



BCWA (Black Country Women's Aid), formerly known as Sandwell Women's Aid) is a leading regional charity which supports victims of violence across the West Midlands.

BCWA offer sensitive and holistic **support** services which each year help over 8000 **victims of abuse to escape from violence**, cope with trauma and rebuild their lives.

We place victims' voices at the heart of our work and we constantly develop our services in response to needs in our communities.

Our services include support for both adult and child victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, exploitation and international human trafficking, and women in the criminal justice system.

First established 30 years ago in Sandwell, we have grown from a small local refuge provider to a diverse organisation which works across Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

Black Country Women's Aid

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Registered in England No. 2791788 • Registered at the above address •
Registered Charity No. 1032298

Members of: Survivors Trust; Rape Crisis England & Wales; Women's Aid Federation; Women's Breakout

Black Country Stalking Support Service

A new service for women and girls affected by stalking

The Black Country Stalking Support Service is a new service launching in January 2018, which offers support to women and girls affected by stalking across the Black Country. The service is a project of Black Country Women's Aid

What is stalking?

Stalking is a pattern of repeated and persistent unwanted behaviour that is intrusive and engenders fear, it is when one person becomes fixated or obsessed with another and the attention is unwanted. Threats may not be made but victims may still feel scared. Threats are not required for the criminal offence of stalking to be prosecuted.

Stalking is one of the most frequently experienced forms of abuse. It is insidious and terrifying and can escalate. There are many misconceptions about what stalking is about. It is not romantic. It is about fixation and obsession. It is a crime. It destroys lives.



Stalking is:

A criminal offence in the UK

High-risk:

- 30-40% of stalking involves physical violence
- 40% of domestic homicide victims had been stalked

Widespread:

- 1.1 million people in the UK are stalked every year
- 1 in 5 women will experience staking in their adult life
- Stalkers contact an average of 21 people connected to the victim

Misunderstood

- Victims often don't realise what is happening is stalking, or that help is available

Underreported

- Victims do not tend to report to the police until the 100th incident
- Only 1% of cases of stalking recorded by the police result in a charge and prosecution

What the service offers



Support for victims

The Stalking Support Service is available to female victims of stalking aged over 13. The service is open all victims, whether or not they know their stalker or have been in a relationship with them.

The comprehensive support service will aim to intervene with victims as early as possible to prevent stalking behaviour from escalating and risk increasing.

Our Stalking Support Workers offer one-to-one practical and emotional support for as long as victims need it. This includes:

- A quick response according to risk level;
- Specialist risk assessment, safety planning and risk reduction, helping victims to look at the stalker's behaviour to develop safety plans;
- Helping victims to understand the criminal justice process, explaining how to report to the police, what kind of evidence police will need, and exploring how victims can safely gather evidence to assist police with their enquiries;
- Support through the legal process, at court and afterwards;
- Integration with local safeguarding arrangements and multi-agency partnerships including MARACs, Children's and Adults' Social Care, health partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships, enabling us to provide effective coordinated support where victims need it;
- Advocacy with other agencies, eg helping victims make safety plans with their workplace, school or housing provider;
- Trauma-focussed interventions and access to counselling.

Support and training for agencies

Free training on stalking and harassment will be available to professionals to improve identification and help victims to get support.

Poster, leaflet and awareness campaigns will be held to reach the community.

Stalking: what are the signs?

Women and girls who are experiencing stalking may recognise some of the following behaviours:

- Repeated unwanted contact, by phone, text, in person or online
- Unwanted gifts, even if they seem innocent, such as flowers
- Gifts that might not seem strange to anyone else, but might have significant meaning to the victim and makes them feel threatened
- Persistently trying to get around any measures victims take to avoid contact, such as making fake online profiles to contact victims
- Contacting or harassing victims' friends and family
- Always seeming to know where victims are and what they are doing, making them feel that they are being watched
- Turning up at victims' work or school
- Hanging around places where victims may be, even if they don't make contact
- Damaging a victim's property or property of their family and friends
- Using threats to coerce victims into meeting them
- Spreading stories about victims to other people
- Persistent breaching of orders that may have been put in place to protect victims
- Making victims fear that violence will be used against them.



How to refer

The support service is available to women and girls over 13 in Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Victims of stalking can self-refer by calling 0121 553 0090

Agencies can request a referral form from info@blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk