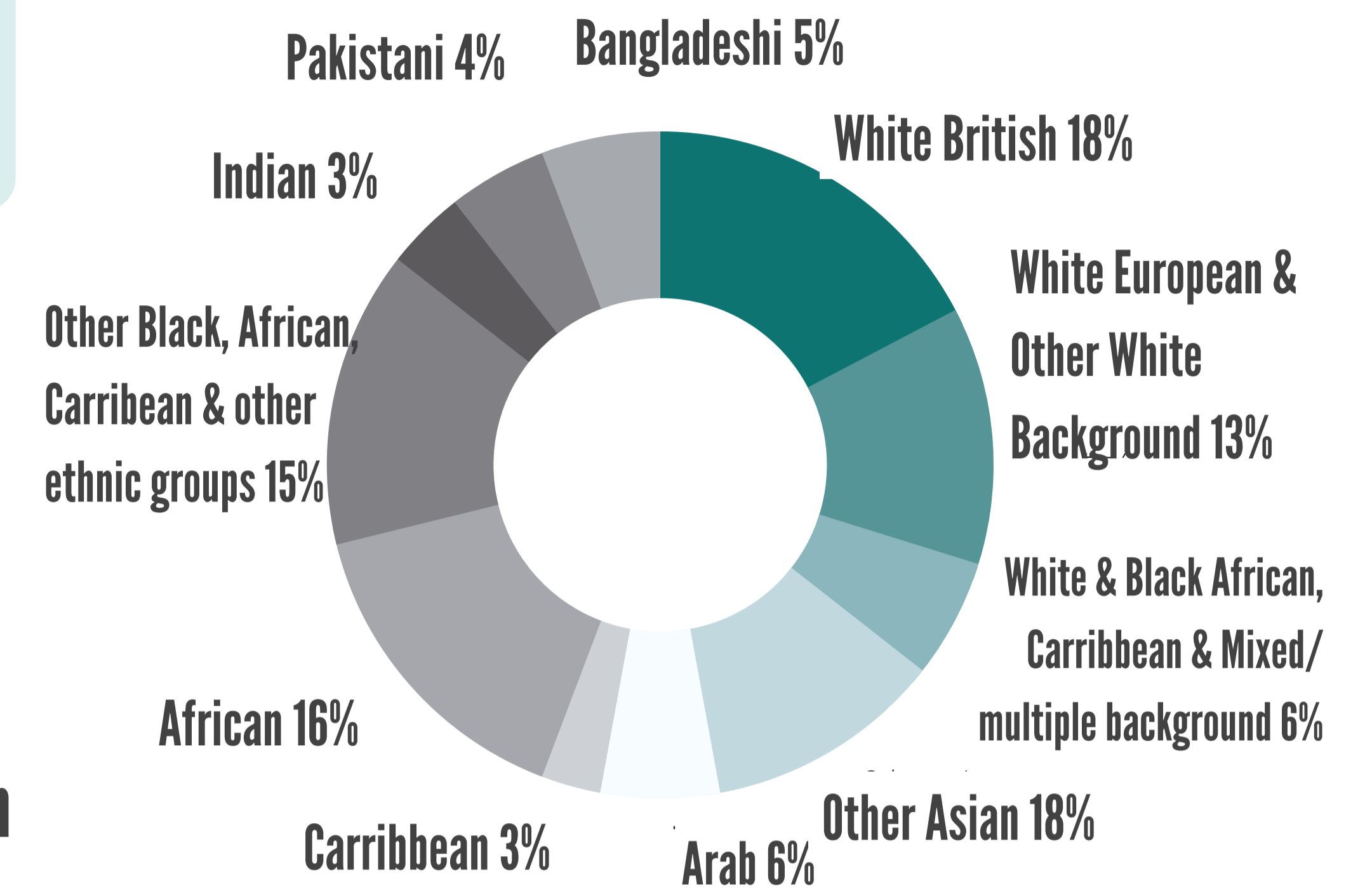


120 women



115 children

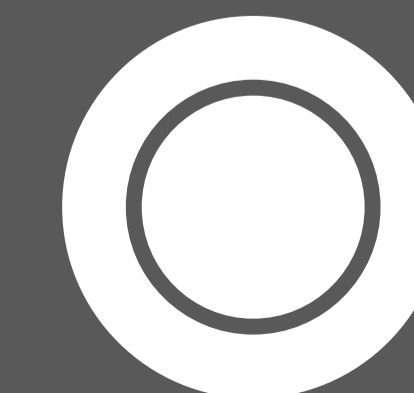
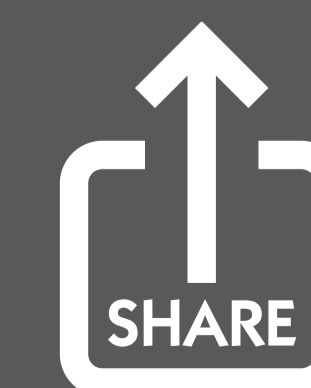
Accommodated in refuges



A dedicated referrals officer welcomed and supported women into our 9 refuges across 2 boroughs throughout the pandemic, and our experienced support officers switched to delivering weekly key working sessions by telephone and video conference. The BCWA Refuge team swiftly put safety, PPE and remote communications in place to ensure all residents could still receive support on their recovery journey. Where houses had to self-isolate, a team of staff and volunteers tirelessly delivered food and essential supplies to families in need.

We also secured emergency funding to have wi-fi extended throughout all areas of the refuges and provide laptops. These were accessible to residents needing to work from home and attend support video calls with our team when face to face sessions were unable to take place.

Technological solutions were also vital to support residents health, whether ensuring new residents and their children could access primary GP care and testing facilities, or encouraging Covid-19 vaccination uptake.



A Woman's Journey – From Victim to Survivor

Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid ensures that every single service user is supported from referral through to resettlement with needs-led and timely interventions.



Referral: referral to BCWA is made, usually from an external organisation or a Local Authority.

Referral Case Officer: will take the referral and carry out a risk and needs assessment by phone.

Urgent needs: urgent needs are assessed and met by BCWA's Welfare Fund to ensure that she is able to arrive safely at refuge and has what she needs to settle in.



Welcome: refuge support staff welcome the family into the refuge. Paperwork for admission, benefit claims and immediate support needs are met on arrival.

Children: Family Support Officers welcome them and discuss specific trauma recovery support and play needs for the children.

Refuge volunteers: help service users settle in and accompany to GPs and other appointments.



Individual Support Plans: are developed with residents. These address safety, finances, housing, physical/sexual/mental health, work & education, social & community relationships, emotional health & wellbeing and criminal & civil justice.

