

# News Aid

February 2001

Issue 5

Newsletter of the  
Northern Ireland  
Women's Aid  
Federation



## Floating Support

By Angela Courtney, Regional  
Management Co-ordinator (NIWAF)

Despite the rather ethereal image conjured up by this term, *Floating Support (FS)* may prove to be a very practical strand of the implementation of *Supporting People*. You may recall that *Supporting People* is the driving force behind the major changes undertaken by Women's Aid and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) during the introduction of transitional housing benefit (see October edition of Newsaid).

*Floating Support* is an NIHE administered grant aiding scheme to which Women's Aid groups have recently submitted proposals. NIHE states that the promotion of floating support schemes will assist people to 'stay put' in ordinary housing. It will avert tenancy breakdown and prevent homelessness and obviate the need for unnecessary moves to institutional accommodation.

This is, of course, also one of the goals of Women's Aid outreach, after-care and drop-in centres and telephone helplines. As NIWAF's 'expression of interest' filed with NIHE in October pointed out, these services have been developed in eleven locations through short term

funding e.g. Peace & Reconciliation funding and the National Lottery Charities Board.

Secure revenue funding in this area is as rare as hen's teeth, so we are all hoping that *Floating Support* 'comes home to roost' in Women's Aid, initially to the pilot schemes identified in each area and then to become the mechanism for maintaining this essential work.

Refuges are short term emergency solutions to problems faced by women and children at serious risk, either physically or mentally, as a result of domestic violence. Moving on through the process of rebuilding confidence and a new sense of self and purpose takes longer. Some women and children do not need emergency accommodation and the more effective use of protective legislation may also reduce the numbers who do. However, all who seek help need accessible support to tap into. By using the wide range of facilities and programmes, women are demonstrating that they do require a flexible system; one which provides practical as well as emotional support. There is a security in knowing that the Women's Aid Centre and Helpline is there, with its caring, responsive and knowledgeable staff, when it is needed.

*Floating Support* may indeed prove to be a way of introducing security to the staff and financial management so that they will be able to continue to provide the services and foster self help in the community.

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The views expressed in this newsletter should not necessarily be taken as Women's Aid policy.

If you would like to contribute to Newsaid, please let us know your views, ideas, comments or queries by email, fax or post to Charlene at NIWAF.

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## Domestic violence can hurt animals too....

Many women and children that suffer domestic violence have pets in the home. These are often used by abusers as a tool to control, threaten, intimidate and frighten: by harming or threatening to harm their pets; or even killing them, which can traumatise children and mothers alike.

Here one woman tell her story:

*'My ex-partner threatened to kill all our animals if we left, I know for certain he would have as in one case he did, but it could never be proved, plus any allegations against him would have put all of us (including the animals) at an even greater risk. He beat my son's dog in a rage, she was only trying to protect us. I tried to stop him so he beat me instead.'*

Research from America gives some horrifying evidence of this:

'Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the women with pets reported that their male partner had threatened to hurt or kill and/or had actually hurt or killed one or more of their pets. Examples of the former included threats to put a kitten in a blender, bury a cat up to its head and "mow" it, starve a dog, and shoot and kill a cat. Actual harm or killing of animals was reported by 57% of the women with pets and included acts of omission (e.g. neglecting to feed or allow veterinary care) but most often acts of violence. Examples reported included slapping, shaking, throwing, or shooting dogs and cats, drowning a cat in a bathtub, and pouring lighter fuel on a kitten and igniting it.' (from *'Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence'* by Randall Lockwood and Frank R. Ascione).

In a recent survey by *Paws for Kids*, out of 50 women pet owners living in refuges in England because of domestic violence:

66% said their abuser had threatened to harm their pets. 38% said that he had actually harmed them. A massive 94% said if there had been a pet fostering service it would have made it easier for them to leave the violence, and so spare themselves and their children more abuse. Well over half had had to lose their pets when coming into the refuge as there was no other option

For many women and children who leave violent relationships, the options open to them regarding their pets are very limited.

Very few local authorities provide any facilities for kennelling pets and most refuges are unable to allow pets to stay. Unless family and friends can help out most pets will either be left behind (to roam or possibly suffer at the hands of the abuser) or be put down. This inevitably causes further distress and trauma for the family—particularly children. There will also be an unknown number of women and children who stay in violent situations because they cannot bear to lose their pets in the above manner.

Paws for Kids was established in April 1997 to provide specialist support services in the North West of England to women and children pet owners who have fled from violence at home. They are committed to the aims and principles of the Women's Aid Federation of England.

