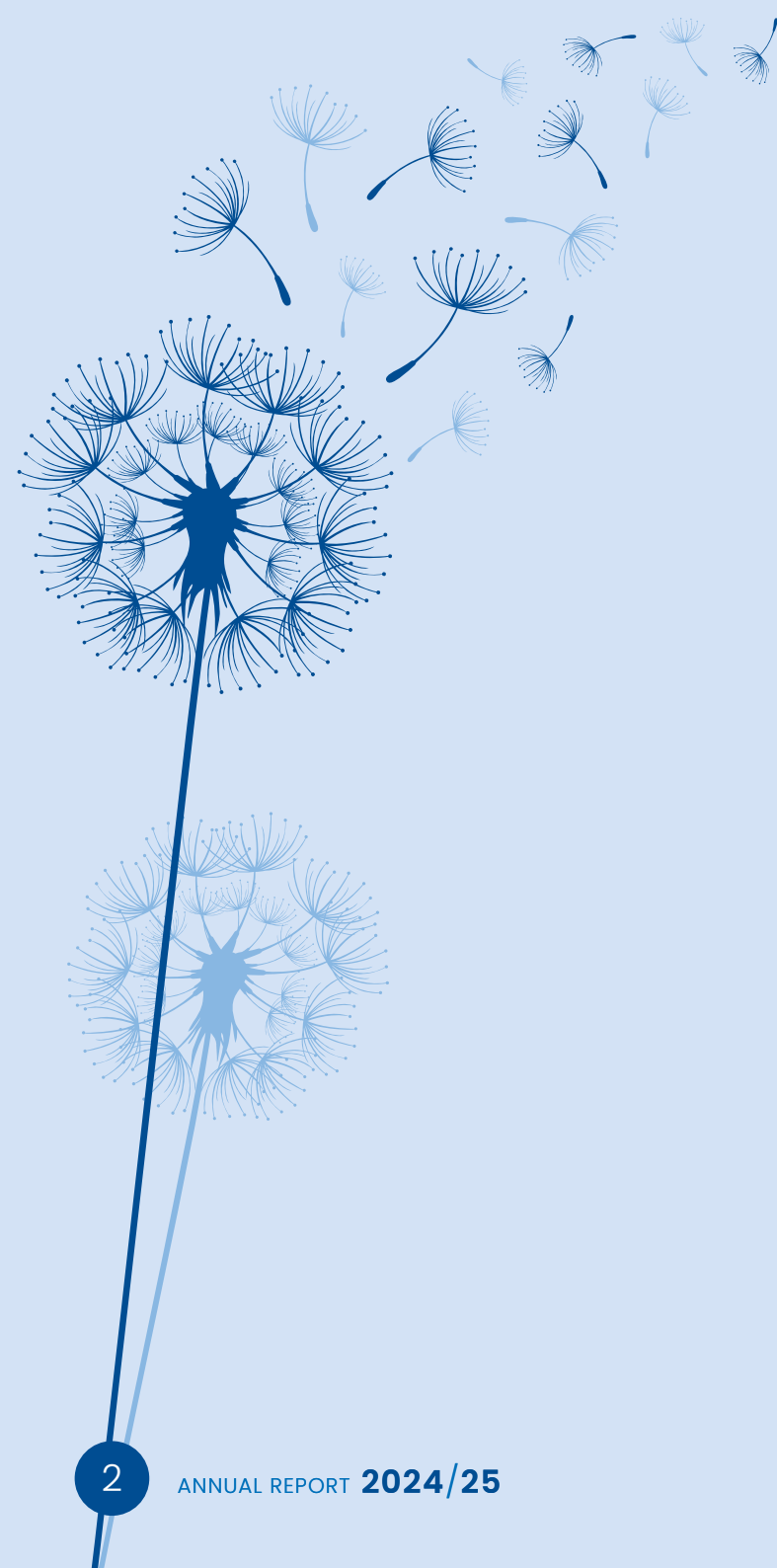


**Shetland
Women's Aid**

ANNUAL
REPORT

2024/25



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Vice Chair Hazel Lambert
Treasurer Tracy Williamson
Secretary Emma Geddes
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LEADING WITH CARE: REFLECTIONS ON 2024-2025

Together our Chair and Service Manager reflect on a year shaped by compassion, collaboration, and resilience.



