

# Annual Report 2017/18

*We listen. We support. We care.*



**Black Country  
Women's Aid**

*we listen, we support, we care*



# Black Country Women's Aid Annual Report 2017-18

Black Country Women's Aid (formerly Sandwell Women's Aid) is a leading regional charity which supports victims of violence across the West Midlands.

We offer sensitive and holistic **support** services which each year help thousands of **victims of abuse** to **escape from violence**, cope with trauma and rebuild their lives. We place victims' voices at the heart of our work and we constantly develop our services in response to needs in our communities.

Our services include support for both adult and child victims of domestic abuse, stalking, sexual violence, exploitation and international human trafficking, and women in the criminal justice system.

First established over 30 years ago in Sandwell, we have grown from a small local refuge provider to a diverse organisation which works across Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

BCWA won the Black Country Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year Award 2015, and the One to Watch Award and Highly Commended overall at the Investors In People Awards 2014.

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## Chairperson's report

# Karen Dowman

It is with great pleasure that I present this Annual Report for 2017/18 demonstrating the continued commitment that Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) has in supporting victims of violence and abuse across the region, those living with and experiencing domestic abuse in all its forms, rape and sexual violence, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

As I enter my third year as Chair I couldn't be more proud, that we continue to be an innovative and responsive organisation that creates opportunities for women to be supported and get the help they need to move on with their lives. My fellow Trustees/Directors are also very proud to be on the Board of this highly professional, dynamic organisation led by women, predominantly for women across the Black Country.

The organisation continues to face many challenges; austerity continues to put pressure on our statutory partners and other funders resulting in funding for our work becoming ever more competitive and harder to obtain. Changes to Government policy, future funding regimes and greater accountability for charities means that we need to be as effective and organised as possible. As a Board of Trustees we need to ensure that there is robust governance, strategic leadership and operational quality. We will continue to build on the work commenced during 2017/18 to strengthen this.

It is important to remember that we supported 8968 people this year: 8072 women, 340 men and 556 children; this is an 14% increase on last year, with a commensurate increase in income which now stands at £3.7 million.

As funding has increased we are now considered at medium size charity with 41 funding streams and contracts and although this adds a complexity to the management of the organisation, it also ensures that sustainability remains key to the continued delivery of services with partners across the region and nationally.

Although we faced some challenges into and out of our services from our partners, for example suitable

accommodation after refuge, we have also been able to respond to the changing needs of victims presenting across our services.

BCWA has continued to develop services that continue to target the most vulnerable. This includes new projects such as the Assist project funded by the Home Office Transformation Fund in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust; additional refuge spaces funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government; and the first Stalking Service in the West Midlands funded through the Tampon Tax, all to meet the needs of women with multiple and complex needs.

Due to continued difficulties with sourcing safe accommodation nationally I am pleased to report that BCWA invested in the purchase of two new properties to help meet the needs of those rescued from modern slavery.

None of our services would be possible without a stable, committed, skilled and effective workforce. Therefore on behalf of the Board of Trustees I want to acknowledge their tremendous efforts both now and in the future, on which our success is dependent.

It still remains a challenge to remain an independent service representing the voice of victims while retaining a close working relationship with our statutory partners and credit must go to Sara Ward the CEO of Black Country Women's Aid, her senior leadership team and all the operational teams who work tirelessly to achieve that balancing act.

My final thanks must go to the fantastic individuals and organisations that donate and sponsor the work we do throughout the year without which our work would not be complete. Survivors, often come to us with only the clothes that they stand up in, so the provision of toiletries, food, toys and other items is essential.

*"Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly and most underrated agent of human change."*

Bob Kerry



# Chief Executive Officer's Report

## Sara Ward

Over the course of this year more victims of abuse have reached out for our help, more children and young people have told us about their abuse and more victims have regained control of their lives. I am pleased and proud for BCWA to have been there when they needed us. We have been a listening ear, been there to hold someone's hand, taken them into a place of safety when there was nowhere to go, advocated and challenged agencies for them, and accompanied them at court. We will always do whatever we can to help victims of violence and abuse heal and recover.

This Annual Report can only give you a snapshot of the successes achieved throughout the year. It cannot tell you about the heartache, the devastating impact or the lives affected by these abhorrent crimes. It is important however to see this as a celebration of the years' work without which lives would not have been transformed, families rebuilt and children and young people made safe now and in the future. It is because of the heartache and the impact of abuse that we strive to create new ideas, new development and new opportunities to support victims.

We strive to be the best service possible. This year we faced the challenge of taking a look at ourselves as we have grown significantly over the years. Who are we? What do we want to achieve? Where are we going? And, where do we want to be? With a focus on feedback from our client we need to know the impact we are making on people's lives. We have faced funding challenges as we strive to sustain essential services where austerity remains. Keeping the ship afloat is a challenge the larger we have become.

Our services are well received across the West Midlands and our partnerships strong. Our clients' needs are increasingly complex as we see people in crisis with statutory services cut, thresholds increased and little resilience in our communities. It has been a challenging year.



### **Working regionally and nationally**

BCWA has been working through a three-year strategy that focused on expanding across the Black Country, increasing service provision for victims and focusing on ensuring that the integrated abuse support service foundation was set. Our Cedar Centres across Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Birmingham mean that victims of abuse only need to find "our door" and we will be available for all.

We continue to work with our national partners lobbying and campaigning for change as the government is set to publish its landmark domestic abuse bill at the end of 2018, it is hoped that will transform the response to this devastating crime. We have spoken to survivors and represented their voices in the consultation to ensure change is real and reflective of victim's experiences. We know that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that every survivor gets the right help and support when and where she needs it. The Bill will improve the response to domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity, across housing, health and social care, children's services, the family courts and many more.



*“On just one day in 2017, 94 women with 90 children were turned away from refuge in England.”*

Women's Aid

## Women in the criminal justice system

We know that the criminal justice system is a challenging space for women. New research into women's experiences at court uncovers a glaring gender gap in the way human rights are used and understood in the family courts. It reinforces the findings of previous studies showing a lack of understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse, and highlights new evidence of gender discrimination within the institutional culture of the courts.

As we celebrate our successes we should also take note of the work that remains to be done in making sure that women do not suffer disproportionately due to their gender. For instance, women receive little attention in criminal justice reform measures. This population has gender-specific needs that differ from men in prison, primarily owing to the fact that they are often the primary caregivers of their children before incarceration and are disproportionately victimised by emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in their past.

Instead of investing in counselling treatment for such traumatic pasts and rehabilitative treatment for substance addiction, the criminal justice system continues to detain women at extraordinary rates. We continue to challenge the experiences of victims in and out of the criminal justice system and know that without the support of BCWA advocates their voices would be lost and recovery slow.

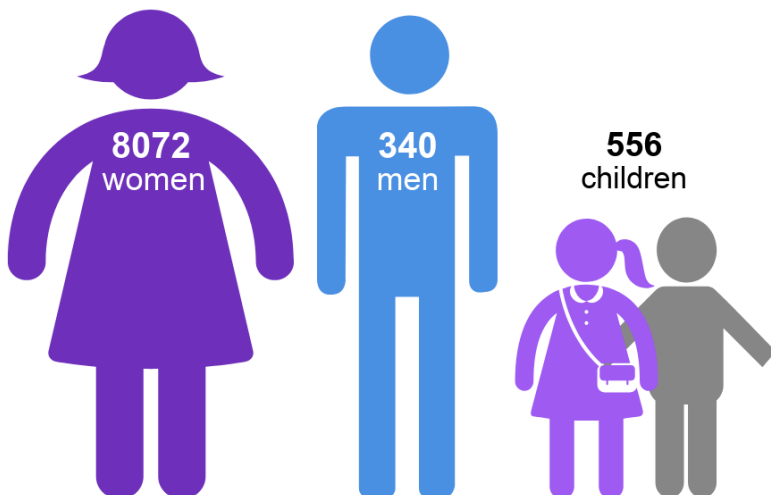
## Reaching vulnerable victims

We know that victims are presenting in many setting with injuries and trauma and do not always get the response that they need. Our presence in GP surgeries, and A&E are essential to facilitate access to support. Those who remain silent as a result of rape and sexual violence can access services through a range of professionals as we have increased training and development.

## Modern slavery

We know that more victims of modern slavery are being rescued and supported though the National Referral Mechanism. Victims present having experienced all forms of abuse and slavery and from

In 2017/18 we supported  
**8968** people



**7008** victims of domestic abuse in the community



**215** women with 299 children in refuge or with floating support



**27** victims of stalking



**183** victims of modern slavery and international human trafficking



**556** children and young people who were victims of rape, domestic abuse and exploitation



**476** victims of rape and childhood sexual abuse



**503** female offenders, women with complex needs, and women involved in sex work



over 40 countries. It has been vital to work with our partners across the West Midlands to keep them safe.

## Children and young people

Our focus on children and young people has this year created many new and exciting partnerships. The Home Office continues to recognise the excellent work undertaken by BCWA in the work related to supporting children and young people with a number of abuse issues. BCWA developed an OCN accredited programme that had its first graduates during the year.

## Looking to the future

The key to a successful service is the people who make

it happen. Success does not come easy or automatic and we never take it for granted. It is through the shared vision, inspiration, dedication and commitment of all Trustees, staff and volunteers that this becomes a reality.

Our future is challenging and exciting. Our growth, development and resilience in recent years have paved the way for tough years ahead.

We remain committed to raising awareness of the issues, finding solutions as well as protecting women and children whose lives are or have been affected by domestic violence, rape and sexual violence. If we don't who else will?



**137,341** entries recorded on 4site, our case management system



**24** phone calls every hour to our helpline



**10** support groups a week



A year in our services



**13,504** one-to-one support sessions



**57,807** updates made to other agencies



**37,696** phone calls made to support clients

How we

**help...**

at the end of support, here's what our clients said

**81%** felt better about their overall situation

**79%** felt safer at work and at home

**74%** felt that their emotional and physical wellbeing had improved

**72%** felt that their self esteem had improved

**77%** felt more able to cope



**76%** felt less frightened

**76%** had better access to support networks

**98%** said they knew what to do if another incident occurred

**63%** of clients with children felt their relationship had improved

**80%** of clients with children felt their children were safer

**74%** of clients with children felt their children's wellbeing had improved



# Regional overview of services

## Wolverhampton

### Stalking

- Black Country Stalking Support Service

### Rape and Sexual Violence

- Independent Sexual Violence Advice (ISVA) Service

### Children and Young People

- Young People's Advocates (DVA, SV, CSE)

### Women's Justice Services

- Red Project: support for sex workers

### Therapeutic services

- Specialist counselling

## West Midlands-wide

### Modern Slavery Services

- Refuge and support for survivors of modern slavery

## Dudley

### Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)

- IDVA Service

### Stalking

- Black Country Stalking Support Service

### Rape and Sexual Violence

- Independent Sexual Violence Advice (ISVA) Service

### Children and Young People

- Young People's Advocates (DVA, SV, CSE)

