

New figures show local domestic abuse charities encounter more than 17,000 new cases each year

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Scottish Women's Aid has today released new figures on domestic abuse that show that on one day in Scotland, 66 women and 20 children reached out to their local Women's Aid for the very first time (1). This figure equates to over 17,000 new cases per year. The charity's researchers warn that this is likely to be a "conservative" estimate, with the true figure potentially significantly higher.

As part of their annual Census Day research into the demand for and provision of Women's Aid services across Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid also found that on one day 366 women and 351 children and young people were living in a Women's Aid refuge. Significantly, refuge was not available for 46% of those who sought it, due to a lack of safe and suitable accommodation, with local groups instead supporting women to access alternative arrangements including outreach work and non-specialist temporary accommodation.

The charity, which campaigns for effective responses to domestic abuse and women's rights in Scotland, said the findings starkly demonstrate the continued, crucial need for the advice, support, and protection that specialist domestic abuse services offer to women, children and young people.

Cheryl Sutherland, Researcher at Scottish Women's Aid said:

"These figures highlight the ongoing need for the specialist support Women's Aid can provide to each individual woman, child and young person who experiences domestic abuse. In just one day, we met the individual needs of 1,301 women and children by offering a range of information, emotional and practical support.

"This snap-shot survey shows that Women's Aid groups throughout Scotland continue to provide non-judgemental support and assistance in a variety of different ways - in person in refuge, by telephone and out in the community.

"Unfortunately Women's Aid groups did not have safe or suitable space for nearly half of women and their children who requested refuge. The need for safe accommodation cannot be understated - although most women and their children were able to find temporary housing through friends, family and their local authority, 3 women and 5 children remained at home with the abusive partner."

Marsha Scott, CEO of Scottish Women's Aid, added:

"As Scotland heads into a further period of economic instability with cuts to social security and local services, the presence of a stable, robust, and properly funded Women's Aid service is what stands between so many women and children experiencing domestic abuse and homelessness, destitution and powerlessness.

"The work of local Women's Aid groups and the specialist services they provide offer early intervention, accurate advice and advocacy, and the conviction that that women and children are not alone. The expertise and dedication of Women's Aid workers changes lives, and Scotland would be significantly poorer without them. "We'll continue to work towards a

Scotland where women, children and young people live free from fear and intimidation and free from domestic abuse.”