

# Perthshire Women's Aid - Housing Support. Housing Support Service

Perth

Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)  
Inspection completed on: 5 January 2018

**Service provided by:**  
Perthshire Women's Aid.

**Service provider number:**  
SP2011011404

**Care service number:**  
CS2011280681

## About the service

Perthshire Women's Aid was registered on 5 September 2011 as a housing support service. The service is managed by a Board of Directors.

Perthshire Women's Aid is affiliated to the national federation of Scottish Women's Aid. Their mission is to advocate for abused women and children.

The service provides support to women in refuge accommodation as well as outreach support services. The refuge accommodation comprises six individual flats which can accommodate up to six women with or without children.

The service has a base in Perth and from there supports women living in refuge accommodation across the city, as well as women living at home or in temporary accommodation throughout Perthshire.

Perthshire Women's Aid's Aim is:

Ending Violence against women, children and young people which means changing the society we live in. We are committed to upholding and promoting the rights of women, children and young people who have experience of domestic abuse through the following means:

Prevention, provision, protection and participation.

Perthshire Women's Aids objectives are for:

Women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse to experience increased safety.

Women children and young people with experience of domestic abuse to have a greater understanding of domestic abuse and how it affects them.

Women, children and young people with experience of domestic abuse to improve their emotional intelligence and resilience.

Women, children and young people with experience of domestic abuse to feel more empowered by being involved in enhancing service provision.

## What people told us

We visited the service on the 26 October 2017 and on 24 November 2017. During our inspection visits we spoke with four women in a focus group. Following our inspection visit we spoke with four women by telephone. We sent 30 service user Care Standards Questionnaires (CSQs) and two women returned completed questionnaires.

Women we spoke with appreciated the support they had received from Perthshire Women's Aid. They told us they felt safe in the refuge accommodation. We also heard that when any issues within the refuge were brought to the attention of staff they responded immediately to attempt to resolve the problem. A number of women commented on the particular benefits to their children in relation to the specialist support that had been provided to them to help them recover from their experience of domestic abuse. Only one women we spoke with felt the staff did not address issues within the refuge accommodation speedily. This individual also felt that the refuge should have been cleaned to a higher standard before she moved. She did feel the standard of care, support and counselling she received from Perthshire Women's Aid was high.

Women made the following comments:

'I got a prompt response. I phoned up and she came out to see me the same day. When my keyworker's not available I can see someone else'.

'I was shocked when I walked into the refuge - its homely and its really nice'.

'Staff are great, they are supportive of the children. A couple of days after I got to refuge CAMHS came. That was organised by Women's Aid staff'.

'Women's Aid get it. Other agencies don't always get it. Other agencies need to be trained to understand domestic abuse. The legal system lets us down, Women's Aid doesn't. Women's Aid have got your back and you feel empowered to stand up'.

'Staff are amazing, they are professional. They treat you like a human being. They believe you. They understand, they take the time to listen'.

'They helped me find the tools not to fall back and to realise there's a life out there for me'.

'My son benefitted from the support. It helped him realise he wasn't alone. My son's support worker was fantastic. The freedom programme was very helpful, you could see other women growing in confidence'.

'If I hadn't had Women's Aid I don't know what I would have done'.

'Now I'm waiting to see a counsellor. There is a counsellor available but it was difficult to get an appointment as I have work commitments. I'm back on the waiting list again'.

'Staff are generally very approachable and very concerned'.

'The location ... for anyone without a car is not accessible. A drop in facility that's more central might help, so that more women access help'.

'My GP recommended Women's Aid to me but she didn't have the details. I had to go and find them'.

'I would like to praise them for the support I have received'.

'I couldn't fault the staff, they are very professional. Always at the end of a phone'.

'Women's Aid helped me to keep my house safe'.

'They don't make you feel like a victim, they make you feel like a person'.

'I never felt like I was imposing myself. I got exactly the support I needed. I got emotional support and they passed on donations to me that I needed. They helped me to release my anger. I got exactly the help I needed'.

'The support brought me closer to my daughter. It helped us to understand each other'.

'They obviously love their job'.

'It was hard when group finished. It would be great if Women's Aid had an aftercare programme to help progress women onto independent working lives. Some sort of social enterprise initiative to empower us more'.

'I couldn't have asked for a better service, you were never abandoned'.

'My support worker is like an angel, she is helpful and very flexible'.

## Self assessment

A self assessment was not requested prior to this inspection visit.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	5 - Very Good
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

## What the service does well

Perthshire Women's Aid is a busy service which provided a wide range of flexible support to women and children which helped them recover from domestic abuse. We found that individual support plans and risk assessments were compiled in relation to individual women. This meant that staff, regardless of whether or not they were a designated keyworker, were able to access detailed up to date records so that they were able to provide the most relevant care and support to meet the needs of each individual woman.