Paws for Kids reduces the distress and pressure on these families and the suffering of the animals by providing a high quality pet fostering service for the animals until their owners are rehoused. This is done through a network of volunteers and pet foster carers who are recruited and trained from around the region. In their first 17 months of running this service, they helped 105 women and their 176 children access safe refuge accommodation by fostering their pets—a total of 188 animals.

For more information contact Paws for Kids

## From Good Intentions to Good Practice

*Mapping services working with families where there is domestic violence*

In recent years, there has been rapid proliferation of services for women and children in situations of domestic violence; however, there are many gaps and inconsistencies in service provision. This research aimed to establish the range and extent of services across the UK for families where there is domestic violence; to identify innovative work and thus develop a framework for good practice.

*From good intentions to good practice* looks at provision and practice across a range of services with regard to:

- inter-agency working
- definitions and guidelines
- staff training
- safety issues
- monitoring and screening
- evaluation
- funding

The report provides an extensive framework for good practice in working with families where there is domestic violence and highlights recommendations for policy development.

*From good intentions to good practice* is essential reading for all agencies working with families, particularly, Women's Aid, women's refuges, organisations concerned with children's welfare, social services and perpetrator programmes, as well as policy makers, researchers and anyone interested in issues of domestic violence and family policy.

Here are some of the main points noted in

the research about Northern Ireland:

- ◆ The N.I Health & Social Services Trusts were found to operate higher numbers of domestic violence support services than the rest of the UK and had services available in all geographical areas that responded. However, this was not reflected in its Children's Services Plans (only 50% of CSPs mention domestic violence, compared to 72% in England). This possibly reflects a lack of 'joined up' thinking between different parts of multi-agency forum and the Health & Social Services planning sections.
- ◆ 70% of the local authorities in Northern Ireland have a member of the ACPC on a domestic violence forum compared to only 50% in England and Wales.
- ◆ 70% of trusts in Northern Ireland have introduced routine screening for domestic violence (compared to only 48% in England and Wales). However, 90% of these trusts still have no system for recording this information.
- ◆ The consistency and extent of provision across Northern Ireland is higher than in England and Wales and is indicative of the potential to progress work in this area.
- ◆ Women's Aid demonstrate good practice overall, although hampered by poor, or inadequate resources.

*From good intentions to good practice*

Authors: Catherine Humphreys, Marianne Hester, Gill Hague, Audrey Mullender, Hilary Abrahams and Pam Lowe (August 2000)

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Reference copy available in NIWAF library.

## The 2000 Home Office British Crime Survey

*Here are some notable statistics on Domestic Violence (England and Wales) taken from the BCS survey.*

- ◆ Between 1995 and 1997 violent crime fell by 20%, from 4,071,000 incidents to 3,246,000. These incidents can be divided into domestic violence, acquaintance violence, stranger violence and mugging.
- ◆ There were 761,000 domestic offences in 1999 – assaults involving partners, ex-partners, household members and other relatives. Domestic violence amounts to 23% of all recorded violent crime (although it is noted that this is probably an underestimate).
- ◆ The chance of being a victim of domestic violence was 0.8%.
- ◆ Domestic violence is the only category of violence where the risks for women (1%) are higher than for men (0.5%).
- ◆ In 74% of domestic violence incidents the victim was a woman.
- ◆ In 52% of incidents there was some type of injury. Injuries were most common in domestic violence (70%). The most common form of domestic violence injury was minor bruising or a black eye (44%) followed by severe bruising (29%).

A copy of the full report is available free from the Home Office Tel : 020 72722084 or email : publications.rds@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

There is also a copy available for reference purposes in the NIWAF library.

MACSAS

C/O BM—CSSA,  
London WC1 NXX

January 2001

To Whom it may Concern

Re: Clergy Abuse of Adult Women (and some Men)

We are increasingly aware of women writing to us after going to priests & ministers for help and subsequently being 'encouraged' into sexual activity. We are advising women that this is Clergy Abuse and have written an information leaflet to help them understand the dynamics of this type of sexual molestation. Some women have also written about sexual molestation by nuns as adults and some men have written about sexual molestation as adults also by priests/ministers, usually tutors during seminary/ministry training.

We are trying now to find the women in this position so that a network of support and guidance can be offered. Most believe these to be 'affairs' but we try to explain our understanding of professional violation of boundaries and violation of all professional ethical codes.

We would like you to work with us in this task and to refer any woman (or man) you know that has suffered this abuse to us, so that we can help as best we can. The women are lonely and isolated and have a great deal of confusion. We want to help. If you can advertise this in any magazine or newsletter we would be very grateful to you.

