

Time is ticking...



16 days
16 issues
16 Actions

#UnlockTheFunding

DAY 1

Northern Ireland: A Dangerous Place for Women & Girls

Did you know...Every other month a woman in
an abusive relationship in Northern Ireland is
murdered?

**Since the first Covid 19 Lockdown, from March 2020 to
November 2022, 15 women have been murdered in NI.**

These women were killed in the most horrendous and violent attacks.
They were mothers, daughters, sisters, friends and colleagues.
Collectively these women were mothers to 30 children, some of whom
witnessed these horrendous attacks.

Additionally, we know many suicides can be attributed to domestic
abuse. These also need to be counted. We need urgent action to
address domestic abuse.

Let's take some time and remember each of these women and their
families. One more life is too many.

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!



DAY 2

Domestic Abuse Homicides in Northern Ireland

Did you know...Between 2017 and 2021,
34 women & girls in Northern Ireland
were killed by men?

Women & girls in Northern Ireland are disproportionately affected by violence, abuse and intimidation.

According to police, from April 2021 to March 2022, women and girls made up 78% of all victims of sexual crimes, 68% of domestic abuse, 64% of harassment and as of April 2022, 95% of stalking crimes.

We need urgent action to make Northern Ireland a safer place for women & girls!

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!

DAY 3



Violence Against Women & Girls: A Government Priority

Did you know... Northern Ireland is currently the only part of the UK without a Violence against Women & Girls Strategy?

Women's Aid have long campaigned on the belief that women & girls shouldn't be afforded any less protections from gender-based violence, simply because of their UK postcode.

We believe the introduction of a new Violence against Women and Girls Strategy in NI, needs to be sufficiently prioritised and resourced if it is to make real change and meaningful difference to the lives of women and girls in our community. Women's Aid services are a Violence Against Women and Girls strategic priority. This strategy, currently in co-design, will not be launched without a functioning executive.

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!

DAY 4

The Cost of Domestic Abuse: A Government Priority

Did you know...the cost of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland has been estimated at £674 million?

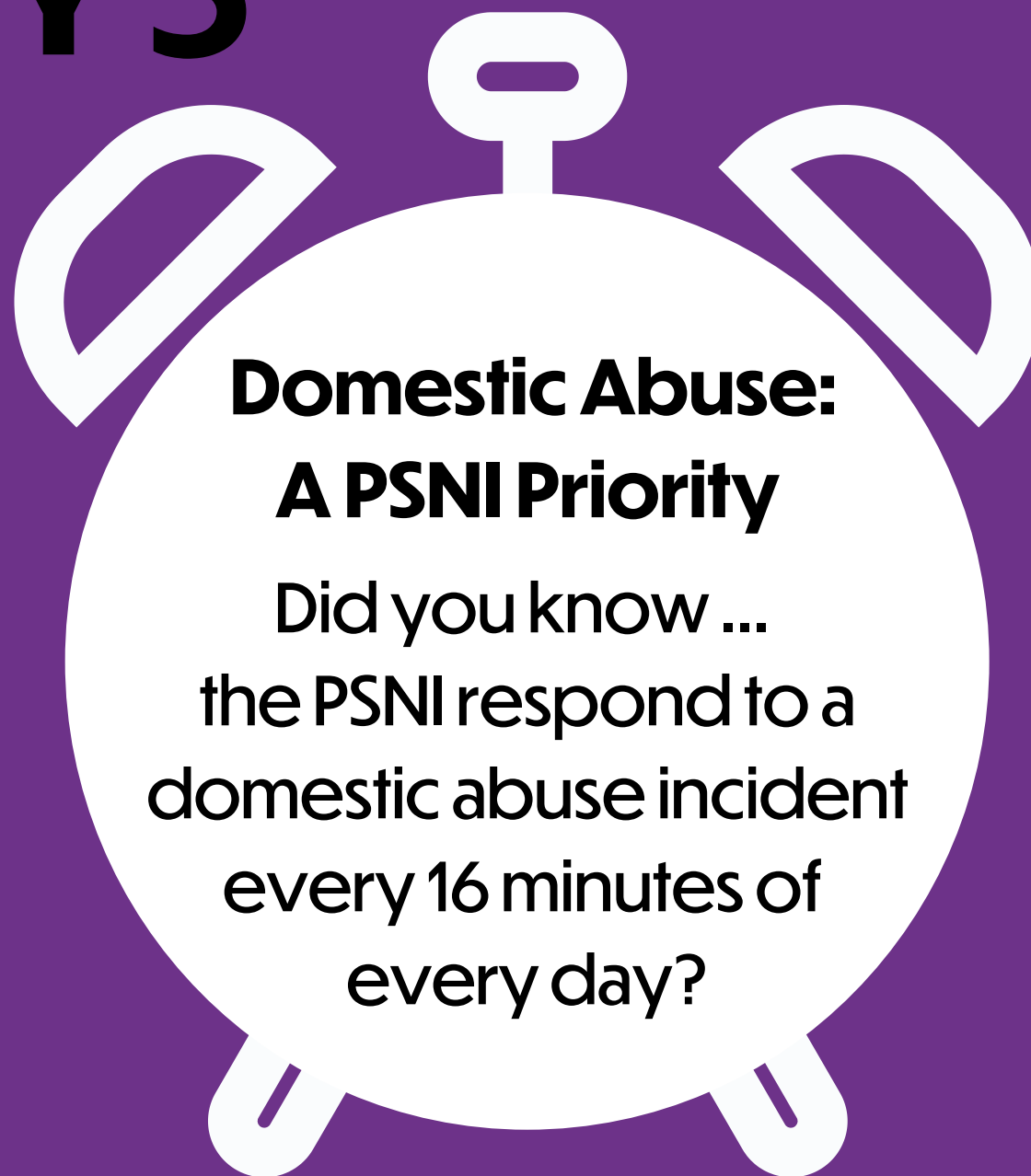
The 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland' Strategy outlines costs associated with domestic abuse.

