

EVA
Women's Aid

Impact Report



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About Us

EVA Women's Aid is an award-winning professional organisation providing free, confidential and non-judgmental specialist support services for women and children who have been affected by any form of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence at any time in their lives.

EVA Women's Aid is a women only organisation, independent of the criminal justice system, statutory agencies and other private companies.

Our Vision

To end the violence towards women and girls.

Our Mission

To provide a range of free, confidential and non-judgemental specialist support services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence whether current, recent or historic.

Our Values

EVA Women's Aid is a woman-only organisation working with women and children who have been affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence and societal oppression. In order to challenge the oppressive beliefs, we work from a feminist and empowering framework that embraces inclusiveness, diversity and equality and is survivor centred. This means recognising that domestic abuse and sexual violence is a crime, committed predominately by men against women and children. We strive to eradicate domestic abuse, sexual violence and oppression in all of its forms.

Message from the CEO

This is EVA's first Impact Report, but one we have been planning for some time. We felt it important to have a record of what we have achieved, but also, (and we don't do enough of this), to celebrate our successes.



Richinda

I have had the privilege of being CEO at EVA since 2013, and I have seen many changes in our service delivery during that time. We are proud of our record of delivering top-quality services in Redcar and Cleveland. We are proud of how we involve our service users. We are proud of our unique, innovative approach. And we are proud that we have not only sustained services during the challenges of the Covid pandemic, but have continued to thrive and grow.

This Impact Report gives a flavour of what EVA has achieved. It gives a snapshot of the range of services we provide, but, most importantly, it gives the women we work with the opportunity to contribute by telling their stories. They are stories about overcoming huge challenges, about keeping going when they are weary, and about achieving the positive outcomes that are right for them. They are stories about hope.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this Impact Report and to EVA's successes – my fantastic Staff Team, our wonderful Volunteers, and the hugely supportive Board of Trustees. Most of all, I would like to thank the amazing women who take that first brave step on the rocky road to recovery, and choose EVA to be their guide.

A word from the Chair

I feel very fortunate to be able play a small part in the work EVA Women's Aid do. The first impression I had on meeting Richinda and her team turned out to be absolutely correct, I had found a warm, welcoming team of skilled women, passionate about helping anyone who arrived at the door, in person or through digital means.



Rachel

EVA have much to be proud of and have rightly chosen to share these successes through this impact report. It speaks for itself that women who complete EVA programmes often return to attend further programmes, keeping in touch with new friendship groups and actively supporting EVA through volunteering and fundraising.

EVA diversified their support methods, initially as a reaction to the global pandemic but having seen the success of these new initiatives, adding them permanently to the offering, continually striving to improve and provide support to more women and children. EVA also recognises that in addition to the work supporting survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence, there is a need to educate young people about healthy relationships and staying safe, hopefully building the foundation for a future where EVA's skills can be redirected.

Behind the scenes, EVA is vocal within local and national groups, contributing to the debate on women's rights, funding and methods of support, leading the pack as an example of good practise.

All these achievements are only possible with the support of the amazing staff team, the leadership and passion of the management team and the continued support of the many organisations who offer funding and guidance – thank you to you all.

Our Services

All our services are needs-led. Women and girls seeking support from EVA, whether in one of our Safe Houses or not, can access any of the services we offer 'under one roof' and have support from EVA Women's Aid as long as they wish.

Advice, Information and Guidance

On housing, benefits, grants, food and clothing banks, and much more

Legal Surgery

Once a month we hold a surgery provided by our supporters at Cygnet Law, Redcar

Supported Housing

We have housing available in the local area for women and girls fleeing domestic abuse and/or sexual violence

IDVA

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate to make sure voices are heard through the justice system or elsewhere

Adult Counselling

We provide specialist counselling and therapeutic support is for adult females who have been affected by the trauma of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence with as many sessions offered as needed

Training, Education & Employment

Advice, support and guidance available on facilities in the local area

Support Groups

Informal sessions offering companionship and support

Fitness & Wellbeing

Welcoming sessions offering fitness and wellbeing activities covering different aptitudes and interests and providing companionship and peer support

Counselling Student Placements

We regularly offer work placements hours to local students undertaking a counselling degree

Volunteering Opportunities

We welcome volunteers to help us in a wide range of activities

Programmes

We have a series of instructional programmes designed to support the recovery journey

Children & Young People's Counselling

We offer specialist counselling and therapeutic support is for children and young people of all genders (4-18 years old) who have been affected by the trauma of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence with as many sessions offered as needed

Our Programme Work

Our programmes are important for so many reasons. They are a place for survivors to meet other women who can empathise with their situations, providing peer support and enduring friendships. Although it can be scary at first, there's no pressure to discuss personal circumstances and group member support is as valuable as the programme learning.

