

Border Women's Aid

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025



BWA



## OUR STORY SO FAR

In 2018, we formalised the foundational principles which we wanted to underpin and inform the work of BWA in the coming years. These include:

### Vision

A community where all women and children can be safe and strong

### Mission

We are women supporting women to live empowered lives free from domestic abuse in all its forms

### Values

We resolved to work in a way that reflected these core values:

- Equality
- Respect
- Commitment
- Trust

With these foremost in our deliberations, we created a 3-year plan to achieve the following strategic objectives:

**Optimise refuge provision**

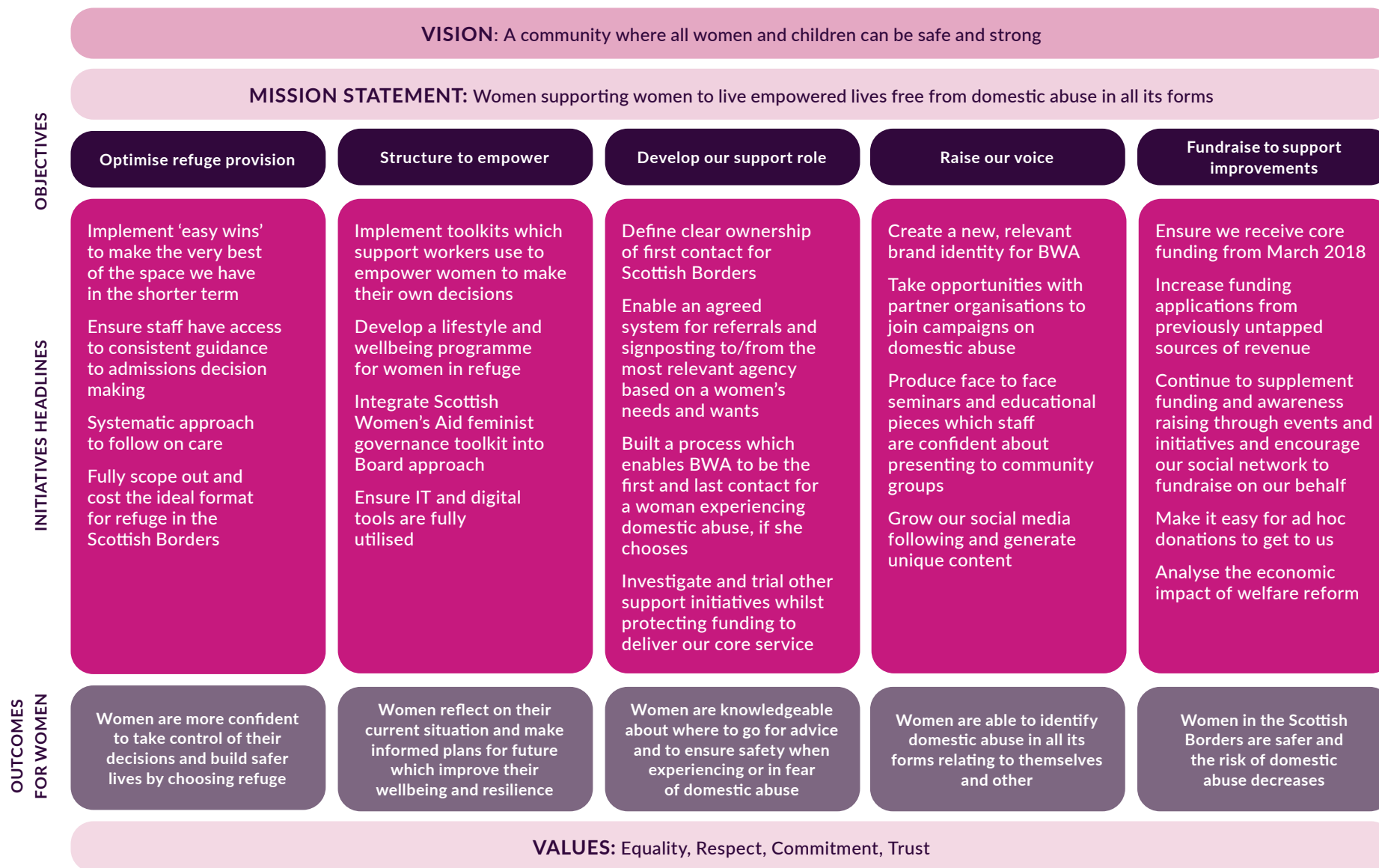
**Structure to empower**

**Develop our support role**

**Raise our voice**

**Fundraise to support improvements to the service**

Between 2018 and 2021 we made great progress with these objectives, scoring considerable successes against the familiar background of financial uncertainty and the new and unfamiliar challenge of the Covid pandemic.



