



**2014-2015
WAO's 15th Year
Annual Report**

"The abusive man's high entitlement leads him to have unfair and unreasonable expectations, so that the relationship revolves around his demands. His attitude is: "You owe me." For each ounce he gives, he wants a pound in return. He wants his partner to devote herself fully to catering to him, even if it means that her own needs - or her children's - get neglected.

You can pour all your energy into keeping your partner content, but if he has this mind-set, he'll never be satisfied for long. And he will keep feeling that you are controlling him, because he doesn't believe that you should set any limits on his conduct or insist that he meet his responsibilities."

Borrowed from Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men. Lundy Bancroft

This annual report is dedicated to the many women who put their trust in our service over the past fifteen years, and whose courage and determination inspires us in our work.



FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

LOOKING BACK.... August 2013 saw the start of a programme of change deemed essential prior to service growth. Following on from our service re launch back in December 2013, WAO has continued to go from strength to strength. This has been led by focused and supportive management and driven by the never ending commitment of our staff team who remain determined and work tirelessly to enable safer lives for service users.

The numbers speak for themselves...

In 2012-13 WAO supported 30 women and 37 children/young people.

In 2013-14 WAO supported 56 women and 64 children/young people.

In 2014-15 WAO's supported 86 women and 53 children/young people.

Without essential improvements across processes and systems this would not have been possible

One of our primary goals for 2014/15 was to increase understanding across stakeholder services of the causes and consequences of domestic abuse. So in June 2014 our WAO Weekly Bulletin was launched. Using a straightforward information sharing template the bulletin helps raise awareness of the issues our service routinely faces. Providing an honest, reflective summary snapshot of a working week, the bulletin continues to attract regular positive feedback from key stakeholders. The feedback log confirms some professionals 'had no idea' of the scale of the problem, the range of issues and the diverse volume of work our staff undertake. The bulletin is now shared with more than 140 practitioners and interested parties across Orkney and beyond.

We in WAO are committed to a partnership approach to managing the risks to those most vulnerable as a result of domestic abuse. This is why, in the absence of any other agency, we offered to bring the MARAC Co-ordinator role in house. Using a limited amount of pilot funding, matched in kind by WAO, we have helped steer the process into the successful service it is today. Enhanced by the provision of free specialist training for local practitioners, our small service continues to play a key role alongside our statutory and third sector partners.

My thanks go to fellow Board members for giving their time as trustees and governors and particularly to Georgette Herd who stood down in September and Jo Murray who left in March. In February we welcomed three new Directors, Michelle Mackie, Maureen Swannie and Miriam Baster who bring a new range of skills and experience to the Board.

Thanks also to everyone who has supported WAO throughout 2014/15; to our funders and partner agencies for their support and goodwill; to individuals in other services who have signposted to us those at risk of domestic abuse; and finally to the staff team whose dedication and professionalism has given so many women and children support and encouragement when they most needed it.

Looking forward....Funding continues to be our limiting factor and my hope for the coming year is that we recruit more Board members and together we help develop and deliver an effective funding strategy. This way we can free up our staff to continue to develop our services and to learn from the real experts; our service users.

'Courage does not always roar.

Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying,

'I will try again tomorrow'

Mary Anne Radmacher

Women's Aid in Scotland...

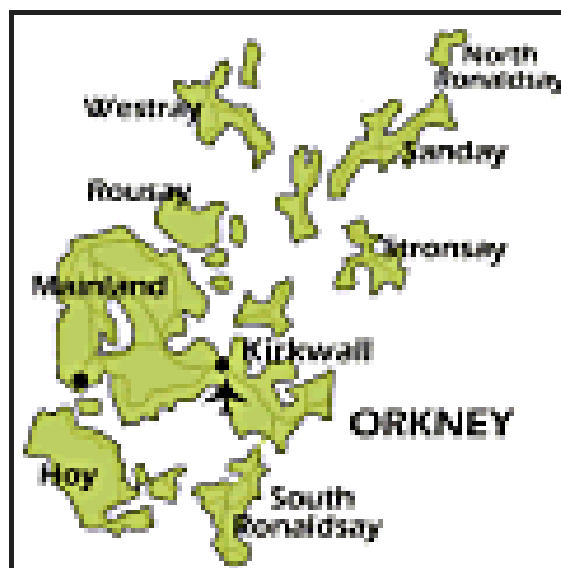
from a grassroots beginning to lead agency addressing domestic abuse

Since its inception in 1973 Women's Aid has been at the forefront of the domestic abuse debate. The feminist analysis of violence against women as a reflection of the power imbalance in society has largely informed the development of work in Scotland over the last 30 years. The beginning of this process found women activists keen to move beyond theorising to providing practical help and support

The first refuges were opened by Women's Aid in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1973 and, by the mid-seventies, eight groups were providing refuge accommodation in Scotland. During the 1970's Women's Aid groups expanded from the refuge based services they had provided, to meet the growing demand from women for information and advice. This included information and advice on a wide range of issues: legal, housing, divorce, access to children and finance.

15 years delivering support for women, children and young people in Orkney...

Women's Aid Orkney was established 15 years ago in February 2000, with support from Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO). Since that time, the organisation has operated independently and was for a while under the umbrella of VAO. It was a huge local community milestone for the refuge to be built and run, since 2005. This was predominately due to lack of awareness within the wider community about the issues



surrounding Gender-Based Violence. WAO is now affiliated with Scottish Women's Aid, and is part of a National network of Women's Aid Groups.

Scottish
Women's Aid
Census Day
2014

383 women & 302 children & young people
were living in a Women's Aid refuge

859 women & 400 children & young people
were supported by a Women's Aid group

67 women & 46 children & young people
contacted Women's Aid for the very first time

45 women & 25 children & young people
asked for refuge accommodation, but Women's Aid groups were
unable to find suitable spaces for

16 women & 9 children & young people

The services we provided this year....

