



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 10



Welcome

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Executive Director
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Emma Bell

Emma Bell, Executive Director

Welcome to our spring newsletter. We've had an exciting and eventful few months and this issue covers the highlights.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year at JWA and have had the opportunity to meet many of our valued volunteers and committed supporters. Our staff team has also expanded.

Firstly, Selina Shaikh has joined as our Volunteer Co-ordinator. Many of you will have already have heard from her, as she is making personal contact with all our volunteers. You can read more about Selina's role on page 9.

Claire Simmons is our new Education Co-ordinator. She is responsible for designing and delivering programmes in secondary schools that educate Jewish children in recognising healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Naomi Dickson has returned to JWA to work as the Awareness Raising Co-ordinator. She is working with community groups, increasing awareness of domestic abuse in the Jewish community and raising our profile.

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death in October of Gay Waldman, our dedicated Community Liaison Co-ordinator. She will be greatly missed by all involved in JWA. Elaine Grazin has written a moving tribute to her on page 8.

We extend a warm welcome to our new Chair, Frances Turner. Under her guidance and leadership, we are sure that JWA will continue to flourish.

Do take time to read about the events that JWA held around the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) that included a panel discussion with The Rt Hon Theresa May MP. The Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, wrote an eloquent and supportive article to coincide with IDEVAW, see page 5.

We are delighted that our core of supporters has continued to grow in these difficult times. Our annual appeal raised funds that will go towards helping women who have had the strength and courage to seek help after being subjected to emotional, physical, verbal, financial and sexual abuse. It is for these women that we exist.

In the words of one client: *"I can't thank Jewish Women's Aid enough for helping me through a terrible time. Your ongoing, daily help gave me the confidence to start rebuilding my life"*.

Thank you as ever for your support and encouragement.

Emma Bell



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

Board News

Frances Turner, our New Chair

About 10 years ago, I was invited to a JWA lunch by Lorna Cohen and enjoyed the experience, realising that these women were just a little different from the usual 'ladies who lunch'. So when I began to think about retiring after 19 years of counselling and heard that the Board were recruiting a new member, I was happy to join them. This year I agreed to Chair the Board and, with much less stress in my life as a result of my children having grown up, I felt that this was a good time for me to work with domestic abuse, which was a topic I had always been concerned about. As a Trustee I was being of service to clients in a very different way. I was in the background rather than working face to face with women.

Since 2007 there have been many changes in the organisation. We have recruited new staff, expanded our work, increased our awareness raising, developed a legal service and at the end of 2009, introduced a telephone counselling service.

I have learned a lot about Jewish Women's Aid and about domestic abuse, whilst getting to know other professionals working in the variety of Jewish organisations. I work with an extremely dedicated group of women trustees. For the past six months I have been mentored by Mildred Levison, the outgoing JWA Chair, who has generously shared much of her vast experience of being a trustee with me. As well as a committed professional staff group, I work with many loyal volunteers and it has been a truly interesting and heart warming experience.



Frances Turner, our New Chair

Since joining JWA I have visited a refuge in Israel and talked to religious women who operate a confidential helpline in New York. In Israel, refuge workers are starting to work with the perpetrators, something we may need to think about. We all have a lot to learn from each and I intend to continue finding out how similar organisations operate in other parts of the world.

I am proud to be a part of Jewish Women's Aid, and look forward to getting to know the rest of our hard working team of volunteers in addition to working with all the office and refuge staff.

Goodbye to our Chair, Mildred Levison

We are of course sad to see our beloved Chair, Mildred Levison, step down. Mildred has brought a real wealth of expertise to JWA after a career in the social housing and domestic violence sectors. Mildred has been involved in JWA since 1996 and was elected to the Chair in 2000, a position she held for five years. Mildred has also been Chair again since last year. We know that she's very much looking forward to her retirement and we wish her lots of luck. Mildred, your warmth, expertise and knowledge have been invaluable to all at JWA over the years – you have left a strong legacy. Thank you.

Looking Swish

Jewish Women's Aid benefited by over £2000 from a Clothes Swishing & Retail Party, held at Norrice Lea Shul on Sunday, 29 November. Joanna Sadie organised the event to mark her 40th Birthday and loved the idea of swishing as it's shopping without guilt! Everyone who attended was asked to bring nice clean, presentable clothes that were lurking unloved in their wardrobes so others could fall in love with them and give them a good home.

As well as the rails filled with clothes which people had brought with them, there were stalls selling jewellery, cosmetics, hats, flowers, and gifts for Chanukah. Particularly popular was the Gift Tree where tickets, costing between £5 and £75, won prizes donated by local shops and businesses.

After the event the clothes that were not swished were donated and gratefully received by World Jewish Relief.

