

# FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING



**MISSINGLINK.**

cutting edge  
women's mental health services



**NEXTLINK.**

changing the face of  
domestic abuse support services



**SAFELINK.**

transforming victims' lives

annual review 2015 – 2016



*"It has been a really positive experience"*

*"I am so grateful to you and will never forget what you have done for me"*

*"The nurturing environment you've created and the staff have been immensely helpful"*

Our support is focused on building women's strengths and ensuring they have the opportunities to grow and create futures that reflect their ambitions and talent.

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**SUPPORTING  
 WOMEN  
 AND CHILDREN  
 FOR MORE THAN**  
**32**  
 YEARS

**MISSINGLINK.**



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# AN INTRODUCTION TO MISSING LINK



**SUPPORTED  
593  
WOMEN  
DURING THE YEAR**

For over 32 years Missing Link has successfully supported homeless women with complex needs to recover, secure and sustain housing and live full and rewarding lives. We are the largest provider of women-only services in Bristol bringing innovation, expertise, established partnerships and extensive experience of engaging women in our wide ranging support services.

We provide a range of housing and support to women who have either acute or long term mental health needs. We support women who are homeless, sleeping rough or whose housing is at risk because of their mental health issues. We also provide a direct access service, Link House,

as a preventative or alternative to psychiatric admission.

We specialise in working with women who have complex needs including substance misuse, offending and self-harm. Our support has a holistic focus looking at health, social care and mental health. All our support is tailored to each woman's needs, and builds on their individual strengths to help them to improve their well-being, secure their housing and sustain their long term recovery.

## Take up of services

During the year Missing Link offered a range of support services and housing services to **593 women**.

*"My mental health is much better after my stay"*

To find out more about these services please call 0117 925 1811 or text 07714 290 011

*"I survived because of all your help and support."*

## HIGH AND MEDIUM SUPPORT WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

In 2015 we were commissioned by Bristol City to provide high and medium level supported housing to single homeless women with complex needs aged 16 and over.

### New Ways House

This is our high support 6 bedded accommodation service with staff on site 6 days a week with an on call out of hours service. Women can stay for up to 4 months. The aim of New Ways is to provide a higher level of support to help women access and engage with other specialist services and to take the first steps towards recovery to move on successfully into longer term accommodation.

During their stay women will have a flexible outcome support plan including help with substance misuse, mental health issues, offending, building confidence, life skills and training. Support includes one to one, peer support, group activities and practical skills sessions.

The service is accessed through the Housing Support Register. We housed 16 women (from June 2015 – March 2016).

*"Totally restored my faith in mental health services"*

To find out more about these services please call 0117 925 1811 or text 07714 290 011



## Medium level Supported housing

Our shared houses are provided across Bristol and range from 7 self-contained flats to shared 2, 3 and 4 bedroomed houses. Women can stay (on average) for up to 9 months.

The aim of this housing and support is to act as a stepping stone to more independent living. Women can stay for up to 9 months to consolidate their recovery and successfully move into lower support or more independent accommodation. Staff provide regular visiting practical and emotional support including group activities, drop-ins, peer support, one to one sessions and support at evenings and weekends through an out of hours emergency on call system.

The service is accessed through the Housing Support Register.

This year we housed 59 women.

Missing Link 3





## WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE

This newly commissioned service provides housing related support, advice and/or assistance to vulnerable women living with acute and enduring mental health support needs that impact on their housing. We offer resettlement support to women who are moving into new accommodation and tenancy support to women in their existing housing. The service is available regardless of mental health diagnosis or statutory care eligibility. The aim of the support is to improve mental health and physical wellbeing, including crisis management, facilitating access to other specialist support services and liaising with those services as appropriate.

It includes help with managing money, settling into a new community, finding voluntary work or training courses and help to find activities during the day. There is a high level of support in the

**94**  
**WOMEN**  
BENEFITED FROM  
FLOATING SUPPORT

beginning which is gradually reduced as the women feel better able to manage. The service works with women aged 16 and over, support is for up to one year in the first instance.

Our floating support services provided support for 94 women across Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

We also offer telephone support and triage service to women on the HSR support waiting list.

WOMEN ARE 12% MORE LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN TREATED FOR A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM THAN MEN.



## PRE-RESETTLEMENT SERVICE

This service works with homeless women with mental health needs who have lost their tenancy because of a severe mental health need or are in hospital and are unable to return to their previous accommodation. They may be sleeping rough, living in Bed and Breakfast, in temporary and/or unsuitable housing, or in between tenancies.

The service is city wide and will take referrals from any route. The service will maintain close links with acute mental health services including admission wards and community mental health teams.

This year we supported 25 women and helped 16 women to find a range of permanent housing.



  
**98%**  
MADE AND USED THEIR  
SAFETY PLANS

## DEDICATED SELF HARM WORKER

A large number of women who use our services self-harm. Managing their self-harm remains a priority for them and we have a specialist worker to work with this issue.

The worker will work with a range of forms of self-harm including cutting, overdosing, alcohol and drug misuse and eating disorders, the worker will also work with women with dual diagnosis. The dedicated worker works as part of the Missing Link team and undertakes preventive and harm reduction work with any woman who is receiving our services.

During this year we worked with 84 women. 76% of women said they successfully reduced self-harm and 98% used the safety plans they had made.

*"The fact that Missing Link is a women only service makes it easier."*



*"My mental health has improved"*

## COUNSELLING SERVICE

Our counsellor works with any women who use our services. She offers support with some of the underlying psychological issues that may have resulted in homelessness, self-harm or mental ill health. The counsellor offers each woman a set number of sessions followed by a review. She works closely with the other support workers and is included in the service users support plan.



This year we received 54 referrals and worked with 41 women.



“Link House helped me feel human again”



## LINK HOUSE for women in mental health crisis

Link House is for women who are experiencing a mental health crisis and are unable to cope in the community. It works to a social care model of recovery. It provides safe, high quality support that has an emphasis on the immediate crisis while also focusing on building resilience, support networks and maintaining good mental health on returning home.

