



VICTIM SUPPORT
SAFETY ADVICE
INFORMATION
REFUGE
EARLY INTERVENTION
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
GROUP SESSIONS
RESETTLEMENT
AWARENESS
OUTREACH



“Refuge and more...”

BWA has operated in Reading since 1975. The need is as great as ever. In 2012/13 BWA's helpline received 6,312 calls and an additional 4,000 plus referrals made directly to BWA's outreach services.

This document summarises the work of the nine refuges, outreach services, resettlement support, group work for women, children and families, sessions in schools, and training and awareness raising that makes up BWA's work programme.

BWA receives support through grants and contracts from Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council. We thank those authorities for backing our work against domestic abuse and also acknowledge the financial support of The Earley Charity, Cisco, British Gas and Microsoft as well as our many individual supporters.



Diana Hunt
Chair of the Board



Liz Terry
Chief Executive

At least one in four women in the UK will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
(British Crime Survey 2010/2011)



BWA's Helpline takes one call every 80 minutes every day of the year.



“I would like to thank BWA for their help at a time when I felt hopeless. Special thanks for Margaret*, she is the kindest person I have ever met, she supported me not only with all the paperwork but with psychological challenges as well.”

* Names have been changed to ensure staff and client confidentiality.

BWA Helpline

The first call for thousands encountering abuse

BWA provides a 24 hour helpline that gives access to all of our services. An agency can call the helpline on behalf of a potential service user or they can call direct themselves. The helpline number is widely published in a variety of ways.

Call Analysis: 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013
Over the period the BWA Helpline received a total of 6,312 calls.

The majority of calls are from Reading, Bracknell, Wokingham, West Berks, South Oxford, Oxford, Windsor & Maidenhead.

Caller Identification

Of the total calls received:

2,906

were people themselves ringing BWA

170

from friends and families of the victims

158

came from Health professionals

141

came from unidentified sources

1,922

came from statutory; e.g. Housing

47

came from Education

372

of the calls came from Police

178

of the calls came from Voluntary, Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), Samaritans

418

came from other Women's Aid organisations

Outcomes

The following table shows the outcome for all calls.

Support	4,220
BWA Refuge	216
Other Refuge	55
Elsewhere	43
Outreach	886
Unable to help	892
Total	6,312

There is a variety of reasons why we may not be able to help a caller; such as it is not appropriate to offer refuge or the demand outstrips the supply, but the main reason (377) was that we did not have room at a BWA refuge.

**During 2012 - 2013
BWA accommodated
a total of 205 residents:**



Refuges

Safe places, free from fear

BWA can provide safe emergency accommodation for up to 38 women and their children at any one time.

BWA has nine refuges across three local authorities: Reading; Wokingham; and Bracknell. Each family has its own bedroom with shared facilities. The refuges range from a two bedded flat to a six bedroom purpose built house with disabled access. Another provides support specifically for Asian women and their children. BWA also has online access to refuge vacancies across the UK so we can find space for those who need to move out of the area.

Refuge provides a breathing space where decisions can be made free from pressure or fear. All refuge workers are based on site; BWA also employs a part-time children's support co-ordinator to work with children in refuge. Refuge is funded by Supporting People contracts and housing benefit.

The refuge service

People come to refuge when they are in crisis. BWA helps begin the process of rebuilding damaged lives. We don't judge, we listen.

An initial support session with a key worker identifies immediate needs, followed by a full induction where safety and support plans are considered along with a range of interventions.

The needs of children are discussed and plans made. Health visitors regularly attend refuges to help with under 5's. Most residents rate BWA support as either 'excellent' or 'good'.



Early Intervention – the Family Choices Programme

Aimed at preventing domestic abuse, reducing repeat incidents and the impact of abusive relationships, Family Choices is based on the premise that most parents want to be involved in their children's lives in a positive way and that it is possible to learn to behave differently. The programme builds mutual respect and seeks to eliminate blame, enabling parents to make safe choices about how they wish to relate to each other and to their children.