Raising a glass for JWA

November was a busy month for JWA, culminating in a supper and wine tasting with the renowned wine writer Jancis Robinson.

Supporters Miriam and Stephen Grabiner were hosts to 60 guests at a central London venue.

Everyone enjoyed Jancis Robinson's informative, interesting and amusing talk, as well as the excellent wines and food.

During the evening, guests heard the true story of one of JWA's clients, followed by an appeal that raised over £25k for the charity.



Rails full of clothes to swish



Just a few of the gift stalls



Emma Bell and Jo Sadie



Jancis Robinson speaking



A selection of guests at their tables

Home Truths: the Social Impact of Domestic Violence

JWA, WIZO and Emunah Panel Discussion at WIZO House, November 2009

Emma Bell, Executive Director of Jewish Women's Aid joined The Rt Hon Theresa May MP; Neil Blacklock, Development Director of Respect, and Dr Louise Howard, Consultant Psychiatrist and Researcher for the Institute of Psychiatry for a panel discussion on the social impact of domestic violence. The panel was chaired by Guardian journalist Tanya Gold.

Each of the panel looked at the issue from a different aspect, with Emma exploring the definition of domestic violence (DV), and explaining that it can occur between family members and same sex couples, as well as heterosexual couples. She spoke about the long lasting effects of domestic abuse on women and their children, citing the disturbing fact that 90% of children are either in the same room or in hearing distance of the abuse. She described JWA's wide range of services, which include a refuge, community outreach, helpline, face to face and telephone counselling, and educational programmes in schools. She ended by reading a moving testimony from a JWA client.

Neil Blacklock of Respect outlined the importance of involving fathers and making them more accountable to their children. Respect has an online child contact centre, Dad's Face, in which fathers who had perpetrated domestic violence spoke to their children in supervised virtual space. He said that more research and

treatment of perpetrators could result in fewer incidents of DV.

Dr Louise Howard spoke about her work with DV and mental health on a Government Task Force, explaining that DV was much broader than physical abuse and that the emotional mind games, stifling control, financial and sexual abuse had damaging and long lasting consequences in terms of mental health and biological problems. She reminded the attentive audience that domestic abuse is a healthcare issue, costing the health service over a billion pounds annually, and not 'just' a social matter.

The Rt Hon Theresa May, in her key note speech, spoke of the Conservative party's plans to combat domestic violence. She praised the fantastic work of JWA and its ability to provide culturally specific services.

Noting that progress had been made in recent years with initiatives such as specialist domestic violence courts, MARAC's (multi agency risk assessment conference) and the criminalisation of the non-molestation order, Theresa May also acknowledged that more measures are needed to improve police responses, and to increase the number of health visitors trained to work with mothers and children. She ended by stressing the importance of prevention, starting with education in schools.

A lively question and answer session closed a thought provoking evening.



Lorraine Warren, Tanya Gold, Neil Blacklock, The Rt Hon Theresa May, Emma Bell, Dr Louise Howard, Deborah Nathan

The Chief Rabbi Speaks

This was published on 14th November 2009, Parshat Chaye Sarah to coincide with the IDEVAW, by Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks.

Chayei Sarah contains an extended account of what we might call the first Jewish marriage. Sarah had died. Abraham, by then old, had been "blessed with all". Yet their son Isaac, the first child born within the covenant, remained unmarried. Abraham gave his servant the mission of finding his son a wife.

The test the servant chooses is significant. She will be one who, when asked by a stranger to give him water to drink, not only does so, but gives water to his camels also. That is how Rebekah was chosen. Jewish marriage, the Torah is telling us, is built on chessed, the word that means both "love" and "kindness".

In Judaism chessed flows both ways: from wife to husband and from husband to wife. In the Ketubah, the marriage contract, a husband undertakes to "work for and cherish" his wife. The sages said that "A man should love his wife as himself, and honour her more than himself." He should not be angry or vituperative or create a mood of fear within the home (Rambam, Ishut 15: 19). According to a midrash, when Jacob momentarily displayed anger toward Rachel, G-d said "Is that the way to answer a woman in distress?" (Bereishith Rabbah 71: 7).

Yet domestic violence still exists. 25 November is an International Day Against Violence Against Women, and it is appropriate that we think about it within the Jewish community as well. Abuse comes in many forms: physical, emotional and psychological, and the Jewish community is not immune to it.

We would like to think otherwise, knowing how much Judaism values the family, sanctifies the home and idealises the relationship between husband and wife.. You cannot wish a problem away. It exists. That is why I – and our rabbinate as a whole – support the work of Jewish Women's Aid and other agencies working in the field.

