


Specialised in supporting women, children & young people in Caithness & Sutherland to stay safe from domestic abuse

# CASWA

Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid



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**SPOTLIGHT ON CASWA**

50 Referrals April-June 2024

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98 women receiving support

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64 children & young people receiving support

## We've moved!

CASWA's new registered office is: CASWA, Naver Business Centre, Naver House, Naver Road, Thurso, Scotland, KW14 7QA.

## CASWA turns 20 in 2025!

We're swiftly heading towards our 20th anniversary and already starting to put some plans in place for next year! We held a board and team day in April, creating bunting which we'll be using at events next year! We also started brainstorming ideas at our team meeting in June, exploring how we'll mark and celebrate CASWA's 20th anniversary! Watch this space and make sure you're following our social media channels to keep up to date with our plans. We hope you'll join us next year in marking this important anniversary for our organisation.

## 80 years of service from our team!

In April, CASWA marked over 80 years of service between five long standing members of the CASWA team. In recognition of their dedication to the organisation over the years, these members of staff were presented with bracelets made by Lark & Lily.

As we head towards celebrating 20 years of CASWA, we reflect on and celebrate all the women who have played a role in CASWA's past, present and future.



## ONE THING YOU CAN DO!

Did you know we have a dedicated blog section on our website? Our team regularly pick topics to write about. Grab a cuppa, visit our website and have a look around, if you haven't already: <https://www.caswa.org.uk/blog> We also share our blogs on social media & we're always keen to increase our visibility. One thing you can do to support CASWA is to share our blogs to help us engage with more people and new audiences. Got an idea you'd like our team to write a blog about? - Get in touch & we'll see what we can do.

We've had a busy quarter moving two of our office bases, including our registered office! Moves are stressful at the best of times, but many hands make light work! We're very grateful for the help and support of the whole CASWA team, our administrative and IT support, David Mackay Removals, Naver Business Centre, Dornoch HUB and VGS. **Thank you** to all who contributed to a smooth move!

*Thank you* 

*Box of Gratitude*

In April we waved goodbye to Ellie Lamont, chair of the CASWA board. Ellie has dedicated over 10 years to CASWA as a board member. Her dedication to the organisation has played a pivotal role in supporting the direction of CASWA for more than a decade. We are extremely grateful for the countless hours she has put in behind the scenes and for the care, support and recognition she has shown the organisation and staff team during this time. We would like to say a big **thank you to Ellie** for all she has done for CASWA.

# Women's Service

**CAIR:** We were delighted to be invited by Lyth Arts Centre to be involved in their CAIR project and have welcomed Micah Mackay as our artist in residence. Micah is delivering a series of creative workshops for service users and staff. Here's a flavour of one of the sessions from our team:

"It began with some mindfulness and a game to get into the mood and relax, followed by a free writing exercise – a really enjoyable experience where you write continually for a set time and allow your mind to lead you. We had a prompt but each found ourselves moving in different directions. We then created pieces of writing as a group, using a line from our free writing and adding more to create collaborative poems! The result – amazing! Wonderful poems that really moved us all. These sessions have really opened our eyes to the beautiful creative projects that can be undertaken and achieved, even with limited time and really brought home the role that creativity has in our work."

...And here's what our artist in residence, Micah, said:

"I've really enjoyed working with CASWA and Lyth Arts Centre to deliver creative sessions. We've explored collaborative writing, mask making, and mural painting, producing a wealth of beautiful art that will now inform a special project to celebrate CASWA's 20th anniversary. Creativity is vital to improving wellbeing and self-confidence and it has been great to see women flourish and heal by trying new creative forms and activities. This is truly an experience I will treasure as a creative facilitator and I look forward to working further with CASWA over the next few months!"

**Own My Life Group Work:** We have continued to run the Own my Life course, helping women to regain their self-efficacy after domestic abuse. We love getting women together to help understand their journeys and regain their confidence and we've recently completed our latest course with a group of women. During the last session we worked with them to start to put together a leaflet about the Own My Life course at CASWA. Watch this space!