Perpetrators

The perpetrator programme is based on the Duluth model of intervention. The 27 week programme is divided into eight, three-session modules conducted on a rolling basis. Recent research suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the individual differences and emotional dynamics of perpetrators, an approach integrated into the work where appropriate.

Victims

Risks may increase for a victim when the perpetrator is attending a programme to address their abusive behaviour. Family Choices allocates a key worker responsible for maintaining contact during the programme. Victims are invited to attend group work, self-esteem workshops and ongoing support.

Children

Support for children living with domestic abuse emphasises that the violence is not the children's fault, encourages healthy expressions of emotions and provides safety planning.

The Family Choices project was established in 2011/12 and is funded by Reading Borough Council. Where there is domestic abuse within the family in Reading the programme is frequently a primary component in Child Protection plans.

The team has weekly 'triage' meetings with Children's Services in Reading. Domestic violence notifications are discussed and actions agreed as to how best to approach the family and offer support. Since May 2011 BWA has received nearly 2000 notifications, the majority of which required some level of support for victims and their children.

BWA has commissioned an independent evaluation of Family Choices in 2013, to review progress and to enable us to plan for the future. In addition to the main project a smaller pilot programme is funded by the Probation Service in Reading. The target group consists of perpetrators who are in contact with the Probation Service for other offences but where the offender manager is aware of an abusive relationship.



In the year since the project began in March 2011:

125 referrals to the project have been made

Of these, **68** perpetrators have attended for assessment

45 assessed as suitable for the programme

25 going on to the modular programme

In addition **83** victims have been invited to the Choices programme with **49** of these attending



1,841
new clients
were supported at
Crossing Bridges
between
31 April 2012 and
31 March 2013



Outreach

BWA's outreach work is organised on an area basis

Reading – Crossing Bridges

A 'one stop' shop based in the town centre for victims of domestic abuse providing an accessible safe venue for victims to 'drop in' or attend appointments providing:

- Face to face support
- Immediate access when a victim decides to seek help
- A weekly free legal surgery
- Referrals to BWA and external support services
- Child Protection and Children's Services assistance
- DIY injunctions

Referrals come from a variety of sources including self-referrals. Clients are offered up to 6 outreach appointments, with a referral to Choices discussed at the first or second appointment. This new, more structured approach to outreach appointments enables Crossing Bridges to handle more clients and provides a better service. Some clients need more support, especially in the initial crisis stages. People requiring more intensive support are identified by outreach staff and agreed by the team. The object is to get the individual to a more stable point where such a high level of intervention is no longer necessary. This approach has enabled staff to achieve a higher level of ownership of more complex cases.

Crossing Bridges is funded through a grant from Reading Borough Council.

Wokingham and Bracknell Outreach

BWA looks forward to being able to 'roll out' projects similar to Crossing Bridges in other Local Authority areas. Similar services are currently provided through outreach workers in Bracknell and Wokingham.

Adult Group Work

Choices

This six week programme helps victims explore the dynamics both of healthy and abusive relationships, the impact of abuse on children, different characteristics of perpetrators and early warning signs. Participants give each other mutual support with many of the groups meeting up after the programme concludes. Child care is provided for mums with pre-school children which enables women to attend who could not otherwise do so.

In Reading we offer a rolling programme of sessions. In the past year 70 women have attended Choices groups. Referrals are made by agencies or women self-refer. BWA has developed Choices to meet the needs of diverse communities:

- Asian Choices: Delivered in Urdu /Punjabi.
- Learning Disabled Choices: adapted and successfully piloted in Wokingham.
- Cranstoun Choices: in partnership with a local agency supporting clients with drug and alcohol issues.

BWA is currently considering training for volunteers to co-facilitate the Choices programme. Volunteers could be drawn from former participants who have themselves benefitted from the programme. BWA has found the involvement of such 'peer support' to be particularly productive.

Support Group

A support group is held once a month, currently supported by a staff member. The aim is for the group to become self-supporting in the near future.