The home is protected space. That is its beauty. But it brings with it the danger that behaviour that would not be countenanced anywhere else can happen there precisely because of its privacy. Insult, intimidation, the use of force, emotional blackmail and physical violence can happen behind closed doors without anyone else knowing. When it comes to abuse, the home provides the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity.

That is why Judaism places such emphasis on shalom bayit, peace within the home. It is here that we are tested, here that we learn the love that is more than physical passion. Love is respect, consideration, gentleness, the capacity to listen as well as speak, sensitivity, graciousness and the willingness to make sacrifices for one another. These things bring the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence, into the home. They are what Isaac and Rebekah shared: chessed, the love that is also kindness.

As a community we may not turn a blind eye or deaf ear to the problem of domestic violence. We must oppose those who practise it and offer practical help to those who suffer from it. We may not leave the afflicted to suffer alone.



Telephone Counselling Service Launched

JWA is proud to announce the start of a new telephone counselling service in December 2009. The service was formally launched by The Rt Hon Theresa May MP at the IDEVAW panel discussion on 25th November. It is an exciting development in JWA's service provision, and enables us to extend our current face to face counselling service, which is only available in London, to women all across the country who have access to a telephone. We look forward to reaching and supporting even more of the brave women who access our services.

Our telephone counselling co-ordinator, Lynne Jackson from Leeds has worked hard to establish the service, working closely with Sheila Miller, who continues her sterling work co-ordinating our face to face service. Lynne has interviewed and trained five qualified counsellors who have already begun to work with clients over the phone.

Lynne and Emma would especially like to thank the new telephone counselling team for their enthusiasm and dedication to this exciting service. Lynne said "We are all looking forward to providing a lifeline to isolated women who have nowhere else to turn, and thank the new telephone counsellors for their enthusiasm and dedication to this exciting service".



Facts and figures

- At least 750 000 children a year witness domestic violence (Dept of Health, 2002)
- 85% of men are not violent to anyone but their partner
- Close to 10 000 women are sexually assaulted each week (BCS self-completion questionnaire 2008)
- JWA outreach services are working with double the amount of women as they were last year.

Tribute to Gay Waldman

For the last few years, Gay Waldman, JWA's Community Liaison Co-ordinator, has been the face of the organisation for many of our volunteers, running educational programmes and arranging the helpline. It is very hard to believe she is no longer with us.

Gay had been battling cancer for months, but, with great courage, she did not give up working for JWA until almost the end of her life. She continued to work at least one day a week, timed to coincide with her "better" days between hospital treatments, until she could no longer manage either JWA or her role as a magistrate.

But that is just typical of the determined woman Gay was. She joined JWA staff in 2003, having first been introduced to us as a volunteer by Elaine Sacks, wife of the Chief Rabbi.

In the 6 years she worked for JWA she motivated everyone who came into contact with her. I have never known a woman more professional, dedicated, energetic and passionate about domestic violence in the Jewish community. She packed an unbelievable amount into her part-time job, and she did it with the positive attitude which stood her in good

stead when she faced her illness.

Gay played a key role in ensuring the continuation and the viability of the helpline, always recognising its centrality to the service that JWA offered to women. She also took the lead in developing our education work. She was always happy to speak to community groups. She successfully co-ordinated the "toilet door campaign" which placed posters in the Ladies' room at most of our synagogues.

In JWA our hearts are heavy with the loss of our valued colleague, and I can only imagine how difficult this time is for her husband Bernard and their lovely children and grandchildren.

But perhaps I can raise your spirits a little by quoting the response of one of our Helplineers when I rang her with the sad news of Gay's death. She told me that she felt honoured to have known Gay, even if it was only for a few years.

Gay, you are in our hearts and there, I promise, you will stay.

- Elaine Grazin



A fresh approach to volunteering

Hello, I'm Selina and I'm so thrilled to have recently been appointed as Volunteer Co-ordinator at JWA. I have a strong background working with volunteers and I bring a variety of skills with me to my new role here. It's lovely to work with such passionate and dedicated volunteers and it's wonderful getting to know each person individually.

At the moment I'm making contact with each volunteer by calling them. It's been a real voyage of discovery finding out the skills and interests of each volunteer. Did you know for example that we have 59 helpline volunteers and nine trained counsellors?

I am very much looking forward to meeting all of the volunteers at a series of events I'm planning for the next year – an induction day, volunteer training and a volunteer conference where all the volunteers can meet and network with each other.

At the moment, I'm actively recruiting for volunteers for our helpline. The ideal skills are empathy, and the ability to listen. You don't need to commit more than three hours per month and it can be very fulfilling. I am also looking for volunteers to help out with administration in the office. These volunteers need to be computer literate and have basic administrative skills. These are only two of a wide variety of volunteering roles at JWA. So you

can see that our volunteering is varied and we may well have a role to suit anyone. We have been working on our application process which is now straightforward and user friendly, so when you apply, the process is clear-cut and we'll try to match your skills to the right role.

