

Saving and changing lives: Introduction to Refuge

Refuge



For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

About Refuge

Refuge opened the **world's first safe house** for women and children fleeing domestic violence in Chiswick, West London, in 1971. Since then we have grown to become the country's largest provider of emergency accommodation and specialist services for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

On any given day we support **3,000** women and children.



Domestic violence in the UK

- 1 woman in 4 will experience domestic violence at some point in her life. This means that a woman you know – a sister, daughter or colleague – could be at real risk of abuse
- 2 women are killed every week in England and Wales by a current or former partner
- The police receive a domestic violence related call every 30 seconds
- In 90% of domestic violence incidents in a family with children, children are in the same or next room, and in 50% of these cases, children are directly abused
- Domestic violence costs the UK almost £16 billion a year – this includes £1.9 billion a year to business alone through absenteeism, stress, decreased productivity and employee turnover

Our mission

Refuge is committed to a world where domestic violence is not tolerated and where abused women and children are given the support they need to live free from violence. Our **objectives** fall into three broad areas:

Provision: We provide a national network of specialist services for women and children – from refuges and child support workers to independent legal advocacy and community-based schemes.

Prevention: We aim to prevent domestic violence through campaigning, education, training and research. We work tirelessly to challenge the negative social attitudes surrounding abuse.

Protection: We lobby the Government to ensure that domestic violence remains high on the political agenda and to implement changes in policy and practice which meet the needs of abused women and children.

The impact of Refuge's specialist services

We work hard to keep our administration costs low. **For every £1 we raise, 83p goes directly to our services.** In May 2013, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) conducted an exercise to determine the impact of Refuge's services on individuals and society as a whole. The results of the study showed that:

- **The impact of Refuge's services on society can be valued at £33 million per year**
- **Every £1 spent on Refuge's services generates an impact on society to the value of £3.54**

Empowering women and children

Refuge runs a range of life-saving and life-changing services across the country, which help women and children to escape abuse and rebuild their lives.

Refuges

A refuge is so much more than just a roof over a head. Our refuges give women and children the time and space they need to start rebuilding their lives. Our specialist practitioners are trained to provide intensive emotional and practical support on a wide range of issues, from financial security to health and immigration issues.



Community outreach

Not all women want or need to go to a refuge. Our community outreach professionals meet women in their homes, or in a discreet place in the community, to offer confidential support on a range of practical and emotional issues.



Independent advocacy

The legal system can be complex, intimidating and isolating for victims of domestic violence. Refuge's team of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) provide expert guidance for women going through the civil and criminal courts. They support women and children at the very highest risk of serious injury and homicide.



Child support workers

Around two-thirds of the residents in our refuges are children, the majority of whom are of pre-school age. They make up some of the most vulnerable and at risk children in the country and, as such, require specialist support. Our child support workers organise fun and creative play sessions for children in our refuges and also link mothers and children to local services, helping them to settle into new areas.



The Gaia Centre, Lambeth

This service offers support for all victims of gender based violence under one roof, and is the first of its kind in the country. The Gaia Centre provides practical and emotional support to women, men, 14-16 year old girls and children who may be at risk of physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse, forced marriage, 'honour'-based violence, female genital mutilation, prostitution, trafficking and stalking.



National Domestic Violence Helpline

Refuge runs the National Domestic Violence Helpline in partnership with Women's Aid. The Helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our trained helpline workers and volunteers provide expert support and information to women experiencing domestic violence – as well as friends, family and professionals. The Helpline acts as the gateway to the national network of refuges and other specialist services, offering a lifeline to hundreds of thousands of women every year.



Working with families to effect change

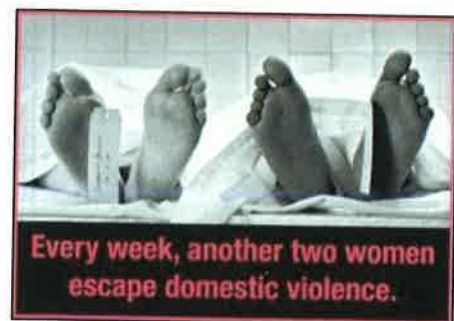
Every week in England and Wales two women are killed by current or former partners. This means that there are thousands of families up and down the country who have lost loved ones to domestic violence. Refuge supports families in the aftermath of their loss. We work closely with families to progress domestic homicide reviews, inquests or statutory investigations that seek to highlight and challenge the failure of the authorities to protect their loved one.



Together with a number of families, Refuge is calling on the Government to open a public inquiry into the response of the police and other state agencies to victims of domestic violence.

Raising awareness

For over four decades, Refuge has campaigned to bring domestic violence out of the shadows. We work tirelessly to raise awareness of this horrific crime, and to challenge the negative social attitudes that allow it to continue. Our pro-bono advertising campaigns and media work also reach out to women and children, breaking their isolation and helping them to access vital support.



Influencing decision makers

Refuge lobbies the Government to ensure that domestic violence remains high on the political agenda. We provide a voice for women and children experiencing domestic violence, ensuring that their needs are represented at the highest possible levels – in national debates over policy and legislation.



Thank you so much for your support – and for helping to sustain our work empowering women and children to live free from fear.

