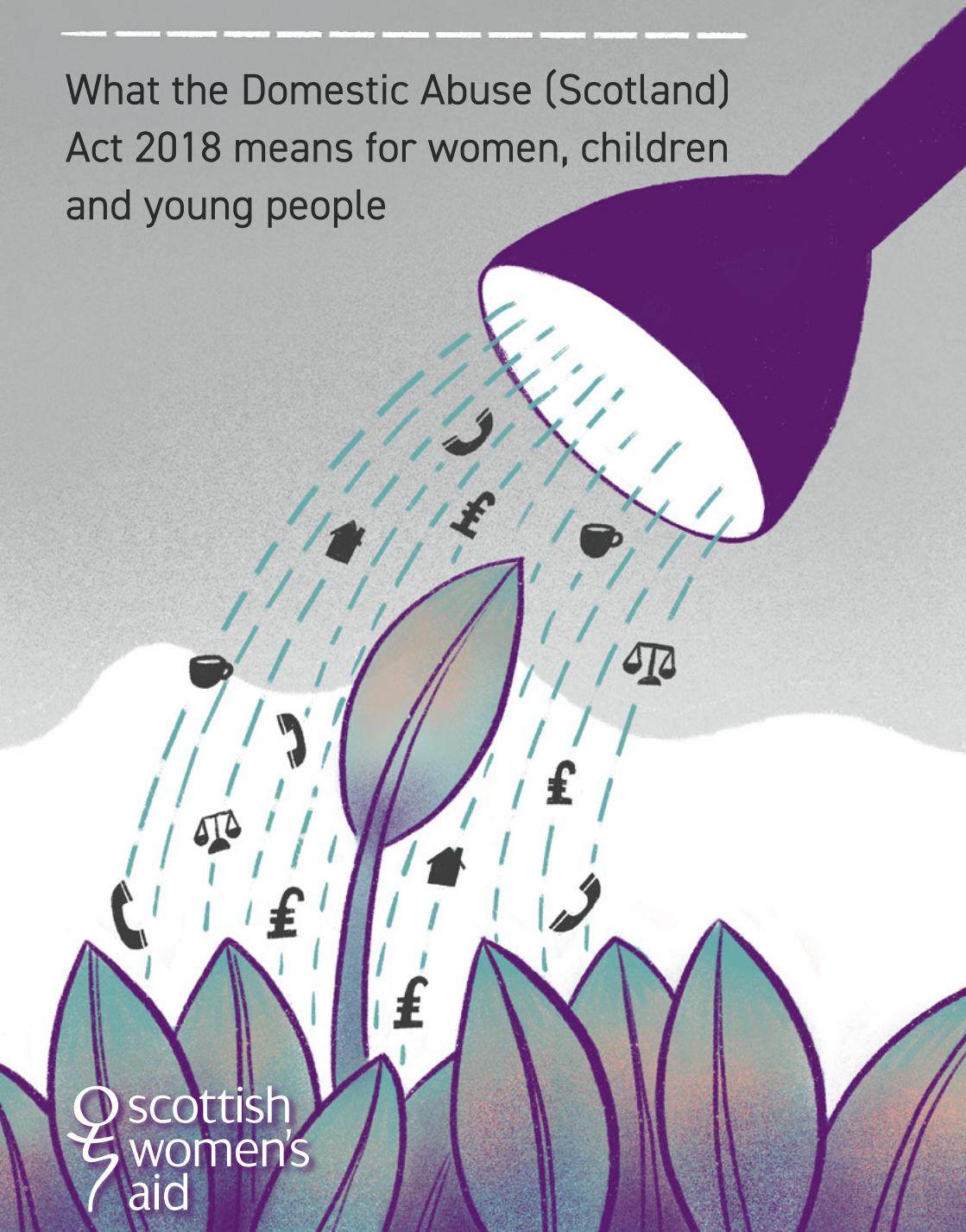


RESOURCING RECOVERY:

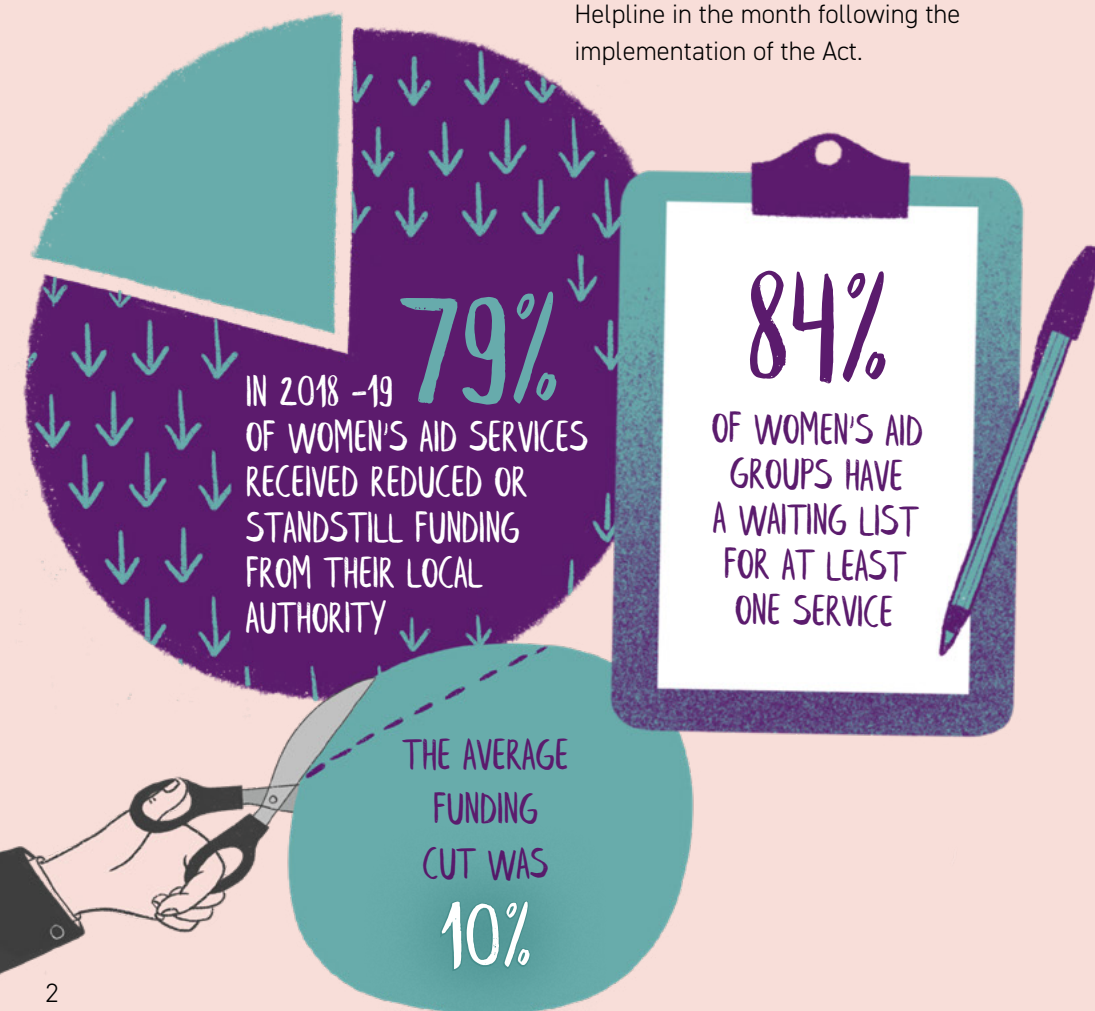
What the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 means for women, children and young people



INTRODUCTION

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 was implemented in April 2019. For the first time in Scotland, legislation recognises not only physical abuse, but also other forms of psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour that women, children and young people (WCYP) experience. It is common but often concealed.

We believe that the introduction of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 will bring an increased awareness and understanding about the complexities of domestic abuse and coercive control, resulting in a significant increase in demand for specialist services. This has already been evidenced by a 23% rise in the number of calls made to Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline in the month following the implementation of the Act.



WHAT ARE SPECIALIST SERVICES?

European law defines specialist services as being rights-based, safety focused, targeting specific needs, and paying close attention to the relationship between victims, offenders, children and their wider social environment. In Scotland, we are clear about the social environment of women's inequality being a cause and consequence of domestic abuse. This knowledge, and over 40 years' experience responding to this issue and listening to WCYP, has shaped Women's Aid's specialist services, which include:

- Specialist support, information and advice
- Safe and tailored refuge accommodation
- Active referrals for critical services in housing, social security and legal systems
- Group and one-to-one support for WCYP
- Specialist advocacy in court and other settings
- Expert training on coercive control and the new Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

In Scotland, we are clear about the social environment of women's inequality being a cause and consequence of domestic abuse.

Women's Aid are at the forefront of challenging domestic abuse in Scotland. We work to make lasting change in communities and individuals' lives.

Current demand for services

It is hard to estimate the scale of domestic abuse in Scotland. Best estimates suggest that 1 in 4 women* experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, however this is likely to be an underestimate. There is very little data available on the numbers of children and young people who experience domestic abuse, but we know the numbers are very high. On just one day in 2019, 1,235 women, children and young people contacted a Women's Aid service, 101 of them for the first time.

According to the latest Scottish Government statistics, in 2018-19 there were 60,641 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland. Where gender information was recorded, 82% of recorded incidents had a female victim and a male perpetrator.

It is important to note that most domestic abuse is not reported to the police.

*Council of Europe (2002). Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of women against violence. Adopted on 30 April 2002; and Explanatory Memorandum. (Strasbourg, France Council of Europe).