Bespoke Accredited Programmes

EVA...Lution Programme

After repeated requests from women to join the Freedom Programme for a second time we looked around for a suitable follow-on programme but could not find anything we liked. We received funding to write and pilot our own follow-on programme, and EVA...Lution was born. It was then taken through the accreditation process and achieved Level 2 with OCN (Open College Network), and was launched in 2018.

EVA...Lution is follow-on Programme for women who have completed the Freedom Programme and who feel ready to explore and move on with their lives. The programme is designed to be a voyage of self-discovery, charting the individual's unique life course, examining beliefs and identifying future goals. It is designed to raise self-esteem and be transformative as well as informative.

Changes Programme

In response to women asking for the next step after Freedom and EVA...Lution, our programme "Changes" was written by staff at EVA Women's Aid and was launched on International Women's Day 2021 after gaining Level 2 accreditation with OCN.

This course is an opportunity for women to focus on themselves and think about self-care, life planning, coping techniques, longer term goal setting. It involves a small group and is extremely intensive and helps women to recognise and grow their strengths

"EVA...Lution helped me so much. Gave me confidence to be me again"
Nichola, aged 38

"I feel EVA...Lution has given me the tools to go forward and be more confident and self-assured"
Clare, aged 41

"EVA...Lution has helped me become the woman I was before, and some. I felt safe and understood."
Aliyah, 25

"EVA...Lution has helped me so much to understand the true meaning of love. I'm in a better place with myself and my self-esteem."
Amy, 35

Our Work in Schools

EVA delivers workshops and awareness raising sessions in secondary schools and other educational establishments throughout Redcar and Cleveland. These sessions, using age-appropriate language and content, help young people recognise abusive behaviour and equip them to feel more comfortable about seeking support, and enable them to support their peers who may be victims of abuse. Often, these workshops give victims the courage to come forward, and we are able to support children and young people with a range of specialist services at EVA.

4EVA

Our Programmes for women have been really successful, so we wanted to create an exclusive Programme that is just for young people. "4EVA" focusses on teenagers, encouraging them to explore their personal relationships, to understand coercion and control and its impact, while equipping participants with the skills needed to make healthy relationship choices. Crucially, it includes a module focussing on social media and how this can be misused –a topic we are often asked about. Each session includes a mix of discussion, engaging written exercises and creative activities. This ensures there is a fresh and fast-paced approach, with something for everyone.

"I have gained loads from Freedom Programme - I feel much stronger and I now realise that I don't NEED to be in a relationship"
Gemma, aged 32

"I don't think I would still be here without the support of the Freedom Programme and the group. I have learnt how to say No"
Ada, aged 58

"Freedom Programme has given me a realisation of what I am worth, I am more than he said I was"
Jessica, aged 29

"The support from Freedom Programme gave me the strength to grow and change"
Mishka, aged 46

Flourish Group

The Flourish group meets every month as a follow-on informal support group for women who have completed all EVA's Programmes.

National Programmes

Freedom Programme

We have delivered the nationally recognised 'Freedom' Programme for many years at EVA Women's Aid. Freedom is a domestic abuse programme that examines the effect of attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusive men and the responses of victims and survivors. It is open to any woman who has experienced an abusive relationship.

Our Counselling Services

EVA's Counselling Service provides therapeutic support for women over 18 and children/young people of all genders. Our Counselling is offered on a needs-led basis until the client has come to their natural therapeutic close.

Adult Counselling Service

We use a blend of therapeutic interventions to support each client to meet their individual needs. Each client is assessed and their support is planned with them directly, so that they feel in control and have their therapy goals supported.

Methods used to support clients include;

- Person-Centred Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Trauma Therapy
- Mindfulness
- Single Session Therapy
- Psychoeducation: Education on types of abuse and the impact on mental health
- Practical Daily Interventions

Sessions are carried out in a variety of ways to suit a client's needs; this includes face-to-face appointments, Zoom sessions and telephone sessions. There is also the option of "walk and talk" therapy where suitable and outreach appointments when needed. In addition to our office hours appointments we also offer early morning and late evening appointments as required. We can also arrange to have an interpreter present if this is needed.