Any further help or advice you need please contact.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Kennedy Co-ordinator/  
Founder of MACSAS

## Caroline's Day



24th January is the birthday of Caroline Crossan (nee McGrellis). Caroline was murdered by her husband in October 1997.

"Caroline's Day" is an initiative of Caroline's family and Foyle Women's Aid to remember Caroline and all those affected by domestic violence in any way and to publicly reject domestic violence in all its forms.

On the 24th January 2001, the first celebration of Caroline's day took place in Guildhall Square in Derry. People from all walks of life, ages and gender attended a contemplative service. Foyle Women's Aid hope that Caroline's Day will be a beacon for those women and children who have experienced or continue to experience domestic violence.

For more information contact Foyle Women's Aid Tel: 028 7128 0060

## The HELPLINE needs YOU!



The Women's Aid 24 hour domestic violence Helpline has been running since 1995. We offer support, information and crisis intervention to any woman who requires it and will often provide the first opportunity for a woman to talk about what has and is happening to her. The Helpline also provides information on domestic violence to families, as well as statutory and voluntary agencies.

Our calls are increasing every month and to maintain and provide a professional service to our callers we need dedicated and committed volunteers. We were extremely busy over the Christmas period and the coverage given by "Just Like a Woman" on UTV had a huge impact. We are currently recruiting volunteers. We require volunteers to work in shifts during the night as well as the daytime. It is often very difficult to cover all these shifts and we are always interested in recruiting volunteers from both within Women's Aid and outside the organisation.

There will be an Information Evening for women interested in volunteering with the Helpline on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2001 from 7pm-9pm at NIWAF office and we are encouraging both current volunteers and anyone interested in working on the Helpline to attend. Training sessions will then begin in late February, dates to be confirmed. Volunteers will be based in one of nine centres throughout Northern Ireland, depending on their location.

We are attempting to broaden our volunteer base and wish to include women from identified minority communities, different cultures, of different sexual orientations and from a wide age range. Without the commitment of staff and volunteers thousands of women in crisis situations may not have had the much needed support and help since the beginning of the Helpline in 1995.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Regional Helpline Co-ordinator, tel: 028 9033 1818 or 028 9024 9041

## Women's Rights are Human Rights!

The Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland will be a piece of law to accompany the new Human Rights Act. A Bill of Rights was promised in the Good Friday Agreement. The NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), also established under the Agreement, has the task of consulting and advising on a Bill of Rights. As part of a widespread consultation process on the Bill of Rights, the NIHRC set up nine working groups reports which recently reported to the Commission. The reports cover Children & Young people, Criminal Justice, Culture & Identity, Education, Equality, Language, Social & Economic, Victims, Women and the Implementation of a Bill; that is, how to make it a reality. The reports will be used as advice on what might be or not be included in a Bill of Rights along with group & individual submissions. It was noted that women's rights would be mainstreamed into most of the working groups' reports.

As part of a wider consultation process, a one day women's consultative forum on 'Women's Rights as Human Rights' was convened by the NIHRC in NICVA with input from a variety of women representatives. At the forum, Commissioner Inez Mc Cormack noted how a Bill of Rights would help to popularise a Human Rights culture here. The forum strongly highlighted the importance that women's rights are acknowledged in the forthcoming Bill of Rights.

There are a number of ways Women's Aid groups can be involved in the in the Bill of Rights consultation.

◇ Groups can hold their own consultations. This will assist with submissions.

- ◇ Groups can attend consultations held by other groups.
- ◇ Written & Oral submissions can be made directly to the Human rights Commission.
- ◇ Individual submissions can be made on '*What I would like to see for women in a Bill of Rights*'
- ◇ Groups can organise training/information seminars about the Human Rights Act and the Bill of Rights by contacting NIWAF's Equality Project Worker or NIHRC

### THE BILL OF RIGHTS TIMETABLE

- ◇ Initial Submissions should be made by 28 February 2001
- ◇ The Commission will issue draft advice on the Bill by April or May
- ◇ Further Submissions can be made up to 30 November 2001
- ◇ By early 2002 final advice on the Bill given to the Secretary of State

For further information contact:

Miriam Titterton or Nadia Downing,

Tel: 028 9024 3987 Fax: 028 90247844

Email: [nihrc@belfast.org.uk](mailto:nihrc@belfast.org.uk),

Website: [www.nihrc.org](http://www.nihrc.org)

### GOOD NEWS FOR THE NORTH WEST

The North West Area has successfully received funding from NIVT to develop our understanding of human rights in broader terms, and to provide the opportunity to create greater awareness by debate and discussion amongst Women's Aid groups in the North West. This will also compliment the work of NIWAF's Equality Project, which is currently exploring issues of social justice and equality at a regional level.

