

Domestic abuse affects up to 1 in 5 women in Scotland.

- 53,681 domestic abuse incidents were recorded by Scottish police forces in 2008/09
- Women were the victims in 84% of the incidents
- Of the 28 women murdered in Scotland in 2008/09, 13 were murdered by their partner or ex-partner

### THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

Domestic abuse has a serious impact on women's health, wellbeing and economic opportunities

- Blunt force trauma (caused by crushing impact and/or by a strike with a blunt object) is the most common type of injury inflicted by an abusive partner<sup>1</sup>
- Women who experience domestic abuse are twice as likely to have poor physical health than women who don't experience domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>
- In a 2008 US study, 51% of women living in shelters (refuges) were found to have major depression, compared with less than 3% of the general population; more than 45% reported difficulty functioning at work or college

**“People don't realise that when you're abused like that how your**

**confidence goes, and the thing is it doesn't start, it's a gradual thing that grinds you away and grinds you away until there's nothing left”**

### THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Domestic abuse affects the health and wellbeing of children too. Witnessing abuse is traumatic, children may be directly abused and sometimes they are hurt when they try to intervene to protect their mothers.

- Nearly three quarters of children on the 'at risk' register live in households where domestic abuse occurs
- 52% of child protection cases involve domestic abuse
- 29 children in 13 families were killed between 1994 and 2004 as a result of child contact arrangements in England and Wales

**“It's a very hard thing growing up in a household where you are constantly afraid. That's what I remember, constantly being afraid and being very, very apprehensive about...when the next violent thing was going to happen and what was going to trigger it”**

### WHAT WOMEN'S AID DOES

Women's Aid provides practical and emotional support to help women to make their own decisions and regain control of their lives. Women's Aid

workers advocate for the woman with housing, health and social work services, help her to find a solicitor and accompany her to the police or to court. Leaving an abusive partner is a life changing experience for women and they value the support they get from Women's Aid.

**“We were given help with housing, the different benefits I was entitled to, because I had walked away from a job, a flat, we had the clothes on our back, they helped me sort income support out within a week...they helped me find a school so that I could get my daughter into a more normal way of living, and a doctor and a dentist”**

Refuge is the service most commonly associated with Women's Aid but a woman does not have to go into refuge to get support Women's Aid. Women's Aid provides outreach services to women wherever works best for them.

- There are 505 refuge spaces across Scotland
- Women's Aid groups turn away more than half the women who request refuge, because of lack of space or difficulties with access

On our last national Census Day, 24th September 2009:

- 642 women were supported by a Women's Aid group

- 365 women and 360 children and young people were in a Women's Aid refuge
- 101 women contacted Women's Aid for the first time

Women's Aid children's workers provide support to children and young people in refuge, at school, in their own homes or in the community. When children move out of refuge, the children's workers continue to support them to settle into their new home. Work with children and young people includes emotional support, support to attend court, child protection work and supporting women and their children to rebuild their relationship where this had been affected by the abuse

- On average 1750 children are accommodated in Women's Aid refuges each year
- 2869 children and young people were supported by Women's Aid children's workers in 2009/10

### THE COSTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse has a significant impact on public services and on the economy. The Scottish Government estimates the cost of domestic abuse in Scotland to be £2.3 billion per annum<sup>3</sup>

- 2009 research calculates the hospital and ambulance costs of

<sup>1</sup> Sheridan and Nash, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Plichta, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Safer Lives, Changed Lives. Scottish Government, 2009

responding to a serious wounding as £9,190

- The same research calculated the costs of a homicide to the criminal justice system, as £144,239
- Lost output as the result of a single homicide costs the economy £451,110<sup>4</sup>

#### THE NEED FOR DEDICATED FUNDING

Against this background, Scottish Women's Aid has concerns about two key sources of Scottish Government funding for Women's Aid work in Scotland which are due to come to an end in March 2011. The Violence Against Women Fund supports the provision of counselling services, outreach work with women living in remote rural areas and follow on support for women moving to a new home and community. The Women's Aid Children's Services Fund supports refuge, outreach and follow on support for children and young people.

- On average 40% of current income for Women's Aid groups in Scotland comes from these two sources of funding
- 65% of children's workers in Women's Aid groups are funded by the Scottish Government, through the Children's Services Fund

Given the projected cuts to public spending in Scotland, we are concerned that local authorities will struggle to make up the shortfall if these funding streams come to an end. A 40% reduction in Women's Aid funding across Scotland would tear apart the framework of support for women, children and young people that we have spent the last 12 years building.

Scottish Women's Aid is calling on the Scottish Government to ensure that these dedicated funding streams continue to provide essential support to women, children and young people who experience domestic abuse.

**"If it wasn't for Women's Aid I would not be standing and probably not have my son. They give me a reason to stand, live and hope for a good future."**

[www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk)

Scottish Women's Aid Charity  
No SC001099

Recognised as a charitable organisation  
by the Inland Revenue in Scotland

<sup>4</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009