"I'm so happy that I have the time to explore what has happened to me and that you are doing this with me"

Lorraine, aged 54

"You have made me feel like there is light at the end of my tunnel"

Jane, aged 67

Children and Young People Service

Multiple therapeutic interventions are used to provide counselling support to children and young people. We also work closely with other agencies, such as Social Workers and Schools to ensure that the needs of the child or young person are recognised and met.

Methods used to support clients include;

- Play Therapy
- Creative Therapy
- Person-Centred Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Trauma Therapy
- Mindfulness
- Single Session Therapy
- Psychoeducation: Education on types of abuse and the impact on mental health
- Practical Daily Interventions

Sessions are carried out in a variety of ways to suit client demand. This includes face-to-face appointments, Zoom sessions and telephone sessions. We also provide "walk and talk" therapy where suitable and outreach appointments when needed. We meet children and young people at times to suit them in and around their academic work, working closely with schools to ensure successful provision.

"Thank you for believing me, you have no idea what this has done for me"

Claire, aged 26

Pre-Trial Therapy

All EVA Counselling staff are trained in offering Pre-Trial Therapy so that those going through court process can still be offered counselling to support their mental health.



"Flexible ways of working have been fantastic through Covid-19, I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise"

Samantha, aged 35

"My greatest achievement has been getting the role of IDVA Support. I think EVA's biggest achievements are the expansion of our services and the amount of awareness we have raised about domestic abuse." Abbie, Support Worker

Our Projects

TEE with EVA (Training, Education, Employment)

Through funding from the European Social Fund, we were able to provide advice and support focussing on employability to the women we work with. This was mainly targeted at women who have been out of the working environment for some time, or had been unable to work for a range of reasons.

The women in the group felt the sense of 'belonging' was very important, with the peer support being invaluable and empowering for the women. Establishing a 'safe place' for women to work together was important too. Participants enjoyed the innovative 'tools' we have used, such as the 'Life Map' which helped with goal-setting

One participant said; "I realised so much through this journey; I realised confidence to believe in myself and be authentic. To have it for myself not because of other people wants. I need to be the best version of me in order to help my son's outlook on life. Before I didn't know where I was going through life to get by now I have a purpose"

Another said; "I'm no longer just focusing on getting through the day, I am now looking into the future"

As this programme has progressed, it has become invaluable to the women, with some participants identifying this as a 'life line'. We have witnessed each woman throughout their journey identifying their barriers and overcoming their fears. The active participants have learnt interpersonal skills, communication skills, how to write a CV, how to navigate the application process but most of all, they have gained confidence, self-esteem and a sense of 'worth'. They have put their own wants, needs and ambitions in the limelight, something they have never been able to do before.

One participant lost all confidence and ability to leave her home and was suffering severe mental health issues. This woman has now gained confidence and accesses the community independently. She has accessed, and engaged with, statutory mental health services after realising how this could benefit her, and has now enrolled on two online training programmes.



"EVA provides a full wrap around service every day, supporting women through the most traumatic of times towards a position of independence, safety and readiness for their future." *Kim, Specialist Adult, Children and Young People's Counsellor*

The Veterans Project

There is no evidence to suggest that domestic abuse is more prevalent within the UK Armed Forces than elsewhere, but there are added pressures for serving personnel, and ex-personnel, and their families, that are not necessarily reduced after leaving the Armed Forces, and could even be exacerbated. In response to this, EVA created a coordinated programme of activities which included a number of awareness-raising workshops delivered online to organisations supporting Veterans throughout the UK. This has increased other professionals' knowledge and understanding which in turn helps them to better support victims of abuse, and to identify abusive behaviour.

Dramatherapy

This was a pioneering new project using Dramatherapy as a means of women 'reclaiming' their bodies and themselves following trauma. As the only organisation in the UK given this award, EVA developed a new Programme featuring trapeze work, circus skills, drama and a range of activities to explore emotions.

One participant said; "I feel empowered and more confident with myself, I am amazed at what I have achieved again. I feel better in myself and feeling more confident from week to week."