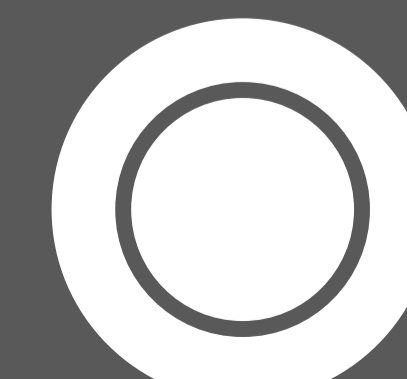
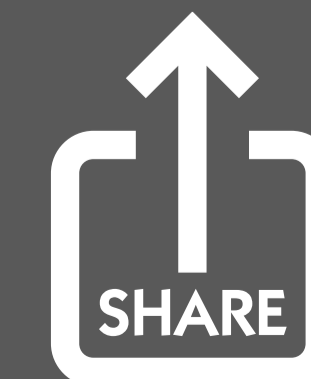
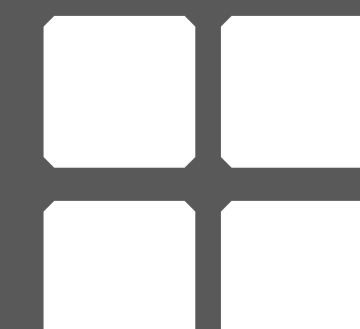
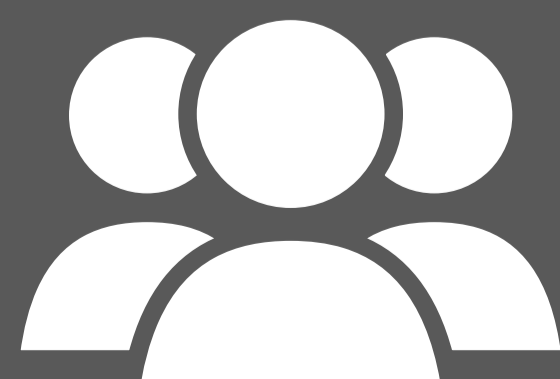
Referrals: as well as regular support planning sessions, service users attend groups such as The Freedom Programme. Referrals to external agencies for specialist support are also made.



Options: as part of key working the service user will meet with the refuge support officer to discuss move-on options within the first 2 months.

Resettlement: the service user will move on from the refuge to their chosen borough within 6 months of coming to the refuge. Volunteers coordinate any furniture needs.

Follow up support: the service user will receive up to 3 months of (telephone) follow up support from volunteers.



Women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)



Did you know?

It is common for immigration status to be used as a tool by an abuser to control someone who doesn't have their own visa.

The Fight to Remain



42 clients were granted leave to remain or permanent residence status



41 additional clients had their immigration status legalised



100% of women with NRPF supported did not return to their abuser

Covid-19 also had significant impacts on immigration needs of victim-survivors and those with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (no access to welfare benefits), and many who were previously reliant on food banks experienced severe poverty and isolation. Lockdown also gave an opportunity for abusers to exert even more control over NRPF victims who already had few options to access support to survive, let alone flee.

The NRPF/EEA Outreach officer worked tirelessly to continue support via the phone and with Zoom sessions. Although applications around visas slowed down, the vital work required to support this group did not. Our The NRPF Refuge Support Officer moved support online and when it was safe, came into the refuges to ensure that we continued to provide the holistic support needed by vulnerable families.

Poverty

Safebeds

We offer a unique safe crisis accommodation to women with NRPF fleeing domestic abuse, which allows a room in refuge to be funded by social services temporarily. These spaces are an integral part of the work we do and continued to be fully occupied during lockdown. BCWA worked closely with local authorities and children's services to ensure that the most vulnerable women had somewhere to stay whilst escaping domestic abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

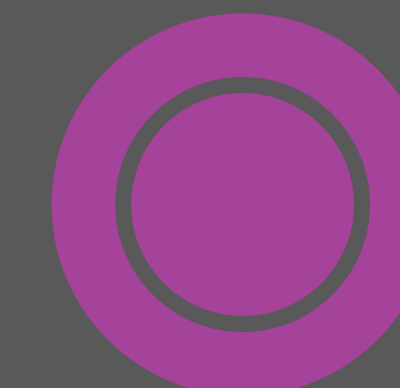
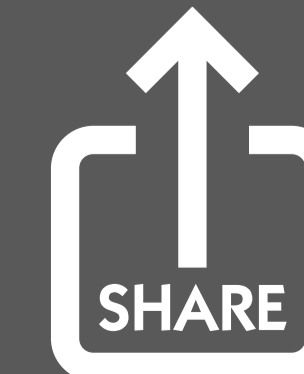
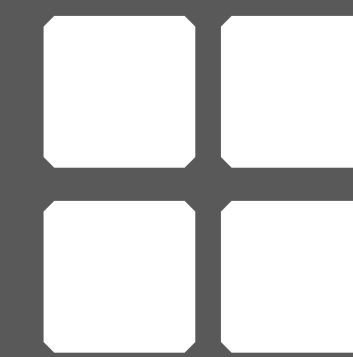
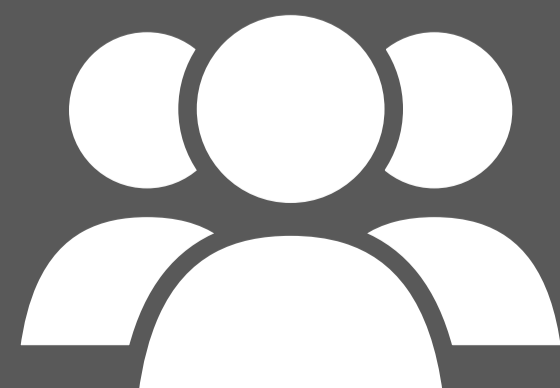
Amina's Story

Amina was married in Malaysia 5 years ago to a British man who soon exhibited mental health issues around OCD and controlling tendencies. They came to live in the UK and Amina had a daughter, which is when things rapidly deteriorated. Her husband began stepping up the latent emotional abuse – belittling her at all times, controlling all their income from benefits so that she didn't have enough clothes to wear and harassing her.

Over a period of years he isolated her completely from friends in the UK, and the CV-19 pandemic stepped up his paranoia, using control of the virus as another way to control her. The physical violence started soon after her daughter's birth but it took 3 years before she was able to get herself and her daughter to safety.

Amina was referred to BCWA refuge by her social worker, where our specialist NRPF refuge officer supported her emotionally as well as through her Islamic and civil divorces, applying to get her Indefinite Leave to Remain, and her own Universal Credit, child benefit and housing benefit claims so she is in control of her own finances.

Amina's daughter was also a victim of the abuse; when she came to refuge she would hide under furniture as any loud noise, had behavioural issues and struggled to socialise with others. Our support workers have, through play and trauma-informed support, encouraged her to learn to communicate with others and deal with anger or fear in much healthier ways.



Meeting Individual Needs

Surviving Well

In 2020/1 we also ran the 'Surviving Well' project in partnership with Bromley Well Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. Surviving Well is an innovative community project based in Bromley that provided specialist outreach services to female survivors of domestic abuse. It was aimed at those experiencing issues with their mental and physical wellbeing.

The programme was designed to address the psychological, physical and social impact of abuse, and to aid survivors to work towards a state of improved wellbeing and recovery through group and one-to-one work.

“ I always feel so motivated to carry on after speaking to you, You also make me feel positive that there will be an end to this ”


- BAME project participant

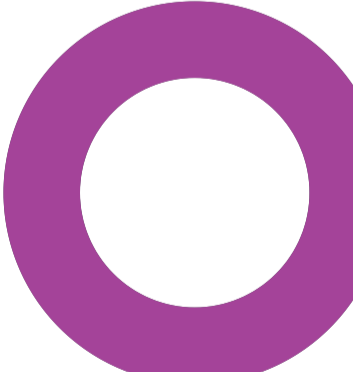
BAME Outreach

In 2020, we launched a new support service dedicated to helping female BAME victims of domestic abuse in Croydon - 35% of female domestic abuse victims being from the BAME community (source: Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime). In addition to the usual challenges faced by victims of domestic abuse (fear, isolation, financial problems and risks to children, to name but a few) those within the BAME community are also subject to additional vulnerabilities, including but not limited to: language barriers, cultural stigmas, complex immigration issues, and racism – many of which were magnified and increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to one-to-one work, the project creates peer support, a social network and community of BAME domestic abuse victim-survivors in the form of coffee mornings and a secure online platform, helping to reduce isolation. Clients also receive training, learn skills and build their resilience against domestic abuse in the future.

