

# Bury St. Edmunds Women's Aid Centre Limited



PO Box 715  
Bury St. Edmunds  
Suffolk, IP33 9HQ  
Tel: 01284 753085  
E- mail: [admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk](mailto:admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk)  
[burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk](http://burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk)

**Patrons:**  
The Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws  
Martha Kearney  
Etholle George

Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid Ltd is a small charity based in Suffolk. We work with women and their children who have been affected by domestic abuse. Our Refuge offers security, friendship, empowerment and a future for up to eight women and their children at any one time. During the residents' stay at the Refuge, our team work through every aspect of their lives to ensure that on leaving us they have received the most holistic service in the time available. The average length of stay is around six months, during which time we aim to:

- offer emotional support and help with recovery via daily one-to-one sessions with our support workers, and also through our self-help/empowerment groups.
- provide sessions with a qualified counsellor for those requiring further assistance.
- secure legal assistance for injunctions, contact for children and their fathers, divorce, home ownership, etc.
- address any past housing issues or debt problems, liaising with creditors, setting up payment plans, etc.
- provide moving-on information, advice and practical support by arranging housing appointments, bidding for accommodation, and ensuring the smooth transition of benefits.

Our Children's Service cares for the needs of our child residents. We employ one part time and one full time child worker, they offer advice and support to mothers, they are experienced and understand the negative impact of domestic abuse on a child's development and emotional well-being. They work closely with the children in small groups and one to one providing a fun, safe and secure environment to develop their confidence and self-esteem through play and creative activities, helping them to understand their feelings and how to stay safe. We also provide a child therapy service for children by a qualified child therapist.

In keeping with our holistic approach, we work closely with colleagues from other agencies, including the police, housing and benefits agencies, social services, health services and schools.

We have a community outreach centre as over 80% of our service users request advice and support through our community-based programmes, including; a telephone helpline, one to one outreach support, a Survivor's of Domestic Violence (SODA) coffee morning, freedom programme, stronger families programme and a counselling service.

The advice and support needs of our non-resident service-users closely mirror those of our residents at the Women's Refuge; they also experience a similar range of emotional and psychological support. Thus, our work with both non-resident and resident women alike shares a common aim: to provide information, advice and practical and emotional support that will enable each individual to move forward on her personal journey from victim to survivor, and ultimately to secure a future free from fear for herself and her children.

On March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 the UK was advised by the Government to 'Stay at Home' to save lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Following this advice we closed our outreach centre and begun a new way of working with our service users that kept their safety and well-being at the forefront and ensure that women and children had continued access to help and advice during lockdown.

The majority of staff have been working from home delivering a full service via telephone or video link, this has been one to one with current and new service users. Our helpline has continued throughout, offering safety advice and emotional support to those most at risk and isolated from friends, family and other agencies i.e. schools. We have continued to work with other agencies to provide the best service for the women and children.

Our children's workers have worked hard and creatively to support the children and their mothers in the refuge by providing online story-time sessions and game, garden activities and learning packs. It has certainly been different but the whole team have maintained a quality service and demonstrated their dedication to keeping women and children safe.

As lock down begins to ease we are now phasing back into the workplace while following all governments' advice with social distancing and cleaning regimes. As women will have more opportunity to seek help and advice and we are anticipating a peak in referrals for refuge and other services, therefore we are preparing for this but increasing our resources.

Anyone effected by Domestic abuse can access advice, support and information by calling 01284 753085 or e-mail [admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk](mailto:admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk)

Tina Hickey  
Principle Operations Manager

**Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid Centre Ltd**