Another said; "I feel strong, empowered, free, energised. I feel empowered when working on the equipment and doing activities and enjoy being part of the group. I am empowered, relieved, free, happy. My head feels clearer than when I came into the session. I feel tired but proud of what I achieved in the session"

Family Support

We know how important it is for families, where possible, to support anyone who has been the victim of domestic abuse or sexual violence, so EVA has developed a range of activities, programmes and groups designed to help families support each other following trauma. We are proud of our innovative and creative approach, and feedback from those who have participated suggests we are helping families come to terms with what they have experienced. Tina, Gemma's mum, said;

"I felt like I was trapped inside a nightmare to be honest and I actually didn't know where to turn to get help and support or how to help Gemma or to find out 'exactly' what had happened to her. I actually felt like a bad mum too as such a lot of stigma is attached to having a social worker so it almost petrified me as I thought they must think Gemma is at risk in her own home.

When you rang me and offered me the course I was just so eternally grateful that somebody was there no matter what that capacity entailed. I just valued any information that could be shared with me (as a parent) that I could use to help the rest of my family and most importantly, Gemma herself.

I have found it very beneficial, even though it has been difficult to talk about and very emotional at times, to understand the different aspects of abuse, as, unless you have had experience of it before, it can be quite hard to detect if it was not directed at you yourself, but instead, to a member of your family"



Our 45+ Project

At EVA Women's Aid, we are proud that we not only listen to our service users, but we take note of what they say, and act upon it when possible. The '45+ Project' was borne out of a conversation with one of our older service users, and is today one of our most notable projects.

The Project involved four main elements;

- Employing a new member of Staff dedicated to working with women aged over 45
- Delivering awareness raising sessions to professionals and other interested parties who had contact with women over 45
- The opening of the UK's first (and only) Safe House for older women
- A poster/flyer campaign featuring images of older women

In addition, because there was very little research available about domestic abuse and older victims, we undertook a joint piece of research with Dr Nikki Carthy from Teesside University. This focussed on barriers to older women reporting abuse or seeking support, and has since been published in The European Journal of Criminology. <http://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/wHeb8rWsmTa7VreG7Tz3/full>



"I was so isolated but I needed to get away. I can't believe a place like EVA exists. You have saved my life"

Lillian, aged 68

"If I'd known about the support available to me, I'd have left years ago"

Margaret, aged 81

"My biggest achievement is controlling the Health and Safety procedures at our offices and safe houses, and empowering our women to reach their goals. I'm so proud of our CEO, Richinda's success in managing to keep such a great team in place and secure funding for new projects." Freddy, Housing Team Support Worker

The Project began with a roar - we opened the new Safe House on Monday 1 June, and by Friday 5 June, we were full. The property has remained almost at full capacity levels since then. The following year, we saw a 45% increase in the number of women aged over 45 accessing EVA's services, including a staggering 500% increase in the 55-65 age group. Every year since, around 25% of our service users are aged 45 and over.

EVA Women's Aid received five awards for our work relating to older women. These are;

- Lloyd's Bank Foundation Charity Achievement Awards 'Championing Change' (runner up)
- North East Charity Awards 'Charity Campaign of the Year' (runner-up)
- Charity Bank Awards 'Greatest Impact' (WINNER)
- Cabinet Office 'Social Entrepreneur Investment Award' (runner-up)
- South Tees Charity Awards 'Getting Noticed' (WINNER)



"Thank you for all the help and support you have shown me through this difficult period. I couldn't have got through the trial without you"

Kelly, aged 54

"The staff at EVA have been fantastic, fun and supportive and they are always prepared to go the extra mile and give us more time if we need it. It is empowering and supportive experience and I would advise anyone to use the service"

Alison, aged 48

"My greatest achievement at EVA is going from student to volunteer, to staff and I have learned so much in doing so." Kayleigh, Specialist Adult Counsellor

Our Supported Housing

We offer supported housing to help women recover from the trauma of domestic abuse and rebuild a life free from violence and fear. EVA has a number of good quality safe houses in Redcar & Cleveland including 1 award winning house especially for women aged over 45. Several of our Safe Houses have access for women with disabilities.

Our Safe Houses have warm, comfortable individual bedrooms with shared bathroom, laundry, lounge and kitchen facilities. We will also provide emotional and practical support and ensure that every woman we support has an up-to-date risk assessment and support plan tailored to their needs for however long it is needed.