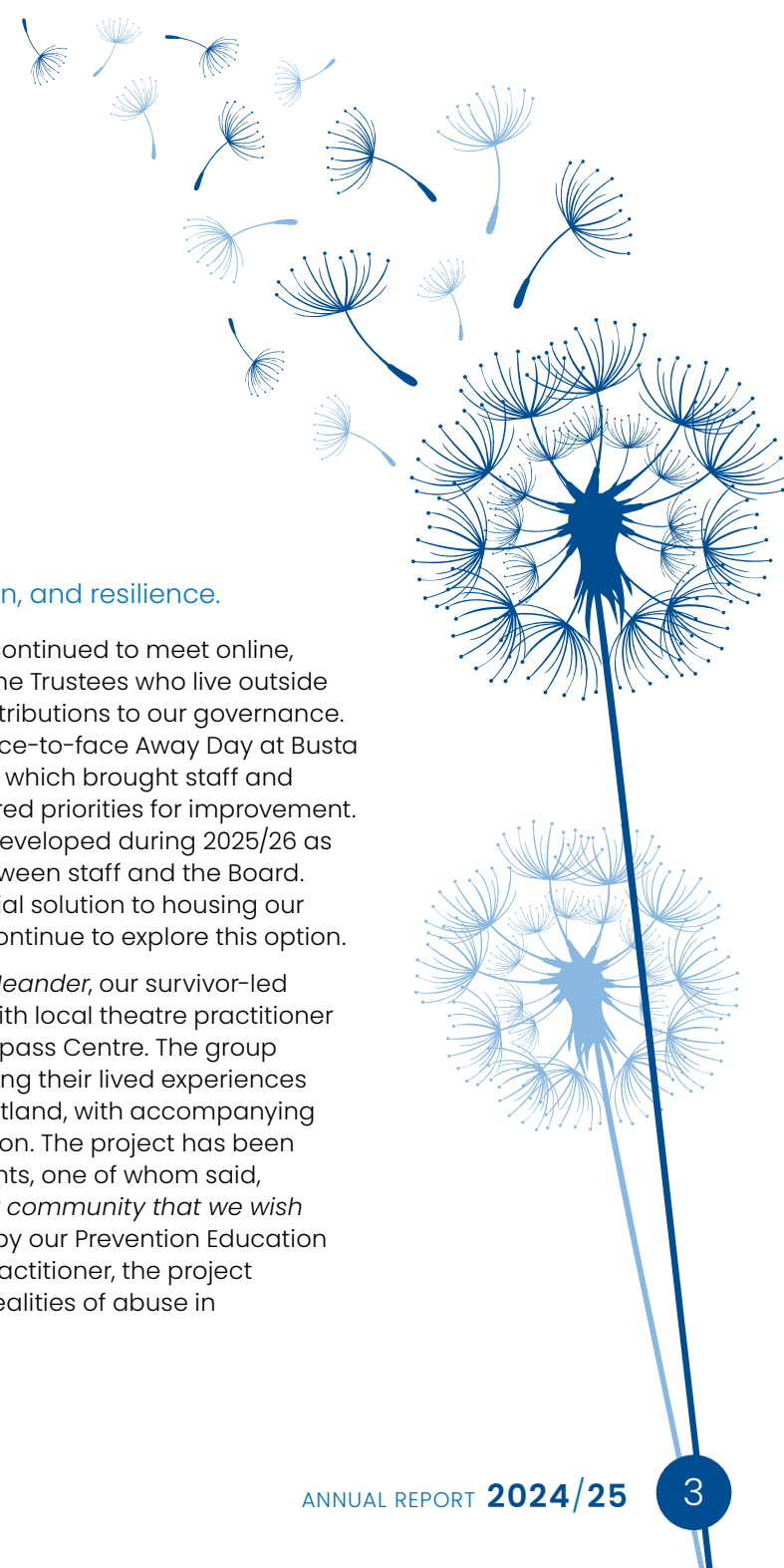
FROM THE CHAIR VAL TURNER

This year has demonstrated that the services which we provide continue to play a vital role in supporting women in Shetland. The refuge has been busy, with two women using it throughout the

year. The number of women seen by the adult team rose this year to 271, with 87 children and young people also in service. Of those, the adult team has been able to close 248 cases, and 73 children and young people have completed their term in service. Over 72% of service users report that they are now living free from abuse, which is a credit to our staff's hard work and commitment. This year, the average length of service for women was almost four months, and for the CYP service it was just over three months.

