



Salisbury Women's Refuge

Newsletter No.3. July 2020.

Working in Lockdown. Sandra - Refuge Manager

As you can imagine, when the government put the country into lockdown the impact on our service was immediate and challenging. We had already written a Coronavirus Management Plan in preparation and so were able to respond quickly and effectively when one of our residents showed potential symptoms of the virus. We immediately put the plan into action and commenced remote working. Staff entered the house only in order to deliver food and cleaning items. Support was given over the telephone for the next 2 weeks. Our residents, although frustrated and concerned, responded sensibly. Thankfully it was not a case of Coronavirus and after the 2 week self-isolation period residents were able to move more freely in the Refuge.

The staff team have been amazingly resilient and adapted to this new way of working smoothly. We were able to maintain contact with the residents over the telephone and via email. The landline telephone was redirected to my mobile and I fielded calls and requests to the staff team as per the duty rota to them at home. They were able to remotely log in to the emails; I took my computer home and set up an office in the front room. Between us we were able to continue support and field queries (we only had to close for referrals for the 2 weeks we were in self isolation).

For the residents the impact was greater and as a communal house managing this was complex. Rotas for the kitchen and bathrooms, much stricter cleaning regimes, spending much of the day in their own rooms, which without wifi and therefore online amusement was incredibly challenging.

We were blessed with donations of games from the 'Kids Out' charity, Pizza nights gifted by a local family, food donations from local Churches, and also schools who were emptying out their kitchens before closing their doors too. No one was forgotten over Easter though and donations of chocolate came in from local groups, supermarkets and even a Dads Club who passed on their Easter eggs as they were no longer able to hold their club and distribute eggs to their members. Two of our children celebrated birthdays during this lockdown period. It was a different birthday experience but they still had cake and presents.

Coming out of lockdown we have seen an increase in referral numbers on this time last year. Our referral process has to now take into account the potential exposure any new resident may have had to the virus in order to safeguard the families already with us and new rules and regimes are in place to minimise this risk.

We continue to strive to ensure our families are safe, secure and in a good position to be able to move forward with their lives, once this crisis has passed.

Right-the residents are shown how to make face masks!

News in Brief

*The Government's new Domestic Abuse Bill began its reading in early March. The COVID 19 pandemic has raised the issue of Domestic Abuse (DA) further with reports of an increase in abuse during lockdown. The Government responded with an extra £28 million in funding. The Bill seeks to provide a statutory definition of DA to include emotional, co-ercive and controlling and financial abuse. It also wishes to establish a DA Commissioner and prohibit perpetrators from cross-examining survivors. DA charities are asking for re-housing to be made easier and extra help for migrant women who have no public funding.

*Our AGM in April was cancelled due to Covid 19 and it is now doubtful that it will take place this year in its usual format. We were however able to send out our Annual Report and Accounts to many of our Friends and supporters. If you have not received a copy and would like one please contact the Refuge office@swrefuge.co.uk

*Deep Clean. Four times a year the trustees and residents don their marigolds and deep clean the 'high traffic' ie communal areas of the Refuge. A very successful deep clean took place on 4 March just before the pandemic restrictions. It's amazing what you find behind the fridge. Being a trustee at the Refuge is not just about reading Board papers!



Jade - a member of staff reflects on becoming a permanent Support Worker

“Hmm, let’s research that one; I’ll find that out for you; it’s in this cupboard; no, it’s not, it’s in that one; I’ll double check that for you; ah, that’s how it works”.

Transitioning from a bank staff member covering staff annual leave a handful of times a month to a permanent staff member who would become a more integral part of the Refugees’ day to day life and who would be allocated residents to key work, these are some of the more common phrases I’ve found myself speaking during this period of role shift.

Working in a refuge supporting women who have suffered domestic abuse was something I felt capable and confident doing from the offset. I understood safeguarding, had the necessary set of skills, knew what agencies I could expect to engage with and was passionate about the role.

However, working as a support worker within this context is not just about being on site to make sure everyone and everything’s safe, speaking on the phone to an agency here and there and trying to solve an arising dilemma in that moment in time. It’s about being an integral part of someone’s life; being that familiar face people can trust to approach for support in the day to day queries and worries and being that familiar face people can trust to invite to bask in the celebrations and the good times. It’s about walking that winding road with women, jumping through hoops and getting out of potholes to support them in whatever way they need. It’s about coaching, guiding, assisting and affirming others to build confidence and well-being. It’s about being the most approachable and ‘we’ve got your back’ person that you can be when a woman may have lacked this for so long. And it’s also about being part of a team to provide that support, safety and security to the absolute top of your ability.

As I step into a permanent role, working more regular shifts, I am very quickly learning that no two days are ever, ever the same. There is always something new to learn, a new situation, something different to address, different conversations to be had and extraordinary things to note and laugh along to. As such, I am unsure whether the statements I most frequently state will ever dissipate. If they dissipate, I am sure they will only merge into new ones. This is not something I feel worried about or will serve to my detriment. Though it’s heart-breaking that Women’s Refuges have to exist at all, working in one as a permanent support worker is a job I feel proud and honoured to have and motivates me to be the best support worker I can be for the benefit of the ladies we support. And with the patience of the residents ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Staffing Notes. We were very sorry to lose Debs from the support staff team in March and wish her well for the future. We were pleased however to appoint Jade in her place, who describes working at the Refuge above.

Easter Bunnies and Pizzas were welcome gifts to the Refuge residents during lockdown