 103 clients supported

 89% felt more confident and empowered about their future

 100% saw improvement in their mental, emotional and physical health

Japanese Project

Our specialist services include outreach support in Japanese to survivors of domestic abuse who are Japanese Nationals living in the UK, funded by the Japanese Embassy Our specialist caseworker worked with 36 women, supporting them with understanding the abuse, family law, immigration and visa issues, child contact, and housing in the UK.

Barriers to Support

Experiencing abuse when you are living abroad and dependent on someone else can be even more isolating, and harder to access support. We asked our Japanese clients what the toughest challenges are:



Language barriers



No Recourse to Public Funds



Long counselling waiting lists



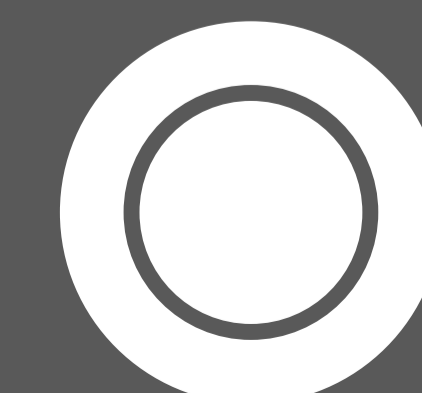
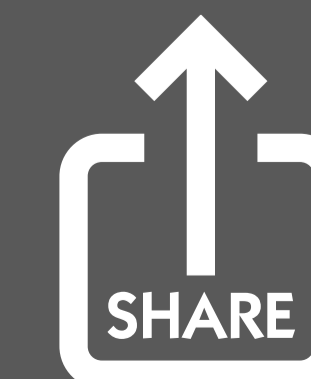
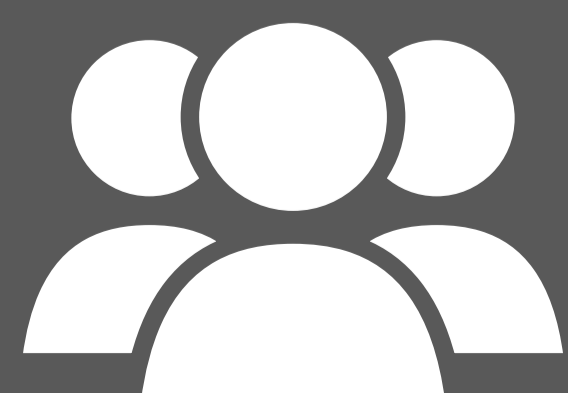
Legal remedies/aid hard to access



Confusing benefits system



Hard to find specialist Domestic Abuse Support



Children's Services

Supporting Children

The impact of the pandemic on children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse has been significant. Some have experienced and witnessed increases in abusive behaviour, all had fewer spaces and opportunities to seek help, and many have been affected by increased poverty. Mothers have been concerned about children being looked after by perpetrators if they become sick, and some perpetrators have used the pandemic and associated measures to abuse child contact arrangements and continue to harass their victims.

Our specialist child support workers were able to continue to work with children in our refuges to alleviate the traumatic effects of domestic abuse through practical support and play activities with the children. They also provided daily play sessions for pre-school children, an after school club and one to one support based on individual needs. During lockdown, services were run via zoom and over the phone, and arts & craft and other play resources were delivered to refuges regularly.



Did you know?

*Many families living with abuse or in poverty have never been to the seaside - in fact, **NONE of the women and children that came in 2020-21 had ever seen the beach before!***



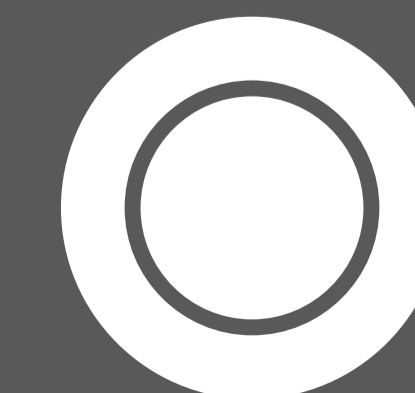
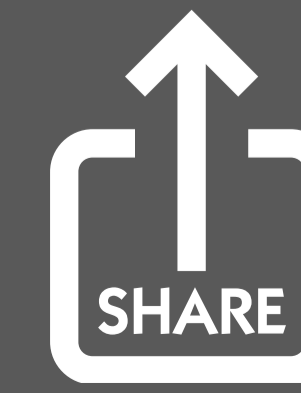
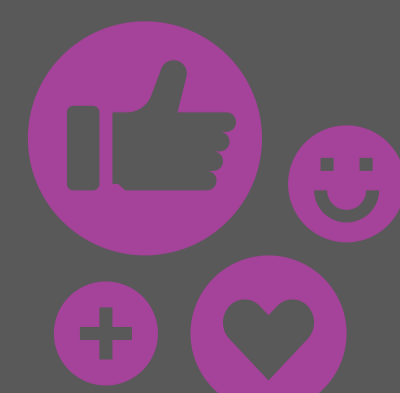
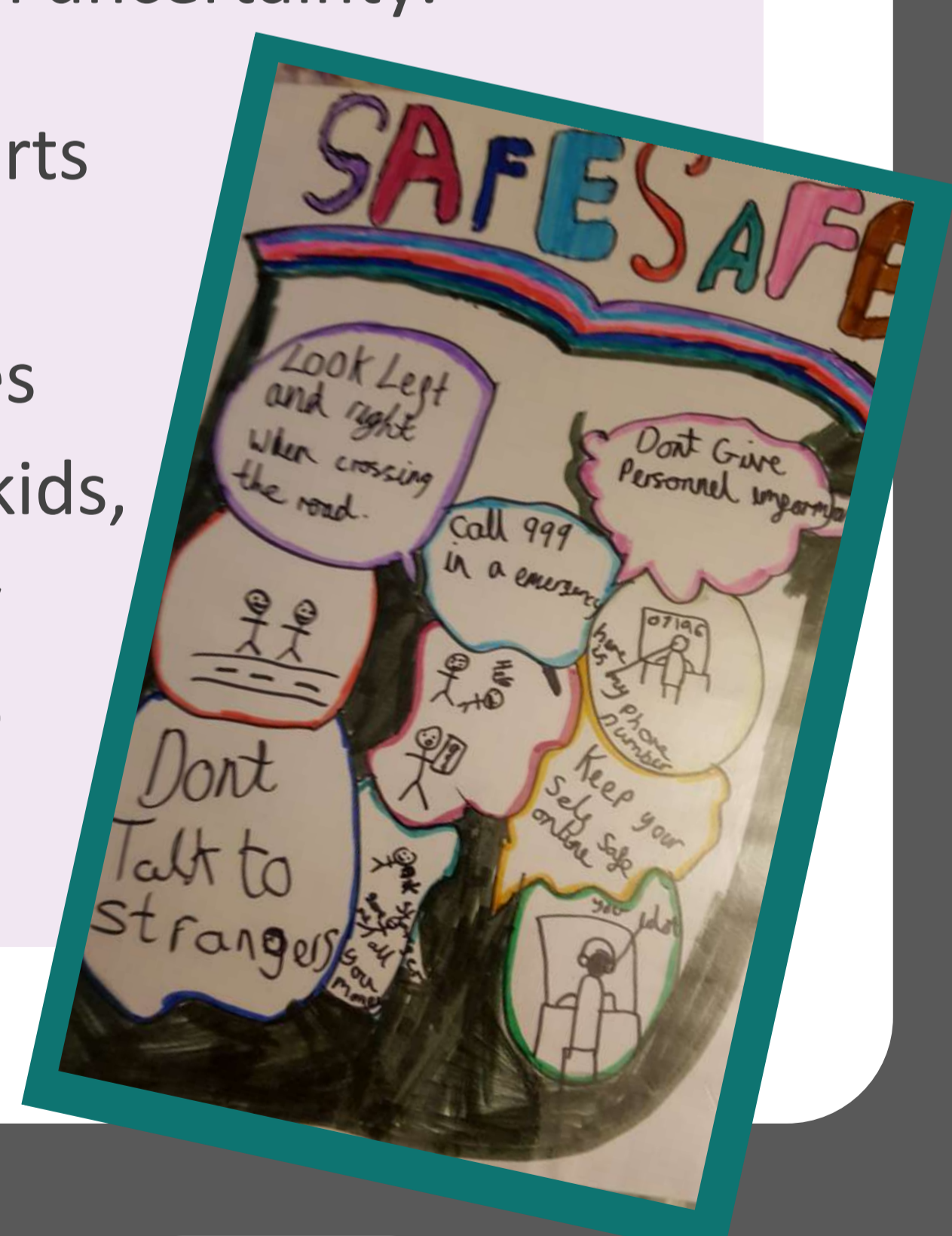
During the school holidays, our team organised trips and activities including to local parks, swimming, arts and crafts sessions, day trips to the seaside & theme parks and other educational activities. They also provided drama, tennis & dance workshops in partnership with the local community.

