

# Mental health and domestic abuse

Women's Aid

18 September 2024

# Agenda

Introduction: Women's Aid's datasets


Mental health findings from On Track national dataset

Domestic abuse support services and mental health: Findings from the Annual Audit 2024

Q&A

# Women's Aid's datasets

Women's Aid has three national datasets which contain information on survivor's mental health and the mental health and domestic abuse service provision.



**Women's Aid's bespoke case management and outcomes measurement system**

**On Track**



**UK VAWG directory of services and refuge vacancies**

**Routes to Support**



**Annual Survey, interviews with service providers, FOI requests**

**Annual Audit**

 On Track: The Women's Aid Outcome Measurement System

  
The UK violence against women and girls service directory

THE DOMESTIC ABUSE REPORT 2024  
**THE ANNUAL AUDIT**

# Deserve To Be Heard

**Women's Aid campaign calling for greater recognition of the impact that domestic abuse has on the mental health of women and their children.**

- A Guide for Survivors
- Are you listening? 7 Pillars for a survivor-led approach to mental health support
- Mental health and domestic abuse: A review of literature
- Reframing the links - Black and minoritised women, domestic violence and abuse, and mental health – A review of the literature

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/research/research-and-reports/>



**#DeserveToBeHeard**

The impact of domestic abuse on the mental health of women and their children

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““The most important thing is to be heard and for those professionals to really understand the dynamics and impact domestic abuse has on survivors not just whilst in the relationship but for a lifetime.””

- *Deserve To Be Heard participant*

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**women's aid**  
until women & children are safe

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# Mental health and domestic abuse: On Track national dataset

In the financial year 2022-23, there were **3,711** and **36,540** women who accessed refuge and community-based support services respectively in the **On Track national dataset**. Of these survivors:

- Refuge: 23.4% and CBS: 21.2% had a mental health disability
- Refuge: 50.6% and CBS: 41.5% had a mental health support need
- Refuge: 10.6% and CBS: 6.0% had dual diagnosis
- Refuge: 47.4% and CBS: 33.4% had experienced feeling depressed / having suicidal thoughts
- Refuge: 9.5% and CBS: 4.6% had self-harmed as a way of coping

In 2022-23, the most common reason for referrals into refuge services was due the service not having the capacity to support the survivor (**40.6%**) of the rejected referrals sample.

- Nearly half of these were due to the service being unable to meet the support needs of the client
- **Mental health was one of the most cited support need services could not accommodate (4.7%** of all rejected referrals sample)

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# Domestic abuse support services and mental health

## The Domestic Abuse Report: the Annual Audit

- Last year, pressure to support survivors with their mental health needs was a key challenge for domestic abuse services, including, but not exclusive to, survivors with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Clients sometimes missed their appointments due to mental health crisis episodes.
- At the same time, finding move-on accommodation has also been increasingly challenging over recent years. Poor mental health of survivors can be exacerbated by longer stays in refuge, leading to poorer mental health outcomes overall as survivors cannot access the services and move-on accommodation that they need.





# Domestic abuse support services and mental health

## Deserve to be Heard: Are you listening?

- Survivors told us the urgent need for specialist mental health support and how, without it, they could be re-traumatised, emphasising that professionals need to:

*“...have specialist (...) in depth knowledge as their actions [cause further harm, thereby] adding to traumatic experience”.*

*“If they [professionals] don't have any experience that's when they can do more damage than good. If they just think they can do it”.*



# Domestic abuse support services and mental health

## Lack of funding and commissioning for these services

- Access to suitable mental health support, such as statutory support, is frequently delayed with extremely long waiting lists, delaying recovery. Ultimately, services told us that it is them themselves that are needing to fill these gaps.
- 44% of organisations reported that they had been providing a service that should be covered by a statutory agency under a public statutory duty and, of these, over a quarter (26.1%) were providing mental health support/ counselling.
- Half (49.0%) of organisations had been running an area of their domestic abuse service in 2022-23 without any dedicated funding.
  - The most common area of work running without dedicated funding was **therapeutic support services (counselling, group work) (43%)**.
  - **16%** were running specialist domestic abuse **services for women with complex needs** without dedicated funding.
- There was been a small overall increase in the numbers of community-based support services with mental health specialist support workers.
  - In May 2023, 39 community-based support services had a specialist mental health support worker(s) (+4 from 2022).
  - 48 refuges had a specialist mental health support worker(s) (0 change since 2022).



# What's next?

51.6% had positive mental health outcomes, including around improving coping strategies and accessing mental health treatment

Outcomes of support

7 pillars of a good mental health response for survivors of domestic abuse

Are you listening?

- 1 An empathetic and understanding response
- 2 Expertise on the dynamics of domestic abuse
- 3 A space to talk with a range of approaches to support
- 4 Support for children and young people
- 5 Practical support
- 6 Women-only spaces, including support led by and for marginalised groups of women
- 7 Support that is quick to access and long-term

Funding integrated Care Boards, training for all healthcare professionals, commission needs-led mental health support for survivors

National campaigning

# How to contact us & further resources

All the research we have discussed today can be found on the Research and Reports page on the Our Research section of our website:

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/research/research-and-reports/>

- Domestic Abuse reports: Annual Audits
- Deserve To Be Heard
- On Track briefings
- Other: Nowhere To Turn reports

Contact details:

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