



# Taunton Women's Aid

## Review of 2013

HELPING TO IMPROVE LIVES

2013 was an important year for Taunton Women's Aid.

Whilst we were no longer running the Taunton Refuge, we were still providing some support to the women and children staying there. We had undertaken a thorough review of what we could offer instead of providing refuge services, and felt that we still had an important role to play in preventing and responding to the effects of domestic abuse.

A new manager brought new ideas and new developments.

This newsletter records our year.

## January



We were very pleased to welcome Fiona Davies, our new Service Manager, at the beginning of the year.

Fiona brought considerable enthusiasm and experience to this new role, and immediately began to develop new ways of working and establish positive relationships with a wide range of other organisations working in Taunton.

As well as these developments, we continued our work in the Taunton refuge, supporting younger women and children.

Cookery sessions for 16-25 year olds proved popular, with members of the group and their children eating together afterwards.

Play sessions for the under-5s in the refuge continued to be provided by our children's worker. These allow their mothers time to themselves, and the opportunity to deal with the practical problems of establishing a new life.

The children enjoy the sessions, which also help them to develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and encourage healthy relationships with their mothers, brothers and sisters.



*Fajitas were popular with all ages.*

Older children (5-11) also had sessions to develop these skills.

## February

Fiona applied for grants from Taunton Deane Borough Council. These were to enable a weekly mothers' group for women affected by domestic abuse to be set up in a family centre, and also to fund some preventive work in schools.

Taunton Deane Borough Council awarded us £1900, to provide sessions in schools in East and North Taunton, focusing on healthy relationships, to start after Easter.

## March

The under-5's made Mother's Day cards, and small vases full of flowers; all the mothers were very pleased with these unexpected gifts.

Fortnightly cookery sessions continued in the refuge, run by a volunteer, and in the weeks between these sessions a range of other craft sessions was provided – making lip balms, notebooks, paper beads and decorated mugs.

The sessions give the women who attend the chance to discuss their experiences of domestic abuse and the issues they are now dealing with, such as changes to benefits and waiting for suitable housing, but also encourages positive affirmations, to give courage and acknowledge their strengths.



*Lip balms made during the craft sessions in the Refuge.*

## April

The weekly sessions in schools began in Taunton Academy and Bishop Fox's, with TWA staff being made very welcome.



A trip to Diggerland for young residents of the refuge and their mothers went very well. For several of the families, it was the first time in a long while that they had been able to have time to play together.

## May

To reflect our changed activities now that we are not providing Refuge services, and to update our image, we commissioned work to design a new logo, which you can see at the top of the first page.

Discussions began with the Head of Wellsprings School about providing sessions there from September.

Fiona continued to attend meetings of the East and North Taunton Multi-Agency Groups (led by Taunton Deane Borough Council and the Taunton Deane Domestic Abuse Forum.



### **Cress seeds**

The children in the refuge planted seeds which they will be able to take into their rooms, or with them when they leave the Refuge, when the plants are established.

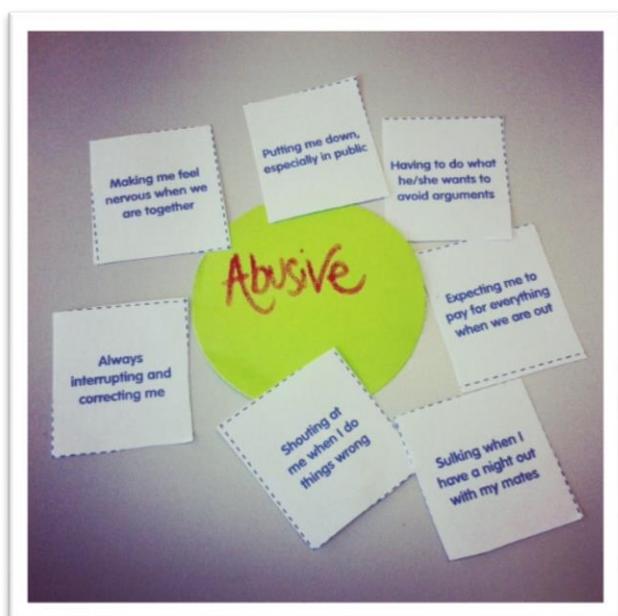
# June

Vida, the new group for women who have had experience of domestic abuse, was established. Women are referred by children's centres and the Refuge staff, and can also refer themselves- leaflets about the group are left in a range of community locations.

