**EXPERIENCE OF REFUGE LIFE - THROUGH THE EYES OF A SERVICE USER**

I had no idea what a refuge would be like and had no expectations when I first spoke to NKWA on the telephone. I had been offered a refuge place previously but had not felt ready to accept. This time however, I knew I had to leave in order to stay safe.

My initial telephone conversation with NKWA was very reassuring. Although I was scared of the unknown and unsure of the other women I would meet at the refuge, I knew from that call that I had made the right decision and that I would be safe and looked after.

When I first arrived at the refuge, I did not feel ready for counselling. It took me a while to fully engage with the counselling through Family Matters, and although I tried the Freedom Programme, I felt uncomfortable in a group environment. I felt much more at ease during one to one sessions and always felt completely comfortable with my Project Worker. I opened up to her straight away, telling her things that I had not told anyone before.

I viewed my time with NKWA as a stepping stone between a really bad place to somewhere better. It gave me a good breathing space to mull things over and get sorted.

The support I received from the staff was fantastic; it was like having a comfort blanket. My confidence and self esteem has grown considerably during my stay in refuge and I now feel able to face the future with a positive attitude.

Although the process of moving on was difficult, with many obstacles being put in the way, all the staff helped and supported me through each step until I was safely moved into my new accommodation.

Now that I am settled in my new home, I do miss the company I had in refuge and I found it hard initially to adjust to losing my comfort blanket. However, NKWA have kept in touch, through the Project Workers and Outreach staff and I know that they are only a phone call away.

In total, I spent 7 months in refuge but overall it was a positive experience. I never want to repeat it but I would never have got this far without NKWA.

(July 2010)

**NEW IDVA SERVICE IN NORTH KENT**

Through funding received from the Home Office, NKWA have been able to appoint Jackie, an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), who will be working with men and women living in the community who have been affected by domestic abuse.

Jackie, who is a CAADA accredited IDVA, will also be working closely with victims referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which are held monthly to discuss high risk victims of domestic abuse.

In addition to the Police and the IDVA, representatives from many agencies attend the MARAC e.g. Dartford and Gravesham Housing, Social Services, Education, Health, Probationary Services, to share information and ensure that the best possible outcome is achieved for those who have been abused.

**FREEDOM PROGRAMME FUNDING CUTS**

We were rather concerned over the funding for the Freedom Programme. However, we are pleased to announce the North Kent Domestic Abuse Forum will continue to support it with their limited funds. The next programme is to be held in both Dartford and Gravesend and will commence on 8th September 2010 until the second week of December 2010.

The Freedom Programme is held on a Wednesday morning in both locations. Places are available and there is a free crèche, but due to funding there is limited crèche facilities.

To join the programme or discuss becoming one of our facilitators, contact Giovanna on 07827933802 or email giovanna@nkwa.org.uk

‘Living With The Dominator’
NEW SERVICE IN THE SOUTH EAST: DAME Project!  
(Domestic Abuse, Money and Education project)

Money Advice Plus (MAP) is working in partnership with Women’s Aid to develop a new Domestic Abuse, Money and Education project (DAME). This project will provide a specialist money advice service for those experiencing domestic violence.

It is recognised that financial abuse is a common feature of domestic abuse and many survivors face financial difficulties as a consequence of the abuse they experience. These can act as a barrier to making the final decision to leave an abusive relationship, and/or to making a fresh start after escaping from abuse.

Despite this, support in relation to these financial difficulties is limited; domestic abuse services often lack the resources to provide in depth money advice, and most money advice projects do not specialise in dealing with domestic abuse cases.

DAME is a new three-year project, funded by the Nationwide Foundation, providing telephone-based money and debt advice and casework to help survivors of domestic abuse who are experiencing financial difficulties. The pilot project will initially be available to women referred by specialist domestic abuse services in the South East of England, and will roll out to the rest of the country in the following months. A Money Advice pack and training programme will be developed for delivery in 2011 with the aim of increasing the knowledge and confidence of workers in both domestic abuse and money advice sectors when assisting survivors who are experiencing financial difficulties.

Money Advice Plus, an experienced provider of money advice services, will deliver the telephone advice service. Women’s Aid will manage an action research project to identify survivors’ needs in relation to financial issues and evaluate the model of service delivery.

If you feel any of your clients could benefit from this specialist service, then please call DAME on 01323 635987.

Please find attached poster.

Reference (Women’s Aid website)

NO RECURSCE TO PUBLIC FUNDS - SOJOURNER PROJECT
EXTENDED UNTIL MARCH 2011

The Sojourner Project is a pilot scheme run by Eaves and funded by the Home Office, and commenced on Monday 30th November 2009 and will be operational until March 2011. Eaves will be working in partnership with a range of other voluntary providers to co-ordinate support, accommodation and subsistence for women and their dependents throughout the country.

The Sojourner Project is for women with no recourse to public funds, who entered the UK on a spousal or partner visa and are eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Domestic Violence Rule.

Who is eligible for this service?

- Victims of domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds
- Those admitted to, or granted an extension to their stay in the UK as a spouse, civil partner, unmarried or same sex partner

Those who qualify for ILR under the Domestic Violence Rule

The service can be offered to those meeting the above criteria, and their dependents.

How can you access the service and what is the process?