Refuge accommodation... we provided sanctuary and shelter and a safe haven for women, children and young people who had to leave their home because of domestic abuse

Moving on from refuge... we provided follow on resettlement transition support for women children and young people who were rehoused.

Outreach Support... we supported women in their own communities either in their homes or other locations by arrangement.

Information... we provided information on housing options, benefits entitlement, legal rights and reporting options.

Advocacy... We provided advocacy support which ranged from safety planning, support at appointments, during reporting of abuse, registering for health services, school enrolment, as well as support through legal action and the court system. We helped service users prepare victim impact statements and criminal injuries compensation applications, as well as helping them access multi agency support when needed.

Training and awareness raising... We provided training opportunities for front line staff who were likely to come into daily contact with women who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Children & young people's service... We provided support in refuge and as outreach in schools and other safe locations for children and young people in their own right, mirroring the service we provided for their mothers.

Co-ordinating Orkney's Multi Agency Case Conference Project... Providing a single point of contact for key agencies and maintaining a record of actions designed to reduce risk for those deemed most vulnerable.

Healthy Relationships: Working in schools with children & young people

This year, thanks to funding from Orkney Child Care Partnership we were able to deliver 69 prevention education sessions in schools in Orkney, promoting healthy and respectful relationships, and providing information about how to access our Children and Young People's outreach service.

What we did:

- Worked positively during formative years to raise awareness of domestic abuse with pupils
- Helped inform their understanding of related issues
- Encouraged pupils to think about abuse of power and control
- Addressed the issue of gender inequality in age appropriate ways
- Raised the issue of negative or stereotypical attitudes & opinions
- Discussed the harms of unacceptable behaviour or language
- Helped pupils to know abuse is not inevitable
- Provided pupils with a forum to explore related issues

Being in a relationship with an abusive partner, and surviving, requires considerable skill and resourcefulness. Although she may not be fully aware of it, every victim of domestic abuse has already been doing risk assignment and safety planning:

- attempting to manage rising tensions
- attempting to head off crises
- attempting to protect themselves and their children
- attempting to keep an already bad situation from getting worse

Despite the potential benefits;

- everything that we suggest that victims do
- everything we offer to do on their behalf
- everything we do **without** their consent also carries with it some kind of potential risk or cost.

Responsible intervention isn't possible unless we seriously consider and account for those risks and costs as well as the risks she has been contending with before she accesses our services.

It cannot be emphasised enough that the problem of domestic abuse cannot be resolved by effecting changes in the victim's behaviour.

No abused women has control over her partner's behaviour and it is dangerous for us to expect victims to be able to stop the abuse that they and their children experience.

The problem is

- the perpetrator's conduct
- the perpetrator's sense of entitlement to use coercive & controlling behaviour

Avoiding serious injury or death is the most dramatic aspect of a domestic abuse intervention strategy. But once we understand domestic violence as a problem of coercive control rather than simply as problem of assault behaviour, we are forced to broaden our concept of risk assessment. Like abused women, services need to conduct a thorough analysis of the complex package of physical, legal, economic, familial, social, and emotional risks faced by the victim, and by those she feels bound to protect.

'Because of the effects of trauma, the victim of battering will often seem hostile, disjointed, and agitated, while the abuser appears friendly, articulate, and calm. Evaluators are thus tempted to conclude that the victim is the source of the problems in the relationship.'

(Lundy Bancroft)

Women's Experiences of Coercive Control

Women who access our service talk about the pressures they face as they are constantly bombarded with unreasonable demands. Demands that are often inconsistent, thus making it impossible to predict what their controlling partner expects of them. Often followed up by threats, pressure or physical restraint if they fail to agree or comply. Coupled with degradation, women can find themselves on the receiving end of malicious and humiliating name calling, or bullying behaviour. This can include buying clothes that are purposefully too small for her, as well as constant belittling behaviour in front of others, and all designed to make her feel worthless.