### Therapeutic services

- Specialist counselling

### Women's Justice Services

- Mariposa Project for female offenders
- New Chance: early intervention
- Red Project: support for sex workers

## Walsall

### Domestic Violence and Abuse

- IDVA Service

### Stalking

- Black Country Stalking Support Service

### Children and Young People

- Young People's Advocates (DVA, SV, CSE)
- Support for child witnesses of domestic abuse

### Women's Justice Services

- Red Project: support for sex workers

## Birmingham

### Women's Justice Services

- Mariposa Project for female offenders

## Sandwell

### Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)

- IDVA and Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service

### Stalking

- Black Country Stalking Support Service

### Accommodation Services

- Domestic Abuse refuge and dispersed accommodation

### Rape and Sexual Violence

- Independent Sexual Violence Advice (ISVA) Service

### Children and Young People

- Young People's Advocates (DVA, SV, CSE)
- Support for child witnesses of domestic abuse

### Therapeutic services

- Specialist counselling

### Women's Justice Services

- Mariposa Project for female offenders
- New Chance: early intervention
- Red project: support for sex workers
- ASSIST: support for women with complex needs

# Domestic Abuse Services

BCWA supports victims of **domestic abuse** in the community at all risk levels in Sandwell, Walsall and Dudley, with services commissioned by Sandwell Council, Walsall Council, and Dudley Safe and Sound.

## Independent Support

Our domestic abuse support teams are made up of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and Domestic Abuse Advocates (DAAs), who work with women and men who are at risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members, aiming to securing their safety and that of their children.

We offer a range of emotional and practical support, including:

- independent advice and advocacy;
- risk assessments and safety planning;
- support through the criminal justice system;
- information on legal and civil remedies;
- working with other agencies to maximise a victim's safety;
- representing high-risk victims at MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference).
- health & wellbeing support;
- confidence building.

Our domestic abuse services maintain strong working links and formalised protocols with partners such as West Midlands Police, housing departments, children's services, adult safeguarding, and a range of other partners.

In 2017/18  
we supported

**7008** victims of domestic  
abuse in the community



**6742** women



**266** men



White Ribbon Day with members of the Safer Sandwell Partnership



## Group programmes

We offer a range of group programmes which enables victims to come together, learn more about domestic abuse, share their stories, and support each other:

**The Freedom Programme:** A course for women who want to learn more about domestic violence, recognise signs, and understand the impact on children.

**The Power to Change:** A course helping women to understand how abuse may have affected them, build their confidence, and recognise their strengths.

**You and Me, Mum:** A course which empowers women to support their children after domestic abuse.

## Training

BCWA provides a range of training for Sandwell, Walsall and Dudley Councils on: domestic abuse; stalking; sexual violence; the trio of vulnerabilities; FGM; honour-based violence and forced marriage to enable professionals across the region to recognise and respond to victims of abuse.

## ED Advocacy Project

In 2015, we made a successful grant funding application to the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust Charity to develop a pilot project in the Emergency Departments (ED) of Sandwell and City Hospitals.

The pilot aims to improve the response to victims of domestic abuse who present at ED. In a pressured environment, these victims often receive treatment for their medical needs but are not identified as victims of abuse. With no offer of support or safeguarding, they become trapped in a cycle of repeat attendances.



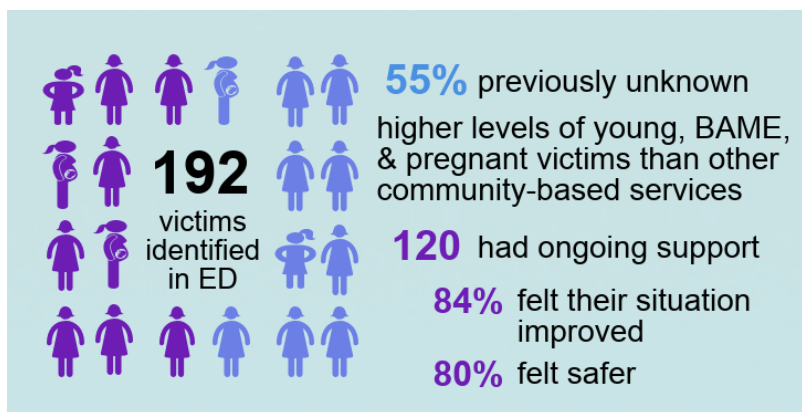
Delivering training for Sandwell Council on White Ribbon Day 2017



Delivering forced marriage training with West Midlands Police

In partnership with Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Hospitals Trust (SWBHT), our project aims to:

- Offer crisis response in ED, with on-site IDVAs to support victims, offering a safe space to talk, initial advice and support, safety information, and options;
- Offer pathways into long-term support;
- Improve ED staff recognition of domestic abuse, and the visibility of the issue within the Trust.



In April 2017 we presented our first evaluation report which highlighted some key successes, including identifying a large number of previously unknown victims, and offering pathways into effective ongoing support. Our initial data also indicates that following support, presentations to ED by the victims identified **reduced by 41%**.



# Stalking

*“It has changed my life, made me understand that what I was experiencing was STALKING? I know it sounds strange but I had no idea and was just living with it!”*

In 2017, BCWA won funding from the UK Government’s Tampon Tax Fund to establish the first regional specialist stalking support service in the UK.

The Tampon Tax Fund allocates funds generated from the VAT on sanitary products to projects that improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls. We were delighted to be successful in our application to this extremely competitive fund.

BCWA announced the new service at West Midlands Police’s Regional Stalking Conference in March 2018, with an official launch scheduled for April.