Activities



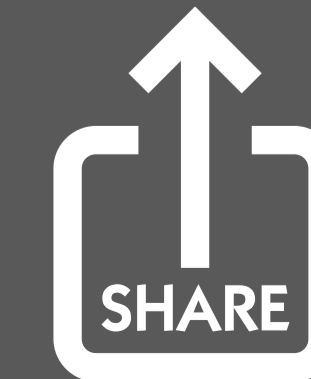
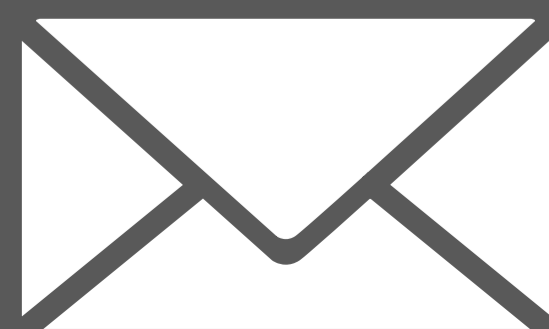
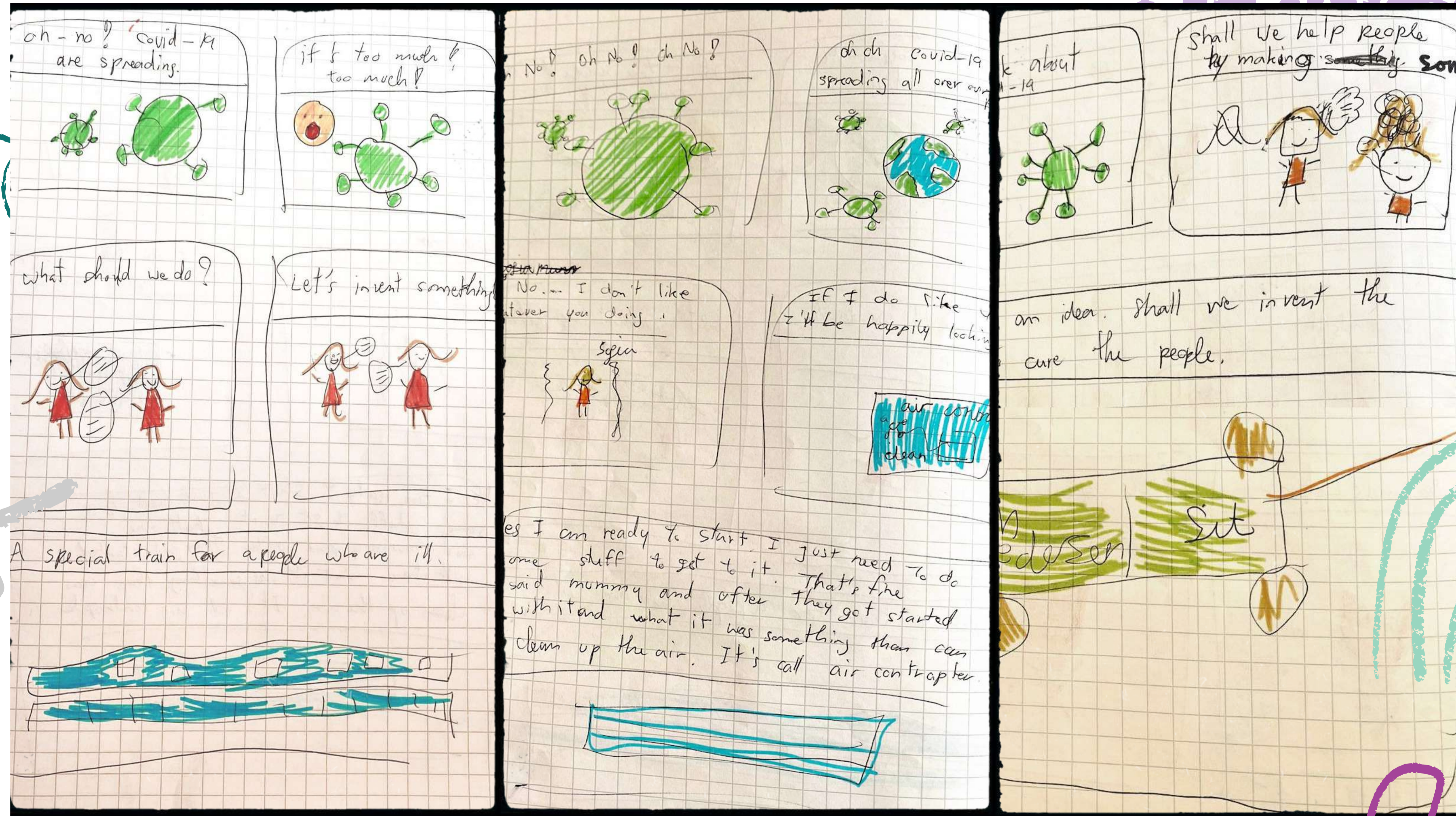
To adapt our children's services we implemented safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus in our playrooms and arranged outdoor play sessions in refuge gardens. We were able to provide Wi-Fi extenders and access to laptops to ensure that children maintained contact with the child support officers, and received much-needed support during a time of so much uncertainty.

Our team made regular deliveries of donated arts craft supplies and all age reading resources to refuges during lockdown, and put on storytimes together with art & craft sessions for younger kids, which took place over video calls. This not only supported the children's development but also gave mums much-needed time to themselves.



Making Sense of Covid-19

Our Child Support Officers worked with the children in refuge to help them understand the pandemic and its impacts. One of them invented a special vehicle to cure everyone of the virus!