Welcoming Spaces

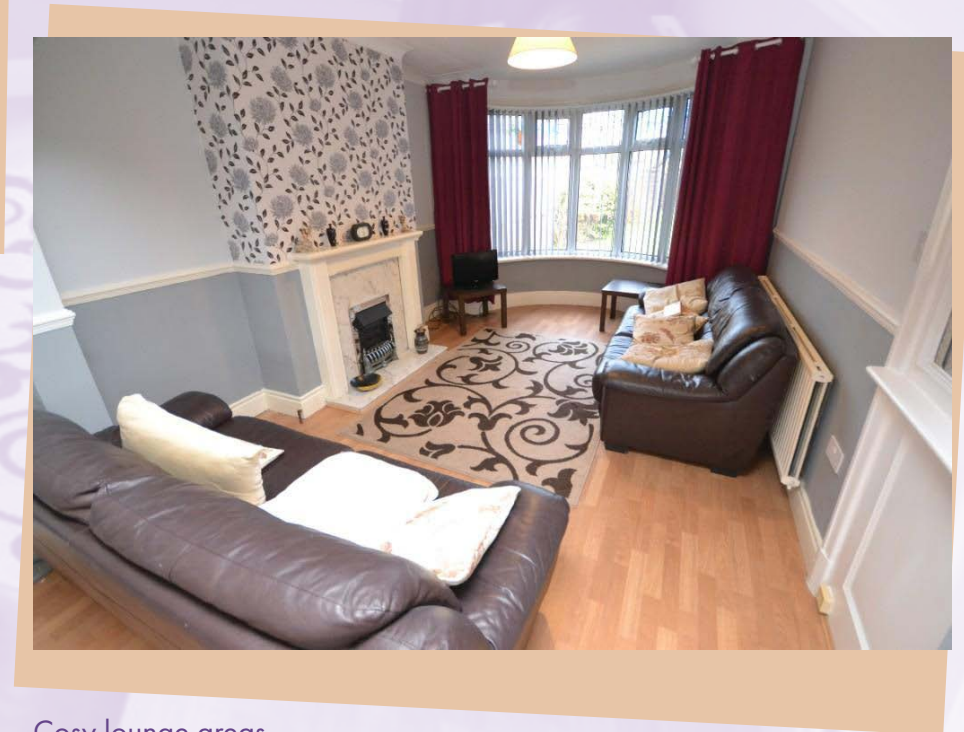


Well-appointed bathrooms

"We have engaged hundreds of abused women in our transformative group work programmes, some of which I have personally put together in order to meet the ongoing recovery needs of our service users. Facilitating and witnessing women's inspirational recovery journeys, positive growth and personal development, has been, and continues to be a truly amazing privilege." *Gill, Interventions Team Leader*



Fully equipped kitchens



Cosy lounge areas

"My greatest achievement, while I have been at EVA, is that I have been able to reach hundreds of young people with information regarding healthy relationships." Sarah, Programme Support Worker

Mental Health Support

We know that many of the women who seek support from EVA have some mental health issues. These can be short or long term, diagnosed or undiagnosed, and may often be as a result of the trauma they have experienced. Our Mental Health Support encourages women to seek diagnosis, to attend appointments with statutory services, and to engage with treatment plans. This, coupled with a comprehensive Support Plan that includes a range of opportunities from our menu of services, enables women to take control of their needs to ensure they are met.



Rachel, aged 26, had PTSD, anxiety and depression. With a young family of four boys under ten, Rachel welcomed a referral to Early Help. We attended GP appointments with her, arranged bereavement counselling and supported her to secure her own tenancy. EVA also helped Rachel secure a £2000 grant to help her move in to her new property. Rachel attended the Freedom Programme and EVA's own bespoke Programme, 'EVA..lution'. Rachel now attends University

Joan, aged 65, came to EVA with the intention of staying for just one appointment. Joan had depression and detachment issues but denial of her situation was hampering recovery. Joan had support to secure benefits then started to attend the Freedom Programme and made new friends with some of the other group members. This group set up their own craft group that they run themselves. They meet every Tuesday, 12-2pm and after the crafts session they all go for coffee at a local café. They even meet at each others' houses, take food and have lunch together.