## Why stalking?

*“I think about it all the time. That I will be one of those women who is killed: murdered by my ex-partner”*

1.1 million people in the UK are stalked every year, and 1 in 5 women will be stalked at some point in their lives. Stalking is extremely dangerous: 30-40% of stalking involves physical violence, and 40% of domestic homicide victims had been stalked.

However, stalking is still a misunderstood crime. Victims often don’t recognise that what is happening is stalking, or that help is available. They do not tend to report to the police until the hundredth incident. Although stalking became a criminal offence in the UK in 2012, only 1% of cases of stalking recorded by the police result in a charge and prosecution.

Whilst there is some support available for people stalked by a former partner, including MARACs and civil orders, there is often little recourse for victims who are stalked outside the context of a relationship.

## The Black Country Stalking Support Service

Our new service is for any woman or girl over 13 in the Black Country who is experiencing any kind of stalking, whether or not they know the perpetrator or have been in a relationship with them. We will also work closely with West Midlands Police to improve victims experiences within the criminal justice system and secure better outcomes for them.

## Support for victims

The Black Country Stalking Support Service aims to intervene with victims as early as possible to prevent stalking behaviour from escalating. Our specialist Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs) offer one-to-one practical and emotional support for as long as victims need it.

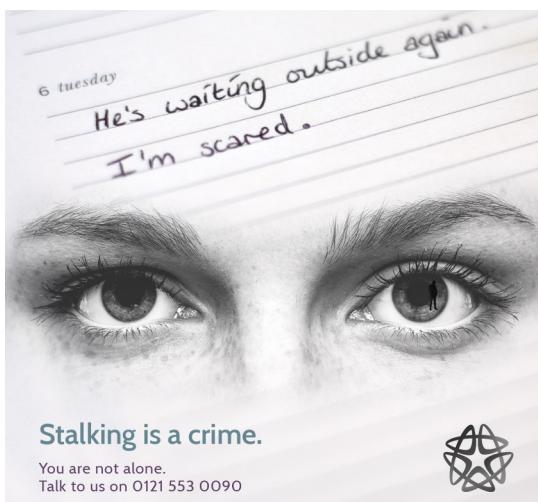
In 2017/18  
we supported

**27** victims of  
stalking  
though one-  
to-one  
casework



**35** requests for  
advice &  
information





The support we offer includes:

- Specialist risk assessment, safety planning and risk reduction, helping victims to look at the stalker's behaviour to develop safety plans;
- Helping victims to understand the criminal justice process, explaining how to report to the police, what kind of evidence police will need, and exploring how victims can safely gather evidence to assist police with their enquiries;
- Support through the legal process, at court and afterwards;
- Working with local safeguarding arrangements including MARACs, Social Care, health partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships, enabling us to provide effective coordinated support where victims need it;
- Advocacy with other agencies, e.g. helping victims make safety plans with their workplace, school or housing provider;
- Working with victims to help them address trauma, with access to counselling.

*"There were six charges against him and with ISAC support I was able to give evidence which resulted in him changing his plea to guilty on all 6 charges.*

*I've now got my restraining order varied indefinitely, with more conditions added to it, including around my son."*

## Training and awareness

We offer free training on stalking and harassment to a huge range of organisations to improve identification of the issue and help victims to get support. Our team also attend community events and carry out poster, leaflet and awareness campaigns to reach the community.



BCWA Stalking Support Team at the West Midlands Police Stalking Conference in March 2018



Senior Stalking Support Worker Lorraine Garratley is interviewed by Sarah Falkland for BBC Midlands Today

## Building the response to stalking

Over our two-year pilot we aim to bring stalking to the agenda, both at operational and strategic levels within the Black Country. We intend to develop a clearer picture of the scale of stalking, the risks, and the value of early intervention to improve victim wellbeing and address the behaviour of perpetrators.

We aim to work with strategic partners to inform priorities and embed a quality response to victims of stalking across the region.

# Rape and Sexual Violence

In 2017/18  
we supported

**476** victims of rape and  
childhood sexual abuse



**436** women

**40** men



**261** cases of rape

**145** sexual assaults

**140** cases of childhood  
sexual abuse

*"All those survivors, past, present and future are  
blessed to have you holding their hands through  
difficult times. You touched my life with strength,  
hope and empowerment. I now have a future"*

Female ISVA client

*"Without BCWA I honestly don't know where I  
would be today. I have never been in a place where  
I have felt more accepted and understood"*

Male ISVA client

Our team of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) support both male and female survivors of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse in **Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton**.

Whether or not survivors choose to report to the police, we can offer:

- someone to talk to in confidence;
- emotional and practical support and advocacy;
- access to specialist counselling;
- sharing information to help survivors make decisions that are right for them, including how the criminal justice system works and what happens if survivors choose to report to the police;
- support and advocacy through the legal process working with police, CPS, courts and witness care;
- support and information for family and friends.

The support of an ISVA is instrumental in helping survivors of abuse overcome trauma and move on with their lives. The service is an essential partner for the regional Sexual Assault Referral Centres.

This year we supported 476 people, a 13% increase on last year, as we continue to see ever more victims of historic childhood sexual abuse coming forward.

## Working in partnership

We have formed the West Midlands Sexual Violence Consortium in partnership with regional partners RSVP in Birmingham and CRASAC in Coventry. This enables us to work together to share best-practice and secure additional funds to support survivors. This year we were successful in securing funding from the Tampon Tax to support vulnerable women involved in sex work.





