



**The Helpline managed approximately 400 calls every week last year.**

# 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline

The Helpline, which is open to anyone affected by domestic violence, handled 19,472 calls last year.

Building on ten years of extensive experience, the Helpline team of staff and volunteers provides support, information and a listening ear.

The helpline, the first to provide a 24 hour service in the British Isles, has constantly developed its expertise to ensure that the service is responsive and supportive. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the Helpline has managed over 99,373 calls since it was established in 1995.

During its development it has added an interpretation service which provides support for women who do not speak English as a first language, and a minicom which provides text phone support for women who have hearing difficulties.

The most recent addition has been the introduction of a freephone service. The freephone is one of the *Tackling Violence at Home* strategy initiatives and the launch of the freephone was supported by a government advertising campaign.

Women's Aid have keenly pursued a freephone service as it is our experience of managing a helpline is that a Belfast phone number can be a barrier to women elsewhere in Northern Ireland. We also know that the cost of making that vital call can be a problem. So, the Freephone helps to overcome these barriers to seeking help and safety. It also encourages women and their children to link to other Women's Aid services.

Year on year since 1995, the number of calls to the Women's Aid Helpline has increased, reaching almost 20,000 calls last year – an average of over 50 per day. During the advertising campaign, two thirds of calls were made by women experiencing domestic abuse; of those women, over 40% are first time callers. That means every hour of every day another woman calls the Helpline for the first time seeking to escape domestic violence.

Most of the remaining calls come from concerned friends and family or police officers, healthcare and social workers.

The Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Every call is handled sensitively, positively and always with the caller's needs in mind.

**women's aid**

Federation Northern Ireland

24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline

**0800 917 1414**

***It's more than a helpline: for many, it's a lifeline.***

*information update - November 05*