

Ross-shire Women's Aid



Annual Report 2011



Helping Women, Children and Young People

Message from the Chair of our Directors' Group

This report covers the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 and describes some of the achievements in Ross-shire Women's Aid 30th anniversary year. One of the highlights of the year was our march down Dingwall High Street to mark our anniversary. The march was attended by over 60 women, children and young people and was lead by Marilyn Ross and Pamela McKinnon holding our banner which had been specially designed for the occasion by our service users.



Ross-shire Women's Aid 30th anniversary march

In this year we have held a number of events to highlight our work and raise awareness of domestic abuse. As well as ensuring staff are well supported and further developing our service by taking part in Scottish Women's Aids' National Outcome Evaluation Project, training our first group of Volunteers for a number of years and expanding the numbers of women contacted through our outreach service.

While a lot has changed since RWA opened its first refuge in 1981, including:

- Women's experiences being taken seriously
- Legal protection being improved
- Recognition given to the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people
- The development of a purpose built refuge which gives families their own flat
- Awareness of the issue increasing amongst agencies and the general public.

There is still a lot of change required to eradicate domestic abuse in Scotland and the wider world. As an organisation we believe this is possible and this is what we work towards.

Maureen Macmillan

Chair of the RWA Directors' Group



Achievements for 2010-2011

- Developed new awareness raising materials in conjunction with our service users, this included new posters and leaflets for both our women's and children's service and the launching of our website (www.rosswa.co.uk).
- Held a seminar on abuse in young people's relationships, this was well attended by professionals from a variety of agencies including police, education, social work and prison service, the day was very well evaluated.
- Held a roadshow in Ullapool to publicise the work we do.

- Developed our 'Three Wishes' Project for our AGM which involved our service users. The wishes included:
 - I wish that people didn't deny that Domestic Abuse happens in different situations, and that they acknowledge that it isn't the woman's fault.
 - I wish that there were more refuges and space available for immediate help, action or access.
 - I wish that I knew that Women's Aid existed 15 years ago.
 - No abused person should have to pay financially for their safety or freedom !!!
 - I wish that all women in the world live free of pain and suffering from abuse.

- Recruited and trained 5 volunteers.
- Our Care Commission inspection went well once again and the day care of children service was rated as a 5.
- Supported a young person to be part of steering group for Scottish Women's Aid 'Our Rights Our Lives' event.
- Celebrated our 30th anniversary with a march down Dingwall High Street and a celebratory event in the Town Hall.
- Ran a 'Blow the Whistle on Domestic Abuse' campaign with Ross County Football Club highlighting the White Ribbon Campaign.



Who we help

Our referrals have increased by a third in the last year. We were in contact with 311 woman and 97 children and young people. This is partly due to the awareness raising we have carried out and partly due to the joint working we have undertaken with the Police and other agencies in supporting the roll out of a pilot Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Process.

We provided 1670 one to one support sessions to women in this year and had 3153 phone contacts. In addition, we provided 1024 one to one support sessions to children and young people in this year.

We had 50 requests for refuge accommodation but were only able to accommodate 9 women and 12 children in this year. All women who were unable to be accommodated were offered outreach support and, where required, support to access alternative accommodation.

17% of our referrals came from women themselves, 38% from the police, 5% form social work, housing and friends and families respectively. The higher referral rate from the police is as a result of the joint working arrangements in place.



Case study

F was living with an abusive partner in a rural hamlet in Ross-shire. Her family lived abroad and she had only one friend in the Highlands. She had been introduced to her friend through her partner as it was his cousin. She had no interaction with anyone else apart from the occasional visit to the GP, who was also his GP, he always insisted on being present with her during the consultation.

The majority of her life was spent at home with her partner. Once a fortnight (when their benefits came through) “as a big treat and if she was good”, they would travel by bus together to the nearest town. When they arrived at the town he would collect their benefit money, visit the cousin and go to the shops.

The cousin saw the deterioration in the woman and the way that he treated her. The cousin told him to stop but, he didn’t stop and always made out it was in jest, play fighting, just having a laugh.

On these visits F was sometimes left on her own with the cousin. On one of these occasions the cousin had the opportunity to tell her about Women’s Aid and a woman there that she knew of that could help. F had no confidence, she suffered from social anxiety disorder (SAD) and could not speak to people she did not know on the phone. She allowed the cousin to phone on her behalf.

It was impossible to meet with the worker as he accompanied her everywhere. It was not possible to talk on the phone as her SAD made this very hard and he would want to know who she was talking to and would hear. So, it was agreed through the cousin that the safest way to provide support would be through text. The text support continued over several months.

Case study

F confirmed to her support worker that she wanted out of the relationship but how could she get out? She had many concerns:

- She had no money, no bank account. All the money she had brought to the relationship he had spent and their joint benefit claim was paid into his account.
- She had no form of identification, no passport, no birth certificate. He had taken it all but said it was somewhere in the house but he didn't know where.
- Where would she go, where would she stay. She was terrified to leave. As he had told her many times if she tried he would kill her.
- What about the animals. She couldn't leave without them. What would he do to them if she was not there?
- How would she be able to get out of the house?

Women's Aid provided a drop in service in the local town. Her support worker would be there and urged her to attend if; it was safe for her to do so.