Young People's Service



Our team of Young People's Officers arranged drama-based empowerment workshops in partnership with Attic Theatre, allowing young people who have experienced domestic abuse to explore responses to trauma creatively. The workshops worked through key themes:

- Empowerment
- Expression
- Self-Confidence

BCWA focuses increasingly on prevention and early intervention, and runs a number of talks/workshops for young people in schools. Our Healthy Relationships sessions have reached over 5000 young people in 32 schools in the last 2 years, and has run an ambassadors or 'relationship influencers' initiative to help young people raise further awareness among their peers.

Empowerment & Creativity

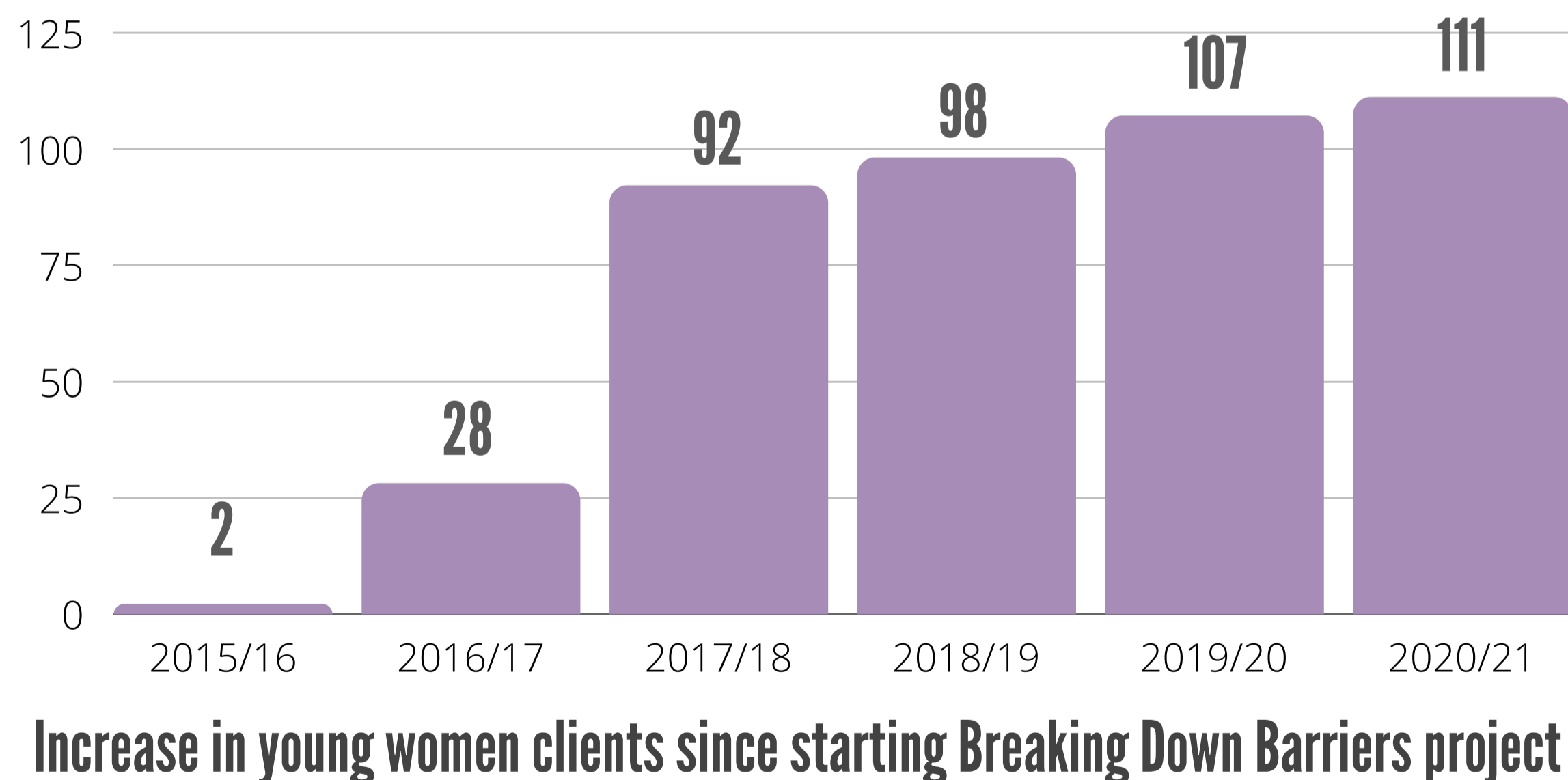
Our work with young people saw a significant rise in demand, despite school closures and young people suffering disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lock down. Due to young people's need for face to face support, this project was the earliest service to revert back to in-person support sessions, with both face to face and specialist support groups for young people.

Layla's Story

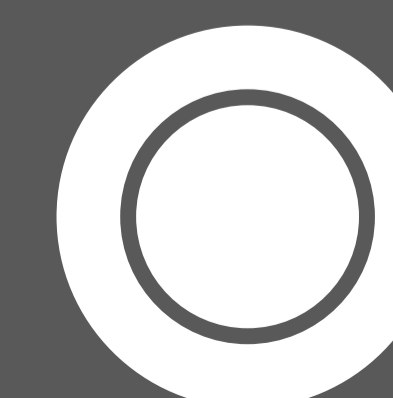
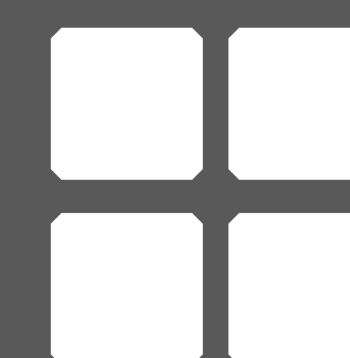
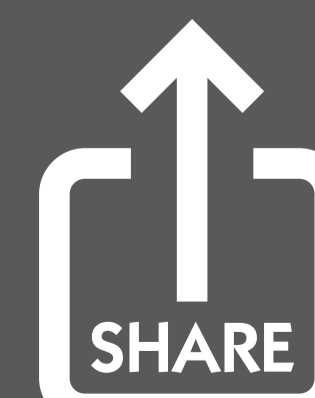
Layla (14) was at high risk of child sexual exploitation and negative relationships with men when she came to BCWA. She was also struggling with an eating disorder and had also gone missing twice. In one-to-one support sessions, she worked through abusive past relationships and her struggle to voice her own consent or refusal around sex, which had all contributed to a loss of self-esteem, poor mental health and body image - specifically challenges with her self-worth, confidence and anxiety.

Layla attended young people's support groups where she was able to explore healthy coping mechanisms to manage stress and build up her self-esteem. She was supported by other members of the group who had gone through similar experiences as her, which helped her to feel empowered, and she was able to process and start overcoming these challenges amongst other young women she could relate to.

Her support workers gave her encouragement to believe in herself and helped her explore self-respect, self-love and personal boundaries, and Layla got into a new healthier relationship. She was able to express what she needed and wanted from her partner, start prioritising herself and her future and be wary of any unhealthy behaviours in the relationship.



A dedicated Young People's engagement officer works with young girls and boys in schools and other youth settings to prevent abuse and support those that have already experienced domestic abuse. We were able to reach 2,218 young people through one off awareness sessions and workshops on healthy/unhealthy relationships, consent & online safety in 2020-21.