The service is an integrated part of the mental health care pathway, has proved to be invaluable to mental health services and has been very successful in preventing hospital admissions and for those who are admitted into hospital reducing their length of stay. This year we supported 131 women.

### Satisfaction survey

Listening to residents experience and ideas is central to everything we do and a fundamental core value. One of the ways in which women who use Link House can feed back their views is to complete an exit questionnaire. This year the survey showed that 100% women found their stay a helpful experience; 81% found the recovery star helpful, 95% said they at the support was responsive to their needs, 88% said they felt their mental health had improved, 94% said they were going home much stronger, 98% found the activities and group sessions helpful and 100% said they would recommend Link House to a friend.



81% FOUND THE RECOVERY STAR HELPFUL

Link House Satisfaction Survey Results

100% WOULD RECOMMEND THE SERVICE TO OTHER WOMEN

95% SAID THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVED WAS RESPONSIVE TO THEIR NEEDS

100% REPORTED THEY FOUND THEIR STAY IN LINK HOUSE HELPFUL

96% SAID THEIR STAY AT LINK HOUSE HAD HELPED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

88% SAID THEIR MENTAL HEALTH HAD IMPROVED AS A RESULT OF THEIR STAY IN LINK HOUSE

98% FOUND THE ACTIVITIES AND GROUP SESSIONS HELPFUL

88% FOUND THEIR WELLNESS RECOVERY PLAN (WRAP) HELPFUL

and more from the women...

“Link House is incredibly special – it’s been so helpful.”

“Link House has been massively helpful for me”

“Link House gave me a break from a destructive pattern and a chance to ‘re-set’.”



## BRISTOL MENTAL HEALTH

Missing Link is one of the 18 organisations which together make up Bristol Mental Health. We are a partner of Recovery Bristol Partnership providing the new community services in Bristol. We provide recovery navigators and mental health crisis workers in hubs in North, Central and South Bristol.

## COMMUNITY REHABILITATION SERVICES

We are a partner in the new Bristol Community Rehabilitation Service. This service, led by Second Step, is a hub and spoke model and supports people from across Bristol, including people who have used the rehabilitation hospital wards and are referred from community and in-patient mental health services. We second staff to provide a range of interventions to help women manage their mental health problems more effectively and to live as independently as possible.



To find out more about these services and to make a referral, call 0117 909 6630.

WOMEN'S COURT SERVICE SUPPORTED **137** WOMEN THIS YEAR

"Absolutely brilliant support and understanding from staff"

"With your help and care I have survived and can carry on"

## GOLDEN KEY

We are a Golden Key partner. Golden Key is a city wide partnership led by Second Step with an eight-year programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. We are working together to change the way services respond to people with complex and multiple needs. Our Golden Key coordinator based at Missing Link brings our specialist expertise of supporting homeless women with high complex needs to the service. We also take part in the operation group and attend the partnership board.

Golden Key has referral windows throughout the year where cases are accepted and a caseworker is allocated.

To find out more about the service and to make a referral, contact [tina.cameron@missinglinkhousing.co.uk](mailto:tina.cameron@missinglinkhousing.co.uk)

70% OF PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER ARE WOMEN.

## WOMEN'S COURT SERVICE

This service is funded by the OAK Foundation to enable us to provide this essential service to women defendants going through Bristol Magistrate court.

The worker meets with women who are either in the cells or have to appear in court that day and offers support with attending court, liaising with the criminal justice system and health and social care needs.

We know that the women are often victims as well as offenders and that prison does not address the causes of women's offending. More than one in three have histories of sexual abuse and over half have been the victims of domestic abuse.

Our service has shown a high take up of women wanting support with a range of needs including debt, housing, benefits, domestic abuse and mental health. The worker can offer support for up to 4 weeks and for those women that require ongoing support she will refer them to other voluntary groups including Missing Link and Next Link services.

This year we supported 137 women.

SUPPORTED **140** WOMEN THROUGH WELLEBBING

## WELLBEING THERAPIES SERVICE

Our Wellbeing Therapies Service in Bristol and South Gloucestershire offers psychological support including home visits, CBT sessions at community venues and our head office. The service is open to anyone who has been referred by their GP.

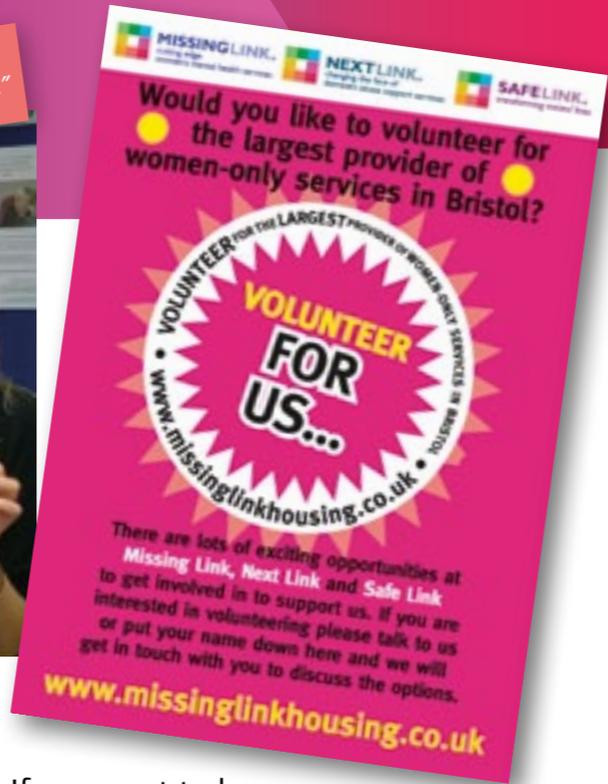


We have supported 140 women this year through the Wellbeing Service.





"I wanted a positive change and the opportunity to help."



## VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME

Volunteers are highly valued as part of our organisation. They bring energy, enthusiasm and wide ranging skills to build the capacity in our services. Women with lived experience bring a vital understanding and extra dimension to our work and what we can achieve. Without volunteers, some of our most important and effective services would not be able to operate.



If you want to know more about volunteering please call 0117 925 1811 or text 07714 290011



"I enjoy giving my time to help people..."



"Staff take time out to listen to you and help you"

## Service User Feedback Event

Missing Link teamed up with HealthWatch Bristol to deliver an objective service user feedback event – also attended by Bristol City Council commissioners. We recognise the value of service users feeding back to neutral people, and not staff involved in delivering our services. This was an informal focus group including women currently using or have used Missing Link services – an evening event which allowed service users to interact socially as well.



"It's 100% important that it's women's only accommodation"

The comments received were:-

*"Missing Link are great. I don't know what I would have done without them."* This woman also disclosed that she was suffering from depression and had been abused and was not able to speak to her family, but Missing Link gave her a safe space to speak openly. And *'the fact that Missing Link is a women only service makes it easier for her as she has suffered abuse'*.

All Missing Link service users agreed that it is *"100% important that it's women's only accommodation"*. They said this allowed them to feel safe and they could relate to the other women and offer each other support.

Several said that they value that the Missing Link and Next Link key workers always ask what the person thinks or wants from their treatment. They said that being asked for their input into decisions about their lives is very different to previous experiences.

All of the group said they liked the accommodation provided by Missing Link because it feels safe, is secure, is clean and because there are staff who *"take time out to listen to you and help you"*.

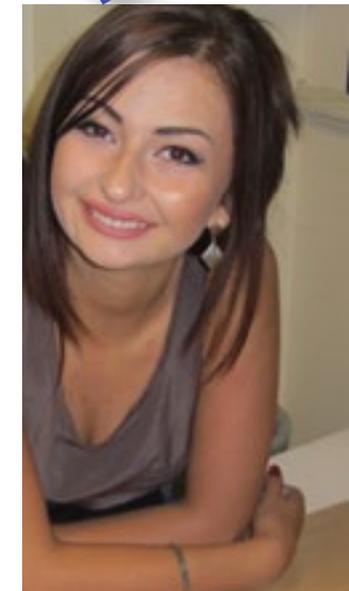
"The house is lovely and welcoming."



## WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS PATHWAY GROUP

Missing Link also co-ordinates the Women's Homelessness Pathway Group – this is a group of service providers, providing homelessness services for women across Bristol. The group provides a forum for raising issues and concerns, sharing training and best practice and networking across services – to improve the care pathways into homelessness services for women.

This year we delivered an Information Sharing Fair as part of Homelessness Awareness week in February. This was the first event of its kind and generated a lot of interest from agencies and colleagues working across Bristol.





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## OUR CORE VALUES *Missing Link, Next Link and Safe Link are committed to the following core values:*

### To treat people as individuals

We believe in providing high quality personalised support, tailored to women's needs. Our support packages will provide an appropriate level of flexible support to maximise independence and self-determination.

### To challenge commonly held misconceptions about mental ill health

We recognise the importance of addressing negative attitudes and perceptions about mental illness and how it is experienced. In our work we will challenge any prejudice or assumptions that prevent people from seeking help and realising their full potential.

### To challenge commonly held myths about domestic abuse

We will challenge the many myths surrounding domestic abuse that make survivors feel that domestic violence is their fault and they are to blame for not leaving their violent partner. In our work we will make clear the reality of domestic abuse and tackle the obstacles that prevent women from seeking help.

### To challenge commonly held assumptions about rape and sexual assault

We know that rape and sexual assaults on women happen far more than people think and the statistics indicate. In our work we will raise

awareness of the issue and challenge assumptions that the women's behaviour and dress is often seen to be responsible for the attack.

### Equal Opportunity

We are aware that domestic and sexual violence and mental ill health occur in all cultures and communities. We will strive to ensure that all women are treated with fairness and equity and that the organisation and its services are accessible to all.

## MISSINGLINK. NEXTLINK. SAFELINK.



### Empowerment

We understand how domestic and sexual violence and mental ill health can make women feel disempowered and devalued. To challenge this we will ensure that the experience and ideas of the women and children that we support are heard and that we maximise their participation in the design, delivery and development of our services.



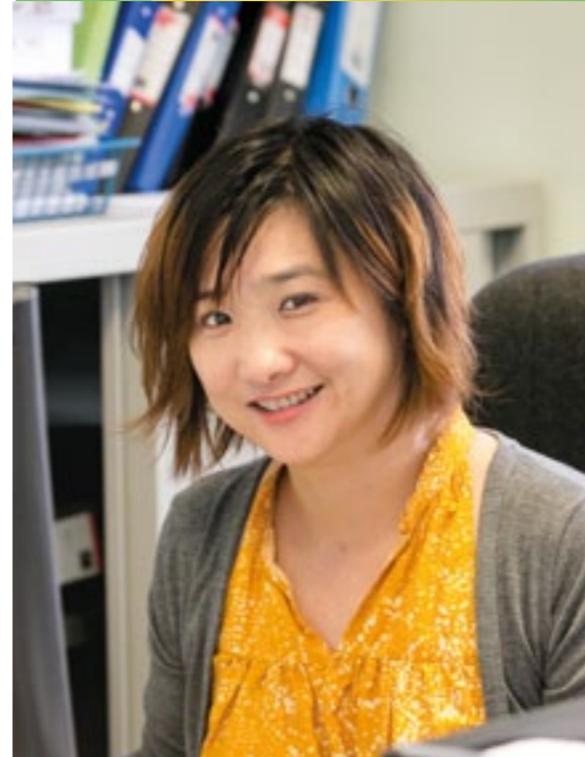


### Cultural Diversity

We are committed to ensuring that the Organisation and its services are inclusive and reflect the rich cultural diversity of the community we live in. We understand that women and children from Black and Ethnic Minority communities have to face the extra dimension of discrimination so we will offer culturally sensitive dedicated services. This will encourage women to come forward, seek help and give them a real choice about how they want to be supported.