Jenni, aged 31, came to EVA after experiencing abuse from their mother. Jenni has recently begun to identify as gender fluid and uses the pronoun they. Jenni has EUPD and a history of self-harm/suicidal ideation. EVA has supported Jenni to access the CMHT where they were assessed and now are receiving support. Jenni was referred to Mind, where they accessed support groups and built a network of friends and workers. Jenni was also referred to a LGBTQ+ charity where she has been assigned a gender support worker to support her around her gender identity. She attends weekly groups and sessions run by EVA which has reduced social isolation and has had a positive impact on her mental wellbeing.



"Women who have suffered domestic abuse and sexual violence need support. EVA adjusted brilliantly during the pandemic and followed government guidelines in order to provide that support. What an achievement." *Nikki, Adult Specialist Counsellor*

Linda, aged 62, was taking medication for depression. She originally came to EVA fleeing from her abusive husband but experienced a 'light bulb' moment when she attended the Freedom Programme at EVA and started to see how controlling her husband had been and that she had been a victim of sexual abuse. As a resident in EVA's Safe House, Linda received support from EVA but also from her fellow residents with whom she was able to share her experiences. Linda now has her own tenancy near her son in Middlesbrough.



Samantha, aged 39, was withdrawn when she first arrived at EVA. She was depressed, felt isolated and had alcohol issues. She was also bereaved. Samantha could not attend EVA unless collected at first as she wouldn't walk through town alone, but always denied she had any problems at all. After talking therapies and non-judgemental support from EVA, she eventually admitted to the issues she had and now Samantha walks to attend appointments at EVA's High Street offices.



Ruby, aged 27, was referred to EVA after experiencing abuse from her ex-partner. She had severe anxiety and depression and was very reliant on EVA's support. She had recently lost her grandfather who had raised her and was struggling with grief. She was referred to bereavement counselling with Cruse. She completed the Freedom Programme with EVA and is currently attending 'EVA-lution', the follow-on Programme written by EVA. This has helped her to build confidence and self-esteem as well as building a network of friends and workers around her. She aspired to go to university however had dropped out due to her partner's controlling behaviour and her own poor mental health. Ruby was offered, and took up a place, at Teesside University to study Forensic Psychology.



"I started here as an EVA volunteer and now I'm working on the housing team. In that time, EVA has secured even more accommodation for women who need it. It's so good to be able to celebrate these achievements." Dawn, Housing Team Support Worker

Involving Women

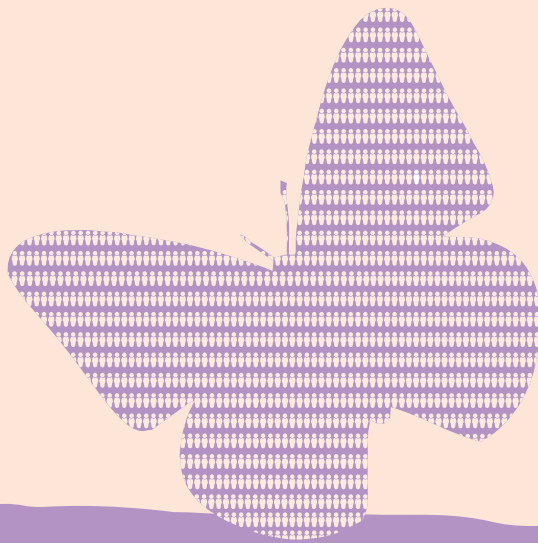
We are proud of how we involve the women who access EVA's services, and we take feedback from them very seriously. We gather information from our service users in a range of ways;

- Feedback and evaluation forms
- Focus groups
- Asking questions and listening to what's said
- Case studies, quotes and comments

Some of our most successful projects at EVA were borne out of feedback from, and discussions with, the women we support. So, we continue to keep those essential lines of communication open. We even have a Suggestion Box in Reception, so keep those ideas coming!

In addition, often the women we work with ask if they can 'give something back' and we are always pleased to hear this, and grateful for their continuing interest in EVA. This could be through Volunteering, helping with fundraising activities, becoming an Ambassador or contributing to our media presence. Several of our paid Staff are former service users, demonstrating that EVA Women's Aid truly is an organisation enabling women towards independence.

We recognise the value that victims/survivors can bring to our services. Having lived experience means an extra dimension is brought, by illuminating the perspectives and experiences of women who have survived domestic abuse and sexual violence. We also know that the journey to recovery can be long and challenging for some women, and it remains our priority to protect victims, so this type of work will not suit everyone. There are many ways former service users can help us, it's a matter of finding the right way.



