



# 2019 / 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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Prepared by Adele Newlands





# HELLO FROM THE CHAIR

2019 / 2020 was an exciting but also difficult year for Ross-Shire Women's Aid.

We welcomed our new manager, Adele Newlands into post. Adele settled in quickly and started to observe the organisational structure of Ross-Shire Women's Aid. We saw a change throughout the year from within our Skye Service reducing our Refuge from a 4-bed property to a 2-bed bungalow, we also had the addition of a new Support Room in Dingwall, a bright and confidential space for Women to come to us for support and we welcomed new staff members to the team.

We created new working partnerships: the Scottish Churches Housing Action; we worked with the Police in promoting the new Domestic Abuse Act and continued our partnership working within the Violence Against Women Partnership.

We provided refuge accommodation, one to one support with practical and emotional strategies for women, children, and young people, and supported those assessed as high risk through the MARAC process (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). We provided Refuge accommodation with an 84% occupancy rate, accommodating 9 families, 7 single women and 21 children with an average length of stay being 229 days. We supported 423 women, 90 MARAC and 137 children and young people in total. Providing 9,904 hours of support.

As part of our early intervention work, we visited all secondary schools in the area delivering our School's Programme. In addition, we were invited to speak to several groups of secondary school pupils who were involved in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative project (YPI). This was a good outcome for Ross-shire Women's Aid, with the group who selected our organisation winning the award – their performance was outstanding and they were delighted to hand over the cheque!

At the end of 2019 we were saddened by the loss of one of the team. This had a profound effect on the team and the Board were immensely proud at how the team worked through the grief and celebrated the life of their much-loved colleague who is sorely missed.

I am proud of the work RWA has delivered in the past 39 years. With the new Domestic Abuse Act coming into place in 2019 to tackle coercive control this has only highlighted further the work that we do in changing the lives of women, young people, and children.

My gratitude goes to everyone who has been involved in RWA, to our supporters, funders and staff who make a difference to people's lives. Having been hit by the COVID19 Pandemic towards the end of the year I know that moving forward will be a challenging time for every organisation but especially for Third Sector Organisations. I feel there will be changes in the way we continue support; we will adapt to technology to deliver the support and the service will look different going forward. But one thing I do know is that with the dedication of the Board and the team we will keep the service moving to ensure that Women, Children & Young people subjected to abuse receive the support that they deserve.

We are hopeful that one day domestic abuse ends.

*Angela Maclean*



‘With your support I no longer live in fear and I have to thank you for all your help and support you have given me. I really do appreciate everything you have helped me through x’

# WOMEN'S SERVICE

During the year we supported 423 women.

Our Women Support Practitioners enables and empowers women to find the strength for them to leave a domestic abusive environment which leaves women and children fearful, isolated, and excluded. With support provided by our experienced workers, women and children live safely while they build confidence and resilience to make changes to their lives to let them and their children live a life free of domestic abuse.

The work we deliver focuses on:

- **Safety Planning:** working with women on being safe, creating, and rehearsing safety plans and installing safety alarms in their new homes.
- **Justice:** making sure women have access to justice and know their rights, attending meetings with lawyers and going to court
- **Restoration:** working with women as they move on to happier, safer lives, taking time to recover from their adverse experiences. We help them grow in confidence and develop self-esteem.
- **Autonomy:** ensuring women have a voice, know their options, and develop their decision-making abilities