“I thank my local women’s refuge, Border Women’s Aid in Hawick, for its important work. It has worked tirelessly to help women gain freedom from abusive relationships. It provides safe accommodation and specialist support for up to a year for women and their children who have left abusive homes. Through its excellent outreach service, it supports many women in the community who currently live with abuse while they plan for a life beyond it.”

Rachael Hamilton, MSP.  
In Scottish Parliament, 28 January, 2021

#ChooseToChallenge



## WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The pandemic was a challenge, to which we rose with commitment and dedication. But it also presented a major opportunity to review the service and its delivery, to experiment and to do things differently in order to meet the needs of the women who came to us for help.

**This is where we are today:**

### A different organisation

- Outreach
- New team

### Operating in a different way

- Remote working
- New funding streams

### Through a period of instability

- Increased demand
- Pandemic



## WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The pandemic years clarified the challenges BWA had to overcome, and the opportunities which not only enabled us to respond to immediate needs but also to chart our way to a new and exciting future with broader objectives and greater ambitions.

### Challenges

- Reduced capacity in the house
- Staff recruitment and wellbeing
- Competing priorities
- Service resilience
- Strengthen board membership and expertise

### Opportunities

- Funding and grant support
- Increased awareness of domestic abuse
- Technology adoption
- Partnership working



## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

# Strengthen Board

### Key considerations:

- Recruit more members of the board to increase board resilience, to represent a broader, more diverse demographic, and to reflect the fact that younger women are at greatest risk of domestic abuse, especially coercive and controlling behaviour
- Run regular recruitment campaigns (every quarter on social media or as necessary)
- Reach out to local colleges and other relevant local organisations, e.g. Heriot Watt, Borders College, local accountancy firms, etc.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** Recruit suitable additional board members. The immediate priority is to appoint a Treasurer with direct/current experience of financial governance, strategic planning and reporting.
- 2022-25** Continue to review and strengthen board membership with wider demographics in mind. Continue to run recruitment campaigns as necessary to ensure the board's resilience and the continuation of its enthusiasm and energy for our work.

“I have been a BWA board member for over 4 years. It is a real privilege to be part of such a dynamic organisation, to shape its direction and provide support to the team, and perhaps most of all be part of a movement that is giving voice to the experiences of women who experience domestic abuse here in the Scottish Borders. I really feel that I am able to make a difference.”

**Eibhlin McHugh**

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

# Service Provision and Resilience

### Key considerations:

- The most pressing issue is staff recruitment and retention. Without the right kind and number of support workers there is a major risk to the service both in terms of meeting the needs of women and ensuring optimum levels of staff well-being, energy and enthusiasm, all of which are essential to do their jobs effectively.
- The data clearly demonstrates that the core service is expanding and changing. The recently established outreach service really took off during the pandemic and continues to grow as women's needs change. The latest Scottish legislation in respect of combatting domestic abuse and coercive control may well drive further change as protection orders, etc. come into use. In addition, we know that today young women, including teenagers, are at greatest risk of abuse, so the service is changing to address their concerns. Across the board, in response to what women are telling us, experimental alternative empowering programmes like creative projects and well-being sessions are proving both effective and popular, so demand for them is increasing.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** The immediate priority is to ensure we deliver a resilient service.
- 2022-25** To ensure that the service continues to respond to what women tell us what they want and need. BWA must not just 'talk the talk' of empowerment but 'walk the walk' of self-empowerment. Be a bottom-up rather than a top-down service.

**“Working for BWA is a privilege as we are invited into women’s lives. Their journey with us enables them to become again the strong and fabulous women they once were, becoming empowered and in turn use this insight to help others who may be going through a similar experience. BWA is all about women lifting up women to own their own lives.”**

**BWA Support Worker**



## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

## Employee Remuneration and Wellbeing

### Key considerations:

#### Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health:

- At the best of times, the nature of the work at BWA is intensive and stressful since every day we deal with human trauma and hurt. But it was the pandemic and its added pressures that highlighted the need for the service proactively to address the matter of staff wellbeing and mental health, and to recognise the fact that taking care of these issues was essential to the resilience of the service as a whole.

#### Remuneration:

- Recruitment and retention are real challenges in the current climate, with cuts in public spending, rising inflation, and the shortage of suitably qualified staff. Therefore, we need to review the Support Worker base salary, as well as evaluate the benefits of any incentives/rewards package we might offer. Inevitably, this is dependent on funding opportunities and constraints.
- Review and benchmarking of salary structure needs to go hand in hand with a review of the Support Worker role profile. Considering how the service has dramatically changed in the last couple of years, we need to redefine the profile. Looking at comparable profiles in the sector, especially the SBRCC role profile and data from previous benchmarking exercises, is a fundamental part of this exercise.

- We need to bear in mind the fact that we are a small service, so the opportunities for progression within the service are limited. Nevertheless, we shall make every effort to provide development opportunities for all staff.
- In carrying out such a review, it is essential that we remember we're an inclusive service founded on collective, feminist principles. Staff should be consulted on their expectations of BWA as an employer and be involved in shaping our strategy. Such consultations should be 1:1 as well as within a group.
- We can use this consultation process as an opportunity to enhance staff/board relationships and engagement. Whilst cognisant of our oversight and governance duties, it's important for morale and general 'esprit de corps' that everyone in BWA can be confident that we're a transparent organisation in which relationships are based on equality and respect.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** Staff recruitment and retention are key to making BWA's vision a reality. A review of the Support Worker role profile, salary and benefits is therefore the priority for 2022.
- 2022-25** Create a framework for improving board and staff engagement. First step is scheduling an 'away day' for summer 2022 and then further focus on how to ensure a framework is put in place for ongoing engagement and feedback.

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

## Suitable accommodation (including appropriate follow-on support)

**Key considerations:**

- We will maximise the two spaces that we have (even bearing in mind the Istanbul Convention which advises 4 places for the size of our population in the Borders). Reviewing our occupancy figures over the last couple of years, and responding to what women want from the service, 2 spaces are proven to be meeting current demand.
- Nevertheless, we need to work on reframing what we provide in the refuge as part of the 'whole woman approach,' actively promoting the fact that this makes our service different and special. In many cases, housing is only one of a number of challenges and issues facing women experiencing domestic abuse. For example, in 2021-22 there was an increase in referrals from agencies and services working with women who have learning disabilities or mental health issues as well as experiencing domestic abuse.
- Should data and case studies provide evidence that more than the current 2 units are needed, then BWA will approach Registered Social Landlords for additional suitable accommodation. For a start, the current housing units do not have disabled access, and this needs to be reviewed with consideration to our ability to provide an inclusive service.
- We are awaiting the outcome of the Scottish Borders Council housing review which was announced last year. In the light of its findings and what actions are proposed, BWA will then be able to progress longer term strategic refuge development in collaboration with our partners.

**Strategic Objectives:**

- 2022** We will not seek to increase refuge capacity in the immediate future. We will undertake to commission a review of our disabled access provision so we are clear on what can be provided in the event that such refuge accommodation is needed.
- 2022-25** We will build on our unique holistic 'whole woman' approach to refuge, which is based on a continuum of support that includes both refuge and outreach, engaging with other professionals and partners where necessary.

“(In refuge) I had time to process what is happening in my relationship, somewhere safe to retreat to, knowing I can walk away if he does not change. I have a choice.”

**BWA Service User**

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

## Service Improvement and Inclusivity

### Key considerations:

- Young people's services: develop a specific service for 16 to 25-year-olds, focussed on outreach and education, to provide relevant, structured, supportive, and appropriate opportunities to allow young women, children and young people to make positive choices for their future. By raising awareness about domestic abuse and coercive control, and educating young people about healthy relationships, we will help to empower the younger generation.
- Own My Life: Maximise the success of the Own My Life groupwork sessions and develop OML groupwork both online and face to face, including drop in. Design a framework through which we can roll the programme out to our Domestic Abuse partners, and through which we can evaluate and continue to improve this part of the service.
- Women Only spaces: Consider the current legal changes taking place nationally, in particular the Gender Recognition Reform Bill, and implications of gender self-identification for a women-only domestic abuse service.
- Transgender issues: Update our literature to include/reflect Scottish Women's Aid policy statements on trans issues. These documents available on SWA website. SWA policy is unequivocal: it 'works to be inclusive of trans women in all areas of our work.' Use occasions like the International Trans Day of Visibility, currently celebrated on 31 March to disseminate information and policy. (More information @ scottishtrans.org)
- Incorporate trans information into our refuge/employment policies. BWA needs to send a clear message in all our internal and external communications that we will work with all women to include gay, lesbian and transgender people who identify as women.
- Language inclusivity: BWA is well aware of the language barriers, including access to translator services, which inhibit our ability to deliver services to certain vulnerable groups. Recognising this challenge reflects our commitment to continuing to build our capacity to respond to ethnic minorities.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** Develop a framework for developing OML groupwork and make OML available to our domestic abuse partners.
- 2022-25** Secure funding to develop the youth service on the back of the Scottish Women's Aid working group and its findings. BWA is a member of this working group. Continue to ensure that our services, initiatives and working practices conform to ongoing national legislative and social change.

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

# Partnership Working

### Key considerations:

- Recent cuts in funding to partner services could have implications for BWA. We need to monitor closely the impact on our referrals.
- Underline the importance of stakeholder involvement in BWA's vision. Continue to identify who our stakeholders are and how we can work together.
- Consider accepting referrals for OML from partner DA agencies and actively promoting BWA as an additional resource across the SBC VAWP to reach more women in the Scottish Borders.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** From April 2022 we will closely monitor the impact of partner funding cuts on our referrals.
- 2022-25** We will continue to play a key role in the VAWP and actively bring a BWA perspective to the partnership.