Throughout the year, the Board continued to meet online, and we remain very grateful to the Trustees who live outside Shetland for their significant contributions to our governance. We concluded the year with a face-to-face Away Day at Busta House, facilitated by Shirley Otto, which brought staff and Trustees together to identify shared priorities for improvement. These ideas will continue to be developed during 2025/26 as we strengthen collaboration between staff and the Board. We have also identified a potential solution to housing our staff team under one roof and continue to explore this option.

We have continued to develop *Meander*, our survivor-led creative project in partnership with local theatre practitioner Stephenie Georgia and the Compass Centre. The group have written sixteen pieces sharing their lived experiences of gender-based violence in Shetland, with accompanying audio and video now in production. The project has been deeply therapeutic for participants, one of whom said, "we want to be the people in our community that we wish we had." Supported throughout by our Prevention Education and Community Engagement Practitioner, the project aims to raise awareness of the realities of abuse in small communities.





Laura Stronach, our Service Manager, continues to focus on securing funding in an increasingly difficult landscape. This year she benefited from training and coaching on self-care and workload management, which has supported both her, and the wider organisation, to thrive.

The departure of our SVAWCYP Partnership Coordinator at the end of March 24 led to changes in how we work in relation to the Shetland Violence Against Women Children and Young People Partnership, with members of our team taking on additional hours to ensure continuity.

Unfortunately, the statistics demonstrate the number of women, children and young people needing Shetland Women's Aid's help has increased this year. Meanwhile, the remarkable women in the staff team, working either full or part-time, are continuing to do all that they can to ensure that survivors are safe, supported and more able to move on to a life without abuse.

This year our Board has remained stable with no Trustees leaving or joining. Further recruitment is planned for 2025/26. I am very grateful to all our Trustees for their invaluable contributions. Without the voluntary commitment and the skills of Board members, the organisation could not function. We are sad to lose Aimee Irvine, Tracey Woodrow (Jack), and Rebecca Sim from our staff team, and we wish them well as they take new directions in life. Meanwhile, we have been pleased to welcome Erin Devine, who started work as an Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate at the end of March 2024, and has quickly become a valued member of the team. All the staff and trustees alike have a strong feminist ethos, with the wellbeing of women and children in our community at the heart of all we do.

Shetland Women's Aid continues to work to the three-stage trauma recovery model, offering person-centred, trauma-informed support to women, children and young people at their point of need. Our aim is to end domestic abuse and gender-based violence in our community by promoting equality, preventing harm, and helping survivors rebuild their lives in safety. We also encourage our partners and community to challenge perpetrators' behaviours and stand together against violence.

Finally, I would like to express our gratitude to our partners, funders, and those fundraising or donating to the work of Shetland Women's Aid. Fundraising remains a challenge, and we rely heavily on the support of the Shetland community as we continue to respond to high-risk situations, relieving the negative impact of domestic abuse and gender-based violence, and promoting understanding by providing high-quality, life-changing services.

Val Turner

Chair, Shetland Women's Aid



FROM THE SERVICE MANAGER **LAURA STRONACH**

This year has been one of exceptional resilience, collaboration, and reflection for Shetland Women's Aid. Demand for our specialist services has continued

to rise across all areas, with 271 women and 87 children and young people supported during 2024–25. Despite sustained pressures on funding, staffing, and capacity, our team has continued to provide trauma-informed, person-centred care to women and their families across Shetland, guided by our feminist values and commitment to equality and justice.

The ongoing cost of living crisis, housing shortages, and barriers in the legal system, particularly around child contact and access to legal aid, continue to impact survivors' safety and recovery. Long waiting lists for therapy and trauma recovery remain a concern, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable funding for specialist services.

The team has also managed the emotional toll of working in complex, high-risk situations. Supervision, reflective practice, and wellbeing initiatives have been strengthened, but capacity pressures remain a key risk area.

Despite ongoing challenges, Shetland Women's Aid remains steadfast in its mission: to create safety, equality, and hope through compassion, partnership, and collective feminist action.

Laura Stronach

Service Manager, Shetland Women's Aid

ABOUT SHETLAND WOMEN'S AID

For over 40 years, Shetland Women's Aid has been the islands' specialist service supporting women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence. We provide confidential, trauma-informed support, advocacy, refuge accommodation and therapeutic recovery for those in crisis, alongside prevention education and community engagement to challenge gender inequality and end abuse before it begins.