423  
Women  
Supported

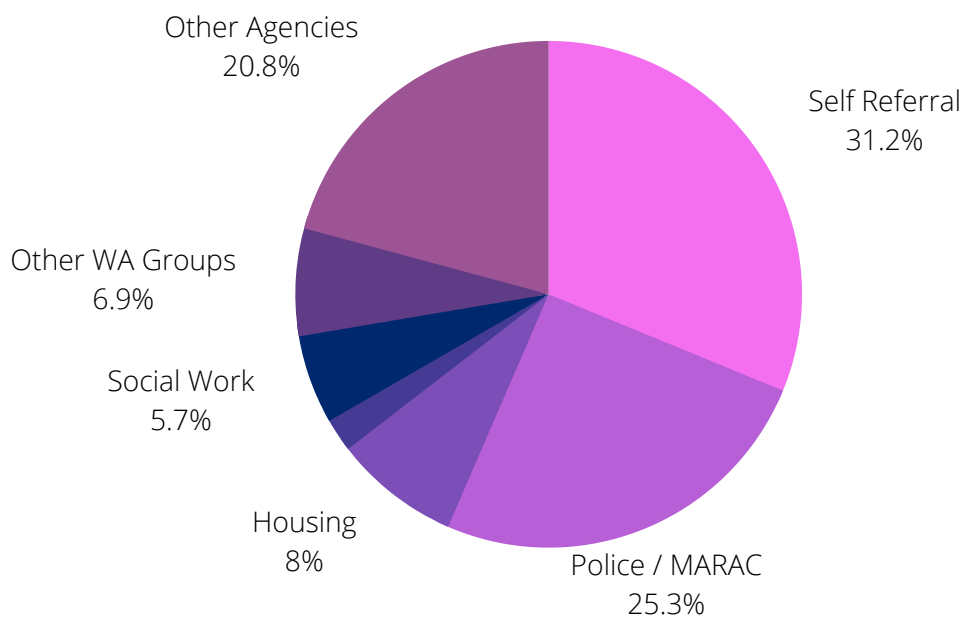
Supported  
90 MARAC  
Cases

Throughout the year we:

- Provided one to one support. Support sessions include Relationships with children; Anger management and coping strategies; Relationships with peers; Loneliness and isolation; Self-esteem and confidence; Safety measures; Legal rights and welfare benefits and Housing options.
- Thrive Parenting Group: Five women attended the programme which ran over six weeks. The programme allows women to explore their parenting skills and aims to support women to create a nurturing and positive family environment where the women and children can thrive.
- Gardening Group: We maintained the garden and encouraged women and children to plant flowers, fruit, and vegetables in the poly tunnel.
- Community talks & training: we delivered information sessions in churches and community centres raising awareness whilst covering Domestic Abuse and Healthy Relationship topics.
- We were involved in the schools programme this year, working alongside the Children's Workers to deliver school talks on Healthy Relationships and where to seek help.
- We held a family pottery day to enable peer support.

# WOMEN STATISTICS

## Referred by

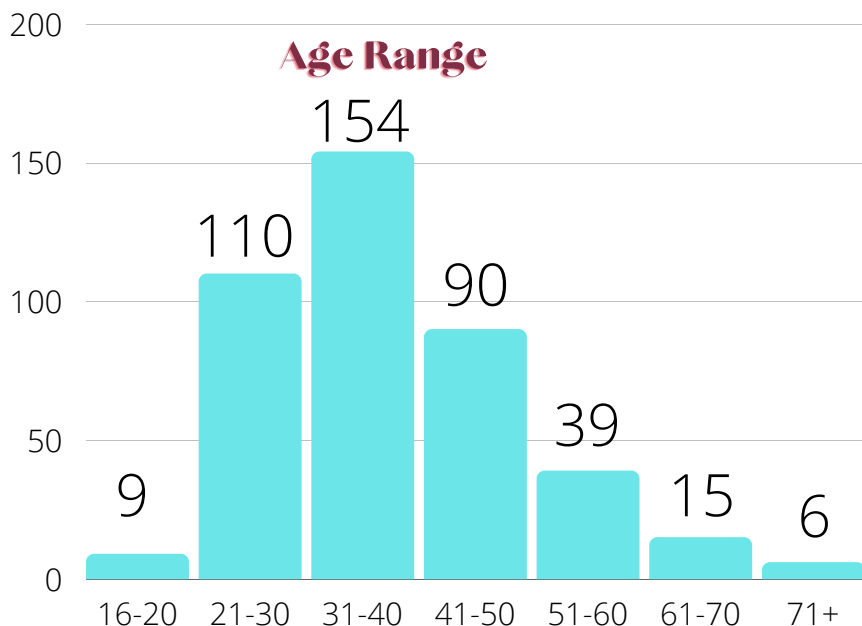


**7747 Women  
contacted  
the service**

**7501 Repeat  
contacts,  
246 New**

**Average of  
19 sessions  
per women**

## Age Range



# Elsa's Story

I have been supporting a lady called Elsa who was referred via health. She had been attending Physiotherapy and the Physiotherapist was very concerned about Elsa who is a very frail 82-year-old lady. Her daughter explained that Elsa's 82yr old husband is very abusive and controlling and he has verbally attacked her too as he is not happy about Elsa leaving the house without him. He even threatened to follow them to the hospital appointment as he said he didn't believe her.