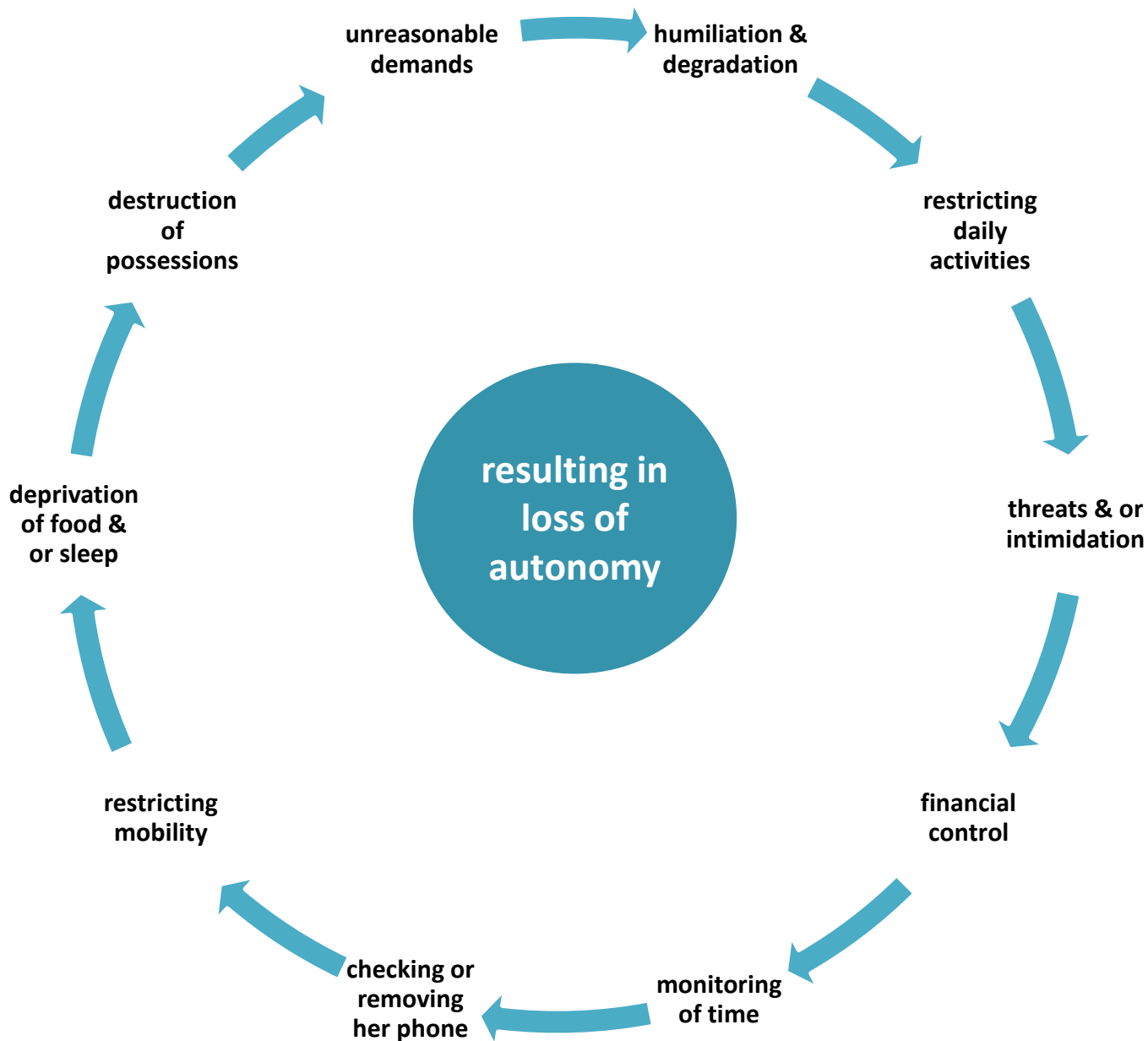
Often women describe how their daily activities are restricted, affecting their ability to do the things they want or need to do. This can include daily exercise, meeting family or friends, attending appointments or holding down her job. Slowly but surely women who experience domestic abuse can feel increasingly unable to carry out their normal routine. They also tell us of the threats they receive, and of the feelings of intimidation caused as a result. Such behaviour can target any aspect of their life, and can include sex too.

Financial control can be another aspect of abuse women are forced to endure, and can include constant monitoring of spending, or limited access to money that may essentially be hers in the first place. Countless women describe ways in which their time is routinely monitored, and their movements stalked, often through unwanted contacted at work, or through controls set in place that dictate how much time can be spent on any single activity. Some women have their mobile phones meticulously checked for incoming and outgoing calls, their duration, and critically who they were speaking to and why. Others may have their phone confiscated, either permanently or as a punishment. However abusers often prefer to leave their partners with their mobile phone, as it means they have constant access to them at any time.

Women also tell us of having their computer passwords changed so they are 'locked out', which in turn restricts women's access to communication, information or services. The same goes for restricted mobility: Sleep and food deprivation are commonplace, as is the deliberate destruction of personal possessions.

If you're unable to leave the house, or use your car because they won't allow it. If your partner's behaviour isolates you from friends, family or colleagues, then it's important to seek help.

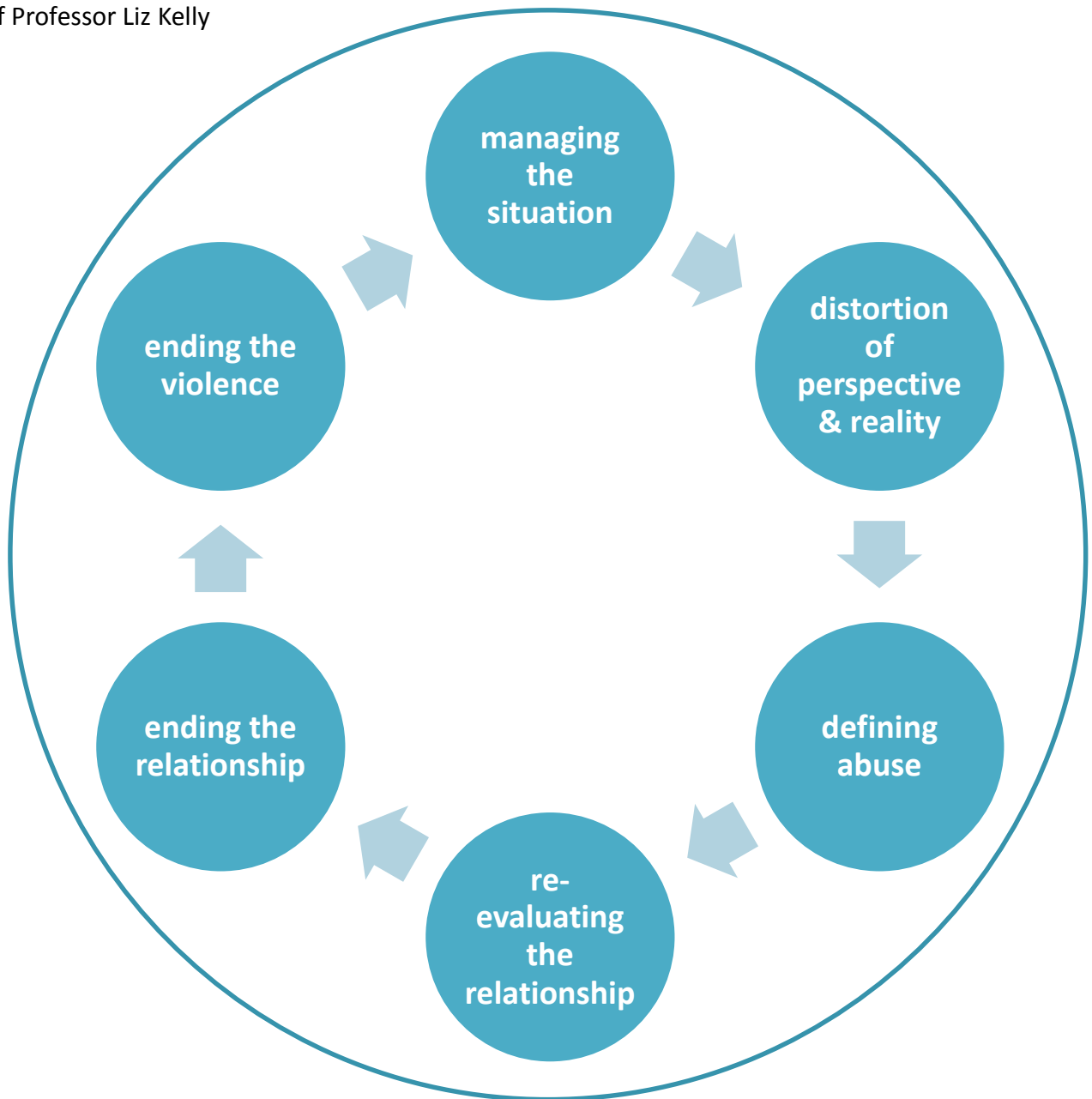
Women's account of some of the most common aspects of coercive control they experience in abusive relationships:



"The strength to live with this and to function daily in a range of settings, to survive, is enormous and courageous."

Evan Stark author of Coercive Control

Based on the work
of Professor Liz Kelly



This six stage process provides a theoretical framework for understanding both why women may stay in a relationship and why they might leave. It is helpful for the practitioner in that it can help them to understand how a women might view her situation at any given time and how their intervention may help to move her to a different understanding of that situation. It shows that a woman may become more clear about the abuse she is experiencing and that a practitioner has played a role in that without the practitioner expecting her to leave just because they have intervened. The framework begins with a time when physical violence enters a relationship (because it was worked up after Liz Kelly's discussion with women who had experienced physical violence in a relationship), though it is obviously understood that a woman can experience domestic abuse without it ever being physical.

1. Managing the Situation: The point at which physical violence is first experienced can be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back' for some women and it is the point they leave an abuser. Many more women stay in the relationship. Why is this? And how can it be? Liz Kelly suggests that it is because they find, or accept, an explanation for the incident which allows for a future: it was a one-off, it was because he was stressed, it was the drink, it was because she provoked him. They develop strategies to manage the situation and incidents of violence. Part of that strategising (on top of many physical actions and soothing approaches to the abuser) is that the blame for the violence is placed somewhere else other than with the perpetrator.

2. Distortion of Perspective/Reality: Gradually more and more of a woman's daily life is taken up with managing the violence and managing the anxiety that comes with it. Trying to make sense of 'why?', takes up more and more of her energy and attention. Increasingly she takes responsibility for his behaviour or blames other things for causing it. Coping is increasingly focused on trying to do and not do certain things. Sometimes she will act defiantly and do something knowing the consequences – this simply reinforces to her (and the perpetrator) that the violence she experiences is her fault. She becomes entrapped in the distorted perspectives that living with abuse creates.

3. Defining Abuse: Defining the abuse is not about using the words 'domestic abuse' or 'domestic violence' but about understanding that you are being victimised by another. Effectively, this is the time when, for the first time, the perpetrator becomes visible to the woman. It is the time when she is able to say to herself 'YOU are doing this to me'.

4. Re-evaluating the Relationship: Once the relationship is understood as one in which abuse/violence occurs a re-evaluation process begins. This is not the same as saying the woman wants to end the relationship but the decisions she makes take place in a changed context of meaning. At this stage she may consider leaving – permanently or temporarily – or embark on some other course of help-seeking. Factors such as stage of life, economic opportunities etc will shape whether the help she seeks takes the form of respite, safety advice or a move towards leaving. For example, if a woman is pregnant she is less likely to want to leave her partner but may wish to speak about safety. This stage can sometimes be confused from the outside with the next stage (leaving the relationship) as a woman may leave on a temporary basis and return many times before she has finally arrived at the stage whereby she wishes to leave the relationship.