The cost of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland was estimated to be £674m in 2011/12 including costs to victims and their families as well as the costs to health, social care and criminal justice.

The overall cost of Women's Aid in Northern Ireland presents a total expenditure which is approximately 1% of the estimated cost of domestic abuse. We believe without the vital services of Women's Aid this cost would be greater and more investment into Women's Aid services will reduce these costs on a long-term basis – we need BRAVE Government commitment for Horizon funding to CHANGE our stark domestic abuse statistics in NI.

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DAY 5



PSNI figures for domestic abuse are the highest they've ever been in Northern Ireland.

Domestic abuse accounts for 20% of all crimes in NI – but does not receive the budget to deal with this amount.

The past decade has seen a huge increase in numbers of domestic abuse incidents attended by police and domestic abuse crimes recorded.

In 2011/12, there were 10,387 domestic abuse crimes were recorded. Ten years later, by 2021/22 this had increased by 109% to 21,723.

These are very worrying statistics, let's work together to change this upward trend.

Behind every statistic is a person or a family that needs support.

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!

DAY 6



Domestic Abuse: A Funding Issue

Did you know...
Women's Aid
Supporting People
funding level has not
changed since 2009?

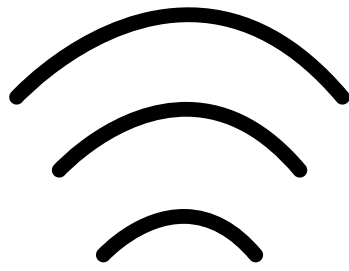
The Supporting People Programme funds over 850 housing support services for up to 19,000 service users across NI including Women's Aid refuges. The Supporting People budget has not changed since 2009 despite rising inflation costs and the current cost of living crisis.

Women's Aid endured a 5% cut to vital emergency Refuge provision in 2018/19. Today we're facing inflation at 11% and spiralling bills in electricity, gas and oil mean Women's Aid refuges are struggling to manage these increased costs without adequate funding.

Our refuges and centres provide vital lifelines for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. Increased funding of the Supporting People Programme is crucial to enable Women's Aid to respond to the increasing need for their services.

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!

DAY 7



Funding in Other Parts of the UK

Did you know... funding in other parts of the UK & Ireland has been increasing for domestic abuse & Violence Against Women services?

The 'chronic underfunding' in Northern Ireland predates the collapse of Stormont, however the situation is being exacerbated by the lack of a functioning Executive.

Northern Ireland was already significantly behind the rest of the UK when it came to funding, but the cost-of-living crisis is making this disparity even more stark. In Scotland, The Delivering Equally Safe (DES) fund provided £9.5 million to domestic abuse projects in its first six months. Earlier this year in the Republic of Ireland, the government announced a €363m strategy to tackle gender-based violence. Funding of this level has never been seen in Northern Ireland. The Westminster Domestic Abuse Bill seen a ring-fenced budget of £125 million for the statutory duty on local authorities to fund domestic abuse support in accommodation-based services in 2021-22.