### Quality Children and Young People's Services

We understand the importance of children and young people having their own individual support. We recognise the value of play as a therapeutic tool in the recovery process and will provide quality play and activities within a safe and stimulating environment. We will engage and help children and young people to express their feelings, build resilience and receive specialist support.



### Safe Quality Housing

We are committed to the provision of quality housing services that are responsive, accountable, meet the needs of the women and children that use them and are of a standard that re-enforces their self-esteem.

### Partnership Working

We are committed to a holistic approach to our service users' needs and recognise that our service is a part of a patchwork of services that are required. This holistic approach can only be achieved through collaboration and co-operation with local and national authorities, health, police and voluntary and statutory sectors.

### Quality and Efficiency

We have in place systems and procedures that make the best use of the resources available to us. We are committed to providing an effective value for money service while at the same time maintaining quality in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the women and children that come to us for help.

### To offer quality advice and advocacy to enable clients to make informed choices about their lives.

We know that many victims suffer in silence because they do not know what options there are available to them to live without fear of attack. With our telephone support and face to face advice sessions

we will ensure that all the legal, civil and support remedies are given to each caller that seeks help.

### Campaigning and raising awareness

We are committed to campaigning to stop violence against women and children in all its forms. We will work collaboratively with our partners to promote the issues, highlight the importance of prevention and strive to reduce the impact of gender-based violence. We know that any assessment of women's mental health must consider the full context of their lives.





## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

This year has been a challenging and exciting one. Next link successfully challenged Bristol in the high court and after a re-marking of our bid by an independent panel we were commissioned to provide the new domestic abuse services in the city. We are really delighted that the quality of our bid was endorsed by the independent panel and that we will be able to carry on providing the service that we have been giving local people for eighteen years.

We know our services have been instrumental in saving women's and children's lives and supporting them to live free from the fear of violence. It is crucial that victims fleeing domestic abuse are able to access services that they know and trust and are on their door step. The message we are now able to give to victims is we are here to stay and we can help you.

Once again Missing Link, Next Link and SAFE Link continue to provide essential services that respond to need and are innovative and effective. Over the year the combined services supported thousands of women and children overcome trauma, violence and mental ill health to recovery and rebuild their lives.

As always our service users were key to the development and delivery of our current and new services. Again this year I want to thank the various groups and individuals that have fundraised for us, we really appreciate people's commitment.

I would also like to thank the committee members, staff and service users for all the hard work that has made the organisation so dynamic and effective and in particular a huge thank you to our Chief Executive, Carol Metters, who has given so much support to staff during these difficult times and with others has worked so hard to keep up morale and to keep services running.

**Cathy Morgan** | Chair

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2015-16

Chair Cathy Morgan | Consultant

Iona Phillips | Solicitor

Mary Welsh | retired GP| treasurer

Rowena Hastings | Recovery Service Manager

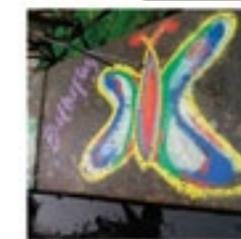
Vicky O'Loughlin | Press and Communications Manager (retired)

Megan Baker | Student

Monah Zealia | Public Health Officer

Joi Demery | Mental Health Manager (retired)

Accountants | ELLIOT BUNKER



# KEY EVENTS OF THE YEAR



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## NEXT LINK RE-COMMISSIONED

The whole of the organisation was delighted to be told that after a remarking of its bid it would continue providing domestic abuse services in Bristol. We were originally told that our bid was unsuccessful and instead the Council intended to fund another organisation. Next Link challenged the decision in the High Court and an agreement was reached that an independent panel of experts would consider the two bids. This panel decided that the bid from Next Link was the best for service users in Bristol.

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## DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

This year together with the Diversity Trust we held a conference to launch a report on our work to improve access to domestic and sexual violence services for LGBT communities. We provided new materials and promoted new ways of working to all domestic and sexual abuse services in the Avon and Somerset Area to increase the number of victims from the LGBT communities to seek help. At the same time we ran a course to raise awareness of Domestic and Sexual Violence within LGBT communities. The Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens was a key speaker and the conference was attended by over 100 people.



## WOMEN'S HOMELESS CONFERENCE

This year we delivered an Information Sharing Fair as part of Homelessness Awareness week in February. This was the first event of its kind and generated a lot of interest from agencies and colleagues working across Bristol. With contributions from over 20 organisations involved in delivering services to homeless women we were able to create information stalls, project films and gather support for our commitment to women only services within Bristol. The event was launched by our chief executive Carol Metters who gave the welcoming address, and was attended by 100 people from over 40 agencies, including the Police, Lighthouse, Probation, Health services and Bristol City Council commissioners.



## NEW WEBSITE

We launched our new website showcasing Missing Link, Next Link and Safe Link. The site is much easier to navigate and very dynamic. Since its launch we have seen a significant increase in traffic including victims of domestic abuse using it to seek help.



## KEY EVENTS OF THE YEAR



### VISIT FROM HOME OFFICE

We had a visit from the Director General of Crime, Policing & Fire Paul Lincoln who came to find out about local domestic abuse services. He talked with staff and service users including our peer mentors to hear about their experience of the police, criminal justice system and the help that was available to them.



### CANDLE LIT VIGIL

To mark International Anti-violence Against Women week we held our annual candle lit procession from Queen Square to College Green. We have held this event for 17 years and each year it has generated an increase in women seeking help.



### OFSTED INSPECTION

We were delighted that again our children's service successfully passed its Ofsted inspection.



### VISITORS FROM ABROAD – GENSINE Domestic Abuse Service

We were delighted to meet with women who provide domestic abuse services in Germany to share ideas about each other's work.



Dr Carlos from Brazil who is a domestic abuse researcher who came to see how we support women who have experienced abuse here in the UK.