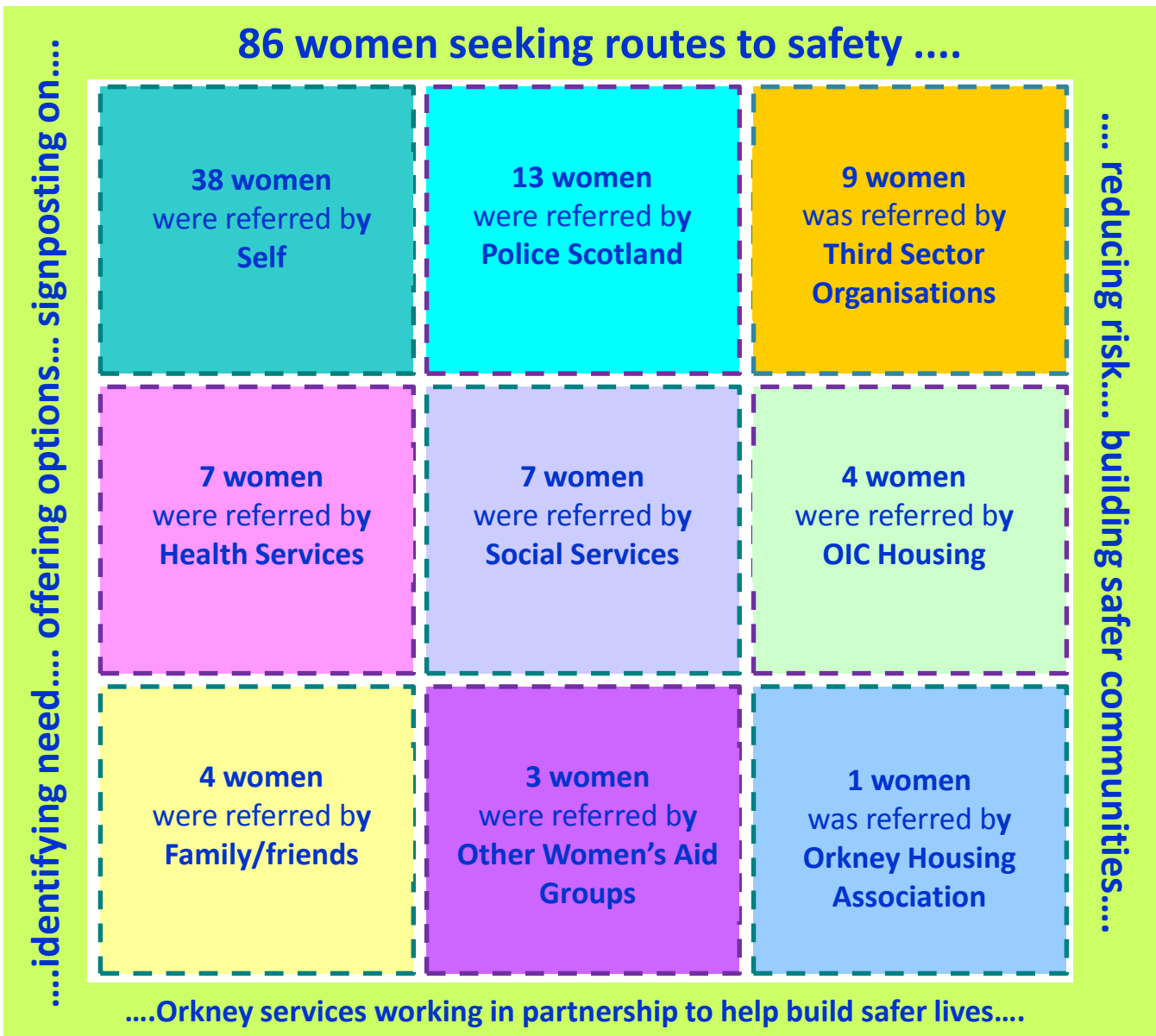
5. Ending the Relationship: Even when a woman has decided she wants to leave for good she may return to the abuser. This occurs for many reasons: the absence of safe alternatives and pressure from others are amongst the most common. It is important to re-iterate here that not all women will want to leave the relationship and not all women will come to this point within the framework. If a practitioner has spoken to the woman about the abuse she is experiencing and they have discussed safety then it is important that they are aware that they have made a difference and that they have not failed in their job or she failed to do what she should do.

6. Ending the Violence: As has already been established during the course of this training, ending a relationship does not always ensure the end of the violence. Leaving can be a particularly dangerous time for women and it is the time that they are most likely to be killed by the partner/ex-partner. It is important to note in this context that the woman has no control over whether the violence ends – that is entirely the perpetrator's decision and highlights the fact that too much of a focus and too much pressure on a woman to leave by practitioners, though often well intended is misplaced.

Has he ever trapped you in a room and not let you out?
Has he ever raised a fist as if he were going to hit you?
Has he ever thrown an object that hit you or nearly did?
Has he ever held you down or grabbed you to restrain you?
Has he ever shoved, poked, or grabbed you?
Has he ever threatened to hurt you?
If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then we can stop wondering whether he'll ever be violent; he already has been."

Borrowed from Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men by Lundy Bancroft

Routes to safety...



What women in Orkney said about their entrapment ...

'I know I have to do something now to keep my son and me safe...'

'If he finds out I'm here he'll kill me...'

'I don't know what to do... I'm too scared to call the police...'

'I feel as if I'm going off my head...'

'He won't let leave....'

'I can't take any more... I just can't take any more..'

'I've never told anyone this, no one knows about it'

'I don't know where to begin... I've never told anyone all these years.... no one.'

'I'm feeling overwhelmed. I don't think I can cope with this much longer...'

'I need to tell someone or I'm scared it gets too much for me...'

'We need help... I can't go on like this any longer'

'I don't even know why I'm here... I don't think anyone can help me...' he doesn't hit me so I can't even call the police...'

'I'm really worried but I'll report it to the police if you come with me'

'He says I'll never see my bairns again if I leave him... he says he'll call social work and tell them I'm a useless mother and can't take care of myself let alone the bairns...'

'I used to speak out for myself... I could take care of myself... look at me now... scared of my shadow...'

'I can't sleep and I'm so tired... nothing stays in my head... everything's a blur... like a fog.'

'I wouldn't feel safe contacting the police'
[in case her ex found out]

'Sometimes I wish he would just hit me because I could get over that. It's the name calling that lasts for all my life.'

