

Specialised in supporting women, children & young people
in Caithness & Sutherland to stay safe from domestic abuse

CASWA

Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid



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62

Referrals
April-June 2025

105

women receiving
support

49

children & young people
receiving support

CASWA Team and Board Day 2025

Every year at CASWA we have a Team and Board day. This is an incredibly valuable day for everyone as it allows for our staff and board members to work together. Last year we worked on the Bunting (pictured above) to help kick off our 20th Anniversary as a service. This year we were joined by Lindsay Dunbar from



Culture Croft who showed us that Lego is not just for kids! We worked together and separately to build CASWA's values from our Lego bricks.



20th Anniversary

Our team worked together to create 3 Lighthouses which we plan to use as part of awareness raising events throughout the year. These were developed as part of the theme we chose for our 20th Anniversary - Light in the Dark. Over the next year CASWA have some internal and external events planned. We will be launching an Art Exhibition, hosting drop-ins and much more, so keep your eyes on our Social Media platforms for more information as it is released. The team at CASWA are very passionate about what we do and can't wait to share more news on our 20th Anniversary when we can.

Box of
Gratitude

We'd like to say a huge THANK YOU to; Royal Dornoch 2025 Community Fund kindly donated £500 towards our Gift Project. This will be a massive support to the Project and help in providing women, children and young people with clothing and other essentials.



ROYAL DORNOCH

Thank You



The CASWA Team would also like to express their continuous gratitude to our volunteer Annie for all the incredible work she does, both with the running of our Gift Project and also by sourcing and securing donations from others. Without this we wouldn't be able to offer Women and their children fleeing with nothing, a little something to help make things easier. THANK YOU ANNIE!

Clay Lantern Making

The Women's Team recently attended a group workshop, facilitated by Messy Nessy - Thurso, where we created Clay Lanterns. It was a fun and relaxed session aimed at reducing isolation and building confidence in a safe space. We were pleasantly surprised by the beautiful lanterns and can't wait for them to go in the kiln.

Women's Service



"Nervous, Supported, inspired"

"LIGHT, BRIGHT, EMPOWERED"

"This one in particular was very fun and would love to do more workshops like this at Messy Nessy"

Creative Sessions

We have run some sessions lately aimed at creating a story through abuse and allowing the wonderful women that use our service, to have a voice. We never fail to be inspired and proud when we see women who may feel nervous about attending and 'getting creative', give it everything. The viewpoints and messages that each woman added to this project were so beautiful and heartfelt. We hope to share this with you in October when we will be putting the work together into an exhibition in Thurso library. We're all so excited and can't wait to share this wonderful work with you.

Own My Life - Spring 2025

The Women's team have enjoyed another wonderful Own My Life course. It's always an inspiring time when women come together to support each other to tackle the difficult subject of domestic abuse. This session again highlighted the strength and compassion we see everyday from the women we work with. It takes dedication and commitment to turn up week after week and the recent attendees did an amazing job. Things were learnt, friendships were forged and tears were shed before the end but we think every person who attended has come out stronger.



A long standing member of our Children and Young People's Service recently moved to new pastures. Her parting gift and lasting legacy is the wonderful poem she wrote which truly reflects all the amazing Children and Young people CASWA has helped over its 20 years of operation, and will continue to help far into the future. She played a significant role within CASWA, her years of experience and wealth of knowledge will be sorely missed. She supported her colleagues on both teams, providing endless advice as well as managing our social media platforms and helping with awareness raising events. Over her 17 years of service she provided support to over 100 Children and Young people across Caithness and Sutherland. Helping them to navigate an extremely difficult time in their lives and this poem sums up not only the work she did but the work that all our Children & Young People workers will continue to do for many years to come.

With Every Step

In quiet moments, soft and bright,
We see their courage take to flight.
Each small victory, each step they take,
A healing journey they will make.

In moments dark, when hope feels thin,
We stand beside them, through the spin.
Not with answers, but with space,
To find their voice, to find their pace.

With every word, with every care,
We remind them they are rare.
Not broken, but with strength to grow,
To let their true selves freely show.

For every child, for every teen,
Deserves a life where they can dream,
And though the journey's hard and wide,
We will walk with them, right by their side.

Through every storm, through every tide,
We are here, their steadfast guide.
A lighthouse shining, by their side,
A steady light they can confide.

L. Rosie



20th Anniversary
Est. 2005

NEW RESOURCES



"I am excited about the opportunity to grow and develop in my new role, and hope to be a valuable member of the team who contributes meaningfully to the success of CASWA".

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE - Q&A WITH OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBER:

Can you tell me about yourself and when you started working for CASWA?

I officially joined the team as a Children and Young People's Worker (CYP) in May, following the completion of my disclosure checks. I applied for this role because I was seeking a new challenge. Having spent 15 years as a primary school teacher, I was eager to use my experience working with children and young people and to align that with my passion for supporting victims of abuse.

From the day of my interview, I was made to feel welcome and like I was part of a team. I have been in the role for 8 weeks now, and already I have gained a deep appreciation for the daily dedication and effort involved in running the charity.

What happens in a support session?

Sessions can take place in various settings - at home, at school or in neutral spaces. CASWA's approach is child-led and person-focused, meaning that support is tailored to each child's individual needs and preferences. Children are involved in decisions about their support, making every session unique.

During sessions, we might work on topics such as emotional wellbeing, boundaries, and respect, as well as educating CYPs about domestic abuse. We often signpost them to other services or professionals who can provide additional help.

As a CYP worker, I also advocate for the rights and needs of the young people, ensuring their voices are heard and their well-being is prioritised.

What is the best bit about your job and the most challenging bit?

The best part is knowing that I am providing a non-judgmental, supportive, and safe space for young people to express their feelings and experiences related to domestic abuse. Some children may not feel comfortable discussing these issues with parents, friends, or teachers, so offering a space that is solely focused on them and their needs is incredibly rewarding. I like to think of our work as walking alongside our services users - not pushing from behind or pulling from the front. Personally, I find working for a cause I am passionate about deeply fulfilling and love that part of my new role is raising awareness.

The most challenging aspect is recognising the limits of what we can do with the time and resources available. CASWA is a registered charity, not a statutory agency, and while we provide valuable support and guidance, we do not have legal powers or statutory authority. We also rely heavily on funding to operate, and Women's Aid is actively advocating for increased and sustainable funding to ensure the ongoing availability of its services.

What kind of person do you need to be to work with children affected by Domestic Abuse?

Resilient, patient, empathetic and having a calming presence are all essential qualities. It's not a role for everyone. People's lives are very messy and complex and so you need to be able to be the calm in a CYP's storm. Children's feelings about their situations can fluctuate from one session to the next. If you prefer routine and structure this role might not be the best fit, as the work is child-led and requires flexibility.

Having empathy and emotional intelligence is crucial, but it's equally important to maintain boundaries. You can have a big heart, but you need to know when to step back and recognise your limits - taking care of your own wellbeing is vital so that you can effectively support others.

AWARENESS RAISING, EDUCATION & PREVENTION



We launched our CASWA Coffees where we invited our service users to join us for a cuppa in a local coffee spot to help reduce isolation.



Insight Day for Professionals

On the 14th May, CASWA facilitated an insight day for professional colleagues, hosted in the Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archive, Wick, focusing particularly on the Own My Life course and the benefits it can have for those with experiences of domestic abuse. The aim was to break down barriers to support and show other professionals what we do, so that they, in turn, can share this with women they work with. It was also a great environment to share all the other awareness raising work that we do and to start some fantastic conversations. This session was in Caithness but we intend to run another in Sutherland before long – please get in touch if you'd like to be on the list once available. Professionals attended from Adult Social work, Housing, Employability, Home-Start, Change Mental Health and Criminal Justice Social Work. Here are some of the comments from the day:



"Really informative and safe group"

"I will for sure be referring to CASWA confident that clients will be in wonderful hands."

"Loved that it was so relaxed. Also was great to put faces to names. Very informative and gave me a better understanding"

"Well run course, informative and not too long. Thought provoking and great insight into work done by CASWA."



We are preparing for a number of events coming up over the next while, such as Freshers at UHI. High School Drop-in sessions and our Art Exhibition.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!



Women's Rights in 2025



FEMINIST CORNER

So far this year we have seen setbacks across the globe for Women's Rights. From the United States, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We've seen significant changes and shortfalls on the rights of Women and Girls. In the United States we are seeing women's bodily autonomy being stripped away with the overturning of Roe v Wade, meaning new reproductive rights and abortion laws. In Afghanistan the Taliban have intensified their attack against women and girls, segregating them from society to the extreme of blocking windows if a woman could be seen from the outside. Women have been stripped of their rights to work with many women centered businesses such as salons being shut down, they are erasing women's freedoms to roam and be active in their communities. In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, sexual violence towards Women and Girls is at an all time high with little to no support services or justice. Similar can be seen in Haiti where criminal groups are controlling parts of the country and carrying out horrific sexual violence. Violence Against Women and Girls is at an all time high in the UK with many calling it an epidemic and a national emergency. Here at CASWA we recognise Women's rights as Human Rights and we want to see a world where ALL humans have bodily autonomy and feel safe and respected in their communities.

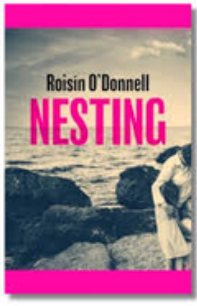
WHAT WE'VE BEEN READING and Watching...

Nesting by Roisin O'Donnell

Nesting is the heart-wrenching story of Ciara Fay and her struggle to leave her emotionally abusive husband and build a new life for herself and her three children. Over the years, Ryan has steadily isolated Ciara from her family, her friends. Where do you go when you have nowhere to go?

This fantastic Irish author addresses several sensitive themes including marriage and motherhood, gaslighting and emotional abuse, homelessness and much more – in this dark yet realistic and emotionally impactful novel.

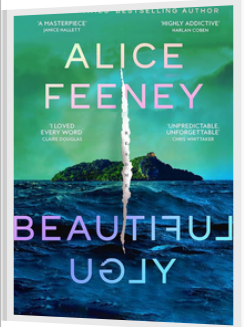
Nesting was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction 2025 and is a BBC Radio 2 Book Club pick.



Beautiful Ugly by Alice Feeney

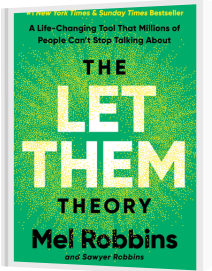
Beautiful Ugly is a psychological thriller where the main character, Grady, travels to a remote Scottish island after his wife's disappearance, only to encounter unsettling events and a woman who resembles her. The island is home to a small, all-female community where men are unwelcome. The women who inhabit this island have all fled difficult situations.

Although the island, Amberley, is fictitious, the author has remarked that the setting is inspired by various Scottish Hebridean islands. The novel gives feminist undertones with the focus being on a community of women rebuilding their lives on their own terms and challenging patriarchal structures.



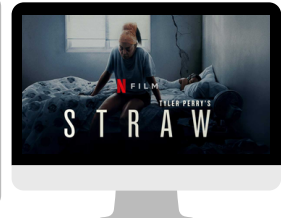
Let Them by Mel Robbins

This book is about taking control of your life, providing the tools to apply to your daily interactions with people. It helps you to set clear emotional boundaries and let go of unnecessary stress and drama in your life. It's written in a clear and understandable way, helping you to realise how much energy and time you're wasting on things that are out of your control. Well worth a read or listen.



Straw - available on Netflix

without giving too much away, this movie portrays the struggles of a single mother, through desperation and grief, poverty and poor mental health. Social injustice and police violence bring this woman to her tipping point (or the "last straw") with everything going wrong on one day. It's not an easy watch and you might need tissues.



F1: The Academy - available on Netflix

I've previously had no real interest in F1, it felt quite removed from my life and didn't really hold my interest. Recently however, I stumbled across F1: The Academy - A global gateway initiative driving increased female participation and talent in motorsport through grassroots activities and professional programmes. A Netflix show follows their season and the determination, dedication and technical knowledge shown, instantly drew me in. It was great to see women in this previously male dominated sport, not only having a go, but absolutely smashing it. It felt like the kind of thing I'd have loved to see when I was a child and trying to find my place in the world. I highly recommend giving this a watch, even if you have never enjoyed F1 before. If you've got children at home, maybe give them a chance to watch it too, it may prove a real inspiration and open their eyes to a different type of role model for young women.

Little Disasters

A six-part drama on Paramount+, explores motherhood, friendship, and societal expectations. Starring Jo Joyner and Diane Kruger, the series challenges the idealised "perfect mother" image, revealing the hidden struggles women face. It highlights female solidarity through nuanced portrayals of friendships and tackles difficult topics like postpartum depression and maternal mental health, contributing to a broader conversation about the need for better support for mothers.

