



## WELSH WOMEN'S AID MANIFESTO

### Assembly Elections 2011

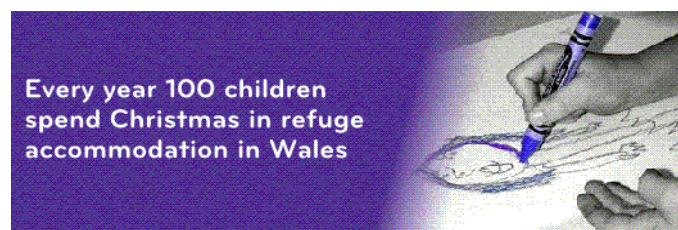
#### About Welsh Women's Aid

Founded in 1978 to campaign for improvements in public policy in relation to women and children experiencing domestic abuse, Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) continues to be the leading domestic abuse organisation in Wales.

We are a national umbrella organisation with a membership of 34 local Women's Aid groups. Our member groups provide essential, specialist, frontline services to women and children experiencing domestic abuse, including emergency temporary accommodation (refuges); outreach in the community; information and practical advice to women and their children; and 24-hour helplines. Welsh Women's Aid also manages the freephone, 24-hour, bilingual Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline.

#### Domestic Abuse in Wales: the facts

- Domestic abuse affects **1 in 4** women in Wales at some point in their lives.
- **150,000** women in Wales will suffer from some form of gender-based violence each year.
- Last year, **1407** women and **1228** children were accommodated in Women's Aid refuges in Wales.
- **Effects on victims** range from physical injury and psychological consequences to long-term mental health issues, constrained socio-economic opportunities and wider social exclusion.
- **Effects on society** include greater gender inequality, social injustice, and huge costs to the public purse in budgets ranging from health and social services to housing and social justice.



## OUR PRIORITIES

Welsh Women's Aid has consulted with our member groups across Wales, as well as their service users and our national team, on the priorities of the Women's Aid movement in Wales. We are asking you to commit to five key priorities, which we believe will protect women and children from domestic abuse; improve services for victims; and prevent violence from happening in the first place:

### 1. PREVENTION:

Focus on early intervention through compulsory **core curriculum education** on healthy relationships and the unacceptability of gendered violence from an early age, and sustained, national attitude-challenging communications campaigns.

### 2. PROTECTION:

Meet the needs of children affected by domestic abuse through ensuring that each Women's Aid group has a funded, specialist **children's worker** in refuge and the community, as in Scotland.

### 3. PROVISION:

Clearly state your commitment to the specialist violence against women and girls sector. Ensure the **sustainability of specialist women's services** through enforcing guidance for local authority commissioners on the need for women-only domestic abuse services under the Gender Equality Duty.

### 4. AWARENESS:

Implement a national domestic abuse **training strategy for professionals** delivering frontline services, including doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, police and the criminal justice system, ensuring that training is ongoing and delivered by experts.

### 5. DELIVERY:

Appoint a **Minister for Women**, and/or a **Violence Against Women Champion** in Government, with responsibility for driving the domestic abuse agenda across all departments to ensure an integrated, whole-Government approach and an emphasis on delivery.

## Saving You Money

Domestic abuse is hugely costly, both to individual women and to society as a whole. Welsh Women's Aid recognises that money is tight and wants to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to save you money, while also ensuring that the most vulnerable do not bear the brunt of public spending cuts. Commitment to our priorities could save millions of pounds from the public purse – as well as saving lives:

- The Welsh Assembly Government has found that women seeking refuge from domestic abuse costs **£8.2million** to the Supporting People housing budget

annually, but has a net benefit of **£47.9million** – saving this amount of public spending on the justice system, social welfare and health budgets.

- Investment in our priorities will alleviate the huge cost of domestic abuse for businesses – particularly important during these difficult financial times. In England and Wales, domestic abuse costs businesses **£2.7billion** every year through economic output due to decreased productivity, administrative difficulties from unplanned time off, lost wages and sick pay.
- The total cost of domestic violence in the UK in 2008 was **£15.7billion** - including the human and emotional cost of injury. However, this was a fall from **£22.8billion** in 2001 – implying that government action and a coordinated community response can reduce the substantial cost of domestic abuse.
- The cost to the NHS of domestic abuse in Wales could be **£60million** (extrapolated from UK research showing the cost to the NHS in the UK is **£1.2billion** per year). Domestic abuse accounts for more death and ill-health among women aged 15–44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war. Commitment to our priorities could drastically reduce these costs to the NHS.
- Nearly half of residents accommodated in Welsh Women's Aid refuges are children. In 2006/7, some 8% of children in refuge were on the Child Protection Register (and 19% of children receiving support in the community from Women's Aid groups). If these children were not in refuge or receiving support, they could well become 'Looked After' by local authorities at a cost of over **£6.5million**.

## Further Information

We would love to talk to you about how we can help you to deliver your vision for Wales, or to discuss any of our priorities in greater detail. We can arrange for you to meet our local groups, their service users, or colleagues from across the violence against women sector in Wales (we are a founding member of the Wales Violence Against Women Action Group).

Please contact **Hannah Austin** on 029 2039 0874, or email [HannahAustin@welshwomensaid.org.uk](mailto:HannahAustin@welshwomensaid.org.uk), for more information or to arrange a meeting.

