

## 2019-20: A YEAR IN NUMBERS



**561** women & **316** children stayed in refuge



**5,536** women & **5,143** children accessed outreach support, allowing them to stay in their own homes



**11** babies born to women in refuge



**276** women couldn't access refuge as it was full



Pregnant women who accessed our support services:

Refuge: **36** women

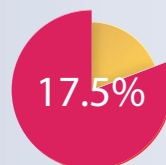
Outreach: **205** women



The PSNI recorded **31,817** domestic abuse incidents and **18,640** domestic abuse crimes. Both of these figures represent the highest figures logged since records began in 2004/05



Police responded to a domestic incident every **17 minutes** of every day



Domestic violence crime accounted for **17.5% of all crime** reported to the PSNI



Women murdered with domestic motivation: **2**

## Foreword by Sarah Mason CEO

*The Covid-19 pandemic was an unprecedented situation that Women's Aid, together with the rest of the world, faced towards the end of this financial year, which no Risk Register could have planned for. Women's Aid groups across Northern Ireland acted decisively and quickly with emergency contingency plans to comply with lockdown which were enforced in March 2020. The Government's key message of 'Stay Home, Stay Safe' was not going to apply to the many women and children we support, as home is not always a 'safe' place. This was an extremely challenging time and Women's Aid staff were acknowledged as key workers as our Refuges continued to operate with families living there during lockdown. This serious situation will continue to be a major focus of operations next year.*

# Breaking Free: Support for all Women

Anyone can experience domestic violence, regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or background. Women's Aid works to support all women.

## Black & Minority Ethnic Women

- 100 women stayed in refuge
- 291 women received outreach support
- 20 women from the Travelling community supported in refuge
- 39 women & 23 children with no recourse to public funds supported in refuge

## Disability & Complex Needs

229 women in refuge and 2,288 women in our outreach services identified as having a disability or additional support needs

## Support at every stage of life

- 8% of women in our services were over 55
- 16% of women in our services were under 25

## Who are the abusers?

### Women in refuge

- 34% male current partner
- 34% male ex-partner
- 1% same-sex partner
- 4% family member
- 2% Child/Adult Child
- 5% other

### Women in Outreach

- 28% male current partner
- 63% male ex-partner
- 0% same-sex partner
- 3% family member
- 3% Child/Adult Child
- 3% other

## Children & Domestic Violence

Domestic violence impacts on all areas of children's lives, including their health, education, social activities and relationships. Women's Aid recognises that domestic violence is an adverse childhood experience and every child/young person's experience is different. Children and young people who experience domestic violence are experts by experience and we must therefore listen to their experiences and take action to safeguard them from harm.



### In 2019-20...

- 316 children stayed in our refuges
- 5,143 children benefited from our outreach support
- We held 4,939 one-to-one support sessions with the children in Women's Aid refuges, centres and in the community
- 6,498 children were engaged in Women's Aid Programmes delivered in schools and in the community

We ran 1,373 chidcare sessions for 434 children, to support mothers in getting their lives back on track after abuse

We trained 2,143 external agency staff on the impact of domestic violence on children

Our staff attended 780 case conferences, core and case planning meetings, and other inter-agency meetings with a focus on children

# Keeping Children & Young People Safe

## Preventative education

Our innovative *Helping Hands* programme helps children understand the warning signs of abuse, and know who to turn to for support. We are in our **tenth** year of the *Developing Social Guardians to Deliver Helping Hands* Teacher Training programme, training teachers to deliver the *Helping Hands* programme in their classrooms and build their capacity to manage safeguarding issues that arise.



### Teachers trained this year:

**168** teachers from  
**105** primary schools

### Teachers trained to date:

**1,613** teachers from  
**575** primary schools

### Training spaces for 2020-21:

**160** teachers

Evaluations continue to be extremely positive and this year we have engaged the services of Dr. Helga Sneddon (Outcome Imps) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the two-day ILM accredited Social Guardian Teacher Training Programme and the extent and impact of delivery of the *Helping Hands* programme in schools across NI. We are hoping to launch this evaluation next year. Preliminary findings from over 100 responses to an online survey showed that subsequent to completing the training:

**97%** felt better able to teach PDMU as a result of the training

**98%** felt better prepared to help children deal with unsafe feelings

**93%** of teachers felt they were social guardians

**85%** of teachers had delivered *Helping Hands* in their classrooms following the training

**100%** of teachers felt the training helped them understand the services and support available from Women's Aid

**100%** of teachers agreed the training helped them understand the impact domestic violence could have on a child in their classroom

**95%** felt the training had helped them develop new skills as a teacher

**92%** had been able to use what they had learnt to safeguard children

## Building on our Success...

Over the next year, we are planning to conduct a comprehensive review of this training programme to capture teachers' feedback in relation to adverse childhood experiences and trauma informed approaches.