Whereas, in Northern Ireland, which has seen more legislative changes in the last 2 years than the last ten years, unfortunately none of these provisions were agreed with committed funding by our Executive. HOW can we implement positive legal changes to address Domestic Abuse without sufficient funding for support services?

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!

DAY 8



Non Distribution of UK Funds to NI

**Did you know...funds
distributed under Barnett
Formula for domestic abuse
from Treasury during Covid-19
pandemic were not allocated to
Women's Aid with £300m
unspent?**



During lockdown the Government at Westminster committed £75M across the UK to address increasing numbers of domestic abuse.

Women's Aid in NI did not see any increased funding during this time. By the end of March 2021, Northern Ireland Government were returning £300M unspent funds to Treasury. Women's Aid services across the rest of the UK benefited from this vital funding, why was Domestic Abuse in NI not a government priority? We believe funds given to Northern Ireland should never be returned to Westminster, and Local Government should have clear plans and processes to enable them to distribute additional funds as efficiently as possible, with clear transparency and accountability, to help those most vulnerable in our community. Support services need an investment of funding to fully meet the needs of victims of domestic abuse.

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!



DAY 9

Women's Aid Services at Full Capacity

Did you know...
pressure on Women's Aid
services is increasing daily?

However, funding is not increasing to match demand.

Despite new Government initiatives to create positive sign-posting services there has not been an increase in the direct services to deal with the increased demand.

We cannot create positive Help-Seeking provisions without adequate direct services for women seeking support. Over the past five years we have accommodated 3,030 women in our refuges and provided outreach support to 32,112 women in the community. However, it must be noted that 1,340 women couldn't access our refuges during this time because they were full. Currently across Women's Aid NI there are close to 900 women who have been triaged and are waiting on vital support services such as refuge, floating support and group work.

This is not acceptable. Support services need an investment of funding to fully meet the needs of victims of domestic abuse.

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DAY 10



Domestic abuse: A Housing Issue

Did you know...
domestic abuse is
a major cause of
homelessness?

Over the past five years occupancy of our refuges has been high and we have accommodated 3,030 women and 2,109 children during this time.

Domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of homelessness in Northern Ireland. For some women with children, the fear of being homeless is a reason they have delayed leaving the abusive situation, as they fear not having a roof over their children's head. Women's Aid support many women and their children through emergency refuge accommodation and help them to find secure housing as they build their new lives.

However, this can take a long time with many women in refuge for over a year because they are unable to get rehoused.

Housing allocation and legislation needs an overhaul to consider the needs of vulnerable women and children, including women with no recourse to public funds and marginalised women from BAME backgrounds. We NEED an Assembly to introduce a reform of housing legislation with the experiences of victims and survivors at the heart of it.

Time is ticking...unlock the funding!

DAY 11

Domestic Abuse, Children & Pregnancy

Did you know...sometimes
the biggest victims of
domestic abuse are the
smallest?

**Children come to refuge with their mothers for safety.
Nearly every month a baby is born in our refuges.**

Yet our specialist children's services are severely underfunded even though we support over 6,000 children per year through specialist trauma informed services and support.

Over the past five years Women's Aid NI has supported 1,905 women who were pregnant, in both refuge and community outreach services. Additionally, in this time, 56 babies have been born to women staying in refuge. Pregnancy is a time when women should feel safe and supported. However, research shows that 20-30% of pregnant women report incidents of physical violence. Research has highlighted that babies are particularly vulnerable to experiences of domestic abuse. Women's Aid is proud to welcome new-born babies into our refuges when home is not a safe place for them at this time.

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DAY 12

Domestic Abuse & The Absence of the NI Assembly

**Did you know...
in the last Assembly
mandate, NI went
1,094 days (60% of
the time) without a
functioning
Assembly?**



We have now been without an Assembly since 28th March 2022.

When we had a functioning Executive and Assembly, finally key pieces of legislation went through, including The Domestic Abuse & Civil Proceedings Act and The Protection from Stalking Act to name but a few, which gave essential extra protections to victims of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.

But without secured government funding to implement these legislative changes on the ground, such as training and awareness raising, a successful roll out will not happen. We strongly urge our politicians to return to (and stay) at the table and focus on the serious societal issues affecting NI.

When we have no Assembly, it is ultimately those who are most vulnerable in our society who suffer!

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DAY 13

Domestic abuse & The Criminal Justice Process

Did you know... between April 2020 and May 2021, 8,360 domestic abuse crimes were reported to the Public Prosecution Service by PSNI?

However only 2,968 suspects were prosecuted.



It takes a huge amount of courage, confidence and support for a victim of domestic abuse to progress through the criminal justice system.

As one woman told us: "I had a court case that nearly broke me.", another women referred to the process as 'the systematic dismantling of a women bit by bit'.

Additionally, many women feel their voices are silenced through the courts. They believe the judicial system is arbitrary with sentencing not in anyway reflecting the seriousness of the crime.

There is much to be done to make the courts and criminal justice process more effective and trauma informed for victims and survivors.

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DAY 14



Domestic Abuse & The Family Courts

Did you know... the Family Court system can be used by abusers to further perpetuate domestic abuse?

In the year 2020/2021, Women's Aid across Northern Ireland supported 6,005 women and 6,450 children in their local communities.

Additionally, 530 women and 319 children stayed in a Women's Aid refuge. 91 of these women shared their voices and outlined their experiences of the family court system through our Hear Her Voice project. These women tell us about their experiences of the Family Court System and how they feel their abusers manipulate the system to continue the abuse. In particular financial abuse had some stark evidence with some women thousands of pounds in debt through abuse of the court system. They do this for example by repeatedly bringing their victim into court over child contact, forcing the victim to be in the same room as their abuser. This is also potentially putting children at risk of further harm and trauma. Women's Aid calls for a solid review of the Family Court Process.

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DAY 15

Domestic Abuse Experienced by BAME women & children

Did you know...in 20/21 alone approx
46% of women who stayed in our
refuges were from BAME
communities?

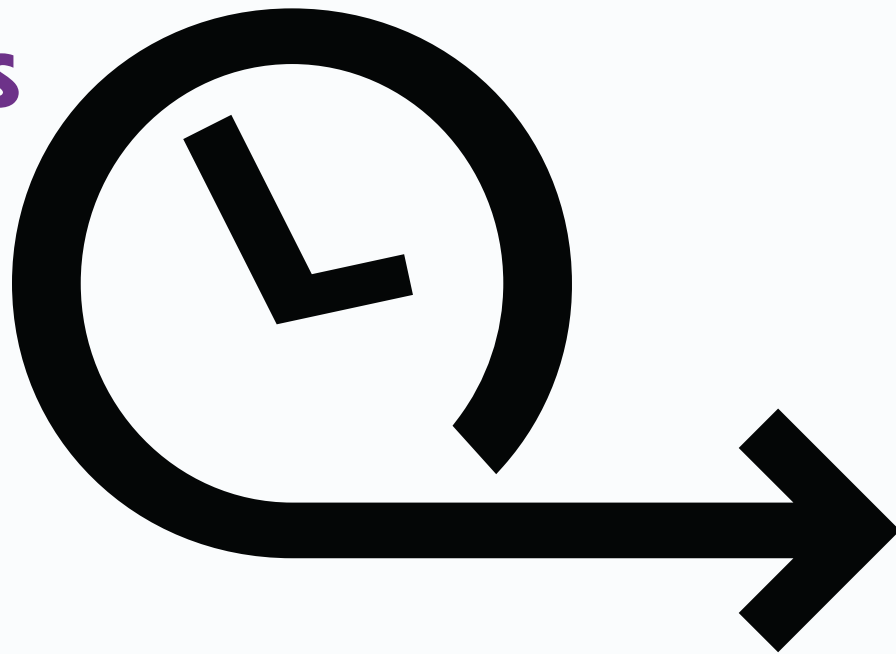
**Over the past 5 years, 819 women from BAME communities
stayed in our refuges in Northern Ireland.**

BAME women are some of the most vulnerable in our society and face many additional barriers to accessing support. We are committed to partnership working with partner organisations that support BAME women and children, to raise awareness and promote service provision. Women's Aid provide specialised trauma informed support for BAME women and their children. One of the major factors is no recourse to public funds for many of these women. An issue Women's Aid has lobbied extensively for. We must ensure that anyone who experiences domestic abuse has access to quality support services.

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**Let's change
the picture of
Human Rights
in NI**

DAY 16



**Did you know... Domestic Abuse is a
violation of human rights?**

Women's Aid has a strategic roadmap to impact change over the next three years which will help deliver on the organisation's mission which is to challenge attitudes, structures and systems which perpetuate domestic abuse and to enable women, children & young people to live free from violence and abuse.

We need Government to support in the delivery of this strategy and ultimately change the picture of the context of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland. This Women's Aid 'Unlock the Funding' campaign, has coincided with the annual international 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (Nov 25 – Dec 10), combining a range of mediums including digital roadside advertising screens, and a dedicated social media campaign.

To find out more about the work of Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland visit our website: womensaidni.org

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Women's Aid

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womensaidni.org