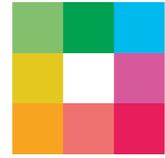
### ADVICE QUALITY STANDARD

Our accreditation was renewed after an inspection confirmed we offer high quality advice and staff have relevant knowledge and training.





# #HERE TO STAY



**NEXTLINK.**  
changing the face of  
domestic abuse support services



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services we offer . . . . .30



## annual review 2015 – 2016

To find out more about all our services please call 0117 925 0680 or text 07714 290 011



# AN INTRODUCTION TO BRISTOL NEXT LINK



This year Next Link Domestic Abuse Services was commissioned by Bristol City Council to provide a new domestic abuse service for women and children in the city. We are delighted to have been successful and see the commission as validation of the expertise and experience we have in the domestic abuse field and the presence we have in the community for the last 17 years.

We also were successfully commissioned by Bristol City Council to provide a complex needs safe house in the city. This is the first one of its kind. The service can house up to 9 women at any one time. It opened in February 2016 offering a safe house for women at high risk of domestic with additional support needs such as unmanaged substance misuse and mental health issues.

We also have resettlement services and an IRIS service in South Gloucestershire. In 2007 we were commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset to provide their domestic abuse safe house provision and a Floating Support Service, to find out more about these please go to the BaNES Section.

*"I have been treated with total respect that is so important to me."*

## Take up of services this year

### Overall take up of Bristol services

During this year we gave support to 2189 families. We also gave advice and information to many more.

### Referrals to all Bristol services

The service has a single point of access and referrals are received by telephone. All referrals are triaged by our duty team who asked women about their situation, the number of children they have with them, what areas of the city are unsafe for them and whether they want a safe house, the community support, crisis response or a dedicated BME service. We carry out a DASH risk assessment on all referrals and if appropriate refer to the Domestic Violence MARAC.

SUPPORTED  
**2189**  
FAMILIES  
DURING THE YEAR

*"I wish someone had offered me this service 15 years ago - very helpful."*

## BRISTOL SAFE HOUSES

We have seven safe houses in the city including a dedicated house for black and ethnic minority women and children, a house for single women and a block of self-contained units. In the safe houses we can house up to 38 families at any one time. The housing is direct access and women and children can move in immediately and they can stay for up to six months.

Where possible, when families move on, we offer resettlement support to enable them to settle into their new communities. For the women who returned to their partners we encourage them to keep in touch in case they need to use a safe house again.

This year we received 430 referrals we housed 98 families with 82 children. Of the 110 families we housed 3 returned to their violent partner.

*"I feel safe for the first time and have this confidence that I don't know where it's come from."*



*"My worker has been a tremendous support."*

SUPPORTED  
**472**  
FAMILIES

## COMPLEX NEEDS SAFE HOUSE

This is a brand new and unique service to Bristol offering support to women who would perhaps be turned down from generic safe houses due the complexity of their needs. The service opened February 2016 and offers a safe house for nine women at high risk of domestic abuse with additional support needs such as unmanaged substance misuse or mental health issues.

Since it opened we have received 19 referrals and have housed 7 women. We have a weekly support group run by BDP operating out of the house which is designed to support the women into accessing specialist substance misuse services whilst they are in a safe and calm environment.

We also worked closely with ROADS providers, Housing and Safer Bristol to form a referral panel to ensure we are accessible to the most vulnerable women within Bristol.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICE

This service offers resettlement support to families moving on from the safe houses and tenancy support to women whose tenancy is at risk because of domestic abuse. Practical and emotional support is given to help families to keep safe, settle into their new home or remain in their own home. Also help with any court proceedings, with making grant applications, registering with a doctor and schools or nurseries and planning the future. The support is offered for up to six months and is gradually withdrawn when the family is integrated into their community. We also provide drop in surgeries in central and east Bristol.

This year the service received 358 referrals and supported 277 women and 244 children.

*"It can benefit me and many others."*

*"I have really appreciated this help."*

## NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN ARCS

These services are part of our community support and are based in the North and South of the city. It is well documented that victims find it difficult to leave their neighbourhoods to seek help. These services reach into communities and have offices in south of the city in Hartcliffe and one in the North at Lawrence Weston. We also provide drop in surgeries at a range of local community venues these include Southmead Project; Brentry and Henbury Children's Centre; Long Cross Children's Centre; South Bristol Hospital; Headley Park Health Centre and Bishopsworth Children's Centre.

Each service responds to local need and offers high quality front line support to survivors and their children to increase their safety, prevent repeat victimisation and reduce levels of physical and psychological injury.

We provide outcome focused support to victims who want to remain at home safely and remove the violent partner, victims who are yet to leave their abusive partners, and victims who need to go into a safe house. The services also support any victim who wishes to use the criminal justice process to prosecute the perpetrator.

This year the services supported 446 families – 221 in the Northern Arc and 225 in the Southern Arc.

*"Thank you for all your help and support and for believing in me when no one else would."*

*"It has boosted my sense of being able to help myself more and that I have strategies and alternatives. Thank you."*

*"It is a great service with great workers."*

## CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICE

This service is part of our triage team and offers intensive crisis support to women and children who are threatened with homelessness because of domestic abuse.