Comfort Group

To meet an increasing number of referrals for clients with Learning Difficulties / Disabilities, BWA has a day time support group based at Crossing Bridges. Fortnightly themed sessions are attended by a staff member.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs)

Currently there is only one IDVA within BWA. Based in Bracknell, the post is funded through the Bracknell Community Safety Partnership. With the introduction of Police Commissioners responsible for commissioning services and allocating funding previously given to Community Safety Partnerships there may be opportunities to negotiate further funding.

“Stephanie* achieved a **very positive outcome** following an eight month stay in refuge with BWA. During her stay she made **huge progress**, moving on far **more confidently and independently** than when she arrived, part of which she attributed to having attended the **Choices programme** whilst in refuge. At times she would feel very low with regards to her housing situation, but with **support and encouragement** she was rehoused through a local housing project in a self-contained flat. **A fantastic first step to independence.**”

from BWA Refuge Worker Report

* Names have been changed to ensure staff and client confidentiality.



Worked
with
more than **500**
children and
young people
since starting
the group work
programme in
2008.

Delivered
our programmes
to over **260**
young people in
2012/2013.

Delivered
Teenage Choices
to nearly **30**
young people in
2012/2013,
working in over
10 secondary
schools.

Delivered
Perpetrator work
in conjunction
with the Youth
Offending Service
with **10** young
domestic abuse
offenders.

Children's Services

Domestic abuse constitutes around one in five violent crimes. Research has shown that perpetrators of domestic abuse frequently commit other crimes. Young people living in homes where there is domestic abuse are 50 times more likely than their peers to turn to drugs and alcohol, more likely to have low self esteem, and achieve poorer academic results.

Helping shape the future for children and young adults is crucial to preventing abuse. While there has been specialist support for children living in refuges, there was previously none for children and young people living in the community. Too many children affected by domestic abuse were left to deal with this trauma on their own.

To respond to this need the specialist group work programme, based on the Canadian programme, was developed in November 2008. In addition BWA delivers a universal programme within schools based on the 'Expect Respect' work developed by Women's Aid Federation of England (WAFE). BWA provides more specialised sessions, Teenage Choices and Group work, if children are identified as living with domestic violence. If a child or young person requires further ongoing support then one-to-one sessions can be offered.

Cases are referred from Children's Services, Educational Welfare Officers, Behavioural Support Teams and others.

"Latest scientific research states that children exposed to domestic violence are just as adversely affected in terms of their brain development, as children who are directly subjected to domestic violence" – "The Enemy Within: 4 million reasons to tackle family conflict and family violence" (4Children, 2011).

"Children who have witnessed DA and been abused show the highest levels of behavioural and emotional disturbance" (Humphreys, 2007).

Resettlement

Moving out of the refuge can be an anxious time. Resettlement offers a stepping stone between the supported environment of the refuge and independent accommodation.

Resettlement is tailored to individual needs. The resettlement plan may include practical tasks such as helping to complete a community care grant application, obtaining furniture for the new home, helping to read utility metres, setting up bills and changing benefit entitlements to the new address. The plan may also include safety tasks such as flagging the new address with the domestic abuse unit of the local police and ensuring that contact details for future support are provided.

Resettlement is usually offered for up to 6 weeks after a woman moves on from refuge, but this is again dependant on individual needs. Further support can be provided through BWA outreach workers if it is needed.

“Sophie* and her two children fled from another area and came to BWA just before Christmas a couple of years ago. Sophie had built up large rent arrears on her previous property due to being subject to financial abuse, and had very low self-esteem and confidence. During her stay in refuge she sorted out a payment plan to deal with her arrears, and took part in BWA’s self-esteem group. Over the time Sophie was with us her confidence improved dramatically, and continues to grow when she looks back at what she has achieved. The eldest of her children initially had issues settling into school and adjusting to living in a new area away from his friends; he participated in the Children’s Group work programme with BWA and slowly improved in school. The family were able to move into a privately rented two bedroom flat. They seem very happy and settled in their new environment”

from BWA Refuge Worker Report

* Names have been changed to ensure staff and client confidentiality.