She was able to attend the drop in. The worker had been able to offer her accommodation before but F did not know how she would be able to get out. During the drop in several crucial things were done:

- The worker explained that she would not do anything that F did not want or F felt would jeopardise her safety and would always consult with her first.
- F signed a disclaimer to say that her support worker could contact other agencies on her behalf.
- The support worker and F worked on a safety plan. There was a window of opportunity where her partner needed to go to the city. She knew that he would go the day their benefits came in.

- The worker contacted the Police to let them know what would be happening.
- Women's Aid contacted several taxi firms until they found one that would be available around that time and offered to pay on arrival.
- Women's Aid contacted several animal welfare organisations until they found one that was able to take the pets/animals.

F texted, when he had left the house and was on the bus. WA called the taxi, they picked her and the animals up, they provided her with accommodation, a vegetarian food box, some money to keep her going, deposited the animals at a local shelter who had agreed to take care of them.



Case study

After F came into refuge we continued to support her for over a year. This provided her with safety so she could begin to recover from the trauma that she had experienced. Before coming to refuge she had accessed social security benefits/public funds. However when WA tried to help her to renew these claims, they were informed that there had been a mistake and although she was an EU national she was not entitled to Housing Benefit or any other benefits.

In spite of this and the challenges that presented we continued to support F for over a year.

During that period a national referral mechanism was developed for victims of trafficking. Her support worker recognised that there were many aspects of her abuse and the way she had been treated that were the same as victims of trafficking.

WA worked with the new referral mechanism and migrant support services, together were able to find a long term future for F.

F no longer lives in refuge accommodation. She has a safe place to stay in a leafy suburb, with enough money to live on and access to training opportunities.





Ross-shire Women's Aid March, Dingwall

What our service users say

We took part in a national outcome evaluation project for Women's Aid services which found that of those service users who participated:

- 100% felt they had more ways to keep themselves safe
- 82% felt they were able to manage a relationship or contact with their ex better
- 100% felt they were able to understand more about how domestic abuse affected them and their children
- 100% felt that in some way they were better able to get what they needed for themselves
- 100% were more confident about making decisions for themselves

When asked if they would recommend the services provided by us women said:

- She would receive the support she needed to make the choices she needed to make to better her situation. She would feel less isolated and comforted in the knowledge that she is not alone.
- She will receive all the help to find herself again and also she will be listened to. Also the part of having a friend that won't tell you what to do is the best thing.
- They understand what you are going through. Not judgemental, respectful, they listen, they care, they help, they can put you in touch with other people who may offer additional help, they are resourceful, they encourage you, spend time with you, they support you, a shoulder to cry on. To me any woman going through a hard time i.e. abuse/physical/mental, or just struggling on their own with grief/loneliness/disability, the list goes on, the one place to go must be Women's Aid



- I would recommend Women's Aid to any of my friends, as you're not treated like a number and you're made to feel at home, the help and information that's made available to you is both encouraging and very useful. The refuge I was in made you feel like family and always had time to spend with you even if they weren't your case worker or even when they were busy they put you first.
- They support and help without judgement, at a time when you are most vulnerable and isolated. Taking care to help you, not just your situation, giving you the courage to know "it's not your fault".
- Having someone neutral and listening and best off all understanding you! The whole isolation and blaming yourself because "I can't help what you make me do to you" stays in your head for a very long time. If I didn't have my Women's Aid worker I'd not understand domestic abuse and always feel alone - who would understand the fear, embarrassment and humiliation etc.
- It has been the best thing I have ever done for me and my kids, and would have still been at home or dead if it wasn't for the workers at women's aid.

Plans for next year

- Develop a new organisational strategy to provide a focus for progress in the next 3-5 years.
- Hold a number of events in the year to publicise the services we offer.
- Develop a joint working protocol with Criminal Justice Social Work to support the roll out of a perpetrators programme within the Highlands.
- Develop a group work programme for women in the Community Integration Unit at Porterfield Prison.
- Develop a leaflet in conjunction with children and young people who use our service which explains 'what it's like' to live with domestic abuse.
- Develop an exhibition charting a women's journey to explain the process women go through when living with and leaving an abusive partner.
- Pilot the use of drop-ins in secondary schools.

Financial information

Statement of Financial Activities

(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT) YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2011 £	Total funds 2010 £
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generating funds:				
Voluntary income	232,054	324,006	556,060	517,978
Activities for generating funds	3,073	235	3,308	124
Investment income	809	63	872	680
Incoming resources from charitable activities	54,549	4	54,553	32,763
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	290,485	324,308	614,793	551,545
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities	(209,663)	(322,173)	(531,836)	(550,232)
Governance costs	(9,188)	(2,714)	(11,902)	(7,553)
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	(218,851)	(324,887)	(543,738)	(557,785)
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES BEFORE TRANSFERS				
	71,634	(579)	71,055	(6,240)
Transfer between funds	(3,417)	3,417		
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR	68,217	2,838	71,055	(6,240)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	140,372	21,528	161,900	168,140
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	208,589	24,366	232,955	161,900

Total funds 2010 £





“Thanks for believing”

A woman we have supported

www.rosswa.co.uk

Ross-shire Women's Aid is a registered Scottish Charity. Number SC008514.

Designed by Charlotte Mackenzie, CMK Art & Design.