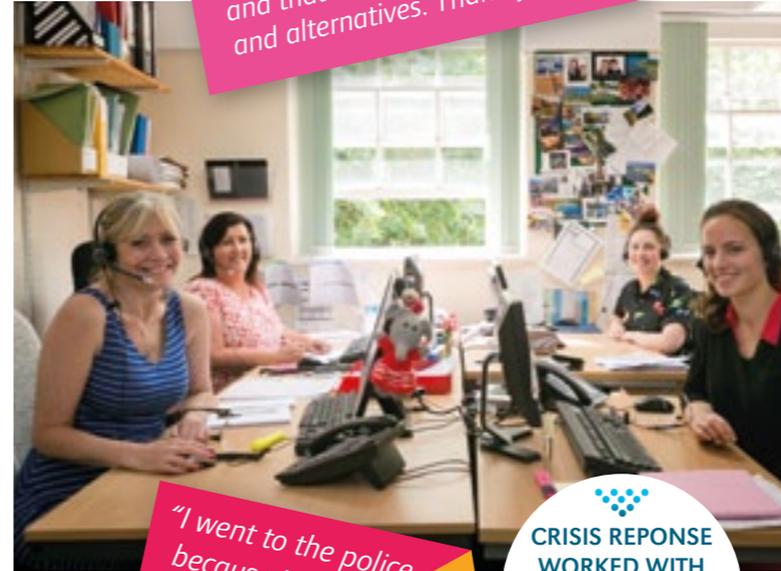
Often women become homeless when they are in a domestic abuse crisis because they feel there are no other options but to leave the violent home. This service responds the same day and will assist women to access emergency legal remedies to help her stay in her own home and extra security in the home to keep the family safe.

The worker will go with women to a solicitor and escort them to court.

When it is not safe to stay the worker will find safe housing accommodation within the city or outside of Bristol.

The support is part of a care pathway and offered for 4 weeks and then if appropriate the family moves seamlessly to other Next Link services.

This year the service received 553 referrals and worked with 543 families.



*"I went to the police because I was confident with the support around me."*

CRISIS RESPONSE  
WORKED WITH  
**543**  
FAMILIES  
THIS YEAR



## DEDICATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

These services prioritise the needs of the children who use our services and have either witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. We provide a range of support including one to one support, after school clubs, play schemes, help with enrolling in schools and nurseries and a dedicated resettlement worker to help children integrate into their new communities when they leave the safe house. This year our services passed an Ofsted inspection.

This year the service worked with 326 children and young people, 82 in the safe houses and 244 in resettlement.



*"I don't know where I would be now without your help."*

WORKED WITH  
**326**  
CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE

*"Fantastic, invaluable service."*

## DEDICATED SERVICES FOR BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Specific BME services

- Forced Marriage HBV
- Dedicated Polish, South Asian workers
- Dedicated IDVA court worker

We recognise the importance of diversity and to ensure our services are inclusive we have a dedicated BME woman's safe house and worker. We also have a dedicated BME resettlement worker and dedicated South Asian and Polish crisis response workers.

This year in the safe houses 21% of women and 23% of the children came from black and ethnic minority communities. In our Resettlement service 42% of women and 31% of the children came from black and ethnic minority communities. 74 women were supported to report their DVA to the police.

*"My whole life has changed since getting support."*

## SOUTH ASIAN DOMESTIC ABUSE CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICE

Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness for South Asian women. Our dedicated South Asian workers provide crisis intervention to South Asian women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse.

The workers assist families in crisis, they offer culturally sensitive support and help to access and legal and practical remedies to enable women and children to remain in their family home and lower repeat incidents of domestic abuse.

This service has proven to be extremely successful at both supporting women and raising the issue of domestic abuse within South Asian communities.

We also have a dedicated Polish worker who has successfully engaged with Polish victims and victims from Eastern Europe.

## FORCED MARRIAGE – HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE SERVICE

As a result of the pilot funded by the Home Office Forced Marriage Unit we were able to use the results of the pilot to generate funding to provide a service for victims who have either been forced into marriage or those at risk of forced marriage or honour based violence. The service offers confidential advice and support to look at all the options available including accessing legal remedies and help to plan their future.

This year the service supported 9 women who were at risk of forced marriage or had been through a forced marriage.

## FORCED MARRIAGE HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE TRAINING PROGRAMME

This year we continued to provide half day multi agency training courses in Bristol and South Gloucestershire, to give practitioners increased confidence to identify and recognise the warning signs to provide better protection for victims. The training comes under the auspices of the respective Safeguarding Boards and was run as part of their training programmes. Feedback from the training is overwhelmingly positive.

Our web based chat/advice facility which enables people to access real time advice anonymously is up and running. The Facebook page also links to our website and live chat.

**FORCED MARRIAGE IS A CRIME**





SUPPORTED  
**119**  
WOMEN  
THIS YEAR

## IRIS IMP NATIONAL LEAD

Our IRIS National Implementation Manager is part of the national IRIS team of three managers. A paper written by colleagues from the national IRIS team and Bristol University, "Women's experiences of referral to a domestic violence advocate in UK primary care settings: a service user collaborative study" was published in the British Journal of General Practice. It subsequently won the award for the best qualitative research paper, awarded by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGPs). In October, our National Implementation Manager for the IRIS project gave a presentation at the Royal College of General Practitioners' annual conference and accepted the award on behalf of the team and all the survivors who had participated.

In April, the national IRIS project was shortlisted to the final four from over 50 applications for the British Medical Journal's (BMJ) "innovation into practice award". Although not the final winner, we are delighted that the project was recognised as ground-breaking practice in bring the health community and third sector together to change practice and better support women and their families.

The IRIS programme continues to grow with 33 IRIS projects now commissioned and running in England and Wales. With more areas are expected by the end of 2016.

*"I wish I'd come to see you years ago."*

*"I feel like there is light at the end of the tunnel."*

## THE IRIS SERVICE

### Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) in Bristol and South Gloucestershire

We have 2 Iris workers in Bristol which means that all of the city's GP practices (60) can access the service. Our IRIS service in South Gloucestershire is fully embedded with all practices engaged.

For many victims of domestic abuse going to see the doctor is the only safe place they can go without their violent partner present. Our specialist domestic violence advocate-educators train and support primary care clinicians to recognise domestic abuse and refer their female patients to our service. The IRIS workers offer emotional and practical support and if appropriate help to access a range of specialist services.

In Bristol this year the service supported 119 women.

In South Gloucestershire the service has delivered 30 training sessions, had 20 Practice Champions and received 87 referrals.

## FAMILY INTERVENTION TEAMS

We are working in partnership with Bristol City Council's Family Intervention Team.