# Accommodation Services

Refuge services remain at the heart of BCWA, offering secure accommodation to victims and their children who have fled domestic abuse. We provide a safe, supported environment where they can start to rebuild their lives and look forward to a life free from violence. Our refuge services are commissioned by Sandwell Council.

Over the years we have developed a diverse range of accommodation which enables us to meet individual needs, including:

- Our main refuge where residents have self-contained flats, with 24-hour staffing;
- A shared house which offers a specialist space for South Asian women;
- A refuge which offers supported accommodation to vulnerable single homeless women;
- Five dispersed safe houses in the community.

Our refuge services have been rated **Level A** in the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework.

Our staff support clients to empower them to make informed choices; we listen and offer support in a non-judgemental manner. No two women's needs are exactly the same, and refuge staff develop responsive individual support plans which include:

- personal safety information;
- support with criminal and civil matters;
- support around safe child contact;
- support around safe housing options;
- referral to other services;

In 2017/18  
we supported

**215** women through accommodation services



**103** women with 299 children in refuge



**112** families with floating support


we had to turn away

**303** referrals due to lack of space

- support to access benefits;
- immigration support.

BCWA also works in partnership with other professionals and agencies including solicitors, social workers, health professionals, children's centres, Early Years Teams, immigration services, alcohol and drug services, education, emergency services, UKBA, local churches and other charitable organisations to meet women's needs and protect their rights.





# Children and Young People

Our specialist Young People's Services support young victims of rape, sexual assault, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and domestic violence. This is a growing service as we work with local, regional and national funders to develop multi-disciplinary support for some of the most vulnerable young people in our communities.

Our team of specialist Young People's Advocates offer essential support to young victims of abuse:

- A non-judgemental, safe space to talk and listen;
- Emotional and practical support and advocacy;
- Risk and safety planning;
- Help to understand and come to terms with what has happened;
- Work to raise confidence and self-esteem;
- Access to counselling;
- Support through the legal process and at court;
- Support to engage with school, Children's Social Care, Youth Offending, and other professionals;
- Attending case reviews and multi-agency briefings to ensure young people's voices are heard.



Youth Police and Crime Commissioner Jack McTavish visited BCWA to meet Sara Ward and our Young People's Team

In 2017/18  
we supported

**556** children and young people

**394** girls



**162** boys

**310** who had lived with domestic abuse at home

**103** victims of teenage relationship abuse

**33** victims and those at risk of CSE

**110** victims of rape and sexual abuse

## Domestic Violence

We offer support for young people affected by domestic abuse in their own relationships in Sandwell. We also support children who have lived with domestic abuse in the home in Sandwell and Walsall, offering advocacy services integrated with our adult team to wrap support around the whole family.

## Sexual Violence

Our specialist Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisers support young victims of rape, sexual abuse, and sexual assault across Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton.

## Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Services

We also support any young person, female or male, who is at risk of or affected by sexual exploitation, grooming or gang related abuse. As part of the Home Office Tackling Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy BCWA have been funded for several years to deliver these services across the Black Country.

BCWA is member of the national reference group for Young People's Advocates and integrates with local, regional and national approaches to tackle this issue.



Building self-esteem with craft activities

## Group work

### Awareness: TRAPPED

TRAPPED is a group education and awareness programme for children and young people which offers a comprehensive approach to the crucial issues of relationship abuse, consent and safety. It features a range of age appropriate sessions which give young people key information about the law and their rights, help them develop confidence to communicate about sensitive issues, build resilience and improve safety.

Since launching in 2011, TRAPPED has been delivered to thousands of secondary school pupils across Sandwell. Based on emerging trends and demand, this year we began piloting an updated TRAPPED with more topics for a broader age range. With funding from the Safer Sandwell Partnership, we piloted TRAPPED modules in primary schools to an extremely positive response.

*"I think the most important thing I learned is to tell someone about my problems... It makes me feel more safe to tell someone trusted my problems"*

Girl, Year 5, St James' Primary

*"Male and female should be treated the same"*

Year 6 boy, St James' Primary

Primary school pupils...

- Rated TRAPPED sessions an average of **9 out of 10**
- **89%** learned something they did not know before
- **52%** recognised from their own lives issues covered in the sessions
- **88%** said that following the session they would know where to go to get help if they faced any of the issues covered themselves

*"Having spoken to both the students and their parents I can truly state that the support and the impact of it has been immense."*

*The girls feel comfortable and at ease with yourself allowing for open and honest dialogue; this also has meant that they have felt receptive to advice and guidance on delicate issues that has been given to them.*

*Your input has been well-received by parents who appreciate the relationship that has been built with their daughters and assisted in their safeguarding by raising their awareness of personal safety.*

*Your liaison with myself in supporting the girls has been invaluable"*

**Dianne Pinell, Lordswood Academies Trust**

### Targeted group work

**VIVA** is a six-week group support programme for girls involved in or at risk of unhealthy relationships or grooming. It focuses directly on self-esteem, risk taking, trusted adults and healthy relationships, with one-to-one support where needed.

**Inside-Out & Helping Hands** are designed for small groups of children who may have been affected by witnessing domestic abuse at home.

It focusses on helping children to understand abuse in an age-appropriate way, identify emotions and build emotional resilience.



# Women's Justice Services

BCWA Women's Justice Services offer holistic, person-centred support to women involved with the criminal justice system and those with complex needs in the Black Country and Birmingham.



## MARIPOSA PROJECT

### The Mariposa Project

Mariposa is a specialist project for women who have offended in Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham, commissioned by Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company. We run four

programmes designed to help women improve their lives and avoid offending in the future: The Changes Programme, Healthy Emotions, Healthy Relationships and Positive Parenting. These are run from our women-only spaces in Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham.

### New Chance

New Chance is a specialist early-intervention project commissioned by the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, which provides diversion from custody for women in Sandwell and Dudley. Following arrest, women are referred by police to our service, which offers practical and emotional support aimed at helping them to move forward in their lives and avoid future offending.

*"Before I started this programme, one of my main issues was making people have control over me and what I do. I've now built up the confidence to say no and to do what I think is best for myself. The staff were so patient with me and so honest and welcoming. I was able to let my guard down and talk about things I would never think of telling anyone else that I work with."*

Client Supported by Women's Justice Services

In 2017/18

**503** women accessed our Women's Justice Services

**408** women in the community were supported by the Mariposa Project

**81** women accessed early intervention through New Chance

**7** women were supported by the Red Door project

**7** women were supported by the ASSIST programme



*“Thank you for all your help and bringing out the good in myself.”*

Client Supported by Women’s Justice Services

## **Assist**

ASSIST is a new partnership project with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust and Anawim, supported with funding from the Home Office Transformation Fund.

ASSIST offers support for women who have complex needs, such as trauma from past or current abuse, mental health issues, addictions, and multiple child removals. These women often struggle to find the help that they need through existing services. We provide positive support through one to one casework and access to specialist psychological interventions to address mental health needs and assist them to stabilize their lives.

*“In all the years I've offended and have been placed in programmes none of them has had the impact on me like this one. My eyes have been opened in many ways. I now think before I do things and I am able to communicate about how I feel.”*

Client Supported by Women’s Justice Services

## **The Red Project**

The Red Project is for women involved in sex work who may have experienced, or be at risk of, sexual violence. Our specialist Independent Sexual Violence Adviser offers outreach support and casework, and we have recently purchased a specially adapted van to offer drop-in services at outdoor sex sites in the Black Country. The Red Project is run across the West Midlands in partnership with CRASAC and RSVP, and is supported by funding from the Tampon Tax.

## **Voices: young female offenders**

Voices is a pilot programme funded by the Safer Sandwell Partnership, offering specialist trauma interventions to young female offenders and care leavers. *Voices* addresses trauma as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; physical neglect, or exposure to domestic violence. Female offenders often have a history of this kind of victimisation and the resulting trauma often feeds into a cycle of unhealthy coping strategies, victimisation and repeat offending. *Voices* offers a chance for young women in Sandwell to break the cycle and avoid entering the adult criminal justice system. This year we completed the programme with 4 young women and plan to run the programme with Pupil Referral Units next year.

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## **Women with Complex Needs**

Here at Black Country Women’s Aid we understand that for some women, traditional services catering to one need at a time are not enough. We know that some women face a complexity of issues, such as offending, abuse, substance misuse, and mental health, which makes it harder for them to access the services they need. This can create a revolving door effect, with women being referred into lots of services but engaging with none. Research from Agenda reveals one in 20 women have experienced extensive physical and sexual violence as both a child and an adult. These women face very high rates of additional issues:

- More than half have a common mental health condition;
- One in three have attempted suicide;
- One in five have been homeless.

One in three have an alcohol problem

For some of these women abuse, violence, and disadvantage combine meaning they have very complex, overlapping needs. Many end up in very difficult situations, for example there are:

- Approximately 11,000 women in hostels;
- Nearly 7000 women sent to prison each year;
- 80,000 women involved in prostitution.

We exist to support and empower women who experience abuse wherever and however they present, and so have developed this specialist service to best meet their needs. Evidence shows that female only, trauma informed, holistic services which place the client at the heart of the support offered is what works for this client group, and this is what we are striving to provide through our various projects. We are members of Agenda and Clinks to link in to national best-practice.



# Modern Slavery

BCWA's Modern Slavery Support services offer refuge and outreach support for victims of modern slavery and international human trafficking.

Victims are referred through the NRM (National Referral Mechanism), which is the UK Government response to modern slavery. We have operated this service since 2011, as the West Midlands-wide sub-contractor of the Salvation Army, which administers the national service on behalf of the Home Office.

This year we were proud to be nominated for a Human Trafficking Foundation Award for our outstanding contribution to the fight against modern slavery.

## International trafficking

In the last year alone we supported people of 29 different nationalities. The most common countries of origin (making up half of victims supported) are Albania, Nigeria and Vietnam.

We have also supported people from Ethiopia, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Thailand, South Africa, India, Eritrea and a range of other countries, including UK nationals.

## Rebuilding lives after trauma

Our modern slavery service includes support for women, men and families through the NRM process. We offer a safe refuge for women and children only, and outreach support for women, men and families.

In 2017/18  
we supported

**183** victims of modern-day slavery



Survivors of modern slavery come to BCWA having experienced some of the worst trauma and exploitation that an individual can face. Our Modern Slavery team are specialist in working with people who have been severely traumatised, and work with passion and compassion to support them on their journey from victim to survivor.

We offer a range of emotional and practical help including: counselling; support with healthcare (many female survivors come to our service late in pregnancy without having had any pre-natal care; survivors who have been sexually exploited are at high risk of infections or HIV); support to understand their legal rights; support with the criminal justice system and their NRM case; links to local services and courses to develop confidence and independence; and support with their next steps, whether it is safe for them to return home or if they need to claim asylum.