Our Service Users

Service User Demographics

April 2020 - March 2021

Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid prides itself on being an inclusive service. Our aim is to continue creating an equality-led, diversity-driven and inclusive environment for everyone accessing our service.



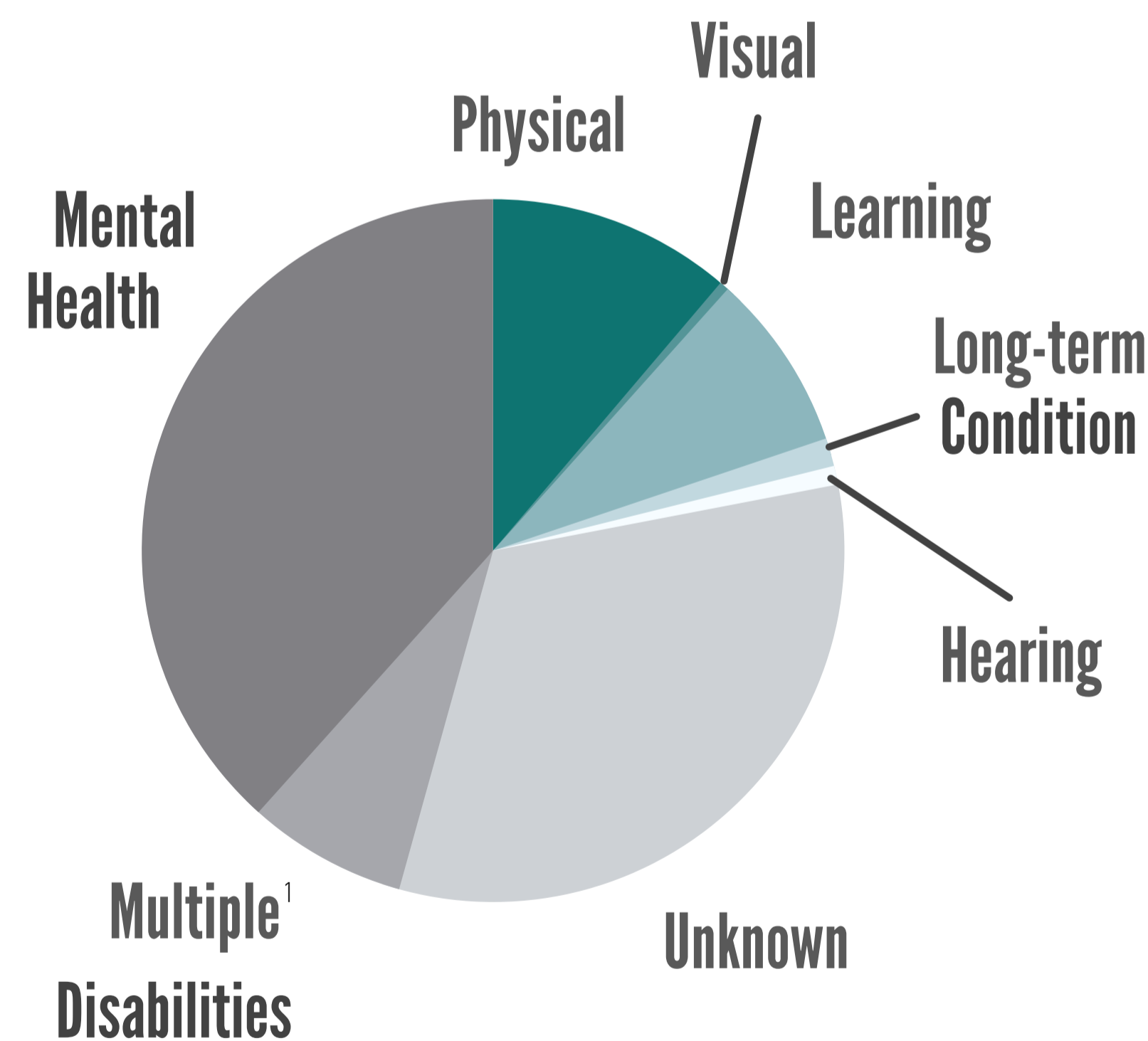
2,171 clients supported
2020-21



38% increase in clients supported from 2019-20

In spite of the pandemic and the difficulties many women faced in leaving their homes and abusive situations. BCWA's established presence in the borough and field of DA allowed victims to feel they could reach out to us for support no matter their situation.

Service Users' Disabilities



12% of service users in 20/21 had a disability. The chart below breaks down the types of disabilities service users had.



1 Disability



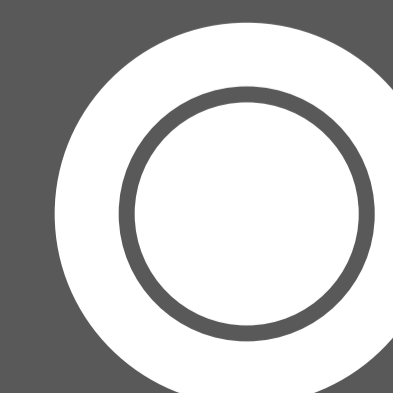
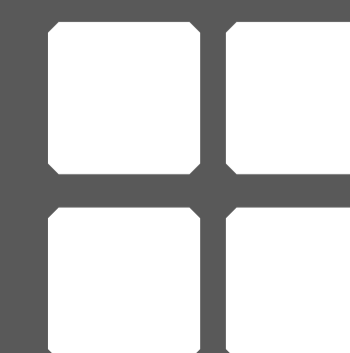
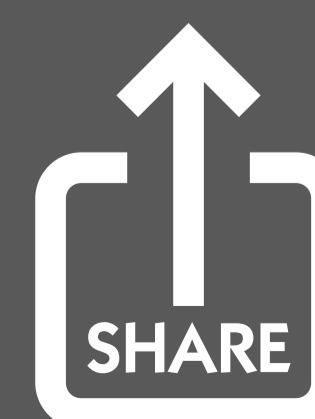
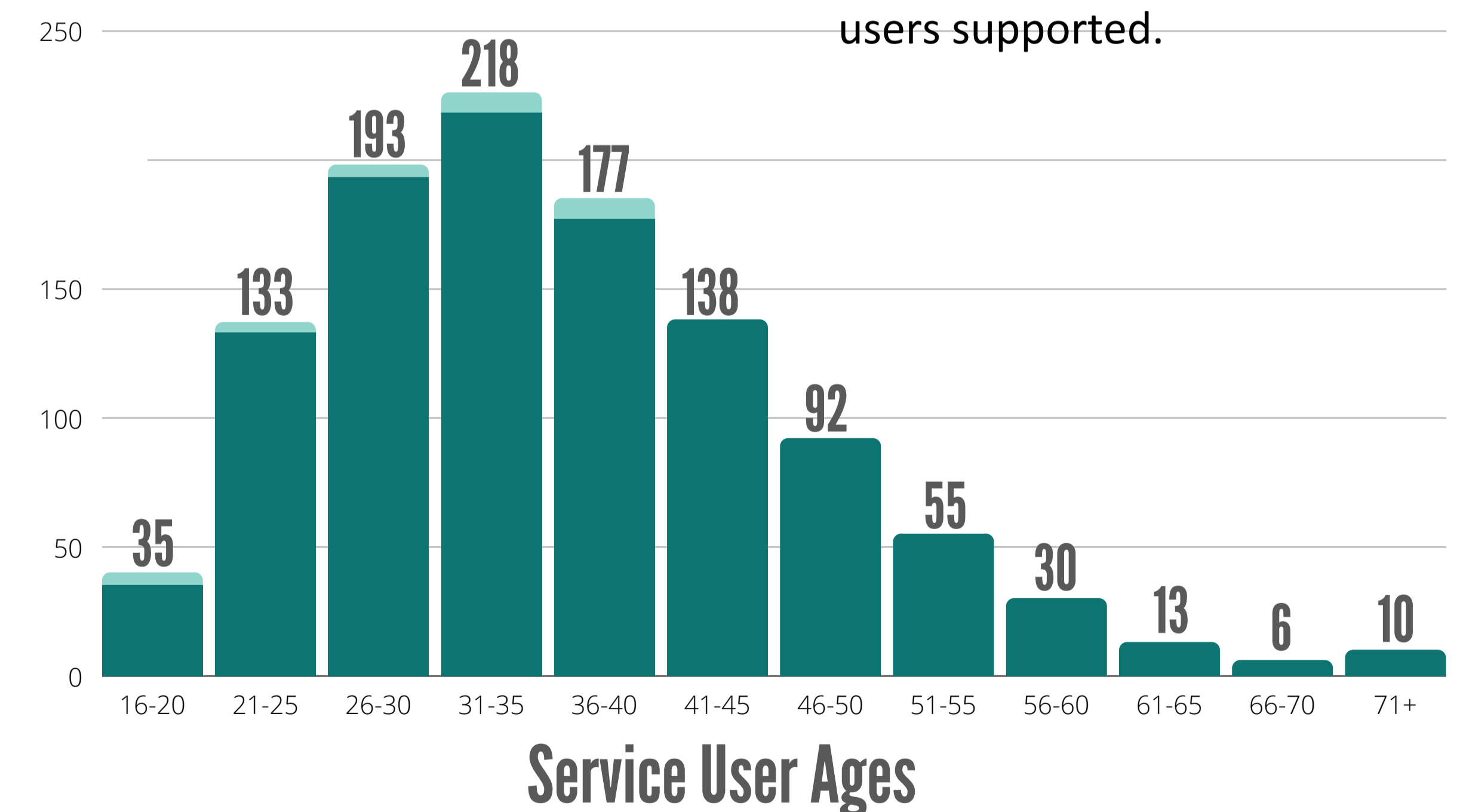
2 Referrals