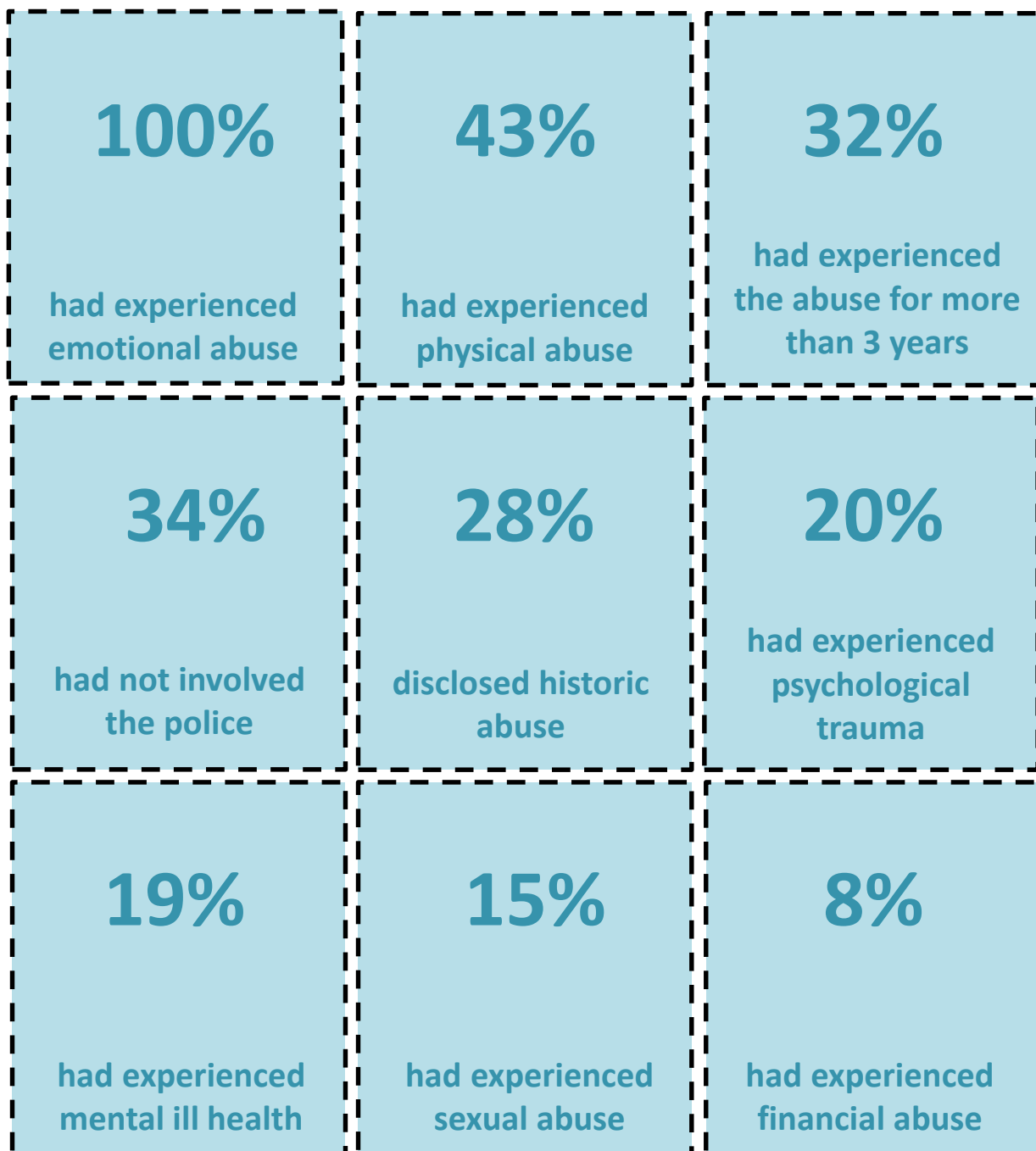
'Will this ever end? I just want it all to stop I'm so tired I just need it to stop'

'What will people say... they'll believe him.. He's the professional and I'm just the neurotic wife...'

'Why does he want to hurt me?'

'How can he still be allowed contact after this?'

There's not a single minute of the day I don't feel scared... I should have left years ago I've left it too late...'



86 lives desperately trying to break free from abuse....



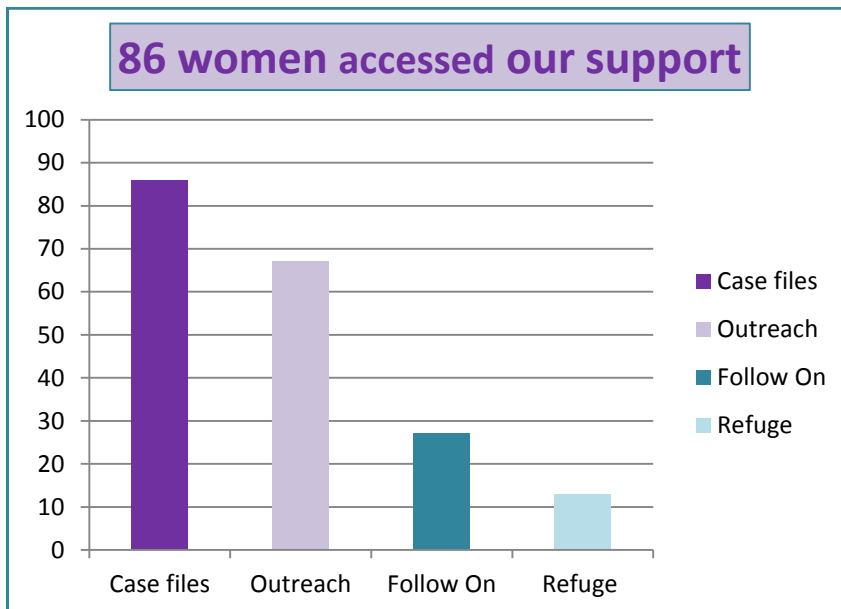
86 women accessed our support during 2014-2015

Some of their feedback....

'If you hadn't been with me I never would have done this today, I would have run away'

'It's a breath of fresh air coming in here you always know exactly what to say to make me feel better.'