I am constantly overwhelmed by the amount of time and energy our volunteers are happy to give to JWA – their commitment is inspiring, and they truly are the lifeblood of the organisation. I'm always on the look out for new recruits so please contact me at the office or look on our website if you'd like to get involved.

Email address: info@jwa.org.uk

Dates for your diary

A date for your diary
Jewish Women's Aid
Lunch 2010
Thursday May 13, 2010
St John's Wood Synagogue
Grove End Road,
London NW8 9NG

Volunteer Conference
April / May 2010

A sad farewell

If the JWA grapevine is working well, word is out that I will shortly be leaving JWA and my work in the refuge. They asked me to write a farewell speech about my JWA life - how much time have you got!

It started like this - in January 2004 - the phone call came mid-afternoon. Mildred Levison, Chair of the Trustees rang out of the blue to offer me the job as Administrator at JWA. "But I've just separated from my husband and am living with Mum in Liverpool!" I protested. Two weeks and a rented flat later I was inducted into the intense world of JWA, a small team of dedicated workers burrowing away under tremendous pressure of work, ever mindful of our aim - to do whatever it takes to help Jewish women and their children deal with their harrowing existence.

For two action-packed years, I managed endless tasks, a variety of work and a regular queue at my desk of Director, Trustees, staff, volunteers and contractors. It was frantic but it was very much a team effort, each of us working so hard for the common cause. Around this time the refuge was struggling to find a replacement support worker. A chance remark to the Director by Mich Greenberg, our little Brummy dynamo, the then Refuge Co-ordinator, that it would be easier to train someone up to do the job seemed to spark off an idea in both their minds. They turned to look at me! My fate was sealed once again.



Now I have four years of refuge experience under my belt and yes, we have had some difficult clients and situations to deal with but I wouldn't have changed it. I've seen the best and worst of what our women went through, how it has affected them and how brave they are to overcome such horrible experiences. It's made me look at myself and rethink what is important. Life at the house runs on kind of a parallel existence, a safe capsule where women of all walks of life are thrown together in a common survival mode. Anyone outside finds it hard to relate to this and that's why JWA exists, to help them with their rocky journey. I believe that in the majority of cases we have helped them to recover and move on.

And, sadly I have come to the end of my shelf life! It was a difficult decision, not taken lightly, but I know it's the right thing to do to step aside to allow a younger, fresher approach. I will be leaving at the end of February and wish all my friends at JWA the best of everything for the future. Keep up the good work, you **are** making a difference!

Shelley Blackstein
Senior Refuge Worker



Tina's story

I was a self employed, independent woman. I had my own home, but was having trouble paying the mortgage. My business partner was an old friend. He suggested that we find somewhere to live together and I could rent my home to pay my mortgage. We started an internet business and he promised to invest in it. We moved in as a couple, but I couldn't rent my home out. We moved in together as a couple.

I knew that he enjoyed the occasional drink, but I didn't realise he was an alcoholic, although some of his friends had warned me. He promised he'd get help for his alcoholism. We decorated our new flat and it started to feel like home.

Within a month he started coming home late – and always with a bottle. He promised he'd stop. The business was struggling financially and he reneged on his promise to invest. I lost my house and was eventually declared bankrupt. I threatened to leave him if he didn't get treatment. I nagged and nagged him about it. I didn't know that nagging is the worst thing you can do with an alcoholic. I got information about Alcoholics Anonymous and he told me he'd been to a couple of meetings, but I found that he had been lying to me.

He became agitated and aggressive. I moved into a different bedroom and fixed a lock on the door. He started having parties in the flat. He brought prostitutes home. He abused me mentally, threatened me physically and threw things at me. He was determined to destroy me. I called the police almost daily because of the abuse. Eventually



he raped me. He put a sleeping pill in my drink. I realised what he'd done when I woke up. I went to a doctor who confirmed it. I was at the end.

I knew I was going downhill, physically and mentally. Eventually, I had to move out. I went to a domestic violence unit where they told me about JWA. I'd never heard of refuges before I called JWA.

I had £1.50 in my pocket when I arrived at the refuge, where I was greeted with such warmth. It was Pesach time and the kitchen was full of food. I felt like I was in heaven. My stress level was so high that I lost my memory for three weeks. My key worker helped me to apply for benefits and I started to feel less stressed. The staff of the refuge gave me hope.

I had two years of counselling through JWA. My counsellor was amazing. I was determined to put myself back together. I've now moved out of the refuge, into a flat of my own. I have started to move on.



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