In response to finding solutions to the geographical constraints we face as a service covering both Caithness and Sutherland, this quarter we trialled delivery of a compressed version of the course online with a group of women. This has enabled those in very rural locations to engage with the course and have opportunities to enjoy interaction with other women. It has also been a helpful tool for those dealing with social anxiety, allowing them to join in without the added pressure of an in-person group setting. Initial feedback from the session was positive, demonstrating the importance and powerful impact of group work, even when done online.

"[The group was] a shared space with like-minded people."

"[The course] touched on important things & we were all singing from same hymn sheet."

"[It was] bitter-sweet – nice that other people understand, but sad that they understand."



At the start of May we got together as a team and board for our annual strategy day to reflect on where CASWA is, where we want CASWA to be and identify ways to grow, develop and sustain CASWA now and into the future! The team and board's involvement in this day supported the creation of CASWA's business plan for the next 3 years, providing CASWA with strategic direction which is informed by the expertise and views of the staff team and board. Onwards and upwards for CASWA!

## Children & Young People's Service



**New recruits!** We've had some new recruits join our Children & Young People's Team! Our new 'trauma teddies' have been kindly donated to our service by a talented knitter. They've been accompanying our team to their sessions with children and young people supported by our service. They're already proving very popular and a great addition to our team's resource kit!



"My child's worker gave me my child time and a safe space to talk about their worries. She listened to my child and helped my child believe in themselves by giving them choices and helping them to understand what was happening. The support gave my child a chance to find their voice, understand what domestic abuse was and the strength to stand up for what they believed in."

Feedback from a Mum

**Funding Success!** Our Children & Young People's Team have secured funding from the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. Our team will be using this budget to purchase and create resources to make 'calm kits' for their resource toolkits as well as for children and young people to take home to support their mental health and wellbeing outside of their support sessions. We've also been able to add to our activities and outings budget enabling our team to take children and young people on outings this Summer!

**Summer Activities Blog Post:** In June our Children & Young People's Team wrote a blog post following a brainstorm exercise. We've put together a variety of free and affordable activity ideas for the Summer holidays. They are a long 7 weeks this year and we know how difficult it can be to come up with ideas day after day to keep children entertained and busy. Need some ideas? Our team have you covered: <https://www.caswa.org.uk/blog/summerideas>

"My child's confidence has grown and they have great knowledge of domestic abuse and the impacts on the family. Thank you."

Feedback from a Mum



# AWARENESS RAISING, EDUCATION & PREVENTION



**Blog posts:** Have you checked out the blog post section of our website recently? They're written, in house, by our team. We've added some new blogs this quarter including a blog about stalking and another in answer to a question commonly asked, "why does she stay?". We've also uploaded our second 'Inspirational Women of Caithness and Sutherland' blog to our website. You can read our blogs by visiting our website: [www.caswa.org.uk/blog](http://www.caswa.org.uk/blog)



**Mental Health Awareness Week - 13th - 19th May:** We used this year's theme 'moving more for our mental health' to do a week-long campaign on social media sharing some of our team's favourite ways to move our bodies. We're an active team here at CASWA and recognise and advocate for role that moving and exercise play in our health and wellbeing.

**Volunteer Week - 3rd - 9th June:** At the start of June we celebrated our volunteer, Annie, who delivers our sister project, The Gift Project. We'd like to say a big thank you to Annie for all her work and dedication to the project and to CASWA over a number of years.

The Gift Project provides gift parcels of essential items to individuals supported by CASWA and their families. The project accepts donations of clothing and toys in new and nearly new condition, as well as toiletries.