'I remember feeling suicidal and calling you. I never can thank you enough and will never forget. You calmed me as I cried and cried, terrified of the control of my ex. I could never have imagined reaching today, thank you x'



'This is the only place I could come to. Thanks for seeing me'

'I'm feeling happy and I'm ok as I am. I'm moving forward with my life'

'I didn't think I would ever get this far '

'I really cannot thank you enough for what you have done for me'

'I'm blown away by this service and all you do'

'I'm really going to miss coming here. Thank you so much.'

'You've helped me so much, I couldn't have done it without'

'You are a fantastic help going out of your way to support me and I can never thank you enough'

'Thank you for all your help and support. You have all helped me so much and I'm very grateful. You're the bestest!'

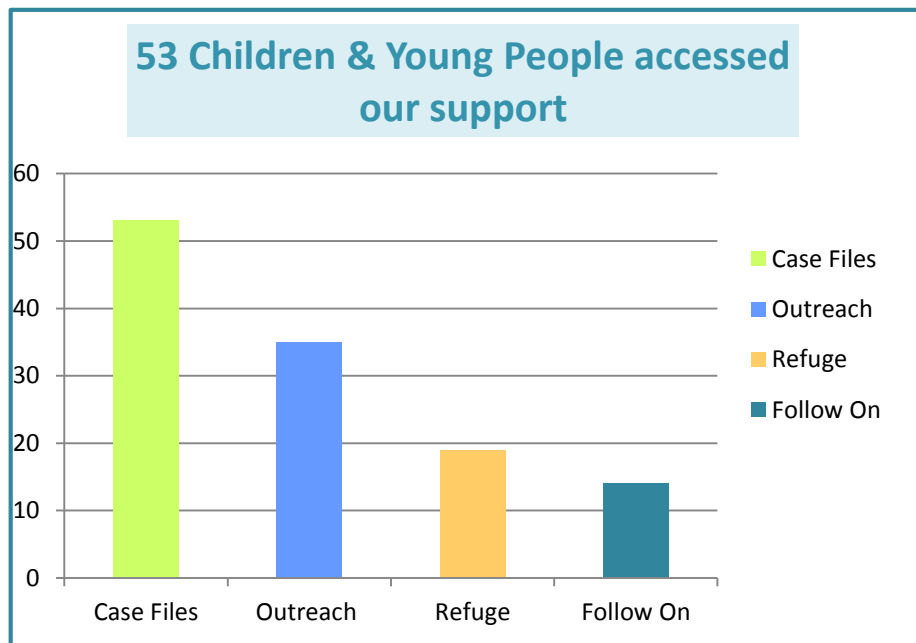
53 Children & Young People accessed our support during 2014-2015 Some of their feedback...

'It took a while but she helped me to stop and think and how to walk away when I feel major angry'

'I felt bad all the time before but now I just feel bad sometimes'

'I wasn't sure what to expect but all the workers were really friendly and I felt welcome'

'I still wish my mum had left years ago but I understand now'



'I can say I don't want to talk about stuff today and that's ok and she always understands'

'It's good you can text cos sometimes it's hard to say stuff'

'It feels nice when your worker texts to ask how things are like you feel you matter and they care'

'At first I didn't want to say anything but now it's like dead easy'

'I can think about the past without getting scared now'



Provision:

We are committed to providing a free, confidential service to women, children & young people who have been affected by domestic abuse.



Protection:

Our staff team work tirelessly to ensure that our service users have access to risk assessment, safety planning and refuge accommodation where appropriate.



Prevention:

We strive to change societal attitudes and beliefs through awareness raising events, campaigns and education. Working in collaboration with relevant agencies and organisations to eliminate gender based violence against women.



Participation:

We believe our staff team are the guardians of WAO, and that those best placed to shape service provision are the women, children & young people we support. By ensuring our service users have a voice we believe we can respond appropriately to need through on-going service development.

Five ordinary women who do an extraordinary job...

Women's Aid Orkney has continued throughout the to deliver a quality service to women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse, and this year we supported a record number of survivors. Once again this year change was a key theme for WAO, and we said goodbye to our ineffective and cumbersome mix of in house applications and hard copy filing by investing in OASIS, a modern, streamlined and highly effective database to assist us to monitor, evaluate and manage service related information. Staff began to see the benefits almost immediately, and 12 months in we consider it to be the single most effective investment of 14/15.

We are often the first service a woman talks to about her experiences of abuse, but equally many of our service users disclosed they had previously spoken about their abuse to three or more professionals in their attempt to seek a route to safety. Working within a person centred framework our support workers offered a holistic service for a total of 139 women, children and young people. As in years gone by many of our service users disclosed surviving decades of abuse, describing the toll it had taken on their health and wellbeing. Helping women and their children to make sense of such experiences can take many months, but step by step our dedicated support workers helped them to regain control and turn lives half lived into lives free from abuse. Leaving an abusive controlling partner is a process, not an event, and we understand that many women who access our service are far from ready to contemplate leaving, but they are ready to talk. **Ever mindful that leaving an abuser is a process, not an event, we are always there to listen.**

The support we provided this year was varied, and often extensive, covering practical and emotional issues as well as information on transport, benefits, housing and legal rights and accompanied women to lawyers, court hearings, tribunals, housing and health care appointment. Each and every working day our support staff help women and their children to make informed decisions for the future, and case file management showed me the high level of specialist advocacy relating to domestic abuse that staff provided. Often working with service users in times of great distress and crisis, they helped identify risk in order to develop effective safety and support plans. For many of our service users the provision of long term one to one therapeutic support helped combat the effects of abuse.

In tandem our specialist children's workers provided similar support for the children and young people who accessed our service. Focusing on exploring and resolving their issues in relation to domestic abuse they have suffered or witnessed, skilfully finding age appropriate ways to navigate difficult conversations.