EVA services were accessed by over
1,000
victims of domestic abuse/sexual violence last year

EVA delivered over
4,000
hours of specialist counselling last year



"The first step into refuge can be very daunting so supporting EVA women emotionally, with finances, housing and taking them to appointments is very important. But empowering the women so they can start to live independently is amazing. I love seeing their confidence grow and there being a more positive outcome." *Chloe, Support Worker (Housing Team)*

Ambitious and Growing

EVA Women's Aid continues to grow. Whilst we're proud of our achievements we continue to be ambitious in order to best support women needing emergency housing, advocacy and a range of support services. We continue to improve staff skills, to plan for the future, and to ensure our bricks and mortar facilities are safe, welcoming spaces.

Our Funders

We are very grateful to all the wonderful organisations that have funded EVA. Reliant on grant funding, donations, and our own fundraising activities, the relationships we nurture with our Funding bodies is very important to us. We like it when Funders ask to meet with us! It gives us an opportunity to demonstrate our passion, our commitment and the pride we have in EVA Women's Aid. We like to showcase our services, and for those who are thinking of funding us to meet Staff, Board members, Volunteers and the women we support, so they can really 'get a feel' for how we work. Thank you to everyone who has supported EVA – we couldn't do it without you!

Raising Awareness

We use regular radio and TV appearances (including Look North, TFM Radio, BBC Radio Tees, and live appearances on BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour and the Victoria Derbyshire Show on BBC2 TV) to raise awareness of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our Supported Housing

EVA's office building is a 'woman only space' because we recognise the importance of having a safe space where women can meet, access support and talk freely. In addition, we offer Safe House supported accommodation for women, and move-on flats for those who are ready to leave our supported housing.

Leadership Success

CEO Richinda Taylor co-wrote an article published in European Journal of Criminology and a chapter in a two-volume book on Domestic Abuse and Older Women. Richinda also won the Institute of Directors 'Director of the Year' Award for Third Sector work on 2020.

Our Patron

Kathy Lette, bestselling novelist, became our Patron in 2017.

"This is the most positive and kindest team I have ever worked with, and the work brings its own reward - I've been told by a number of children that I am the first person to listen to them properly. It's a privilege to see the change in their confidence." *Nadine, Children and Young People's Specialist Counsellor*

Women's Stories

Carole's story



"When I first came to the EVA "Freedom" Programme I was worried about it. I didn't know what to expect and what the people were going to be like. I suffer with a personality disorder and don't usually feel confident around people I don't know, or groups. When I attended my first session of Freedom I was made very welcome by the facilitator, she made me feel at ease.

As the weeks went on, I felt more and more confident to open up and for the first time made me feel like my opinion counted. I have learned such a lot from the course, I knew a lot of it but I didn't ever put things I learned into practice. I have always been keen to help others but could never see things wrong in my own life until I did the Freedom.

Because of EVA I signed up to the New EVA-Lution programme and found it really helpful. Due to my condition, I find it hard to think of myself rather than others. I would definitely recommend these courses to anyone, not just if you've experienced domestic violence".

Paige's story



Paige aged just 15, sought support from EVA after disclosing a sexual assault from a close family member. On the day Paige was due to meet with EVA's ISVA (independent Sexual Violence Advocate) her Mother called EVA to say that the perpetrator had committed suicide and they were unsure if we would be able to see Paige as a result. Our ISVA visited the family to talk through their options.

Paige was added to EVA's waiting list for counselling with one of our specialist young People's Counsellors and it was agreed that our ISVA would continue to support Paige, even though through she would not be going through the criminal justice process.

After six sessions with EVA's ISVA, Paige began to progress and start to "make sense" of what she had been through. Paige is now undertaking Counselling at EVA and getting the additional support she needs.

Paige said about the service she received; "Me and my parents would like to thank you so much for everything you have done for us. We were just left and it was extremely kind of you to keep on seeing me. It made everything a little easier and I'm very grateful".

Rachel's story



Rachel was offered a place at a woman's refuge in Manchester but she did not want to leave the support of her mum and felt it important to stay in the area for her children's sake.

"I didn't know anyone in Manchester - it would have been very difficult," she said.

After being introduced to us, things started to look up for Rachel. She was offered ongoing support and assistance with housing and was eventually rehomed. Rachel now has care of her children again and is moving on with her life.