We arranged to see Elsa in a room at the hospital when she was due to have her appointment and Elsa, although she is frail, she was delighted that she had someone to speak to outside of her family.

Elsa has endured almost 50 years of shouting, intimidation, coercive control in all its forms all tied in with a genuine fear of him "going off at her". Elsa's brother had died recently so it seemed to change something in Elsa's thinking. She feels like she is alive but not living.

**SAFETY:** The risk assessment was "high", and a MARAC referral went in with considerations asked for her daughter also who feared being attacked by her stepdad, as he is becoming increasingly abusive to her to isolate Elsa further. Safety advice was given and put in place.

**EMOTIONAL:** Elsa is one of the most open and honest women I have met, and she is feeling so relieved to be speaking about something that in her generation was "you made your bed and now you have to lie in it" Elsa says that she realised in the early years of marriage, that she had married not a very nice man. She says in the early years he was hyper critical of everything she did, wore, said, cooked and she genuinely feared he would hit her.

One of the saddest things for me was to hear that this also 82yr old man had not even toned down the abuse. He was still gaslighting Elsa and was even using her frailty as a weapon. She recalls the week before needing the toilet and him having "put" her in a rocking chair. When she asked for help, he started laughing at her and left her.

Elsa's daughter arrived and found her mother very distressed, so she helped her mum up from the chair which enraged the stepdad saying she was overstepping the mark and stepping on his toes.

Shortly after Elsa was hospitalised, due to a very bad chest infection which was exacerbated by her husband's constant demands even though she could hardly breathe. He had turned the thermostat up to maximum further hampering Elsa attempts to breathe and her daughter came into the scene of her mum really distressed and him shouting at her. Her daughter called the Ambulance against his wishes.

Whilst recovering in hospital I had the opportunity to speak to Elsa about the reality and danger she was in going back to her husband. Elsa has another daughter who has a big house with its own room and en-suite who really wanted her to come stays at hers to recover.

Elsa agreed to this and has decided she is not going back home, EVER.

Despite her husband bringing her chocolates and flowers and begging her to go home, she told me she just knows that he will never change. I applauded her courage and strength. Her physical appearance and stamina are improving by the day. I explained that living in an abusive situation floods your body with adrenaline as the abuser keeps you in the flight or fight state at all times, even when they are temporarily being "nice" which has a detrimental effect on your whole body. Elsa agreed that made sense and feels hopeful for the first time in many years.

## CHRISTMAS

Elsa has spent her first Christmas surrounded by her daughters, grandkids, and family. She told me she had the "best" Christmas ever as it was so relaxed and peaceful. I suggested it was the first of many and that every day she is alive she will be doing what she wants, when she wants, and that even though there is a journey ahead of us I was so proud to be coming along for the ride. The bravery it takes to leave after 50 years is immense, but I think Elsa's humour, independent streak and strength of character has made my job satisfaction soar.



# CYP'S SERVICE

Our Children and Young Person's Practitioners provide emotional and practical support within refuge, local schools, community areas, cafes and within the CYPs own homes. This support can be for any child who has been subjected to Domestic Abuse, up to the age of 18, on a one-to-one basis or within a group setting. During the year we supported 137 CYPs.

Support only begins once the CYP feels safe and ready to talk. For each CYP the support practitioners work on a support and safety plan which is personalised to their own situations and needs. The topics covered in the support can include relationships with parents; feelings; anger management and coping strategies; healthy and unhealthy relationships; relationships with peers and how to have their voices heard.