## How we help

We asked clients about their experiences of our support:

- 85%** felt **better** about their overall situation
- 90%** felt **safer**
- 86%** felt their **physical and emotional wellbeing** had improved
- 78%** felt that their **confidence and self esteem** had improved
- 81%** felt **more able to cope**
- 88%** felt that their access to **social networks and support** had improved
- 100%** of those with children felt that their **children's wellbeing** had improved
- 88%** felt that their **children were safer**
- 85%** said that they would **know what to do** if they felt at risk of being exploited again

*"You have really helped me get back on my feet even when I thought the world was crumbling. Thank you so much for being there for me and restoring my life."*

*"You helped me with all my needs. If I can put a number from 1 to 1000, I will give 1000."*

## In the news

Black Country Women's Aid has been working with the Salvation Army and the media to raise awareness of modern-day slavery. Two of our clients, "Hannah" and "Promise", bravely chose to tell their stories to the media. Both women had been trafficked from their home countries with the promise of legitimate work, only to be forced into sexual exploitation. Having escaped their traffickers, they hope to raise awareness of the appalling crime of modern slavery, and to show victims that there is a way out.

"Hannah" talked to the *Evening Standard* and *Independent*, and "Promise" told her story to *Unilad's* documentary team, who made a short film "Promise's Story", available on youtube.

## National, regional, and local strategy

As well as supporting survivors, we contribute to the wider fight against modern-day slavery, advocating for improvements in the response to vulnerable victims.

BCWA is part of the Human Trafficking Foundation's Long-term Support Group, contributing to policy recommendations on improving support for survivors, particularly post-NRM, which were presented to Anti-Slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland;

BCWA submitted evidence to the NRM Review, mapping how the NRM could better meet the needs of survivors for the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit's Victim's Peer Group;

BCWA made a joint submission with the Salvation Army to the DWP Enquiry into modern slavery, which resulted in improvements in survivors' access to benefits.

We acted as expert consultants to the West Midlands Modern Slavery Strategy and West Midlands Police Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures, bringing the voices and experiences of survivors to regional strategy.

We represent survivors on the West Midlands Victims Commission, West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network, Human Trafficking Advisory Foundation Forum, and PAN West Midlands Multi-Agency Group.

*"We are indebted to [BCWA] for sharing [their] expertise...BCWA has demonstrated its commitment towards supporting victims through its NRM work but its passion and skill in tackling modern slavery is demonstrated through its ability to empower others to tackle this crime."*

Jo Barber, Policy Officer Victims Services, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner



Head of BCWA Modern Day Slavery Services Baldish Sohal speaks at the launch of the West Midlands Modern Day Slavery Standards





# Therapeutic Services

*"When you first started counselling me, I was frightened, insecure and had low self esteem... I blamed myself for the past. You have helped me so much...I have now found myself... have bright prospects for my life... thank you for helping me to see that life can be great."*

Counselling client

Therapeutic counselling is nationally recognised as an essential component of a specialist domestic and sexual violence service. Counselling can help victims of abuse to develop more effective coping strategies and overcome problems arising from these potentially devastating experiences.

At BCWA, counselling underpins and supports all of our community and accommodation services. We also offer counselling for victims of human trafficking, working through interpreters, specialist counselling for children and young people, and new therapeutic interventions such as Mindfulness and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy.

BCWA also offers a specialist counselling pathway for victims of rape and sexual assault referred through the adult and paediatric SARCs (Sexual Assault Referral Centres) in the Black Country.

In 2017/18

**415** survivors of abuse accessed specialist counselling



**394** women and girls

**21** men and boys



# Feeling Free

## A Survivor's Story

"Elaine", one of our peer mentors, told her story to Jim King from the West Brom Building Society:

*"I couldn't believe that other women were able to understand what I'd been through, that I wasn't alone. It was a real eye-opener the first time I went to BCWA, hearing the experiences of other women and the traumas they'd faced. Yet to see how they'd survived gave me the strength too to rebuild my life and to imagine a future that allows me, at last, to hope."*

Elaine refers to BCWA as an organisation that "saves lives". She finds it strange to think back to when she initially came into contact with BCWA and attended the Power to Change group.

*"I would sit in silence, unsure what to say, but the sessions were so powerful and the support so wonderful that over time I learnt to speak about what had happened to me. It allowed the process of healing to begin and gave me the perspective to really see my husband for what he was – an abuser."*

Elaine has come a remarkably long way since then. She's now a peer mentor at BCWA, where she uses her knowledge and skills to support other women, who've been the victims of domestic violence.

### The strength to remember

But the memories of how she suffered at the hands of her husband are still painful for Elaine to remember. At times, she has to struggle through the tears that threaten to overwhelm her, but Elaine is determined to tell her story. It confirms the strength and pride she has regained in her life.

*"You don't see the signs. They say love is blind and it's true. I didn't seem to realise how he was isolating me from people, my friends, even my family, so that he could claim to be my only friend, the only one I believed I could trust. It was like he was operating a remote control. He made me give up my work to care for our child but then wouldn't let me go back. He'd throw this terrifying tantrum if I even mentioned it."*

That frightening level of control, how it makes a woman doubt her own perceptions and emotions, came to a height when Elaine found her husband one night with his sister, another victim. The sense of shame, the fear her family would ostracise Elaine, completely paralysed her, sapping all self-respect from her.

And Elaine's account exposes another presumption many people have about domestic violence.

*"I'd been a professional woman, a financial adviser, but he drained any confidence I had. We presented this respectable 'happy family' image to the world but it was a complete lie of what was happening behind closed doors where 'home sweet home' was so far from the truth. He was a charming business man to those he met but I knew different."*

For Elaine, that reality was control, coercion, humiliation, physical abuse, and sexual assault.

### Reality and respect

It was really only after her father suspected what has happened to his daughter that a dramatic turnaround in Elaine's fortunes occurred.