Specialist Provision

Sahara

BWA provides through Sahara House a specialist refuge for Asian women in Reading, staffed by Urdu/Punjabi speakers. In addition Reading Borough Council fund a specialist Asian outreach worker, based at Crossing Bridges.

BWA has developed expertise in working with victims of forced marriage and honour-based violence. Referrals are received from the Forced Marriage Unit for women who need refuge. BWA works closely with local agencies to provide a coordinated response for victims.

Victims with Learning Disabilities/Difficulties

Because of their greater vulnerability victims with learning disabilities are likely to need longer term support. Within the team at BWA there are a number of staff experienced in working with clients with learning disabilities/difficulties and BWA has adapted services to better fit their needs.

Victims with Mental Health Issues

Almost half of female victims suffer from depression, with 64% affected by post traumatic stress disorder. Victims of domestic abuse represent a higher suicide risk. The majority of victims who contact the BWA helpline identify that they are depressed, with many of these self-diagnosing. Consideration of mental health issues forms part of BWA's comprehensive risk assessment for victims with a range of co-ordinated responses offered.

"People with a long term illness or disability are more likely to experience domestic abuse than those without these conditions". (Beyond Violence, July 2012).

Victims with Drug and Alcohol Issues

Victims of domestic abuse develop coping strategies in response to their experiences but many of these strategies are counter-productive. One study found that nearly one in five victims used alcohol and nearly one in ten drugs. Drug and alcohol issues often need to be addressed before BWA can work effectively on the abusive relationship. The Cranstoun Choices Group allows victims with substance misuse issues to attend group work and receive support around domestic abuse whilst continuing to benefit from the input from Cranstoun.

Young victims

Women and men aged between 16-24 are at the highest risk of domestic abuse. Universal work within local schools and colleges provides accessible information about healthy relationships. 'Teen Choices' support young people affected by domestic abuse and BWA staff attend a drop-in for young mums, providing outreach support.

Victims with English as a second language

The team is able to operate in several languages, including German, Slovakian, Polish, French, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi.

Hidden needs

Victims present with ever emerging new and previously hidden needs; BWA monitors developing trends and recent research to remain responsive.



“Refuge and more...”



“I have found everything helpful from positive thinking to my timeouts. I feel Family Choices has given me the tools to be a calm and productive member of society.”

“Things have improved and we both respect each other’s views and concerns more.”

“The group made me more aware of my children’s feelings and emotions.”

“I valued the support and “follow-on” support that was offered by the trainers.”

“Lots of things, meeting women in the same position, feel less isolated as a result of the group, feel more confident, have learned boundaries for my partner. The group helped to ease the load, I’ve made mistakes in the past but I’m on the right road now! The facilitators were wonderful.”

BWA Vision

All women, children and men should be able to live free from the fear and experience of domestic abuse and violence in their homes and relationships.

BWA Mission

We provide confidential support, information, outreach services and refuge accommodation for women and their children who are affected by domestic abuse and violence.

We provide confidential support, information and outreach services to men who have experienced domestic abuse and violence.

BWA Values

All BWA activities are underpinned by a set of values adopted by the organisation's volunteers, staff, management and trustees:

Welcoming and empowering – we listen, encourage and equip people to make informed choices

Places of safety – we provide environments where anyone using our services can talk freely, live safely and think about the future

We do not judge – we listen and provide the environment where people using the service can recognise that some aspects of their life are not the way they want them to be

Trust – you can trust BWA: confidentiality is paramount and people using our service can count on professional, highly skilled support

Equality – we believe in providing support to anyone who needs it, regardless of their sex, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation or disability

Raising awareness – BWA encourages people to understand domestic abuse and violence, to seek support and report concerns.



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Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee with, at the time of writing, 43 employed staff. There are currently eight board members. Responsibility for day-to-day management is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive and a three person management team.

Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) is a registered charity no: 1050484. Company registration no: 03081670.