40% Increase - There was a substantial increase in the number of referrals received (not including the figures for the One Stop Shop) in 2020/21.



3 Age

BCWA service users were most commonly from ages 21 - 45 years old. Despite schools slowing down during the last year due to lockdown, the young persons service was still kept open. See below for the full breakdown of ages of the service users supported.



Advocacy

Perpetrators working from home prevented survivors and their children from leaving their homes, accessing or moving in to a safer accommodation such as a refuge.

In addition, many were not able to go to friend or family homes to remain safe, due to lockdown and Covid social restrictions.

Locked In

With high levels of reports from victims, some cases were not taken as seriously by police as would be expected and they were recommended 'No Further Action', which has led to survivors losing confidence in reporting to the police.

With courts closed, civil court cases were not heard or had huge delays, so many survivors missed out on contact with their children or orders were not put in place to safeguard clients.

Legal Issues

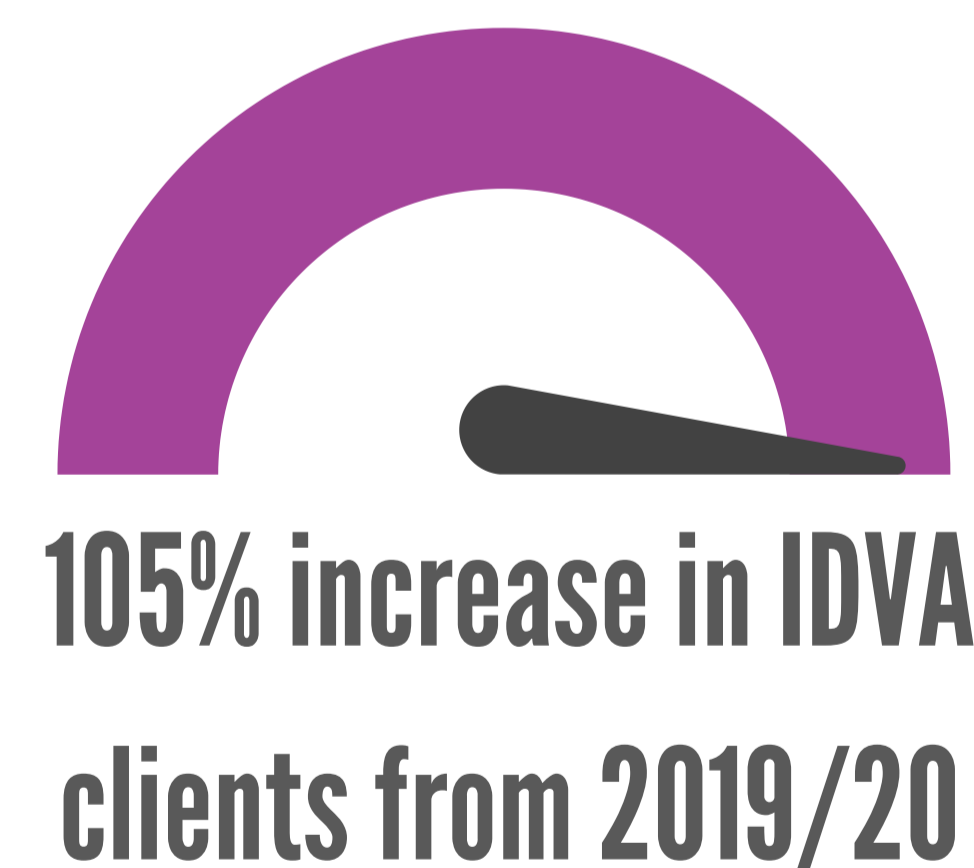
“ Thank you for [...] all the support, affirmations you have provided, and you have put all your hearts and efforts to help us regain the positivity, strength and hope in our hearts and in our lives ”

- NRPF IDVA service user

With Contact Centres being closed, perpetrators put pressure on survivors to have unsupervised contact with their children. Perpetrators used contact session to put children or survivors at risk of Covid 19. Perpetrators used COVID-19 outbreaks to control survivors through child contact.