The team is funded under the government's Troubled Families umbrella, the families supported have to meet the following criteria, a member of the family must be in receipt of a workless benefit, low educational attendance and ASB, youth offending and nuisance.

Next Link has a Domestic Abuse worker in each of the three teams, North, South and central, giving advice and guidance to the keyworkers working with the families who are experiencing current domestic abuse or dealing with the impact of historic abuse. We are also running group sessions for the young people helping them to identify what is a healthy relationship.

## LIGHTHOUSE

We have an IDVA based with the Lighthouse Integrated Care Team.

The team is the central point of contact for all domestic abuse reported incidents in Bristol. Within the team each DV incident is assessed for a referral for specialist DV support. The IDVA work includes attending the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for high risk vulnerable victims and any follow up actions from the conference.

The IDVA coordinates and triages all of the standard, medium and high risk victims and then allocates them to the appropriate Next Link service for on going support.

The intended outcome is victims have support at the earliest opportunity following a report to the police to increase successful prosecutions of perpetrators and a reduction in repeat offending.

This year she worked with over 900 women.



*"This has been an extremely helpful service."*

*Our phone lines are now open from 8.30am to 5.30pm.*





ADVISED OVER  
**2000**  
PEOPLE THIS YEAR

## ADVICE QUALITY STANDARD MARK

This year our Advice Quality Standard accreditation for our advice and guidance work was renewed after an audit of our service. The AQS accreditation confirms we deliver well-managed domestic abuse advice services, provide ongoing help, ensuring staff have relevant, up-to-date knowledge providing high quality advice. This year we received 2,540 phone calls and gave advice to over 2,000 people and the mark is an external confirmation of the skill of our workers and the commitment of the organisation to ensure its work is of the best standard. LiveZilla (live chat line) is active on the duty desk from 1.00pm – 5.30pm Monday – Friday.



SUPPORTED  
**472**  
FAMILIES

## SURVIVORS PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK

We firmly believe that domestic abuse services should be informed and guided by survivors. Throughout the year we have consulted with the women and children that use our services on new initiatives and their experience of our services. They have also been involved in recruitment of staff, fundraising and talking to the media and key stakeholders about their experience of domestic and sexual abuse.

100% of women in our safe house and community support services said they felt safer after receiving support from Next Link. 87% of service users felt they were more equipped to maintain their independence. 97% of women said they felt an improvement in their health and wellbeing.

*"I would like to say 'thank you' for the help."*



## PROMOTING THE SERVICE AND RAISING AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Throughout the year we have participated in events including Southmead Festival, PRIDE, Muslim Cultural Festival, North Bristol Domestic Abuse Conference, BCC market place event LGBT report launch, Zero Tolerance disability event and International Women's Day to raise awareness of the impact of domestic and sexual violence on women and children and to ensure that information about our services is readily available and accessible.



We know that domestic and sexual abuse is on the increase and there are many women still living in fear that do not access or know about the help that is available.

Our commitment is to continue to raise these issues at a local and national level and at the same time reassure women it is not their fault. Too often domestic abuse and rape are seen as the women's fault and we need to challenge this perception and put the responsibility for the crime where it rightly belongs with the perpetrator.

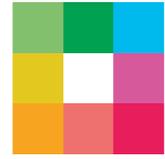
*"Thank you for all your kindness."*



*"You helped me to believe I could achieve great things"*



# FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING



**BATH NEXT LINK.**  
changing the face of  
domestic abuse support services



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## annual review 2015 – 2016

To find out more about these services please call 01225 466 989



# AN INTRODUCTION TO BATH NEXT LINK



In December 2007 Next Link was commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset to provide domestic abuse services for women and children.

Bath Next Link services include a safe house, children's services and resettlement and tenancy sustainment services.

## Take up of services this year

### Overall take up of Bath services

This year we received 152 referrals and gave support to 28 families in our safe house and 33 in resettlement. We also gave advice and information to many more. For those that we couldn't help because we were full we found alternative safe housing outside of Bath.

*"It's been really great."*

SUPPORTED  
**61**  
FAMILIES  
DURING THE YEAR

*"Very helpful. Thank you for all the help."*



## REFERRALS TO ALL BaNES SERVICES

Referrals are all made by telephone. At the telephone stage women are asked about their situation, the number of children they have with them, what areas are unsafe for them and whether they want a safe house, or the resettlement/ tenancy sustainment service. We also carry out a DASH Risk assessment and if appropriate refer to the DV MARAC.

*"My life is so much easier now. I have also received counselling which I really need and has helped me."*

## BATH SAFE HOUSE

We have one safe house that can house up to 8 families at any one time. The housing is direct access and women and children can move in immediately and there is an out of hours service that can be accessed through the police. Families can stay for up to six months. Each woman has a key worker offering emotional and practical support and every child has their own key worker offering therapeutic play. While they are with us they are given support with safety, benefits, legal options, housing and custody of the children. Where possible, when families moved on, we offered resettlement support to enable them to settle into their new communities. For the women who returned to their partners we encourage them to keep in touch in case they needed to use a safe house again.

*"My worker has an extremely clear understanding of my needs."*



*"It's a very good, positive service and should always be here to help others with these issues."*

SUPPORTED  
**472**  
FAMILIES



*"My worker made me feel very comfortable and at ease which I needed."*

## RESETTLEMENT AND TENANCY SUPPORT SERVICE

This service offers resettlement support to families moving on from the safe houses and tenancy support to women whose tenancy is at risk because of domestic abuse. Practical and emotional support is given to help families settle into their new home or remain in their own home. Help to form a plan to keep them safe, with making grant applications, registering with a doctor and schools or nurseries. The support is offered for up to six months and is gradually withdrawn when the family is integrated into their community.

