



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

## Press release

### **“You know a Jewish woman experiencing domestic abuse”: Domestic abuse in the Jewish Community**

In response to the largest known survey of Jewish women of its kind<sup>1</sup>, Jewish Women's Aid has found that 26% of respondents (27% of women) had personally experienced domestic abuse. This finding is in keeping with national data indicating that 1 in 4 British women experience domestic abuse at some time in their lives<sup>2</sup>.

Just over 55% of survey respondents (56% of women) indicated they knew someone who had experienced domestic abuse<sup>3</sup>. The majority of respondents were clear that domestic abuse did not just include physical violence.

However, in spite of this level of abuse happening throughout the community, only 68% of respondents still believed that domestic abuse occurs at about the same rate in the Jewish community as in the general population. 62% of respondents indicated that they were not aware of a Rabbi in their community publicly addressing the issue of domestic abuse.

In addition to a general opinion survey, Jewish Women's Aid also commissioned in-depth interviews with women who had experienced domestic abuse. Some extracts from the searing accounts they gave of their experiences are included below.

#### *Jewish Women's Voices*

***“Throughout my life, abuse made me feel so many different things. Often, it was emotional, and the lasting scars of being made to feel for years that you do not matter and would be nothing without your husband, well, that I have to carry with me. The physical abuse, it gave me something to concentrate on. The pain was unbearable yes, but so was the emotional agony. It was the emotional pain, the belittling, the stalking, the yelling that made me try to kill myself. I could run from his slaps, but not from his words”.***<sup>4</sup>

78% of respondents indicated that a Jewish-specific domestic abuse organisation is helpful for the Jewish community, and the service user interviews showed appreciation of the work of Jewish Women's Aid and the range of services it provides.

#### *Jewish Women's Voices*

***“In all honesty, I knew I could go to a friend's, but knowing that the [Jewish Women's Aid] refuge was there, when [JWA staff] told me such a place existed, it gave me the courage I needed, to leave. Just knowing it was there ... knowing it was safe, and Jewish, it made me able to go. I attribute knowing it was there to the courage I found to leave him”***

As Emma Bell, Executive Director says, “This ground-breaking study shows that there is a shocking and unacceptable level of domestic abuse in the Jewish community, which is in line with national data and shows that we are not immune. We need to build on the work that we do at JWA to highlight this throughout the community, and I'd therefore prioritise five of our recommendations for immediate action:

- **JWA calls on synagogues, communal organisations and communal leaders to do everything in their power to educate their respective communities about the spectrum of domestic abuse, which includes emotional abuse, as a painful form of violence against women.**
- **The Jewish refuge provided by JWA is the only kosher and Shabbat observant refuge in Europe, and is therefore of great importance to many Jewish women. JWA is facing**

**statutory funding cuts and the continued existence of the refuge is thus in danger. JWA therefore asks the British Jewish community to continue its valued support to ensure that this vital service can continue.**

- **Education is key to breaking the cycle of domestic abuse. JWA is committed to providing healthy relationships programmes and asks other communal organisations to work in partnership to deliver these programmes to the widest range of young people as possible.**
- **Jewish women seek support from rabbinical authorities, who can be helpful and supportive. JWA will seek to set up a Rabbinical Domestic Abuse Group to guide their work, and as a resource for women seeking rabbinical advice.**
- **Domestic abuse often begins in pregnancy or soon after. Therefore, Jewish communal organisations who have contact with pregnant women or women who have just given birth should take any opportunity to educate them about healthy relationships and signs of abuse.**

**<end quote>**

All media enquiries should be directed to Emma Bell, Executive Director on [emma@jwa.org.uk](mailto:emma@jwa.org.uk) or 020 8445 8060.

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#### *Notes to Editors*

This press release is accompanied by a media briefing. The media briefing also contains information about the services JWA offers and the numbers of women supported etc. Information regarding the charity's work in 2009-10 is also available in our annual report at [www.jwa.org.uk](http://www.jwa.org.uk)

A copy of the full research report, or selected chapters including the data analysis of the survey with relevant graphs and the Jewish Women's Voices chapter, is available from [emma@jwa.org.uk](mailto:emma@jwa.org.uk)

<sup>1</sup> The survey yielded **842** complete responses. With 788 female responses, this survey yielded (to the knowledge of JWA) the highest number of responses to any survey aimed primarily at Jewish women.

<sup>2</sup> British Crime Survey 2008-9 and also from other research for Women's Aid.

<sup>3</sup> The demographic breakdown (age, geography, religious observance) of respondents was broadly in keeping with national data on British Jewry, adding significant weight to these findings.

<sup>4</sup> For additional Jewish Women's Voices please see media briefing or Chapter Four of final report.