- ◆ NIWAF published its Annual Report 1999/2000 in November. Copies are available from Charlene@NIWAF Tel: 028 90249041
- ◆ The NIWAF poster series 'Don't hit my mummy', 'Sealed with a fist' etc have been reprinted. Copies are available from Charlene @NIWAF Tel: 028 90249041



## The Website

The NIWAF website [www.niwaf.org](http://www.niwaf.org) is getting around 6000 hits a month.

Once again, I would like to remind groups that they have an opportunity for a free presence on the web. The only group to have taken us up on the offer so far have been Ballymena Women's Aid  
[www.niwaf.org/ballymena.htm](http://www.niwaf.org/ballymena.htm)

If you would like your group to be represented on the NIWAF website then take a look at what Ballymena have provided and send information, graphics, photos etc to Charlene at NIWAF.

In the near future, I would like to start up a section for young people on our website . This will be user friendly and informative for young people seeking help. I would welcome any ideas or suggestions for content and design. If anyone has any suggestions or would like to get involved in the website contact me at NIWAF (Charlene Tel : 90249041 or email: [niwaf@dnet.co.uk](mailto:niwaf@dnet.co.uk))



## Children's Video and Art Exhibition

The training video on children and domestic violence will be launched on March 7th at 11am in the Nerve Centre, Derry. To accompany the launch, we hope to hold a children's art exhibition. Children's art should be in the form of paintings, drawings, poetry, crafts and the subject matter can be anything at all. All work will be displayed at the launch venue. As the video is about children and giving them an opportunity to speak out, this is a great chance to enable more children in refuges and aftercare settings to get involved. We are asking Regional Childworkers to collect artwork and bring it to their next regional meeting on the 23rd February or send it to NIWAF before this date.

## In Progress....

NIWAF will be publishing a series of domestic violence information leaflets in the near future. These will cover the following issues:

- ◆ challenging attitudes and raising awareness
- ◆ know your rights
- ◆ NIWAF services
- ◆ volunteering within Women's Aid
- ◆ seeking help
- ◆ children and domestic violence
- ◆ help for young people



## Courses & Conferences

- ◆ Making the Links -A conference exploring the links between child abuse and animal abuse and the implications for practice and policy on: Monday 12 February 2001 at: NSPCC National Training Centre in Leicester. For more information contact Haidee Hunter, NSPCC National Training Centre, tel: 0116 234 7228
- ◆ Teenage Tolerance - the hidden lives of young Irish people. Exploring young peoples' experiences of violence and abuse - conference to launch research commissioned by Dublin Women's Aid. Wednesday 14th February, 2001 1.15pm - 5.15pm. Cost - from £4 to £40. For more information contact Aisling Griffin, Dublin Women's Aid, tel: 00353 18782304 .
- ◆ Learning to Care - how we can meet the educational needs of children in public care . A conference on 27th February 2001 at Greenmount Agricultural College, Antrim. Organiser: BASW. For more information contact Mairead Harkin, tel: 028 90672247
- ◆ Preventing Violence in Relationships A programme for men who feel they have a problem with their use of controlling and violent behaviour, training for facilitators on 3rd, 4th & 5th April 2001. For more information contact Maire Heery, tel: 028 9061 2724

## Paws for thought!

Dear sisters,

As you read in the story on page 2, domestic violence can hurt pets too. This got me thinking about what, if anything, is available in Northern Ireland. Well, I know that animals are not allowed in the refuges and that there is no service like *Paws for Kids* here, so, I phoned a couple of our refuges to see what they did when pets were involved.

One refuge worker tells of a woman who would not go into a refuge because of her "wee dog", another group tells me of a woman who got herself into debt for putting her dog into kennels. There have also been situations where workers have taken in the animals themselves, which of course is not feasible long term, nor should be expected of workers. The overall impression from just a few short phone calls is that yes, pets are causing issues for women and children fleeing from domestic violence.

Perhaps then, someone should research this further, and explore the need for such a service here. If an organisation akin to *Paws for Kids* is set up, who should run it? Should it be associated with Women's Aid?

As an organisation, I know we can only do so much, but if ignoring the pets means that the safety and well being of women and children is affected, then maybe we should start thinking about this issue.

*Charlene Craig (NIWAF)*

## Newsaid

*If you would like to submit an article, piece of news, diary date or poetry for May's edition of Newsaid please send it to Charlene at NIWAF before April 20th.*

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