"I had nothing but EVA Women's Aid helped me get all my furniture, all my stuff. Without EVA I would still be stuck there in that situation," she said. "Since coming here I don't class myself as a victim anymore, I see myself as a survivor."

Many women like Rachel are desperate to leave their abusive partners, but issues like childcare, finances and shame due to religion or culture prevent them from making that massive step.

Jane's story



Jane suffered 26 years of mental and physical abuse before she was finally able to pluck up the courage to leave last year.

"I fled from my home and went to EVA Women's Aid," she said. "I lived down south but I wanted to get as far away as possible. I had stayed for 26 years and I was building up to it for a long time. I stayed mostly for the children but also because you are

brought up thinking you should stay. You are taught "what happens in the house stays in the house". My children are older, they are adults now, and it was the right time for me to leave."

EVA helped her find a home and she continues to receive ongoing support from staff and other women who turned to the charity.

Now in her mid-40s, Jane said it takes courage, but urged other women suffering to seek help.

"If it's getting to the point where you are just existing and not living, then it is never too late," she said. "It was very difficult but I had a lot of support, I've made new friends here and have been able to rebuild my self-esteem. I have moved into my own flat, I have been on courses and I'm now looking for a job. I am still in contact with my children."

Our Volunteers

Our volunteers are a much valued and vital part of our organisation. We offer a variety of volunteering opportunities, giving women the chance to be part of our dynamic team, increase their skills and knowledge, improving personal well-being and employment prospects whilst helping support the women we work with. Our team of volunteers are highly valued and well managed.

Our Fundraisers

EVA is proud to have the loyal support of our local fundraisers who make a valuable contribution to our work with their efforts to raise money on our behalf.

Our COVID-19 Response

It was a challenging time, and like many other organisations, EVA will feel the long-term impact almost indefinitely. However, we emerged strong and resolute, taking the learning on board, and determined to continue to provide services. I am immensely proud of my Team for how they have responded during the pandemic. Because we are small and nimble enough, we were able to react quickly, and we *'just got on with it'*.

- We quickly reviewed our priorities, and realigned our services
- Staff quickly adapted to new tasks and job roles – some Staff are doing completely different jobs to what they were recruited to, but all Staff took on the challenge without complaint
- We adapted to new ways of delivering services – all but two of our projects kept running
- We applied to temporary funding and were successful in most cases
- We created new practices and policies to ensure we supported our Staff's mental health and wellbeing
- New referrals sharply increased – we saw a 35% increase in the first six months of lockdown, but we rose to the challenge and no woman was turned away
- We kept in touch with existing service users and all new referrals were contacted even if face to face sessions were not possible to complete assessments
- Some new ways of working will be retained as good practice – who knew that Zoom meetings would become a way of life??
- All Staff were given the opportunity to receive vaccines in the early stages because of the nature of our work and we ensured that all Staff were allocated the appropriate PPE if undertaking front-line work
- Our Counselling Staff adopted new ways of working, offering video and telephone Counselling, and in some cases, 'walk and talk' therapy was offered and successful

Strategic Planning

EVA creates a new Strategic Business Plan every three years, setting our direction and identifying growth areas. This document helps the CEO and the Board plan ahead to ensure we know where we're going, and how we will get there.

Partnership Work

At EVA, we know the value of working in partnership, to pool ideas, resources and strategy. We work closely with a number of local and regional organisations, a number of whom are represented in the Cleveland Women's Network, of which EVA's CEO is Vice-Chair. We work hard to cultivate excellent working relationships with Cleveland Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, local Courts, Solicitors and a whole range of small local organisations that support the people of Redcar and Cleveland.

Our Memberships

EVA Women's Aid is proud to be a full member of the Women's Aid Federation of England (WAFE) and even prouder to hold their National Quality Standards, demonstrating we are a quality organisation putting the needs of victims and survivors first. We are also members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), which guides our Counselling service. EVA's CEO is one of the founder members of the North East Rape and Sexual Violence Network (NERSVN), and also a founder member of TALENT, a group of local organisations promoting and supporting social enterprise businesses throughout Redcar and Cleveland.





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"EVA saved my life"

... haven't been able to get through the process without your support. Or even been able to live"

"If it wasn't for the staff at EVA believing in I would have given up a long time ago"

... aren't anyone that understands what I'm going through apart from you"

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