MEETING NEEDS

It is WCYP experiencing domestic abuse who bear the brunt of cuts to funding. Services who can support their recovery must be able to respond.

Our research shows that despite a year-on-year increase in demand for Women's Aid services, funding for our specialist services is insufficient, due to funding cuts, freezes, and the nature of short-term, precarious funding.

Because of this squeeze on Women's Aid services, many WCYP are already left without specialist understanding, advocacy and support in an incredibly vulnerable time. As more women and children come forward as a result of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, we must ensure that we are here to provide the support they need.

Currently, in Scotland:

On average, over **1000 WCYP** are being supported by Women's Aid **on any given day**

In 2018-19, **79%** of Women's Aid services received **reduced or standstill funding** from their local authority compared to the previous year. **The average funding cut was 10%.**

At the same time, all Women's Aid services experienced the same or increased demand for their services, **83%** reported an **increase in demand**.

There has been **a stark increase in the waiting time** for women and children to access a refuge. Over half of Women's Aid services reported having to operate a refuge waiting list in 2018-19. This means that women and children forced to leave their home because of domestic abuse are left **without a safe place to go**.



On just one day in 2019, Women's Aid services were **unable to accommodate 58% of women and 38% of children and young people** who requested refuge, due to a lack of available space.

The majority of Women's Aid services have experienced an **increase in demand** for their services every year since 2011.

Women and children now stay even longer in refuge before being able to move to a suitable new home.

The average length of stay in refuge is 8 and a half months. In some areas, notably Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Highlands, women and children will wait in refuge for between a year and a year and a half for a new home, **due to a lack of affordable housing available**.

The rollout of **Universal Credit** and changes to benefits have had a hugely **disproportionate impact on women** who have experienced domestic abuse. **42% of Women's Aid services** reported in 2018-19 that **changes to social security had directly impacted their services**.

84% of local Women's Aid groups now operate a waiting list for at least one of their services, with some services **carrying waiting lists of up to 6 months**, meaning they are unable to immediately respond to women and children in crisis.

The wellbeing, safety, and survival of WCYP lies behind these statistics. Every increased waiting list is a woman, child or young person not getting the vital support they need at the time they need it.

Struggling to provide these essential services to those who need them the most means we are facing a crisis in equality and a crisis in safety at a time when Scotland has committed to a national strategy to end violence against women and girls.

Scotland's delivery plan for our Equally Safe Strategy includes an action to improve funding for frontline services. To do this, Scotland needs a two-prong approach. First, short-term, significant increases in local funding and protection from local budget cutting exercises that are dressed up as so-called good-practice competitive tendering. Second, we need a longterm plan to ensure adequate funding that is stable and sustainable. Developing a scheme that enshrines in law funding for a guaranteed level of service can deliver system change and ensure that Scotland complies with its international obligations, as well as meeting its national policy aims as laid out in Equally Safe.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF RESOURCING RECOVERY FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE

Scotland has a duty to invest in specialist domestic abuse services not only from an ethical responsibility to its citizens, but also from an economic perspective.

The Scottish Government estimate that the cost of domestic abuse to the public purse is £2.3 billion and that the cost of all forms of violence against women amounts to £4 billion.

The social value generated by women's services is five to eleven times greater than the amount of money invested in them. Society benefits from women and children being able to reach their full potential, and lead empowered lives.



WILL THE DOMESTIC ABUSE (SCOTLAND) ACT IMPROVE THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND?

Scotland is leading the way in implementing legislation that responds to the lived reality of women and children's experience of domestic abuse. As well as the opportunity for justice that this new legislation brings, women and children have always needed, and will continue to need, safe accommodation, emotional support, and advocacy from services who have the expertise, understanding and skills to respond.

We must ensure that WCYP who require Women's Aid services are able to access them. This is why, at this crucial time, we are calling for decision makers and the public to stand up for women, children and young people at risk, and to support us in our call to secure the long term sustainable funding of specialist domestic abuse services in Scotland.



ON JUST ONE DAY IN 2019, WOMEN'S AID SERVICES WERE UNABLE TO ACCOMMODATE **58%** OF WOMEN AND **38%** OF CHILDREN + YOUNG PEOPLE WHO REQUESTED REFUGE DUE TO LACK OF AVAILABLE SPACE



ABOUT WOMEN'S AID IN SCOTLAND

Scottish Women's Aid is the lead organisation working to end domestic abuse in Scotland. Over the last 40 years, our work has led to significant improvements in legislation, responses and public awareness about domestic abuse.

Women's Aid in Scotland is a network of 36 local Women's Aid groups, working across Scotland from Shetland to Stranraer. Women's Aid provide specialist domestic abuse support and advocacy services for women, children and young people.

Scottish Women's Aid
2nd Floor, 132 Rose Street,
Edinburgh, Scotland, EH2 3JD
Tel: 0131 226 6606

   @scotwomensaid

www.womensaid.scot

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