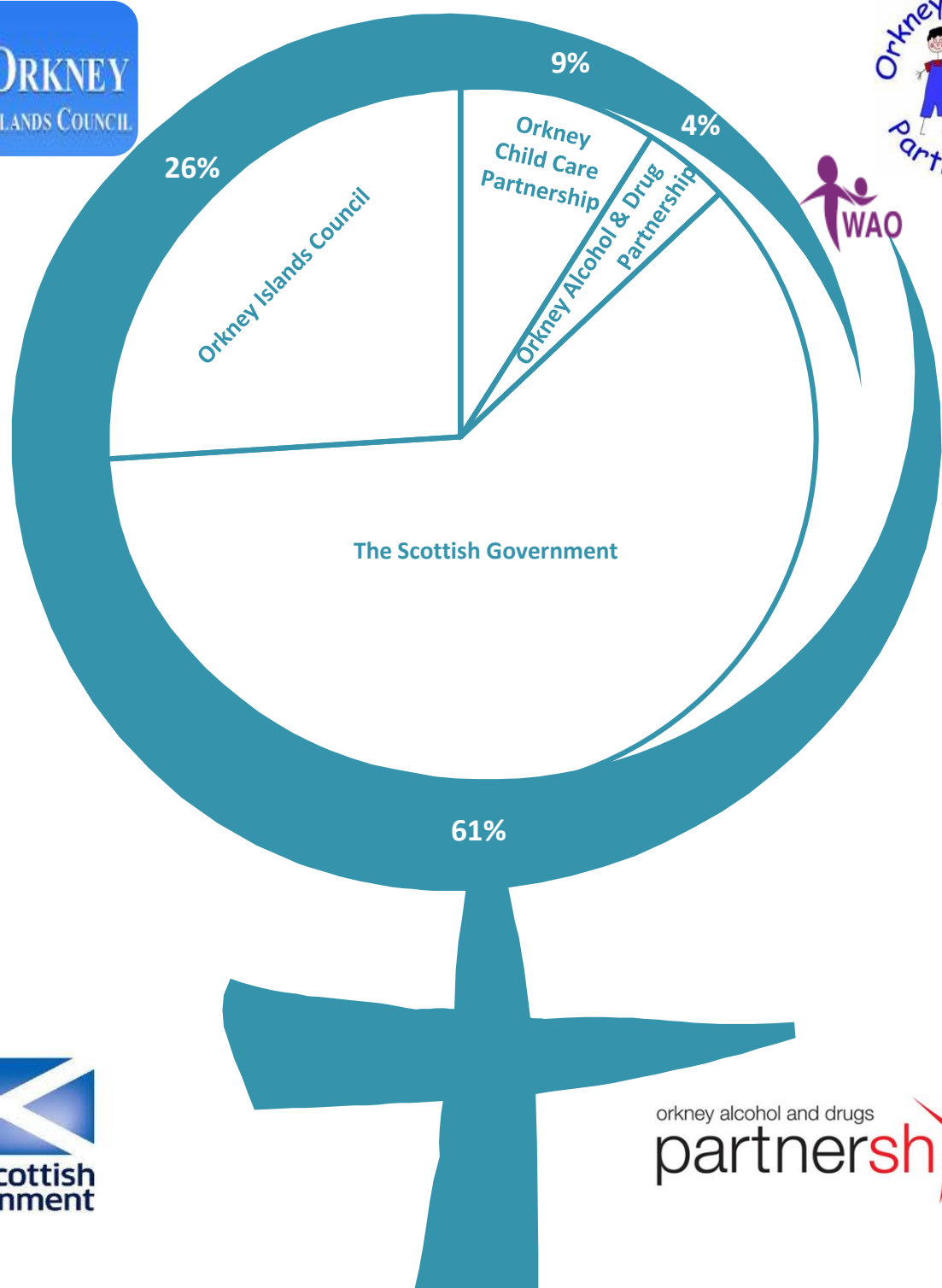
Throughout the year our administrator helped ensure all aspects of WAO's service ticked over effectively to enable a busy support team to focus on front line service delivery. Our administrator also ensured that Orkney's MARAC process was efficiently co-ordinated across partner agencies, and acted as the single point of contact for 11 multi agency case conferences that were held to improve outcomes for a total of 15 women in Orkney deemed to be at high risk of domestic abuse.

Five ordinary women: What I witnessed first hand was each member of our small staff team, give of themselves, regularly going above and beyond what any manager would be entitled to expect from a workforce. **Five ordinary women who helped change the lives of the 139 women, children and young people who accessed our support this year.** They are without question WAO's most valuable resource and I feel privileged to work alongside them.

Sandra Paton, Manager of Women's Aid Orkney



Our ability to provide our life line service for women children & young people whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse would not have been possible without financial support from our funders.



Our sincere thanks goes to:

- Orkney Island Council
- The Scottish Government
- Orkney Homelessness team
- Orkney Housing Association
- Orkney Child Care Partnership
- Orkney Alcohol and Drug Partnership
- KGS Kirkwall Community Project
- Orkney Community Councils
- Orkney Children's Trust
- Voluntary Action Fund
- The Pickaquoy Centre
- The Salvation Army
- Orkney Food bank
- Project Linus UK
- The Blue Door

As well as WAO's directors for their time, support and vision
And to the countless third and statutory sector practitioners and individuals in the
community who supported us this year

Talking Helps

For free, confidential support & Information please call us:



Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm
(excluding bank holidays)

Support line: 01856 877900
Business Line: 01856 871311
or email: info@womensaidorkney.org.uk

For more information visit our website:
www.womensaidorkney.org.uk

WAO has a confidential mailbox facility courtesy of Orkney Housing Association
Please address all WAO correspondence as follows:

WAO
C/O 39A Victoria Street
Kirkwall, KW15 1DN