Activities have included decorating notebooks, making felt hearts and homemade chocolates. The women have already benefitted from a space to talk, sharing their experiences as survivors of domestic abuse.

Work with groups of students at The Taunton Academy and Bishop Fox's School continued to go well. The groups are very different and each present their own challenges and opportunities. Work with the pupils involved discussing warning signs of domestic abuse, and some of the young people strongly identified with this topic.

*Chocolates made by the Vida Group*



**Work done with school groups**



## July/ August

The women and children really enjoyed the summer family activities organised by TWA staff. They appreciated the opportunity to meet the women's school age children and the children enjoyed meeting each other and playing together. The youngest was 1 and oldest was 16, but all ages mixed well and had a good time.



*A Teddy Bears' Picnic.*

TWA staff began to work with the Halcon 1 Team (a multi-agency team set up by the police) to provide a weekly drop in, 'Chill and Chat'.

## September

Arrangements to run a PatternChanging course were put in place.

Pattern Changing is an educational course for women who are, or have been in an abusive relationship. It is designed to help women understand domestic violence, how it has affected their life and how they can recognise their power and choices in life.

Pattern Changing aims to:

- Break the cycle of abuse.
- Break patterns of behaviour which lead to returning to an abusive partner or entering into another abusive relationship.
- Help women change negative life-long patterns of behaviour to positive patterns of their own.
- Help with parenting.

## October

Sessions within Heathfield and Wellsprings Schools got underway. Both schools were very welcoming and open to what we provide, and feedback is generally a real appreciation for there being a specialist option available to support children affected by domestic abuse



For Halloween, the Vida group had a small party with snacks, pumpkin carving, food decorating, and games.

## November

Fiona ran a training session for professionals, which was coordinated and organised by Somerset County Council.

Feedback from participants was very positive, and three further sessions, to take place in 2014, have been requested.

The new Clare's Law was introduced during Domestic Abuse Awareness Week. The law, which enables people to check the police record of their partners, had been piloted in Manchester, but has now been expanded to cover all of England and Wales. Fiona gave interviews to BBC Radio Somerset and Tone FM about the implications of this new law.

We were very pleased to receive a grant from the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Action fund to enable us to run a weekly support group from women in the Halcon area of Taunton.



## December

Excitement was high at AJ's indoor play centre when children, mothers, TWA staff and volunteers and Trustees got together for the Christmas party. With lots to do and eat, a great time was had by all.

Fortunately, Father Christmas was able to fit in a visit before he got too busy, and all the families were given a big goody bag to take home.



# Our thanks

We feel very privileged to be able to help women and children of all ages to lead happier lives.

In turn, we greatly value the support of our Supporters Group, and of a wide range of individuals and groups in our community whose fundraising activities throughout the year enable us to carry on. We hope that we can continue to count on support from local people to help us with our work.

If you would like to know more about what we do, or help to fundraise, please get in touch – contact details are given below.

**Taunton Women's Aid  
Dennett House  
Middle Street  
Taunton  
TA1 1SH  
T 07968 168 758**

Website: [www.tauntonwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.tauntonwomensaid.org.uk)

Email: [fiona@tauntonwomensaid.org.uk](mailto:fiona@tauntonwomensaid.org.uk)

Registered charity No 273441

Many individuals and organisations have kindly made donations during the year, including



- Bake Eat Love
- Taunton Town FC
- Bonnie Glam
- Razzle Dazzle Ices
- Pauline Holmes and the Ladies of the Kingston St Mary PCC
- Hotel Chocolat
- Vineyard Church
- Mary Hawthorne
- Mr Miles Tearooms
- Halcon 1 Team
- Somerset County Council
- You're Lovely Beauty
- The Queens Arms, Pitminster
- Sainsbury's and the Sainsbury's Walkers
- Louise Tilden and the Garden Room Customers
- LUSH
- St George's Church, Wilton
- The Flintlock Inn
- Gaye Fox
- Yummy Mummy
- Andrew Ford
- St Catherine's, Swell