“ Women's Aid has made me a stronger person & has helped me accept the past and prepared myself for a better future. I now know that what happened wasn't my fault. ”

“ Without Women's Aid I don't think I would be here today, meeting other women in similar situations as myself has been very helpful. ”

“ I think the *Helping Hands* programme will help teachers to feel more confident when dealing with sensitive issues. I think this is a course that should be available to all children in schools across NI ”

# Women's Aid's Work Across Northern Ireland

The 9 local Women's Aid groups have done incredible work across Northern Ireland this year. Here are a few of their highlights.



ABCLN's **Older But No Safer** campaign calls for greater protection for older women living with domestic violence and abuse. In 2019/20 ABCLN supported over 100 women over 55. Older women are less likely to speak about domestic abuse, have fewer opportunities to leave their abusers than younger women and face additional barriers to support.

Armagh Down and Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid were successful in partnering with DoJ to launch **NI Pilot IRIS scheme**. Working with 2 GP federations to provide specialist Domestic and Sexual abuse training to medical staff and be a dedicated specialist advocate for victims, helping them to access the appropriate onward services.



Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid held their annual conference. This year the conference was called '**Changing the Conversation**' and brought together partner agencies who work with Belfast and Lisburn to address domestic violence and abuse and change the wider public mindset around abuse along the way. Nicola Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, spoke at this excellent event.

As Causeway Women's Aid moved towards their **merger with Mid-Ulster Women's Aid**, ongoing support from the community and new friends made delivering their services so much easier.



Fermanagh Women's Aid hosted and organised the first **Coercive Control Conference in Co. Fermanagh** in April 2020. This was an incredibly successful and well received conference, with speakers from Criminal Justice System, Western Health and Social Care Trust, Fermanagh Women's Aid, Men's Action Network and 3 survivors of Domestic Violence telling their stories and experiences to our 250 participants.

Foyle Women's Aid Voices Champions organised and led the '**Find Your Voice**' event in Ashleywood House. The event brought survivors together to look at the power of their collective voice. Survivors celebrated a sense of community and vowed to use their voices to help others find theirs. The group met the Mayor of Derry and Strabane District Council, Cllr. Michaela Boyle.



Staff and volunteers for the **Change that Lasts - Ask Me project** in Mid-Ulster Women's Aid celebrated together with a Christmas Party. They enjoyed arts and crafts, games and having some time together to reflect on the positive benefits the project has brought to the local community.

North Down & Ards Women's Aid was the recipient of several brilliant **fund-raising events** during 2019/20. Local band Full Circle held a musical event, a North Down fitness trainer organised a Mourne walk challenge and Gary Lightbody (Snow Patrol) and Davy Matchett (Third Bar) kindly donated a signed Snow Patrol guitar which was sold at auction with Wilson's Auctions donating their fees. Thank you to everyone for all their support and hard work.



Omagh Women's Aid staff participated in the **Community Cash Voting Event** in 2019, funded by the Fermanagh and Omagh PCSP and the NIHE, which offered local community groups £500 grants. Omagh WA was selected as a recipient and was able to create this comfortable and welcoming space in their Resource Centre where children and young people experiencing domestic abuse can receive one to one support.

# Empowering Women, Rebuilding Lives

Domestic violence and abuse robs women of their liberty, self-esteem and control over their lives. Women's Aid supports women in their recovery from abuse through a wide range of personal development programmes, covering topics like self-care, mental health, trauma recovery, parenting, and employment and life skills. This year.

## JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Journey to Freedom is a personal development group process for women who have experienced (or who continue to experience) domestic violence.

This year **667 women** took part in the programme.



## YOU & ME, MUM

The You & Me Mum programme is designed to empower and support mothers to address the needs of their children who have lived with domestic violence.

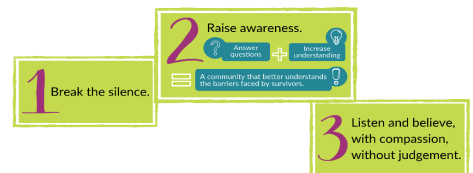
This year **49 women** took part in the programme.