**137  
CYPs  
Supported**

**"Thank you for everything you've done for me. Before I started seeing you I was in a completely different place. I was struggling with my mental health and my anxiety and my parents divorce was something that was really making me struggle. I couldn't even go and visit my dad because I was so anxious and our relationship was that bad. But after being with you I'm a lot less anxious and I have even started speaking to my dad again. I'm in a much better place emotionally and I can't thank you enough for helping me. Thank you for everything :)"**

Throughout the year we provided:

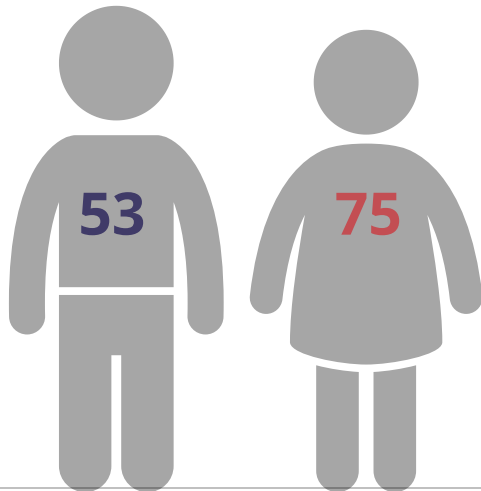
- one-to-one support sessions
- a four-day summer programme of activities including a trip to Landmark, baking, activities focusing on anger, safety, and healthy relationships.
- a family trip to Whin Park arranged for Refuge and outreach families.
- a family night for Refuge and outreach at the Pantomime at Christmas
- Halloween party in Refuge, all flats attended and dressed up, we played games and had snacks.
- A CYP gardening group ran every fortnight throughout the summer months.
- A pizza Party & Pancake night in Refuge
- Trampoline Park, Roller bowl, Soft play and Cinema trips for Refuge and outreach
- A Christmas Party
- a fortnightly refuge group to go over refuge rules, talk about feelings and do an activity such as baking, art, games.
- Provided talks to 24 classes on the topic of healthy relationships and keeping safe.
- Drop-in sessions in Skye College.

**YPI  
Winning  
Performance**  
**[Click here](#)**



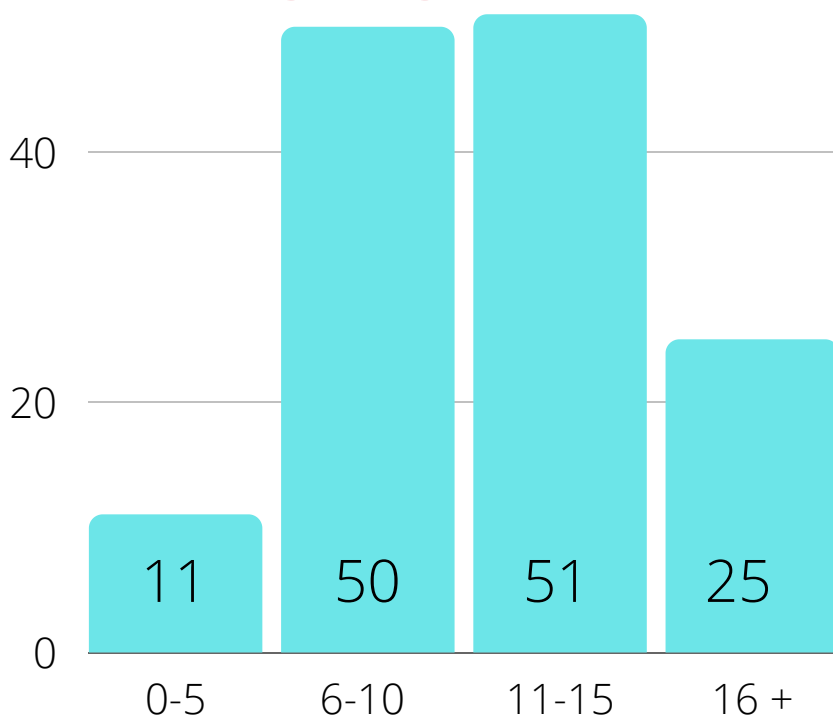
# CYP STATISTICS

## Gender \*From known data



2251 CYP  
Contacts made  
to service

## Age Range of CYPs



2227 Repeat  
contacts  
24 New

Average of  
16 sessions  
per CYP

## **Rex, 7 years old Anger Management**

Rex was referred to the service by his mum and head teacher. His mum and dad split up last year and he sees his dad some weekends. Recently his behaviour has become unpredictable and he has been having anger outbursts. This in turn makes him feel very low afterwards.

At the start of each support session, he fills in his 'happy scale' and 'worry chart'. We then discuss why he is feeling like this. I listen carefully and give him time to talk.

We have worked on techniques on how to control our anger and have identified what triggers his anger. Rex says this is helpful.

On one occasion Rex was very upset and scored himself low on his happy scale. He said he had a big outburst in the morning, but he had tried so hard to control himself. He said he thought about the techniques and told his mum about his sister jumping on his school bag. He said his sister did not stop and this pushed him over the edge. He was disappointed with himself. I praised Rex for trying to use the techniques and said that was a big improvement as he stood back and thought about the situation before reacting straight away.

We then did a positive thoughts jar and wrote down lots of positive statements and quotes about Rex. He thoroughly enjoyed this, and I could see his mood improve. He thanked me for this and was excited to take his jar home. He said it made him feel so much better and he would look at it when he is feeling low or angry.

## **Tommy, 8 years old Feelings / Children's Rights**

I meet with Tommy every 2 weeks for 1-1 support sessions. His mum split from his dad due to domestic abuse and they now live in the refuge. Tommy sees his dad every weekend and is happy to do so.

During our support sessions we talk about his feelings and discuss anything that may be worrying him at the time. Tommy said that he gets upset when his sister doesn't want to see his dad. He said this is unfair on his dad and it's mean. We then discussed why his sister may not want to see his dad. We discussed the rights and responsibilities of children and we spoke about what this means.

Tommy realised that his sister has the right to choose not to see their dad at times.

We then spoke about how his sister may be feeling. He said he didn't think about her feelings before as he thought she was just being mean. Tommy felt better about this situation and said he can still have a good time with his dad.

Tommy said that this has helped improve his relationship with his sister as he doesn't get annoyed when she chooses not to see him.

## **Sam, 10 years old Advocacy**

I have been working with Sam for 1 one year now, he is 10 years old. First it was weekly contact and now it is every 2 weeks.

He has had a lot of stuff going on. Sam has had to go back and fore to court with his mum, to stop his father getting access and for an interdict. Sam was always very clear to me he doesn't want to see his father because he is a bad person and wasn't nice to him when he was younger. We decided to do a safety plan, because Sam was feeling a bit anxious about his Dad turning up. Sam did this by writing down his name, number, address, police number, where to go if in danger. Sam said this helped him feel better about if his dad did turn up.

Sam felt quite anxious about going to court. On our sessions we would go for a hot chocolate and have a chat, we would talk about ways to help our anxiety. Sam would sometimes write these down - he would say go out on his bike, talk to friends on PlayStation, read books or go for a walk.

I would go to court with Sam and his mother. Sam would be very clear how he felt about his dad to the judge and that he didn't want any contact and why he didn't, because his dad abused him when he was younger. This helped with Sam's confidence, self-esteem and decisions.

The outcome was his dad isn't allowed any contact with Sam. Sam felt better after this was all over and felt good that he stood by on how he felt and wouldn't back down. Sam still talks about the times he had to go to court and often says he is glad he told the truth and said how he felt. I now see Sam every 3 weeks, to check in on how he is feeling.





# REFUGE

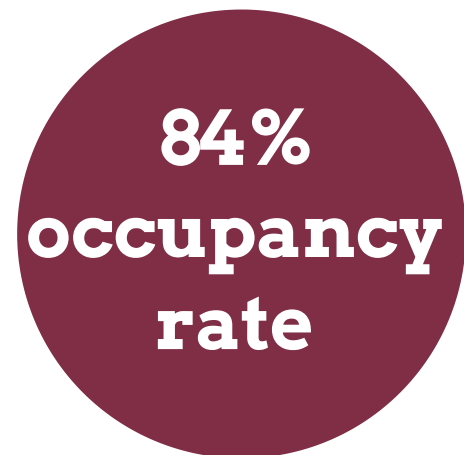
## Ross-Shire

It has been an extremely busy year in Refuge supporting 9 families, 21 children and 7 single women. This is a huge increase from 2018 / 2019 where we supported 6 families and 1 single women. We had 21 requests for refuge in total.

This was the busiest Refuge has been at one time with Children - which made Refuge very lively and fun! We put on extra activities to support the children in Refuge throughout the year and to allow Mums to have a break. We increased group work which included baking and arts & crafts and held evening activities such as pancake night and a pizza party.

Throughout the summer months the garden was well used for water sports. The paddling pool was out, and children enjoyed playing games outside.

We continued to grow fruit and vegetables in the poly tunnel for the mums and children to enjoy.



## Skye & Lochalsh

Working in partnership with Skye & Lochalsh Housing we learnt that Housing needed more 4 bed properties in the area, and looking at what our needs were within Skye & Lochalsh, we decided to end our tenancy of our 4 bedroom Refuge. Understanding the importance of having a Refuge within the area we were happy to be offered a new build in a more accessible area.

We managed to get the property up and running without too much disturbance to the service and are able to accommodate 1 family within the property.



**9 families**  
**21 children**  
**7 single**  
**women**



# PARTNERSHIP

We continue to be involved in the Highland Violence Against Women Multi-Agency Partnership working with other members to improve agency responses to domestic abuse and other forms of VAW.

We believe that improving responses at agency level helps to improve the protection available to women, children, and young people.



RWA provides special advocacy as part of the MARAC partnership, together with NHS, Education, Social Work Services and Housing.

MARAC identifies the highest risk victims and coordinates services to reduce repeat victimisation, help victims feel safer and reduce the risk to victims and others, including children.

**RWA have supported 90 MARAC cases this year. This is an increase of 43% compared to last year.**



HIGHLAND & ISLANDS  
**MARAC**

We entered a 2-year partnership with Scottish Churches Housing Action. Scottish Churches Housing Action work on our behalf to contact all the Churches within our area and arrange for community talks to take place to enable us to raise awareness.

The churches also are able to select us for donations which are used to supply 'starter packs' for women and children entering refuge. The donations can also be used for when women are moving into their new home to buy any essential supplies.



Scottish Churches  
Housing Action

We partnered with FareShare who redistribute surplus food to charities.

This has enabled residents to stock up on surplus food as most can be frozen and we distribute out to women we are seeing that day.



# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

ROSS-SHIRE WOMEN'S AID  
(Company Limited by Guarantee)

STATEMENT of FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
(including Income and Expenditure Account)

Year ended 31 March 2020

	Notes	Un- Restricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2020 Total Funds £	Un- Restricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2019 Total Funds £
<b>Income and endowments</b>							
Donations and core grants	5	4,382	2,000	6,382	1,134	3,100	4,234
Charitable activities	6	299,719	227,166	526,885	295,684	316,686	612,370
Other trading activities	7	123	-	123	524	-	524
Investment income	8	3,823	-	3,823	3,096	-	3,096
<b>Total income</b>		<b>308,047</b>	<b>229,166</b>	<b>537,213</b>	<b>300,438</b>	<b>319,786</b>	<b>620,224</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>							
Raising funds:							
Charitable activities	9/10	358,225	288,326	646,551	291,691	309,177	600,868
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>358,225</b>	<b>288,326</b>	<b>646,551</b>	<b>291,691</b>	<b>309,177</b>	<b>600,868</b>
<b>Net (expenditure)/income</b>		<b>(50,178)</b>	<b>(59,160)</b>	<b>(109,338)</b>	<b>8,747</b>	<b>10,609</b>	<b>19,356</b>
Transfers between funds	20	14,087	(14,087)	-	(4,048)	4,048	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>(36,091)</b>	<b>(73,247)</b>	<b>(109,338)</b>	<b>4,699</b>	<b>14,657</b>	<b>19,356</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>							
Total funds brought forward	21	366,573	144,843	511,416	361,874	130,186	492,060
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>330,482</b>	<b>71,596</b>	<b>402,078</b>	<b>366,573</b>	<b>144,843</b>	<b>511,416</b>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing activities.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our funders without your support we would not be able to achieve the outcomes that we do.

We would also like to thank all the individuals, organisations and community groups who provide donations throughout the year from fundraising.

## Thank you