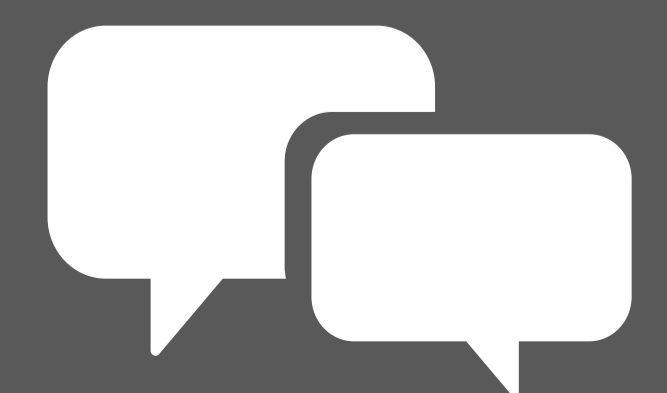
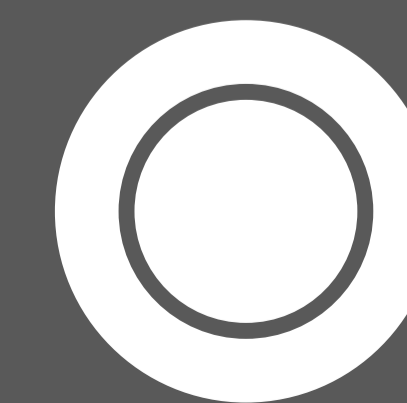
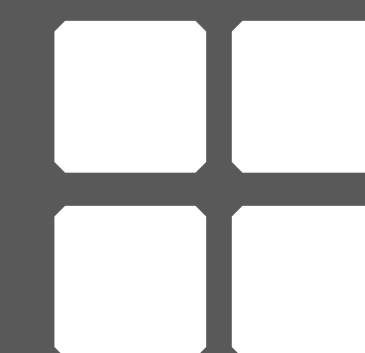
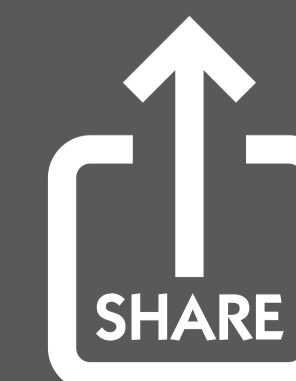
Child Contact

Our IDVA service supports and advocates for high-risk victims of domestic abuse. In 2020/21 the need for this service rose exponentially due to the rise in domestic abuse during lockdown, which also presented challenges in contacting clients living in dangerous abusive situations. Our team were available to clients on phone, instant messaging and video call frequently, and were able to support 882 women.

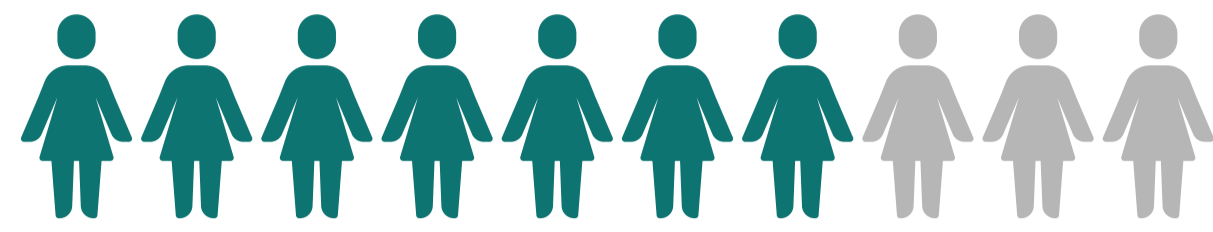


“ The support from this service has been fantastic, Its been non-judgemental and easy to access and I would have been a bit lost without it, Just knowing I can pick up the phone any time has been great, ”

- IDVA service user



Community



2,292 women supported through telephone outreach

Survivors with no access to the internet or a PC or with language barriers had difficulty in applying for Universal Credit in their own right after leaving the perpetrator, because the Citizen's Advice Centres were closed or limited support was available.

There were delays on accessing benefits so they struggled financially, and some days they went without food. Food Banks were closed for drop in collections.

Welfare

The IRIS (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) programme is a training, referral and advocacy model to support GPs to better support their patients affected by domestic abuse and to raise awareness within general practice. Our Advocate Educator delivered training and referral support to GP practices in the borough of Croydon, as well as one to one support for victims.

GP Practices

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our drop-in One Stop Shop service was moved online to form a 'virtual' alternative. This enabled us to continue to provide our free and confidential weekly open session, giving victims speedy access to representatives from BCWA, Bromley Housing Options, Local Solicitors, the Metropolitan Police and Victim Support.

Adapting Services

Women who have attended our support group programmes report an increased understanding of domestic abuse and ability to deal with abusive behaviour, understanding of the effects on children and increased self-esteem and confidence. The programmes offer a broad overview of the psychological and emotional effects on women and their children who have lived with domestic abuse in any of its forms.

To keep this crucial service open during the pandemic, we quickly replaced our in-person groups with paid-for places on the Freedom Programme online. This course offered clients self-directed learning they could work through at safe and convenient times to them, and with remote one-to-one support from BCWA's outreach team as needed.

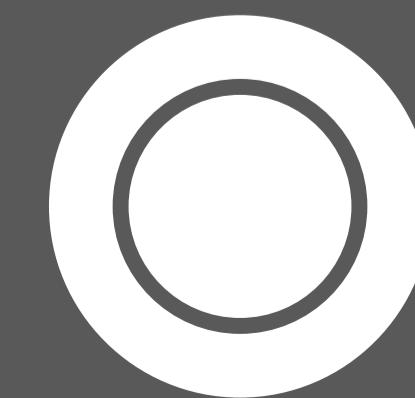
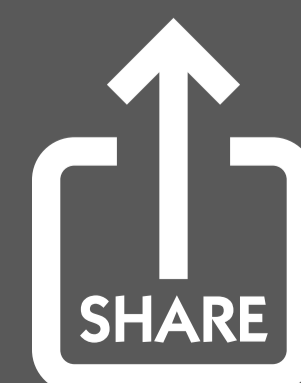
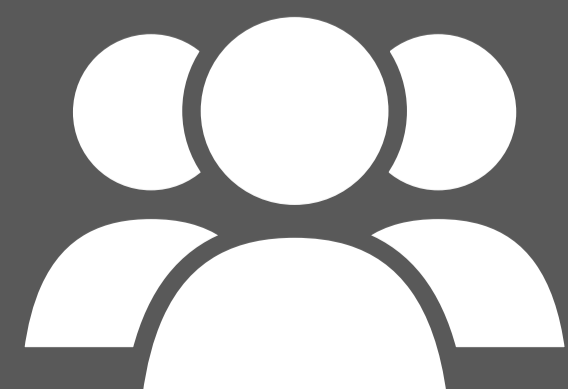
Online Support Alternatives

Volunteers

Our volunteers are crucial to the delivery of our community and refuge-based services, as well as helping with administrative work, fundraising, coordinating donation and assisting with resettlement. In 2020-21 a small number of extremely dedicated volunteers gave their time to support BCWA's work, assisting with refuge support, food deliveries and resettlement.

“The staff are welcoming and friendly, They provide avenues where you are free to discover your potential and to build your confidence, and are very supportive”

- BCWA Volunteer



Funding

Our Income £1,730,656

29%
increase in
turnover



Statutory Income	£647,769
Trusts, Foundations & Voluntary Income	£440,930
Rental Income	£641,957



“I now can say, I have got this, I am strong and ready for anything life throws at me”

- Outreach service user

“Being part of a group of women who went through similar situations make me feel that I am not alone. Not every professional out there understands what I am going through but the team here know exactly what is going on in my mind”

- Support group attendee

What's Next

Our priorities are always aligned with the needs of the victims and survivors we serve, and we are committed to long term recovery from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic as part of our ongoing support offer.

Our priorities for 2021/22 and beyond are:

- Expansion into move-on accommodation services
- Retention of contracts with the local authority for both community and accommodation based services
- Continue to provide services for women moving on from refuge, women with no recourse and EEA nationals seeking support, as well as registration with OISC enabling BCWA to provide basic immigration advice
- Provision of mental health support for survivors
- Increased capacity for support line, outreach and IDVA support due to vastly increased need
- Increase provision of prevention and early intervention services for children and young people due to increasing demand for support

Supporters & Partners

Our work would not be possible without the generous and ongoing support of a range of funding partner, we would like thank them all for their continued investment on BCWA & its stakeholders:

