

Scottish Government Throws A Lifeline to Vital Violence Against Women Services Across Scotland

At this morning's Scottish Government debate on Violence against Women, Alex Neil the Minister for Housing and Communities, announced that three vital funds will be retained at their current level in the next financial year.

Prior to the announcement it had been thought that many services for women and children would be cut. 40 Women's Aid groups around the country faced an average loss of 40% of their funding. A number of rape crisis centres were facing the possibility of either closure or severe restriction of their services. These services have now been safeguarded.

The announcement came as very welcome news to Lily Greenan, Manager of Scottish Women's Aid. She said:

"We have worked closely with Rape Crisis Scotland and with local Women's Aid and Rape Crisis groups around Scotland over the last few months gathering support for the continuation of this funding from the Scottish Government. Today we are all extremely grateful to the MSPs, local politicians and members of the public who have played their part in making this happen.

"Christmas is the time of year when our services are needed most of all – during the festive season there is a dramatic increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents – so it really could not have come at a better time."

Sandy Brindley, National Coordinator of Rape Crisis Scotland, welcomed the announcement.

"Sexual violence can have a devastating impact and it is crucial that survivors throughout Scotland have access to specialised services. If Scottish Government funding had been lost, rape survivors across Scotland would have found it much more difficult to access support. We believe the provision of support following sexual violence should be a basic right, and we welcome the support for this across the Parliament."

Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, while welcoming today's announcement, called for a long term funding strategy to ensure the sustainability of vital support services. Lily Greenan said:

"We still have a long way to go to ensure that women and children who experience violence are able to access support wherever and whenever they need it. We look forward to working with the Scottish Government and COSLA over the next few months to find ways to secure the future of these vital services."

Ends

Distributed to the media on behalf of Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland by Andrea Pearson, 0776 967 6899, andrea.pearson@copytaker.com

Notes

1. Women's Aid groups around the country are supported nationally by two funding streams supporting Violence Against Women services and services to children and young people who experience domestic abuse. Currently, these funds amount to just over £8.3 million per year. This consists of the Rape Crisis Specific Fund – £700,000; Violence Against Women Fund – £3,505,337; Children Services Women's Aid Fund – £4,166,258.

2. In October and November Scottish Women's Aid visited Oban, Inverness, Perth, Irvine, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Orkney with a set of 30 life-sized cardboard representations of women and children with an inscription reading "I'm here because I'm not safe at home" to seek support from local politicians. Pictures available here <http://www.flickr.com/photos/copytaker/sets/72157625261490758/with/5123533805/>

3. There are 14 rape crisis services operating throughout Scotland. Every rape crisis centre receives £50,000 per year from the Scottish Government to try to provide a basic level of capacity for these services. On average, dedicated funding from the Scottish Government accounts for 50% of rape crisis centres' funding. Some centres, such as the Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre and the Western Isles Rape Crisis Centre, are 100% dependent on this funding.

4. 5 new rape crisis centres have been set up through the Scottish Government's dedicated funding, in Lanarkshire, the Western Isles, Argyll & Bute, Perth & Kinross and the Scottish Borders. The Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre was launched by the Solicitor General on the 22nd November this year.

3. Figures from Strathclyde Police show that while on average around 60 incidents of domestic abuse are recorded daily, on December 25, 26 and 27 and then again on January 2 they record between 80 and 90 incidents of domestic abuse each day. On January 1 this jumps to more than 160, nearly three times as many. Figures for 2008 available from DCI Peter McPike, Domestic Abuse Task Force at Strathclyde Police.

4. Scottish Women's Aid is now in its 35th year working towards an end to domestic abuse in Scotland. There will be events held throughout 2011 to mark the anniversary. The first event was the launch of a website <http://www.togetherwecanstopit.org> which suggests ten ways in which people can help to stop domestic abuse. So far about 500 people have signed a pledge to help stop domestic abuse.

5. Scottish Women's Aid is Scotland's leading authority on domestic abuse. It plays a vital role campaigning and lobbying for effective responses to domestic abuse. It provides advice, information, training and publications. For more information check <http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/> Scottish Women's Aid is a company limited by guarantee, registered company no SC128433 and a registered charity, charity number SC001099.

6. Rape Crisis Scotland runs a national helpline for anyone affected by sexual violence, and campaigns to raise public awareness and change attitudes. The helpline is open every day from 6pm-midnight on 08088 01 03 02. For more information, check www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

7. In 2009-2010 884 rapes and 112 attempted rapes were reported to the police. 1,685 indecent assaults. The new Sexual Offences Act which reforms the law on sexual offences was implemented on the 1st December 2010.