

# Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid Housing Support Service

Golspie

**Type of inspection:**

Unannounced

**Completed on:**

2 November 2018

**Service provided by:**

Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid

**Service provider number:**

SP2005007651

**Service no:**

CS2010247623

## About the service

Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid is affiliated to the National Women's Aid Federation.

The aims and objectives of the service are to advocate for women who have suffered harm and also their children, both locally and nationally. To offer support and information to women who have been harmed and this includes their children. To provide women affected by domestic abuse to determine their own lives. To recognise and meet the needs of women and children. To promote policies and practices to prevent domestic abuse. To raise awareness of the extent and impact of domestic abuse in society.

The service is overseen by a management team, group of directors and has a dedicated manager.

## What people told us

The views of people who used Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid (CASWA) were very positive. Specific comments noted included the following:

- 'I owe my life to CASWA. Without their help I don't think I would be here today.'
- 'CASWA is just brilliant. The staff are great and I am so grateful to them.'
- 'I don't know what I would have done without the support and I now finally have my life back.'
- 'My support worker is so patient. I don't know how they put up with me.'
- 'I am starting to get better now and this is all down to the support I get from my support worker.'
- 'I don't think I would be here today if it wasn't for my support worker and the help I got from Women's Aid.'
- 'I spent years in an abusive relationship and now I can finally see light at the end of the tunnel.'
- 'I was very lost, weary and despairing. CASWA was a constant feeling of support for me. They encouraged me to believe in myself and begin to trusts in others once again.'
- 'I am not a bad mother, I am not a failure. My support made me believe this.'
- 'I am really getting on with my life now and only get in touch with my support worker when I need to.'
- 'CASWA empowered me to feel strong and move on with my life.'
- 'I wanted to learn from what had happened and make something good of it all.'
- 'CASWA sent me on an Understanding Domestic Abuse Study Day through Scottish Women's Aid in Edinburgh. It was so liberating to feel a part of this strong group of women looking out for other women and children.'
- 'Because of CASWA my family and friends have me back. I have my health. My true personality is restored. My confidence grows daily and I am a very happy survivor.'

- 'Thank you CASWA from me and every woman and child you have supported. Also for those who are yet to find you.'

## Self assessment

We did not request a self assessment in this inspection year. However, we looked at the Business Plan for the service.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

<b>Quality of care and support</b>	6 - Excellent
<b>Quality of staffing</b>	not assessed
<b>Quality of management and leadership</b>	6 - Excellent

## What the service does well

Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid continued to provide an excellent and valuable service to women and children who had been affected by domestic abuse.

Women and partner agencies we spoke with confirmed this:

- 'This is an excellent service and is of great value to the women and children it supports.'
- 'I can rely on this service to act quickly when I make a referral.'
- 'This service saved my life.'

The service provided flexible support to women and children who had experienced domestic abuse. The service was staffed by a small, stable team of long standing staff members. Staff were well qualified and team working was strong. We found evidence of excellent information sharing across the team. Support was provided to women and children, both one to one and in groups.

From the initial point of contact with women, safety was prioritised and the extremely prompt response to requests for help meant women could access outreach support and safe housing, when needed. Reciprocal arrangements were in place with other Women's Aid services, to accommodate women away from immediate danger in other areas.

The risk assessments that were in place were highly effective. Risk assessments were robust and clearly identified ways in which women and children could be protected. Safety plans were an integral part of the risk assessment. These identified strategies to reduce potential risk. For example, the use of code words to alert the need for help.

Since our last inspection all staff were accredited as Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates. Staff championed women deemed at high risk within the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process. Women had benefited from highly effective partnership working with other agencies, including police, health, social work and housing.

The support plans that were in place for women and children were excellent. The support plans ensured the support provided was led by women and this resulted in some excellent outcomes. Support plans were reviewed on a regular basis and this ensured that all information was up to date. The service used an electronic data base to compile detailed diary notes of all contact with individual women. This ensured staff were able to access up to date information.

Partner agencies we spoke with spoke highly of the management and staff team and the excellent work carried out by Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid:

- 'The workers at Caithness and Sutherland Aid are very capable and have a great depth of knowledge.'
- 'I work closely with the workers and I have complete trust in them.'
- 'The additional training workers have carried out in Independent Advocacy greatly assists when women need that additional voice.'
- 'When there is a crisis the service responds very quickly.'
- 'I have been involved with other Women's Aid services throughout Scotland and I think this is one of the best I have come across.'

The service had carried out some exceptional work since our last inspection that was truly sector leading. The service had identified that there had been a very low number of self and agency referrals in the West Coast areas as opposed to the East of Sutherland. Both very remote areas. The project 'The West Coast Project', was created to increase the awareness of domestic abuse in local communities and partner agencies to increase awareness of the service. To increase the referrals in remote, rural locations and to enhance partnership working in remote, rural locations. Information was relayed to partner agencies, health care professionals and information leaflets distributed within the local communities in public places. This produced excellent results and saw an increase in referrals from both partner agencies and women. Health care professionals we spoke with told us that this had really been a great an innovative initiative: 'This project identified women at risk who may have slipped through the net.'

As a direct result of this sector leading initiative, the service had been successful in gaining funding from the Scottish Government to pilot the 'Ask Me' project. This is the first of its' kind in Scotland and will create a network of community ambassadors, who will work to raise awareness of domestic abuse in their local area and create safe, supportive communities for women experiencing domestic abuse. Ambassadors will signpost local specialist domestic abuse services with the aim that all women receive the response they need, the very first time they reach out for support.

The service was led by a manager who constantly thought of ways to improve the service. For example, the quality assurance systems that were in place were excellent and identified areas for improvement. One very good example of this is whereby the manager identified that the use of questionnaires to gain feedback from partner agencies was not really working. As a result, a multi agency work shop was held, 'Working Together', 'Responding Safely'. All staff from the service attended along with staff from National Women's Aid. This had been a great success and at the end of the work shop, evaluation forms were distributed to ensure feedback was gained from all who attended. These were evaluated by the manager to ensure areas from improvement were actioned.

The manager audited all files, case recordings and other records on a regular basis. This ensured that the quality assurance systems were highly effective.

Staff received regular and quality supervision from their manager. Supervision records we looked at were of a high quality. Records clearly demonstrated that staff were able to reflect on their practice and clearly demonstrated that staff had great confidence in their manager.

Regular staff meetings took place and staff also met as a peer group. Peer group meetings were encouraged by the manager, as it enabled workers to meet and discuss any issues with their peers. The manager was not present at these meetings. However, any issues that required to be dealt with were feedback to her for action.

The manager kept up to date with changes in policy or procedure and ensured documents within the service reflected this. For example, Duty of Candour and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

The manager was held in high regard by both the staff team and other agencies:

- 'This is the best manager I have known.'
- 'You make the team shine.'
- 'You can brighten the most stressful day.'
- 'You are the glue that holds our team strong.'
- 'The manager is always thinking out of the box to make things better at Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid.'

All in all, we found that Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid was performing to an excellent level, sector leading in areas and operating beyond the expectations of the Health and Social Care Standards.

## What the service could do better

The service should continue to deliver the excellent quality of care and support delivered to women and children and should continue to think of innovative ways in which the service can improve further.

## Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

## Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
3 Oct 2016	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		6 - Excellent Not assessed 6 - Excellent 6 - Excellent
22 Oct 2014	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
25 Nov 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good
16 Feb 2011	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		5 - Very good Not assessed Not assessed Not assessed

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