



Leeds Women's Aid Timeline of Achievements and wider work in Leeds

1970s

1972 A group of local women activists got together to work set up Leeds Women's Aid (LWA).

1973 Our first refuge was opened in Burley after convincing Leeds City Council to give us 2 broken down terrace houses. This was the first women's refuge outside of London. We could house 10 women and 15 children at any one time.

Feminist Books Collective begins in Leeds and the Leeds Women's Liberation Group is divided into regional/ neighbourhood groups (because of the increasing numbers).

1974 The 1st *Women's Aid* National Conference happened in London; Erin Pizzey and the Chiswick refuge (the 1st in the UK) represented the emerging Women's Aid movement. This conference organises the movement nationally.

The Select Committee on Violence in Marriage: collects evidence and publishes its reports in 1974 and 1975: "The Committee consulted relevant departments of central government, some local authorities, legal and law enforcement agencies as well as organisations providing services directly to battered women." (Hanmer 1976).

1975 The second national conference of *Women's Aid* was held in Leeds in February 1975 with almost all of the 42 groups attending. A decision was made to form the National Women's Aid Federation (now separate organisations Women's Aid Federation England, Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid and Northern Irish Women's Aid).

Peter Sutcliffe (The 'Yorkshire Ripper') begins to kill women in the area. The murders continue until 1980. The police only begin a full out investigation after Sutcliffe begins to murder 'respectable' women (i.e. not prostitutes) in the late 1970s. Sutcliffe is finally arrested in January 1981 and is tried and convicted in the summer of 1981.

1976 Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act passed. This act makes injunctions possible without a divorce or separation proceedings. It becomes possible for a court to order a man out of the matrimonial home,

whether or not he owns it or the tenancy is in his name. These protections do not apply to unmarried women.

1977 The Housing Act of 1977 gave priority need for accommodation to victims of domestic abuse with children which enabled refuge workers in Leeds to re-house women safely.

In this significant year, the first Reclaim the Night marches across the UK were called by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, bringing women together in Leeds and across the country to protest against sexual harassment.

1979 Southall Black Sisters was formed in 1979 to support all black and Asian women living in the UK through campaigns, providing legal advice and information and offering counselling.

1980s

During the 1980s, feminists campaigned to transform domestic violence from a private trouble to an issue of public concern. Groups like LWA were at the forefront of encouraging women to speak out about it. Although there was a broad professional understanding of the general issues of domestic abuse there was little reference to forced marriages, honour killings, trafficking or sexual violence in the general context of developing or funding service responses. Feminist and gender researchers raised the profile of these and other issues; for example the ongoing work of Liz Kelly, Julie Bindel, Marianne Hester, Gill Hague (to name only a few) informed lots of the thinking behind how specialist services such as LWA were moving forward.

1985 LWA was closely involved in the two highly successful “Crimes Against Women” conferences organised by Leeds City Council

1987 LWA worked with other women’s organisations to organise and hold a ‘Money for Women Conference’ in Leeds which consisted of a series of workshops looking at why women and women’s groups receive less income than men.

The first National Domestic Violence Helpline was opened by Women’s Aid.

1988 LWA raised concerns about how the introduction of the Poll Tax would affect women in refuge.

1990s

1990 LWA was now the biggest women’s refuge in the country with places for women and children across three sites.

1991 The Leeds Inter Agency Project (LIAP) was established which brought together systems and policies across the city and comprehensively raised the profile of domestic violence and abuse.

The then Chief Constable Peter Nobes published the first Force Policy on Domestic Violence, importantly defining practice such as to “separate the complainant from the alleged perpetrator” before taking a statement.

Marital rape only became a crime in the UK this year.

1992 LWA celebrated being established for 20 years!

The Zero Tolerance campaign to end violence against women had a huge profile in Leeds with many public buildings, buses, bus stops and lifts covered in Zero Tolerance posters and Andrea Dworkin came to speak in Leeds.

1993 The Brookside storyline featuring Mandy Jordache increased public awareness of domestic violence. Sandra Maitland the actress who played Mandy came to speak at that year’s LWA AGM.

Jasvinder Sanghera set up the Karma Nirvana charity in Derby after she was a victim of forced marriage and honour abuse

1994 Help, Advice & the Law Team (HALT) was set up as a pilot project in Leeds to provide practical and legal help, support and advocacy to victims of domestic abuse. HALT was the first organisation in the country to fulfil this unique and vital role which was not covered by any other service. For several years HALT and LWA delivered joint presentations to every police group across all the divisions at least once a year.

1996 LWA told a perplexed Look North interviewer that “the disposable incomes of LWA staff would not be spent at Harvey Nicholls” following their incredibly sexist launch posters showing a woman on a lead.

The Family Law Act 1996 was passed.

Also, the Housing Act of 1996 broadened the definition of homelessness for those who are eligible for accommodation, including explicitly referring to victims of domestic violence.

1997 LWA’s 1st Volunteer Coordinator delivered our 1st Volunteer Course in June.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 was passed as law (introducing in 1998 new protection orders which could be used when dealing with post-separation harassment and stalking). LWA & HALT worked closely with the police to establish how these orders could be used positively when attending reports of domestic violence.

1998 Throughout 1998-9 Prof Jalna Hanmer, an experienced academic on gender based violence, led a research based project based at Killingbeck police station in Leeds focussing on the issues of repeat victimisation in domestic abuse. LWA & HALT were asked to contribute their views and this report made recommendations and changed police practice.

Although only 200 were expected, there were nearly six *thousand* prosecutions nationally under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

1999 HALT became an independent charity.

Leeds opened the 1st Domestic Violence Court in the UK at Leeds Magistrates Court with HALT as a key partner.

2000s

2000 HALT grew from having just one part time worker alongside a team of volunteers to four paid workers plus volunteers.

Forced marriage continued to be on the agenda for LWA and other VAW services. Nationally this was strengthened with the publication of a national working group Choice by Right in 2000. As always, training and resources to implement change were slower in becoming widely available.

2001 Sylvia Walby at the University of Leeds conducted an in depth study on the total cost of domestic violence to services (Criminal Justice System, health, social services, housing, civil and legal) amounts to £3.1 billion, while the loss to the economy is £2.7 billion. This amounted to over £5.7 billion a year

2002 LWA introduced 24-hour staff support in our refuges in April and we received our 1st Children in Need (CIN) grant to work with children and young people in refuge, the start of a long running relationship with CIN. The children's support service went on to be cited as a model of good practice in the report "We're just like other kids" (2003).

2003 LWA opened 20 self-contained safe houses.

The Supporting People funding framework was introduced in April radically changing the way accommodation based services were funded.

MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) were piloted in Cardiff and soon became part of the discussions which led to this way of working in Leeds. MARACs are now held daily in Leeds to increase the safety of the most high risk victims in the city.

2004 HALT celebrated its 10 years anniversary and held a conference which had input from Baroness Scotland.

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (DVCVA) brought in radical changes including making common assault an arrestable offence.

2005 LWA successfully renovated our largest refuge "Emmeline" from shared accommodation to individual 10 self-contained flats, with 24 hour staff cover and security. Accommodation included two units for disabled women or non-disabled women with disabled children, and we were one of the only refuges in the UK that could offer self-contained accommodation for large families, including for women with older sons.

HALT was one of the organisations that helped to create the national agency CAADA (now SafeLives). HALT was one of the handful of small charities across England and Wales that were trying out new ways to help domestic violence

victims along with the Women's Safety Unit in Cardiff (who were to set up MARAC's) and Advance in west London

2006 Volunteering England funds the development of community counselling services and as such LWA works in partnership with Women's Counselling and Therapy Service, Touchstone and Leeds Housing Concern.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) began in Leeds. A MARAC is a victim focused information sharing and risk management meeting attended by all key agencies, where high risk cases are discussed. This process provides a structured response to cases through a partnership approach, and allows statutory and voluntary agencies to respond consistently to manage risk.

2009 LWA, with a steering group of partners, opened the Anneli Project, a safe house service for women who had been trafficked into, and within, the sex industry.

The police began using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model to identify and assess the potential danger caused by domestic violence.

Belated implementation of sections of the DVCVA 2004 enabled any person convicted or acquitted of any criminal offence after 30 September to be made subject to a restraining order.

2010s

2011 Leeds Domestic Violence Service (LDVS) was formed by LWA, Behind Closed Doors (BCD) and HALT to deliver the local authority's community based Domestic Violence and Abuse contracted services in partnership for the first time; however LWA were not successful in obtaining the main refuge contract "Emmeline". Sahara Black Women's Refuge was decommissioned by the local authority and it was closed down, however LWA ensured that the provision was not completely lost and opened its second independent, non-commissioned refuge in the building and named it Warwick House. This refuge retained a high percentage of residents who are women from BAME communities.

2012 The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 was initially introduced as a Stalking Bill however many victims of stalking felt that they were not taken seriously by the criminal justice system and that stalking should be a specific offence. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, created two new offences of stalking and stalking involving fear of violence or causing serious alarm or distress.

2014 LWA recognised that LGBT+ people are proportionately not engaged in DV & A services, so undertook 'An enquiry into LGBT Domestic Violence in Leeds', which comprised a literature review on DV & A amongst LGBT+ people, and conducted questionnaires and focus groups to better understand the domestic violence experiences of this client group, and what helps and hinders them in accessing effective support.

HALT celebrated being formed for 20 years, and also became a Leading Lights service fully accredited by SafeLives (formerly CAADA) demonstrating their commitment to excellence in service and support.

LWA was chosen as one of only three Leeds charities to benefit from StreetSmart. At participating restaurants during the festive months of November and December, a voluntary £1 is added to the diners' bill. At the end of each month, the restaurant passes on all of these £1s to StreetSmart and funds raised is donated to chosen charities.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (or Clare's Law) was introduced to give any member of the public the right to ask the police if their partner may pose a risk to them. A member of the public can also make enquiries into the partner of a close friend or family member.

2015 The LWA Charity Shop in Horsforth was officially opened by our patron Rachel Reeves MP.

Also, the Leeds Front Door Safeguarding Hub (FDSH) was launched, having daily partnership meetings and MARACs, giving high and medium risk victims and their family's additional interventions in order to reduce risk. HALT (representing LDVS) were key in this development.

2016 Women's Lives Leeds (WLL) was launched as a unique partnership between 12 women and girls organisations across Leeds, including LWA as the lead partner. The partnership is funded by the Big Lottery Women and Girls Initiative for 4 years.

LWA carried out a further survey with LGBT+ people to find out what kinds of services and support LGBT+ people in Leeds were accessing; what their experience of this has been; what they would like to see available, and what prevents them from accessing support around DV & A experiences.

2017 LWA, HALT & BCD were successful in being re-commissioned by Leeds City Council to deliver the community based DV&A contract as LDVS, and welcomed Women's Health Matters into the partnership. Additionally the consortium won the refuge accommodation contract as well and LWA were delighted to run this for LDVS and welcome staff to LWA who came from the previous supplier. "Emmeline" has returned home after 6 years away...

Also, LWA merged with HALT, using the working name Leeds Women's Aid *incorporating* HALT for the 1st year, creating the largest women's organisation in Leeds (if not Yorkshire), which has enabled us to offer a wider range of improved services to high risk victims of domestic violence. 2017 marked 45 years since LWA was formed in 1972, however due to the merger and expansions, 2018 would be celebrated as 45 years since the opening of the 1st refuge in 1973.

LWA supported the 3 GP surgeries with the pilot of asking all female patients if they had experienced DV & A by delivering drop-in's in those surgeries

12th November 2017 was the 40th anniversary of the start of the 'Reclaim the Night' marches. Every year, these marches bring 1,000s of women onto the streets to reclaim their right to enjoy the freedom of our towns and cities, at night, without fearing male violence.

2018 - LWA celebrates 45 years of Service Delivery and of proudly opening the 1st refuge in the UK outside of London in 1973

2018 The pivotal moment in feminist history came one hundred years ago when the Representation of the People Act was introduced giving over 8 million women over the age of 30 the right to vote.

Leeds Piloted the first "Domestic Abuse" Car in partnership with the police, sending trained DV Support Workers on shift with responding officers. LWA coordinated the involvement of LDVS staff in delivering this.