

Interview with Liz Harvey – Wycombe Women's Aid

Mike Appleyard's Report – 25.2.02

Summary of Services provided

Women's Aid has been in High Wycombe for 20 years.

They own 5 houses near each other; 1 is for admin; group and counselling rooms, the other 4 houses can accommodate 13 women and their children.

There are 9 employees:

1 full time, 2 work 30 hours and 6 work 20 hours

1 Manager (full time)

1 Welfare Officer

2 Welfare Workers to help with legal and benefit matters

1 Welfare Assistant

2 Outreach Workers, (1 of whom works with Asian women)

2 Child Workers.

Between them they offer family support, outreach, drop-in sessions and support for women who were in the hostel, and of course support and counselling for those staying in the hostel.

Very few of the women who are in the Wycombe hostel actually lived in High Wycombe; they go for security reasons, to other towns who in return will send their women to High Wycombe. The need to get away from an abusive partner is paramount and it has to be the woman's decision. Obviously the abused woman from Wycombe will contact Wycombe Women's Aid so will people from South Bucks and Chiltern. There are no women's aid hostels there, though they support the hostel with £7,000 from Chiltern District Council and £2,500 from South Bucks District Council.

They would like to offer more support for the children. At the moment there are too few hours, but Liz was impressed by the idea from councillors that the Youth Service might offer support and Women's Aid might use school facilities.

It became clear during the discussion that, since Wycombe Women's Aid provides residence mainly for families out of area, the balance of funding for this service may be geared in favour of large towns. Large towns produce far more families than rural areas. Thus Wycombe Women's Aid and other small district areas are providing, at their own cost, residence for non-residents, in the main.

We use few places in other areas.

Are we thus subsidising areas with high levels of family breakdown?