Domestic abuse is rooted in gender inequality and reinforced by harmful gender roles and stereotypes. It is rarely a single incident, but a persistent pattern of controlling behaviour that can include emotional, sexual, financial or digital abuse. Many survivors tell us that psychological and coercive control leaves the deepest scars. Our practitioners work alongside women, children and young people to recognise abuse, rebuild confidence and move towards safety and independence.

Our services are rooted in intersectional feminist values, recognising that experiences of abuse are shaped by inequality, identity and circumstance. Living in a small island community brings unique challenges - from rural isolation to concerns about privacy and stigma - and we work alongside each survivor at their own pace, ensuring safety, choice and empowerment remain at the heart of every decision.

OUR WORK IN FIGURES

Throughout 2024-2025, Shetland Women's Aid continued to provide specialist, trauma-informed support to women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse across the isles. Behind every figure is a person navigating safety, recovery and change – often in the context of complex trauma, housing insecurity, and limited local resources.



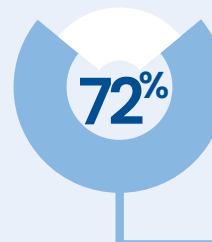
SUPPORT ACROSS THE YEAR BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025, SHETLAND WOMEN'S AID:



Women were supported by **INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC ABUSE ADVOCACY (IDAA)**



Women fleeing domestic abuse and in **REFUGE ACCOMMODATION**



Of women told us they were now **LIVING FREE FROM ABUSE OR THE THREAT OF ABUSE**

AVERAGE LENGTH OF SERVICE
Reflecting the time needed to provide meaningful, trauma-informed support



FOR WOMEN



FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



YEAR-END SNAPSHOT:
31 MARCH 2025

ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR,
Shetland Women's Aid was supporting:



Women and children were engaged across a range of interventions including assessment, advocacy, support, therapy, and trauma recovery. Many people were receiving support from more than one service at the same time, reflecting the overlapping and complex nature of domestic abuse and recovery.

AT THE SAME POINT IN TIME:



These figures highlight the continued demand for specialist domestic abuse support services in Shetland, and the ongoing need for sustainable funding to ensure timely support for those who need it.

I honestly would not be here today if not for the help and kindness shown to me at Shetland Women's Aid

BEYOND THE FIGURES

The service helped me to gain the strength to leave the relationship. It wasn't just helpful – it helped me to regain my life and power

Shetland Women's Aid were always there to listen and offer support on some of my worst days

While figures help us measure the demand for specialist support, feedback from women who have completed support with Shetland Women's Aid shows the difference this work can make.

I'm now much happier and feel a sense of freedom and control that I haven't felt in years

My time with Shetland Women's Aid gave me space to think about my needs and what works For me

It's given me my confidence back and I'm now more aware of red flags to look for when starting a new relationship



AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES IN SHETLAND

In November 2024, we conducted a Shetland-wide survey to better understand the experiences, challenges and priorities of women living in Shetland. The survey was open for two weeks and received 58 responses, offering insight into gender-based violence, discrimination, safety, and the additional pressures created by living in a rural island community.

Over **half of respondents (51.7%)** stated that they had been affected by gender-based violence in Shetland, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, harassment and coercive control. Despite this, over **73% of those affected chose not to report to the police**, citing fear of not being believed, social repercussions in a small community, and a lack of trust in systems of justice. These findings reflect what we see in practice: abuse is often perpetrated by someone known to the victim, and barriers to reporting are significant.



Some people in the community don't want to choose sides when domestic abuse isn't 'visible' to them, but by not choosing sides they side with the abuser.



More than **54% of respondents** said they had experienced discrimination as a result of being a woman. Women described a culture in which sexism and misogyny are normalised, particularly in social spaces, workplaces, and public events. While many women reported feeling safe on the streets, concerns were most strongly expressed about safety at public events and within the home.

The survey also highlighted wider, interconnected challenges affecting women's wellbeing, including access to healthcare, housing, transport, childcare and employment. Crucially, respondents emphasised that these issues cannot be viewed in isolation, and that meaningful change requires coordinated action across services and decision-makers.

Alongside the challenges, women also spoke of Shetland's strengths – particularly the support of other women, community connection, and the presence of specialist services. The findings of this survey are already being used to inform local planning and partnership work, and will continue to guide our prevention, advocacy and community engagement efforts.

A full copy of the Women in Shetland survey report is available on our website.