You can find out more about, and support, the project via the following links:

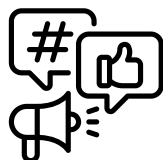
<https://www.caswa.org.uk/blog/volunteer-week-gift-project-update>

<https://www.facebook.com/thegiftprojectsutherland>

**Social Media:** At CASWA we maintain an active social media presence across two platforms: Facebook and Instagram. We routinely share content relevant to our work, such as content relating to gender-based abuse and feminism. These are difficult subject matters which can carry stigma and poor understanding in the mainstream. We strive to use our expertise and platform to promote better awareness and understanding across our community of issues relating to gender-based abuse, feminism, equality and human rights. This quarter, for example, we've shared posts about signs of unhealthy relationships and abusive behaviours, posts which raise awareness of and challenge patriarchal and misogynistic ideas, posts which highlight the experiences of LGBTQI+ persons as well as positive affirmations and messages to survivors. Following, engaging with and sharing our social media content is a great way to demonstrate support:

<https://www.facebook.com/CaithnessandSutherlandWomensAid>

[https://www.instagram.com/CASWA\\_womensaid/](https://www.instagram.com/CASWA_womensaid/)



## WHAT WE'VE BEEN WATCHING, READING, LISTENING TO...

**Inside Out 2 (film):** Our team have enjoyed trips to the cinema to watch the latest Inside Out film. For those less familiar, Inside Out is a child- (and adult!) friendly film all about feelings. An intelligent and gentle nudge towards encouraging us all to learn about, better understand and accept all the feelings we experience as human beings.

**Man Enough (podcast):** A podcast which promotes exploration and discussion around what it means to be a man, and human, in the world today and how rigid gender roles have affected all people. Lots of episodes to choose from. Alternatively, start listening from the beginning or the latest episode.

**The Hate U Give (book & film):** Recommended by one of our team, this is a fantastic young adult coming of age novel by Angie Thomas. It is about a 16 year old girl, Starr, who is trying to navigate her two starkly different lives: one where she lives in a poor, vastly African American neighbourhood, the other where she attends an elite, predominantly white private school. Starr becomes part of a national news story after witnessing a white police officer shooting her childhood friend unlawfully and gets thrown head first into the fallout from this.

**The Midpoint with Gabby Logan (podcast):** One member of our team recommends this podcast which explores what it means to be at the halfway stage of your life. Gabby talks candidly to well-known faces about their own midlife challenges and expectations, drawing on the advice of experts. An entertaining and educational podcast.

**Man vs Bear:** A hypothetical question posed to women across social media over the past few months - who would you rather come across in the woods? A man or a bear? Many women have said they'd choose the bear and there have been lots of relevant and important discussions happening on and offline about why they chose the bear. While hypothetical, it is an important question to ponder to promote better understanding of women's experiences of the world. We encourage listening and acknowledgement to the reasons why some women said they'd choose the bear.



Man  
**VERSUS**  
Bear

## FEMINIST CORNER

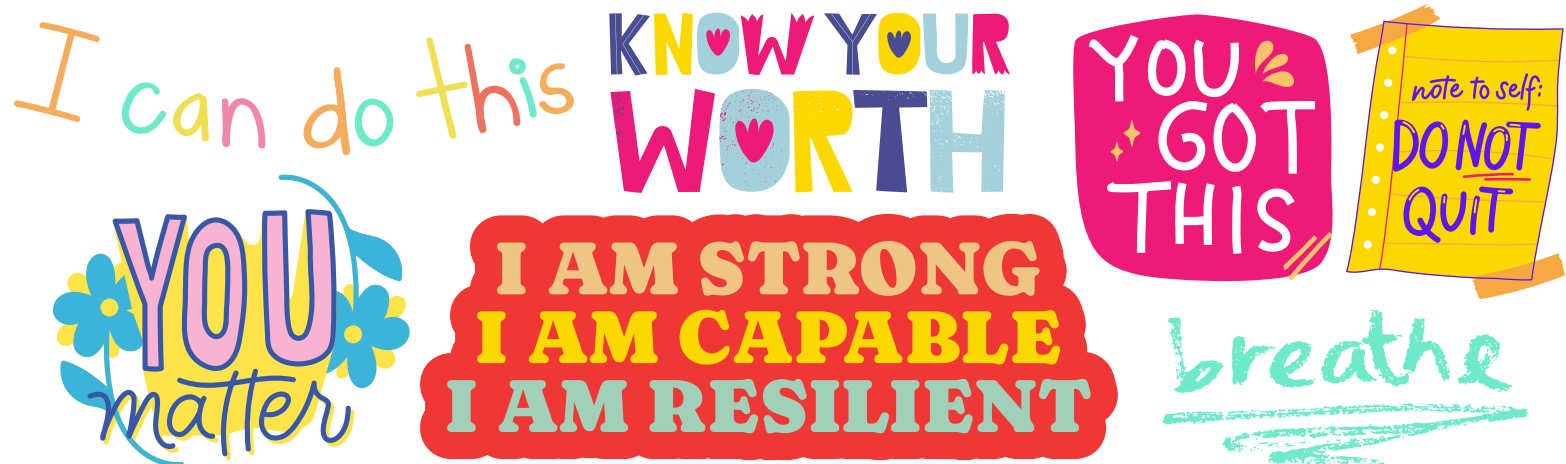
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"MEN ARE AFRAID THAT  
WOMEN WILL LAUGH AT THEM.  
WOMEN ARE AFRAID THAT MEN  
WILL KILL THEM"