We spoke to a number of women who had participated in the freedom programme which is a programme designed to raise awareness of the nature of abusive relationships as well as awareness of how to protect oneself from abusive relationships. One women explained: 'It helped me to see the abuse that I hadn't seen before'. In cases where children had been separated from their mothers the service carried out assessments. These assessments informed support provided to women and, where possible, this contributed to children being returned to their mother's care. Women we spoke with told us the support they had received from Perthshire Women's Aid had helped build their self confidence and had helped them to gain more control over their circumstances.

The service was aimed at supporting women and children to be empowered, independent, resilient and safe. We found that staff had been trained in the administration of naloxone (naloxone is an opiate blocker which when administered in the event of overdose can be life saving). Women were helped to complete benefits applications as well as housing applications. Where necessary, the service linked with the local food bank which ensured that women and children were provided with food if this was required. Staff members accompanied women to appointments at external agencies if this support was required. The service worked in partnership with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide specialist support to address issues related to financial abuse.

Women were given opportunities to engage in social and recreational activities. This included 'nature time' which involved outdoor activities aimed at building resilience. Support was tailored to meet the individual needs of each person, at a pace they were able to cope with. Women were able to give their views on the support they received both throughout the time they were using the service as well as at the point of exit. Women we spoke with told us that staff were very flexible in how they delivered support.

The service had recently completed an internal restructure aimed at improving the quality of service provision in particular, areas of joint working. The premises had relocated since the last inspection which meant that all staff within the service were now based in one office. We heard that this development had helped to both build relationships and improve communication across teams. Staff spoke positively of the newly appointed manager for the housing support service and felt that this appointment had contributed to improved team working.

The staff group were insightful, highly motivated and they worked hard to meet the high level of demand within their service. We found that staff were receiving regular formal supervision. Staff within Perthshire Women's Aid brought a wide range of relevant qualifications and experience to their role. One staff member held a degree in childhood practice, another held a degree in health studies. We found three staff within the team had completed specific training in independent domestic abuse advocacy. This training informed staff on the subject of domestic abuse and how to support and represent women who were assessed as being at high risk in relation to domestic abuse. Staff were able to access relevant training via Scottish Women's Aid's ongoing training calendar. Staff also had access to online training facilities. The service had designed and made use of a training matrix which was used to develop a staff training plan. The service had recently secured a training grant to provide specialist mental health training for staff.

The service had built up strong working partnerships with relevant local agencies. A member of the service's management team sat on the Violence Against Women Partnership. The service participated in the local multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) which was aimed at reducing the risk of domestic abuse in relation to women who had been assessed as being at high risk. Perthshire Women's Aid had identified domestic abuse champions within Perth and Kinross Council Social Work Department. The service also worked collaboratively with local schools to raise awareness of the nature and impact of domestic abuse.

We spoke with professionals from partner agencies and we heard that Perthshire women's Aid staff were highly committed to supporting people. They actively engaged and participated at joint meetings. We were told that Perthshire Women's Aid had effectively mediated to achieve positive but realistic outcomes for the women they support. We particularly heard positive reports on the benefits for families from participating in the Cedar programme (Cedar is a unique way of working with children, young people and their mothers who have experienced domestic abuse). This partnership working helped to ensure that support delivered to women and children across agencies was streamlined.

## What the service could do better

There had been a number of changes within the staff team which some staff had found unsettling. Some staff we spoke with felt there was scope for improved communication across the organisation. The service could support staff to actively contribute to service development within Perthshire Women's Aid.

The service could explore carrying naloxone (naloxone is an opiate blocker which when administered in the event of overdose can be life saving) within their service.

The service should ensure that it is familiar with the Care Inspectorate's up to date guidance on notification and that it notifies us of incidents in accordance with this guidance **(see recommendation)**.

The service had recently implemented an updated version of electronic case management. This was in the initial stages and the service was exploring the ways this new system could support their recording of electronic case files. The service had agreed to explore using this case management system to introduce flagging to highlight review dates of individuals' risk assessments.

We received feedback from a partner agency that, at times, there had been differences between professionals, in terms of values and opinions related to supporting families who have experienced domestic abuse. We heard that communication between the agencies had helped to increase understanding. There would appear to be further scope to improve communication and understanding between agencies.

The service had plans to identify domestic abuse champions with external agencies, starting with a pilot project with social work. Progress with these areas of development will be followed up at the next inspection.

## Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

## Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. The service should ensure that they access the up to date Care Inspectorate guidance on notifications and notify us in accordance with this guidance.

National Care Standards Housing Support Services. Standard 3: Management and Staffing Arrangements

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
24 Dec 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
8 Nov 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
9 Nov 2012	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good

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