PREVENTION EDUCATION

Prevention education is a core part of Shetland Women's Aid's work to challenge the attitudes and inequalities that underpin domestic abuse and gender-based violence. Alongside our established programmes in schools, our prevention education has continued to evolve in response to emerging risks, with new training developed to strengthen professional understanding and collective responsibility for preventing harm.

SPOTLIGHT ON ONLINE MISOGYNY

During 2024–25, our Prevention Education & Community Engagement Practitioner developed and delivered Unmasking the Manosphere: Online Misogyny & Young People, specialist training responding to growing national concern about the influence of misogynistic online content and rise in concerning behaviour from young men and boys.



I gained valuable insights that have greatly enhanced my understanding of discussions surrounding misogyny, and I now feel better equipped with the right information. The knowledge you shared is essential.

That was tremendous – your research is spectacular (-ly horrifying)*

Fascinating presentation. Very interested in how this work is being used in practice

The training explores how online spaces – including social media and influencer content – can normalise harmful beliefs about gender and shape young people's attitudes towards relationships, power and control. Grounded in a trauma-informed approach, the session supports professionals to recognise the early warning signs of radicalisation and feel more confident challenging harmful narratives before they escalate into abuse.

First delivered as part of the Scottish Government Improvement Service's spotlight event during the 16 Days of Activism, this training has since reached hundreds of professionals across Scotland, including delivery at the Scottish Women's Aid Conference.





COMMUNITY SUPPORT & COLLECTIVE ACTION

Ending gender-based violence is a collective effort. Throughout the year, individuals, schools and community groups across Shetland showed their support through fundraising, creativity, and acts of solidarity, helping to raise awareness and stand alongside women and children affected by abuse.

SWEEMIN FOR WEEMIN

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25 November–10 December 2024), dozens of women in our community took part in Sweemin for Weemin, a collective fundraising and awareness event, inviting people to brave a daily dip in the winter seas while collecting sponsorship.

A special thanks to Rebel Fitness for their dedication and enthusiasm, managing to swim every single day despite the harshest sea conditions. Together, participants raised £1,740 to support Shetland Women's Aid's specialist services. Just as importantly, the initiative created visible conversations about gender-based violence, encouraging our community to come together, reflect, and stand in solidarity with women, children and young people affected by abuse.



JUNIOR CRAFTIVISM CLUB

Alongside fundraising and awareness activities, we provided creative spaces for young people to thrive and make a positive difference in Shetland. Funded by BBC Children in Need, the Junior Craftivism Club was open to children and young people across the isles, combining arts and crafts with activism to build confidence, connection and wellbeing. Children were encouraged to think about themselves and their community, while using creativity as a catalyst for change. We had a lot of fun making meaningful crafts, including stress-busting slime and friendship bracelets, and hope these sessions allowed young people to form positive associations with Shetland Women's Aid which will last long into the future.



YOUTH PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

We are very proud to have been supported by local young people through the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), with many school groups choosing Shetland Women's Aid as their charity to represent over the year. Not only did they raise awareness of our work, they taught their peers about domestic abuse and how it can affect women, children and young people in our community. Their efforts have supported us to break down the stigma of abuse and create a safe and compassionate school environment where more young people will feel confident to call out problematic behaviours and come forward for support. We have no doubt that each YPI group has made a huge difference in their school and the wider community, and that gives us hope for the future.



Some quotes from the knitters:



I love my monster and hope whoever receives it feels the same way



The thought that something I've made will help someone else, especially a bairn, makes me feel really proud



It's been great being part of this project - I hope it inspires other folk to make Worry Monsters and support such an important cause



ADULT LEARNING WORRY MONSTERS

In 2024 we received a huge donation of Worry Monsters knitted by volunteer knitters at Adult Learning. Worry Monsters allow those affected by domestic abuse to process their feelings in a secure way, while being reminded that they are supported by the wider community. Each monster is completely unique, but all have a special pouch to allow worries to be gobbled up and kept safe. We can't thank the knitters enough for their hours of love and dedication towards this project, and to Denise Nicolson at Adult Learning for coordinating everything. It's a tangible example of how volunteering can make a real difference.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who stood alongside women and children this year through acts of generosity, creativity and collective action. Our community is our strength and together, we can end domestic abuse in Shetland.



ACCOUNTS

SHETLAND WOMEN'S AID SCIO

AUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS £	RESTRICTED FUNDS £	TOTAL 2025 £	TOTAL 2024 £
INCOME FROM				
Donations and legacies	12,119	–	12,119	24,231
Charitable activities	–	609,266	609,266	630,837
Investments	2,079	–	2,079	1,427
other Income	280	–	280	954
TOTAL INCOME	14,478	609,266	623,744	657,449
EXPENDITURE ON				
Charitable activities	2,231	636,599	638,830	686,003
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR/ NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	12,247	(27,333)	(15,086)	(28,554)
Fund balances at 1 April 2025	191,675	77,608	269,283	297,835
FUND BALANCES AT 31 MARCH 2025	176,949	77,248	254,197	269,281

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

SHETLAND WOMEN'S AID SCIO

AUDITED BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
FIXED ASSETS				
TANGIBLE ASSETS	-	86,295	-	88,526
CURRENT ASSETS				
DEBTORS	14,777	-	6,889	-
CASH AT BANK AND IN HAND	178,344	-	193,573	-
	193,121		200,462	
CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	(25,219)	-	(19,707)	-
NET CURRENT ASSETS	-	167,902	0	180,755
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		254,197		269,281
INCOME FUNDS				
RESTRICTED FUNDS	-	77,248	-	77,606
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	-	-	-	-
GENERAL UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	137,749	-	152,475	-
REVALUATION RESERVE	39,200	-	39,200	-
		176,949		191,675
		254,197		269,281



GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION OF COUNSELLORS



Shetland Women's Aid is committed to investing in women and building a sustainable, skilled workforce for the future. During 2024–25, we supported five adult counselling students to complete their diploma placements, helping to increase capacity within our counselling service at a time of high demand. Working with student placements enabled us to reduce waiting times for women affected by trauma, while ensuring support was delivered safely and ethically through close supervision by our qualified team of therapists.

One of the student placements was undertaken by a support worker within our Children and Young People's Service.



I feel incredibly lucky to have been supported by Shetland Women's Aid throughout my counselling journey. With their support, I was able to complete my Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling and continue into specialist training in Children and Young People's Counselling - opportunities I wouldn't have had without the organisation believing in me.

Shetland Women's Aid have created a space for my career to grow, investing in my development. I was provided with placements to gain my qualification and trusted with therapeutic work, and the team have nurtured my confidence as a practitioner.

We recognised there was a gap in the children's service after two of our children's counsellors left the organisation and we understood the importance of rebuilding and strengthening the children's team. Being able to step in and fill that gap - trained, supported, and guided by the organisation - is a privilege and a responsibility I am proud to hold.

I am deeply grateful for the training, experience, and encouragement that have enabled me to contribute to our specialist CYP team, ensuring children and young people in Shetland can continue to access the support they need, when they need it.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shetland Women's Aid would like to thank the following funders and organisations who have supported our work over the past year:

- Scottish Government: Delivering Equally Safe
- Scottish Women's Aid
- Shetland Charitable Trust
- Shetland Islands Council
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Robertson Trust
- BBC Children in Need
- NatWest SafeLives Circle Fund
- Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund
- Lerwick Community Council

We are also grateful to the many individuals and groups in our local community who have donated money, furniture, and white goods, and those who have fundraised on our behalf.



HOW TO GET INVOLVED

There are lots of ways to support the work of Shetland Women's Aid. If you would like to join our team, fundraise, or simply share your ideas, we would love to hear from you. You can call us on **01595 692070** or email office@shetlandwa.org.

You can also donate or fundraise through the following platforms:

PAYPAL
paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/5199252

JUSTGIVING
justgiving.com/charity/shetlandwomensaid

EASYFUNDRAISING
easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/shetlandwomensaid/

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

If you or someone you know is affected by domestic abuse, we are here to help. You can contact us Monday – Friday, 9am – 4pm. Our team offers confidential, specialist support to women, children and young people across Shetland.

T: 01595 692070 E: office@shetlandwa.org

When our service is closed, support is still available 24/7 through Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline, operated by Scottish Women's Aid.

The helpline is free, confidential, and open to anyone of any gender. Text and webchat support is also available.



T: 0800 027 1234
E: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk
www.sdafmh.org.uk

You are not alone. Help is here when you're ready.
If you are in immediate danger, please do not hesitate to call 999.

Thank you to our larger funding providers for without their support, Shetland Women's Aid would be unable to provide our specialist service.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Shetland
Charitable Trust



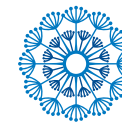
DELIVERING
EQUALLY SAFE



Lerwick
Community
Council



INSPIRING
SCOTLAND



Shetland
Women's Aid



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