It is anticipated that the majority of the referrals will come from existing Domestic Violence Helplines and refuges, however anyone can make referrals to the scheme by calling the Sojourner Project Duty Worker on: 0207 840 7147

Further referral information

Reference (Eaves Housing)

PELHAM HOSTEL—THE STORY SO FAR

Continuing the story from the previous Newsletter. Our proposed new hostel has had one or two delays but the completion is in sight. We are hoping to be open by the end of September and will have the full story in our next issue.
**DOUBLE BONUS FOR FINANCE WORKER!!**

We are pleased to announce that Gina our Finance Worker will be celebrating the birth of her twins a boy and a girl due on Halloween!

Gina has been working for NKWA since 2004 and is a valuable member of staff, ensuring our finances are kept in order.

Gina will be starting her maternity leave in September and will be gone for several months and we all wish her well.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Anne who will be joining us during Gina’s maternity leave. So any queries regarding finances will be directed to her.

Anne, a self-employed book-keeper, has been supporting Gina for the last year, working three days a month. When not working Anne enjoys spending time with her 2 ponies and 2 horses.

We wish them both well in their new roles.

---

**CHILDREN’S SERVICE AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

**SEASIDE BLOG by Heather**

The Children's service took the families to Margate for the day, armed with buckets, spades and packed lunches. They all talked about the sand castles they were going to make and the shells they were going to find, they all got very excited as they saw the sea.

When we arrived the families went off to explore Margate. As we walked around we found some of them had made use of the beach activities - having a go on the swings and giant inflatable slide and some of the children even braved the sea.

On our travels we saw one family’s child running around chasing the seagulls away from where they were eating their lunch, another mum had talked about her daughter’s initial fear of the sea before running into it.

As we all started to meet to return home the children happily told us about the shells they had collected the sand castles they had built and about the swimming they had done in the sea.

The journey home was a lot quieter as many of the families fell asleep. They had really enjoyed their day at the seaside.

The children's service is planning other outings over the summer holidays, which include trips to the farm and a local country park. In addition we are also running art and craft sessions with the families in the houses.

**UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

Children and mothers will take a visit to local Fire Station and joining in the fun at our local Children’s Centres - for summer holiday activities.

When schools go back, the Children's team will re-start their under 5’s play sessions and after school activities which include cooking, art & craft, football and model making.

In - house counselling service for the children in refuge will still continue throughout the summer holidays by Rachel, a trained counsellor.

Unfortunately, October half-term is a bit unknown at the moment because of lack of funding but we are hoping to raise some funds for a trip to the local theatre where the children will be able to see a show that includes Bob the Builder, Fifi & the Flowertots, Angelina Ballerina, Pingu and Fireman Sam.

*Children’s Service details:* [hayley@nkwa.org.uk](mailto:hayley@nkwa.org.uk) or 01322 384792
**LOCAL SUPPORT AND NEWS**

**ONE STOP SHOP**

Dartford (CAB)
Tuesday 09:30am - 12 noon
Trinity Resources Centre
High St, Dartford

Gravesend (CAB)
Thursday 10:00am - 12 noon
44 Windmill St Gravesend

Swanley (CAB)
1st & 3rd Wednesdays 13:00pm - 15:00 pm
16 High St, Swanley

Available in above Citizens Advice Bureau offices (CAB)

**BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Asian Project**
PO BOX 98, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 5DR
Tel: 01634 581771 (Mon-Fri 09:00am - 5:00pm)
24 hour on call 07808 733767
Temporary accommodation, help, advice, counselling & support for Asian women and children suffering domestic abuse.

**North West Kent Racial Equality Council**
Enterprise House, 8 Essex Road, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2AU
Tel: 01322 287251
8 Wrotham Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0PA
Tel: 01474 369329
Provides free & confidential support towards victims of racial discrimination and harassment.

**Homestart**
Denton Multi-Cultural Family Centre, Lower Range, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2QL
Tel: 01474 325300 (Mon-Fri 09:00am-4:00pm)
Email: team@homestartwkent.fsnet.co.uk
One-to-One volunteer support for families in their own homes. For families with a least one child under 5.

**Rethink/Sahayak**
4-5 High Street, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0BQ
Tel: 01474 364837
Email: sahayak@rethink.org (Mon-Fri 09:00am-5:00pm)
One-to-One befriending service to people with mental health problems, domestic abuse and provides support and information.

**FEEDBACK**

We are keen to address issues that may be of particular interest to you. If you have any ideas or suggestions on what you would like to see featured in NKWA newsletter or to send us news form your organisation, please email us on admin@nkwa.org.uk or call 01474 369855

**INTERNET LINKS**

www.hideout.org.uk (Children & Young Person)
www.refuge.org.uk (Provide accommodation & advice)
www.womensaid.org.uk (National charity for domestic abuse)
www.direct.gov.uk (UK Government website)
www.homeoffice.gov.uk (Department for Immigration & Passport advice)
www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk (Forced marriage)
www.dcsf.gov.uk (Department for Children, Schools and Families)
www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk (Free legal advice)
www.legalservices.gov.uk (Legal Services Commission)

**CONTACT DETAILS**

NORTH KENT WOMEN’S AID
PO BOX 753
DARTFORD
KENT
DA1 1FY

PHONE: 01322 384792  FAX: 01322 381521
EMAIL: admin@nkwa.org.uk
CHARITY REG NO. 1125773