

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 12 JULY 2022

New report finds that over a third of young women have experienced abuse in intimate relationships

Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) and YWCA Scotland have today (12th July 2022) launched a new campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse experienced by young women in their intimate relationships.

This comes as SWA and the Young Women's Movement Scotland (YWCA) have released a new report, [The Rise Report](#), which found that 36% of young women had been in an intimate relationship with someone who harmed them physically or emotionally, and nearly three quarters knew someone who had experienced abuse. The report makes a number of recommendations for how specialist support services can better meet the needs of young women experiencing abuse.

The research for this report was carried out by YWCA with Young Women Rise – a group of ten young women from across Scotland, some of whom have lived experience of domestic abuse in their own relationships.

"I would like someone to listen to me and ask how I want to be supported, rather than someone deciding for me what support I need." – Participant in Young Women Rise Research

[The Rise Report](#) finds that, while young women understand what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like, not a single participant said they felt well supported to learn about relationships or domestic abuse at school. Young women reported wishing they had been taught about emotional abuse and other toxic behaviours at school, which could have helped them recognise abuse earlier in their own relationships.

"We learned we could say no, but we were never taught what to do if they ignored that...there was a lot missing." – Participant in Young Women Rise research

Young women taking part in the research felt it was particularly important they see themselves, and their life experiences, reflected in support services. They stressed that they would like to see evidence that workers had done anti-racism training and understood LGBTQ+ experiences.

"I'd want to see diversity in their campaigns, people with different races and genders and body sizes but even with that, I would still be suspicious, I'd want to see if they were working with other organisations that have a track record of working with marginalised groups. Then I would feel more confident." - Participant in Young Women Rise Research

Many young women expressed that they would feel more comfortable seeking support from Women's Aid specifically if there was a support service especially for younger women and that it would be easier to relate to a service that had been developed to support their age group.

"There needs to be a more modern, radical, educated and accessible service for young women." – Participant in Young Women Rise Research

Gabrielle Blackburn, Service Development Coordinator at Scottish Women's Aid said:

"The Women's Aid network are united in wanting to tackle the issue of abuse in young women's intimate relationships. We know how hard it can be for them to get the support they need, and we want to make it easier. This report tells us that we are providing the right type of support – non-judgmental, survivor led and inclusive. It also shows us where we can be better. The Women's Aid network will use this research to improve how we promote our services to young women and girls, so that they know Women's Aid are here for them and so they understand how to reach out to us when they feel ready.

"We are thankful to the young feminists in Young Women Rise who led on this work – for their commitment, their enthusiasm and their ideas. Their research will help us make sure we are better able to welcome all young women who require support around domestic abuse."

Rhianna Mallia, Research and Impact Manager at YWCA, said:

“It was a privilege to work with Young Women Rise on this important research, we were able to gather rich and nuanced data because of their input into the design of this project.

“This report and campaign are a call to action; support services need more funding and resources to better cater to the needs of young women and non-binary people dealing with unhealthy relationships and domestic abuse. Not one participant felt supported to learn about relationships at school; this needs to change. Young women need to be able to recognise the signs of abuse, feel validated that they are worthy of support, and then know how to access it.

“YWCA Scotland will continue to engage with young women and non-binary people to amplify their voices and experiences.”

Monique Raranga, Member of Young Women Rise, said:

“Young Women Rise has given me more than a bit of research experience. It empowered me as a young woman. It reminded me that my voice and experiences matter now, and that young people can make a difference on a national scale. Relationships and abuse can feel like topics reserved for the “grown-ups”, which couldn’t be farther from the truth. Young Women Rise created a crucial space that uplifts young voices, prioritises our wellbeing, and works to ensure young women everywhere are heard and supported.”

Information for editors

[The Rise Report is available here.](#)

[Scottish Women’s Aid](#) commissioned this work on behalf of the Women’s Aid network in Scotland so that Women’s Aid are better able to welcome all young women who require support.

[YWCA](#) carried out this research alongside the Young Women Rise advisory group.

For interviews with members of Young Women Rise, Gabrielle Blackburn from SWA or Rhianna Mallia from YWCA please contact media@womensaid.scot with details of your request.

SWA knows that children and young people face a number of barriers in accessing support when they have been harmed – particularly in social work and education settings where a child protection focus is on risk in their home environment. We urge our statutory organisations to consider the research in this report and we’d like to work on whole system responses to young people experiencing harm in their own relationships.

Further information about how the research was carried out is available in the report.

For free, survivor-sensitive images to use in any story about domestic abuse, [see here](#). For images created by and for young women, see attached.

Any story about domestic abuse should point to appropriate sources of help and support, including [local Women’s Aid services](#) and Scotland’s Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline. The Helpline is available 24/7 for anyone, of any gender or sexuality, who wants support around domestic abuse. You can call on 0800 027 1234 or email and web chat from www.sdafmh.org.uk