**1,197 women took part in programmes run by Women's Aid across Northern Ireland**

## Change that Lasts – Ask Me Community Ambassador Programme

This year WAFNI, alongside Mid-Ulster Women's Aid, co-facilitated the Change that Lasts, **Ask Me Community Ambassador programme**. The project aimed to educate members of the community on domestic abuse so they could break the silence around abuse, raise awareness and listen and believe survivors without judgement. It came to an end in March 2020 and we were able to evaluate the impact our **51 ambassadors** made in their communities:



381 Community members reached



78 disclosures



2,222 community members reached via social media



70 survivors signposted



1,513 pieces of VAWDASV literature shared

## Policy, Lobbying & Campaigns

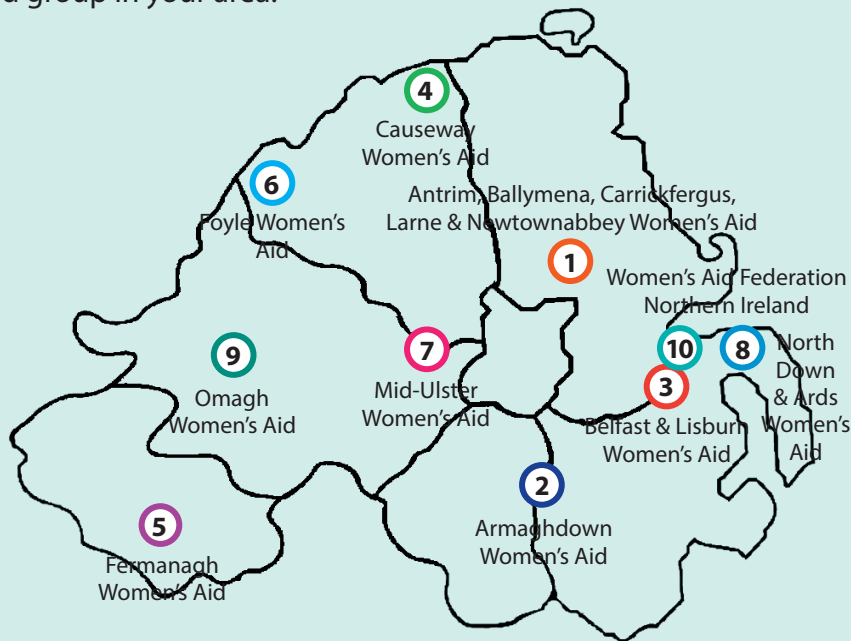
Women and children experiencing domestic violence and abuse are at the core of all our work, and this is no different for our policy and lobbying work. This year we welcomed the **restoration of the devolved Stormont government** and the opportunities this has presented for more effective avenues for lobbying. We note the commitment to the publishing of a gender equality strategy, but continue to advocate for a Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, to formally recognise the impact of gendered violence in NI.

Much of our work this year has centred around the **Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill**, which will finally make domestic abuse and coercive control an offence in formal legislation, bringing us into line with the rest of the UK and Ireland. When the Bill was introduced to the Assembly in early 2020, WAFNI immediately got to work comparing it to similar legislation in the rest of the UK, writing briefing papers outlining what was missing from our proposed legislation and lobbying government officials for the inclusion of legislative elements intended to make this a gold standard Bill on domestic abuse and coercive control. **WAFNI submitted both written and oral evidence to the Justice Committee** outlining our position on the legislation and we continue to work towards ensuring that it is as robust as possible and works for the survivors it is intended to protect.

WAFNI has responded to a large number of **consultations** this year. All of our consultation responses endeavour to centre the experiences of our services users at all times. WAFNI continues to work with key stakeholders, partnerships and the wider women's sector to ensure that women's rights are advocated for at all legislative levels across Northern Ireland.

# Women's Aid information

Women's Aid has 9 local groups and one regional umbrella body covering the whole of Northern Ireland. Find a Women's Aid group in your area:



1. Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne & Newtownabbey Women's Aid	reception@womensaidabcln.org	028 2563 2136
2. Armaghdown Women's Aid	admin@womensaidargmaghdown.org	028 3025 0765
3. Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid	admin@belfastwomensaid.org.uk	028 9066 6049
4. Causeway Women's Aid	womensaidcoleraine@btinternet.com	028 7035 6573
5. Fermanagh Women's Aid	womensaidfermanagh@btopenworld.com	028 6632 8898
6. Foyle Women's Aid	info@foylewomensaid.org	028 7141 6800
7. Mid-Ulster Women's Aid	admin@midulsterwomensaid.org.uk	028 8676 9300
8. North Down & Ards Women's Aid	info@ndawomensaid.org	028 9127 3196
9. Omagh Women's Aid	info@omaghwomensaid.org	028 8224 1414
10. Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland	info@womensaidni.org	028 9024 9041

## With thanks to our funders:

