



The 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline referred 40% of its callers needing assistance to their local Women's Aid's Floating Support service this year.

Domestic violence is a housing issue

Women, who have experienced domestic violence need a range of accommodation and support services: the impact of domestic violence on health, social and economic wellbeing of women and their children is far reaching. These effects vary depending on the type of abuse, her individual circumstances and the quality and consistency of any support that she accesses from friends, family, voluntary or statutory sectors.

Access to immediate, safe accommodation is a key element in the provision of temporary accommodation and used by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in relation to domestic violence to meet their statutory duty. The importance of providing not just accommodation but also support to homeless households and of preventing homelessness is also recognised by NIHE as strategic objectives.

Refuges

Refuges, operated by local Women's Aid groups, combine emergency access accommodation with a range of support services, providing safe, secure accommodation; one to one support; benefits and housing information; confidentiality/safety measures; advocacy and support in accessing statutory agencies; help in accessing the legal system and other identified support needs. In addition refuges provide a range of children's services including designated play areas and trained childcare support workers.

Floating Support

Women's Aid provides a Floating Support service which is funded by NIHE under its Supporting people initiative. This service assists women to remain in their homes, supports women living in temporary accommodation other than refuge and assists women to settle in alternative permanent accommodation.

The introduction of Floating Support has made a significant impact on the services being delivered by local Women's Aid groups. The 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline referred 40% of its callers needing assistance to their local Women's Aid's Floating Support service this year. The effect is to significantly reduce homelessness amongst women and their children experiencing domestic violence and to allow for planned responses rather than crisis intervention.

women's aid

Federation Northern Ireland