Margaret Atwood

# CUT OUT & KEEP

Some bits and pieces for a scrapbook, your journal, a vision board, your wall, etc



## GIVE IT A GO...



**Writing:** Try free writing, with or without a prompt. No gaps, no editing, just writing, writing, writing and see what interesting thoughts flow freely from your mind. This is a no pressure exercise and if you're stuck, a doodle is also perfectly acceptable! Some of our team find this a great way of clearing the thoughts from their minds and allowing themselves to think more clearly and focus. We've also been doing some writing activities in our work with Micah Mackay as part of our CAIR (Caithness Artist in Residence) work with Lyth Arts Centre. Why not give writing a go? Writing can be a lot of fun and a great stress reliever! ...And who doesn't love an excuse to get a new notebook?

**Emotional First Aid Kit:** We have first aid kits for our physical health, why not have one for our emotional health too? When we're struggling, it can be really helpful to have something at hand to make things a little bit easier. Often when we are struggling, stressed and overwhelmed we can't think clearly or come up with ideas that might help us, this is where an emotional first aid kit can be helpful. The good news is you can make your own! Why not give it a go? Grab yourself a box (any box will do - a delivery box, a shoebox or buy a box especially for your emotional first aid kit!). You can decorate it too if you like.



When thinking about what to include in your box, it can be useful to think about the following:



What would bring me comfort and help me feel relaxed and calm? What has helped me in the past when I've been struggling, stressed or overwhelmed that might help me again in future? What might help be a helpful distraction? Where can I go to for more support if I need it?

Here's some ideas of things to include in your box:

- Sensory items that bring you comfort. This might be a pair of cosy fluffy socks, a soft teddy, a warm blanket, a scented candle or sensory brushes, for example.
- Creative items. A colouring-in book, drawing pad, colouring pencils, wool, knitting hooks/crochet needle or a cross stitch.
- A notebook and a pen.
- Fidget/distraction items. A stress ball, hair bobble/rubber bands, a stress/glitter jar (Google how to make your own!) or a puzzle book.
- A wee treat. A teabag, a hot chocolate sachet, a wee bar of chocolate.
- Affirmations/positive statements to help challenge negative thoughts. Write your own on paper, get someone close to you to write some for you or use the ones at the top of this page!
- Photographs or reminders of happy memories which bring you comfort.
- Reminders of anything you can't fit in your box or won't remember - a reminder to get some fresh air, go for a walk, meet up with a friend, watch a favourite film, a playlist of comforting/uplifting songs, reminders of breathing and grounding exercises, etc...
- A note of relevant people/helplines (and contact details) so you can contact them if you need to.



If you are supported by CASWA and would like help to make a box of your own, please speak with your keyworker.