*"My father helped me towards a realisation of what had happened to me, what I'd become. It was then that I somehow escaped. But, like so many women, that's rarely the end of it. My husband always seemed to find out where I was, and the threats of violence continued. I was always in fear of my life."*

But escape finally she did and, thanks to BCWA, Elaine feels she can now look ahead.

*"Women here feel they can say anything and that they'll be understood. Abused women are often judged as though it's somehow our fault. With the group and specialist staff at BCWA you come to appreciate the truth, that we are the victims."*

Yet, having been a victim, Elaine refuses to let that define her. As well as a peer mentor with BCWA, she is currently doing a counselling course.

*"At my darkest point, I never dreamed I could discover a different life for myself but, thanks to BCWA, I feel I can now reach out and touch something I thought I'd never find again. Freedom."*



# Fundraising

We would like to say a huge thank you to some of the many people and organisations who have supported us during 2017/18 with donations, fundraising challenges, gifts for our refuge and support in-kind:

Annie Lennox Primary School

The Art Yard, Cradley Heath

ASDA Brierley Hill

ASDA Merry Hill

Baby Basics at Warley Baptist Church

BBC Radio WM

Beeswift

Black Country Chamber of Commerce

Black Country Heritage Lodge No 9702

Brockmoor Foundry

Bromwic Lodge No 6773

Chapter of Dudley No.252 of Royal Arch Masons

Free Radio

Guru Nanak Gurudwara, Smethwick

Halesowen & Rowley Regis Rotary

Interserve

Lewisham Oak Lodge 9213

Marks & Spencer, Merry Hill

Marks & Spencer, West Bromwich

Paula Thacker

Q3 Academy, Tipton

Sandwell Council Communications Team

Sandwell Council Domestic Abuse Team

Sandwell Hospital's Antenatal Team

Sandwell Networkers

Six Towns Credit Union

Tesco Bags of Help

Tesco Dudley

Tesco Merry Hill

Tesco West Bromwich

Walsall Magistrates Court

Wolverhampton Girls' School

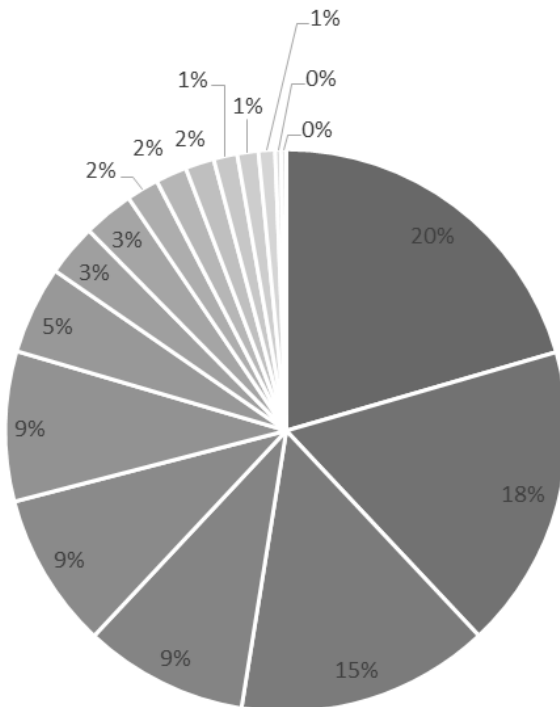
Wychbury Women's Institute





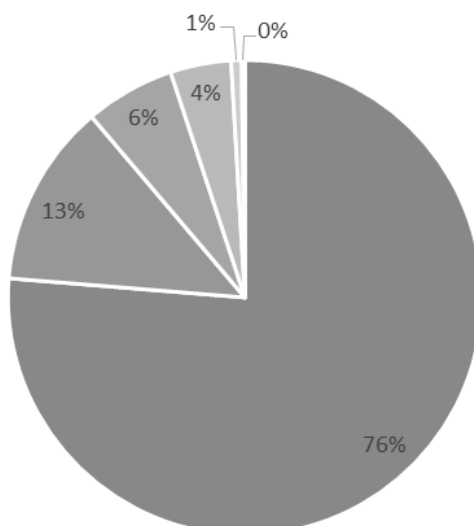
# Financial Reports

## Income



- Sandwell MBC: £617,248
- West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner: £527, 241
- Supporting People: £438,559
- Accommodation: £284,040
- Walsall MBC: £269,778
- Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC: £259,579
- Dudley MBC: £152,559
- Home Office: £89,754
- Ministry of Justice: £87,624
- Generated: £56,178
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport: £54,055
- West Midlands Police: £50,000
- Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner: £41,122
- Comic Relief: £36,465
- Children in Need: £28,795
- Wolverhampton City Council: £10,000
- Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust: £9,127

## Expenditure



- Staff costs: £2,813,831
- Property costs: £460,922
- Office costs: £226,011
- Activity costs: £152,948
- Depreciation: £26,526
- Professional fees: £8,100



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**@BCWomensAid**



**Black Country Women's Aid**

**Registered in England No. 2791788 • Registered Charity No. 1032298**

**Registered at the above address**

**Members of the Women's Aid Federation, Clinks and Agenda**



**Ministry of  
JUSTICE**



**west midlands  
office for policing  
and crime**



**Walsall Council**



**Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum**  
Working Together to Stop Domestic Violence and Abuse



**Staffordshire &  
West Midlands**  
Community Rehabilitation Company



**NHS**  
**Sandwell and West Birmingham  
Clinical Commissioning Group**



**BBC  
Children  
in Need**