



Summary: Women's Aid Federation of England National Accredited Quality Standards

women's aid
until women & children are safe

for services supporting women and children survivors of domestic violence

The Women's Aid Standards form a set of accredited criteria through which dedicated specialist services addressing domestic violence perpetrated against women and children can evidence their quality.

Principles

- ▶ The core outcomes for services are prevention of violence against women and girls, and safety and lasting recovery for survivors.
- ▶ Promoting recovery for women and children survivors involves building stability, resilience and autonomy and requires a multi-faceted and needs-led response within a feminist and human rights framework.
- ▶ Domestic violence is a gendered form of violence¹ and is both a cause and a consequence of women's inequality. Men are the abusers in most incidents of domestic violence² and form the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of domestic homicide, including child homicide. Gender is therefore the most significant risk factor for domestic violence³.
- ▶ An understanding of the complex dynamics of gender is vital to prevention and to building effective responses to survivors⁴.
- ▶ The impacts of abuse on survivors are exacerbated by additional structural inequalities of race, social and economic class, sexual orientation, ability and age.
- ▶ Power and control dynamics operate through silencing, isolation and internalised oppression and will transfer from individuals into organisations unless transparent democratic structures are in place.
- ▶ Recovery and rebuilding of lives for women and children survivors is facilitated in women-only spaces and environments of mutual respect.
- ▶ The recovery of women and children survivors is best promoted by dedicated specialist women's services working in partnership to offer complementary services, while valuing and supporting each other's specialisms.
- ▶ The experiences and needs of male victims differ from those of female victims and are best met in dedicated specialist men's services, not by specialist services for women and children.

1 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Committee, General Recommendation 19, Article 1 (11th session 1992, Preamble, Council of Europe Istanbul Convention 201).

2 Walby, S and Allen, J (2004) *Home Office Research Study 276, Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics.

3 Stark, E and Flitcraft, A (1996) Preventing Gendered Homicide in Stark and Flitcraft, *Women at Risk: Domestic Violence and Women's Health*. Sage.

4 Respect (2008) *Respect position statement: gender and domestic violence*.



The Standards

1. Safety, security and dignity

The organisation offers prompt targeted responses within a safe environment, maximising service user engagement and reducing short and medium term risk.

2. Rights and access

The organisation promotes equality and diversity and operates within a human rights framework, ensuring access for those most in need and maximising disclosure and recovery.

3. Physical and emotional health

The organisation addresses the immediate and longer term physical and mental health needs of service users, reducing their need to access health services in the future and promoting long term recovery and well-being.

4. Stability, resilience and autonomy

The organisation supports service users to develop stability, resilience and a sense of agency for their lasting independence and recovery, and to prevent future harm and need for services.

5. Children and young people

Where services are delivered to women with children, or to young people, the organisation addresses the safety, educational and health needs of children and young people living with domestic violence and its effects, reducing their need for services in the future and equipping them to move on to adult lives free from violence.

6. Prevention

The organisation works in partnerships to challenge social tolerance of gender inequality and domestic violence and improve responses to survivors in order to reduce the long term prevalence of violence against women and girls.

7. Accountability and leadership

Transparent decision-making and meaningful service user involvement secure the trust and engagement of service users and achieve positive long term outcomes for women and children.