*"Really helpful! Thank you."*

*"It's been very refreshing to have someone be non-judgemental and not trying to stop self harm... understanding that, currently, it has a purpose... understanding that self harm can be more than just cutting or overdosing. I've been told before that it's the same as someone binge drinking ... that's felt invalidating."*

## BATH ONE STOP SHOP

We currently have a specialist Domestic Abuse Worker based at the One Stop Shop one day a week. She offers advice and information to service users and professionals on what domestic abuse support is available in BaNES. The service is set up so women can walk in for advice without needing an appointment and/or can be referred into the specialist support by Bath and North East Somerset Council staff.

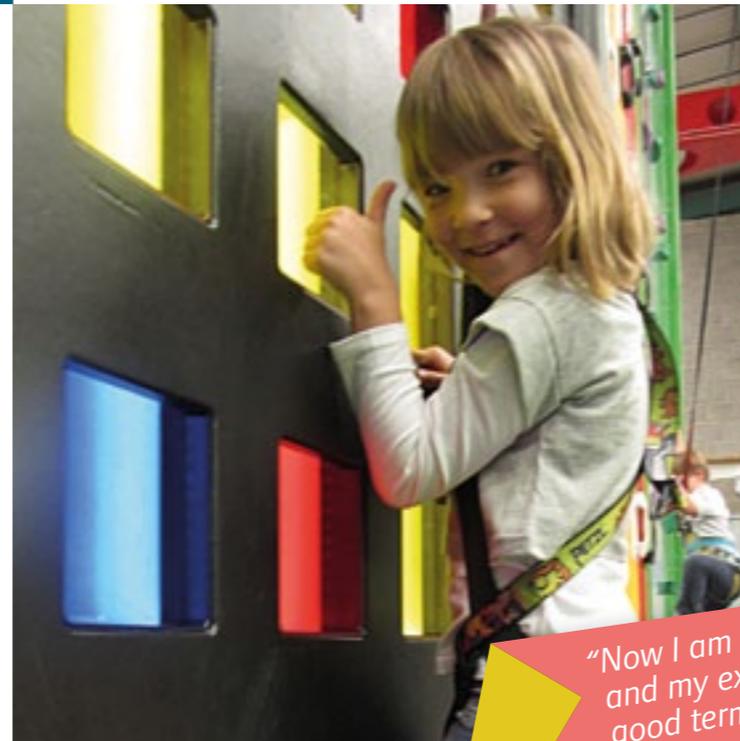
Also we have delivered one briefing and one workshop to BaNES staff, including benefit and housing advisors. The workshop was aimed at helping the frontline staff to identify signs of domestic abuse and what to look out for when meeting with service users, it also provided them with tips and advice on how to safely deal with disclosures and how to refer into Next Link.

*"I feel so much safer. Thank you."*

## LIGHTHOUSE KEYNSHAM

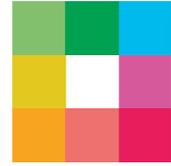
We also have a dedicated IDVA based at the Lighthouse in Keynsham for two mornings a week, she works as part of a multi-agency team to deliver a co-ordinated response to domestic abuse reported to the police and ensuring the women are supported to access Safe House and/or community support.

*"Now I am not struggling, and my ex are on good terms."*





# FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING



**SAFELINK.**  
transforming victims' lives

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To find out more about these services please call 0333 3231543 email [safe.link@nextlinkhousing.co.uk](mailto:safe.link@nextlinkhousing.co.uk) or text 07714 290 011



# AN INTRODUCTION TO SAFE LINK

(Sexual Assault Follow up and Empowerment)



SAFE Link was established in 2008 and is a service that works across the Avon and Somerset Police Area and provides emotional and practical support to all victims of rape and sexual assault. It was recommissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2015. The service follows the Revised Victims Code of Practice.

## THE SERVICE OFFERS

The service offers

- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- Dedicated Young Persons ISVA
- Children's ISVA
- BME ISVA
- Peer support groups

We have nine Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, 5 for adults and 3 for children and young people and one peer support worker all who offer confidential advice and practical and emotional support including a safe place to talk, access to counselling, support attending Sexual Health Services and help with medical attention. They also can help with supporting the family and practical problems such as help with housing, benefits, and employers.

If the victim wants to report to the police they can give support with making a statement, assist with claims for compensation and give support before, during and after the court process.

The victim does not have to report to the police to access the service and the rape or sexual assault can have happened recently or in the past.

The workers work in partnership with the Police and specialist sexual violence services and are based in hubs in

- Keynsham, BaNES with Lighthouse,
- Concorde House, South Gloucestershire with PROTECT Investigation team
- Express Park, Bridgwater, Somerset with PROTECT Investigation team
- New Bridewell, Bristol with Lighthouse team
- Kenneth Steele House, Bristol with PROTECT Investigation team
- SARSAS in Taunton

Staff deliver support by

- One to one support in person and by telephone
- Peer support groups
- Training and practical skills sessions
- Use of email, text, Skype and WhatsApp.

In 2015/16 the service supported a total of 788 victims; 622 aged 18 and over, 108 aged 14 -17 and 58 child victims.

SUPPORTED  
**622**  
VICTIMS AGED 18  
AND OVER



AND  
**58**  
CHILD VICTIMS

"It's really helpful being able to pick up the phone and speak to her if I need to."

"To have someone with you the whole way through the CJS who you can trust when you have no trust left... is amazing."

## PEER SUPPORT

This is our second year of running peer support groups funded by Comic Relief. Our peer support programme is made up of actual and virtual support groups. Each group has up to six victims meeting in a closed setting to talk about their feelings and learn from each other. The programme consists of 10 sessions, each with a theme including: flashbacks and nightmares; trust; sleep; safe relationships; managing thoughts and feelings; healthy body/healthy mind; anger and triggers, support from family and friends; coping mechanisms; future hopes and goals. Some members of the first group are now training to become peer facilitators and they will go on to run new groups. The virtual group uses WhatsApp to communicate and support each other and is a closed group. This year we ran 5 peer support programmes.





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Missing Link strives to create a culture that encourages and values everyone's differences and promotes mutual respect and shared understanding.

Missing Link is a Housing Association with charitable status, registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act (2014). Register No. 24218R