**“You’re amazing and your support is what keeps me going. You have no idea what you have done for me and continue to do.”**

**BWA Service User**

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

# Raise Our Voice/Activism

### Key considerations:

#### External Communications:

- We need to improve our ability to respond swiftly and accurately to news items of the day. Not only because it's important that the truth is reported but it is an opportunity to promote our work locally.
- All of us at BWA should be proactive in picking up issues in the press and flagging them for response. To do this efficiently we need to develop a bank of responses, talking points, and core messages.
- BWA needs to develop a closer relationship with the local media outlets so that our work, our message, and particularly our successes, are promoted regularly and often.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** Design and develop a new website (our 'shopfront'). Up our engagement with local issues and events so our voices will be heard in the local media.
- 2022-25** Increase our engagement with the press and with local policy makers and influencers so that our work is publicised in the most positive of ways.

**“I still struggle with anger and denial, but I’m learning to be independent and trust myself more. I’m slowly rebuilding the confidence that was questioned and destroyed, and becoming who I am and was meant to be.”**

**BWA Service User**

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

## Prevention

**Key considerations:**

Prevention is increasingly a key element in the work of BWA, especially since the needs of young people are increasingly pressing. BWA already works with local colleges and schools to raise awareness of abuse and healthy relationships. Recent and ongoing collaborations with local creative groups like Alchemy Arts are specifically aimed at raising community awareness of domestic abuse. This raises several issues.

- We recently established our Outreach Service, thanks to the generous National Lottery Community Fund and Robertson Trust grants. It has been more successful than we ever anticipated. This success has caused us to question whether prevention (which has been part of our strategic plans for some years) should remain a separate core activity or should be subsumed under Outreach. Should the Outreach Service, going forward, formally evolve to consist of two equally important strands. One element is supporting women experiencing domestic abuse out with the refuge. The second, equally essential, element is actively developing an educational and consciousness-raising programme.
- We need to investigate if having an enlarged Outreach Service, as opposed to separate Outreach and Prevention/Educational services, would help or hinder us in the Domestic Abuse marketplace, especially when it comes to grant applications and other fundraising initiatives.

**Strategic Objectives:**

- 2022** Continue to deliver and develop Outreach and Prevention in their current iterations, especially in respect of responding to what women want from the service.
- 2022-25** Monitor both services to see how they are meeting women's needs, how much they overlap and/or duplicate, and how they impact on staff time, with a view to reviewing the service structures if necessary, so that both outreach and prevention can be delivered in the most effective way.

**“I have a greater understanding of how to identify and mitigate risks from PCR (person causing risk)”**

**BWA Service User**

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

# Funding

### Key considerations:

In the last couple of years, BWA has successfully increased its income streams. Whilst SBC funds the refuge service through its homelessness remit, many of the new initiatives have been funded by major grants like those from the National Lottery, the Robertson Trust and the Scottish Government's Delivering Equally Safe programme. Local fundraising is also becoming an important additional revenue source. Nevertheless, as with much Third Sector work today, funding remains insecure and uncertain, even as demand for services increase. Therefore, fundraising is now very definitely a vital and pressing part of BWA's work.

### Strategic Objectives:

- 2022** We expect SBC funding at its present level to continue.  
  
We will approach current donors early in this coming financial year to negotiate extended funding beyond the allocated three years. We need to establish priorities as to how funding and donations received is spent, with particular consideration to this strategic plan and its objectives.
- 2022-25** We will focus on seeking out new potential funding streams, in addition to active fundraising here at home, and applying for grants wherever they may be found.

**"I feel more in control and hopeful for the future because of BWA support."**

**BWA Service User**

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

### In conclusion

By implementing the plans outlined above, BWA has committed to continuing its transformative work of keeping women safe and empowering them to live lives free from domestic abuse.

Here is what our service users and stakeholders can expect from the Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

#### Service Users:

- Consistently high standards of service
- Innovation in service delivery in response to changing needs and what women really want
- Equal commitment to supporting ALL women
- Empowerment

#### Stakeholders:

- A trusted partner
- A pipeline of powerful evidence-based ideas and innovation
- Continuous service evaluation
- Strong compliance and governance

This Strategic Plan provides a robust framework for managing change and navigating uncertainty, enabling BWA to continue to work towards fulfilling its mission in light of its vision and values. We are a local organisation that has a deep vested interest in the women of our community and in our community as a whole.

“Thanks...I really appreciate your support. You've already helped a lot and I'm honestly starting to see things differently...it's a valuable service you provide”

**BWA Service User**





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