

RECOUNTING WOMEN EXHIBITION
LAUNCHES AT STILLS GALLERY EDINBURGH

An exhibition highlighting the impact of domestic abuse on women's experiences of homelessness, injustice, isolation and poverty, Recounting Women, will be unveiled at Stills Gallery on 27th May – 2nd June.

Every year thousands of women and children are forced to leave their homes and go into temporary homeless accommodation, bed and breakfasts and refuges – although only 1 in 6 women made homeless will be able to get a space in a refuge.

Using a series of photographs and text developed by women who have experienced domestic abuse, the exhibition highlights the affect domestic abuse has had on them and their children, the barriers they face in rebuilding their lives and what needs to change.

Recounting Women is a collaboration between Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) and local Women's Aid groups working across Scotland to provide essential refuge and support services to women, children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.

The exhibition has been created following three years of conversations with women in workshops led by SWA, with women supported by Perthshire Women's Aid, Glasgow East Women's Aid and recently Edinburgh Women's Aid and Shakti Women's Aid on the challenges they face every day.

Marsha Scott, Chief Executive of Scottish Women's Aid, said:

"The Recounting Women exhibition harnesses the power of images to allow women who have experienced domestic abuse to tell their own story – in their own way.

Empowering women whose voices and experiences are often marginalised to communicate directly with the people who have the power to change their lives. Thanks to all the incredible women who have taken part in the project and helped to bring this unique exhibition together"

The website www.recountingwomen.co.uk will be live from 27th May.

Ends –

Issues on behalf of Scottish Women's Aid by Michelle Brown PR. For more information, pics and interviews, please contact:

Notes to editors -

Key themes from the exhibition -

Homelessness

- Domestic abuse is a major cause of women's homelessness in Scotland. A "dispute within the household: violent or abusive" was given as the main reason for homelessness by 4,395 applicants; 78% of applications in this category were made by women, and more than half had children on their application. In fact, more women make a homeless application under this category, than for any other reason. (Scottish Government Homeless Statistics 2017/18 disaggregated by gender accessed 5/11/18)
- Yet, women's homelessness as a result of domestic abuse remains largely invisible in Scottish Government strategy to end homelessness in Scotland

Poverty and destitution

- For some women their immigration status meant they were not eligible for temporary homeless accommodation. They had no money and no place to live, reliant on friends and dependent on Women's Aid. Women with No Recourse to Public Funds and EU nationals whose rights to claim benefits are limited often experience destitution or are forced to return to their abusive partner.
- Poverty, women often left 'with nothing' and had to navigate an uncaring, and complicated benefits system with consistent delays to payments and increasing debt. Cuts to social security and tax credits particularly for lone parents are especially dramatic, they lose around £5,250 on average, equivalent to almost 19% of their net income. This rises to up to 25% for the poorest lone parents. The child poverty rate for children in lone-parent households is forecast to increase from slightly over 37% to slightly over 62% as a result of the austerity reforms, an increase of almost 25 percentage points.

Court ordered child contact /residency

- Women's experience of the court system – particularly in relation to child contact arrangements was of a lack of understanding of domestic abuse in the legal system. Women experienced not being taken seriously, heard or believed. Their children's views were not taken into account and they were not allowed to be heard in the justice process.

Impact on women's health

Women described the different ways all of this had on their physical, mental and emotional health. Of feeling completely lost, having to climb endless stairs and never seeing the top, of having no space to heal from the impact of domestic abuse.