

## UK Domestic Violence Charities' Finances

### Summary

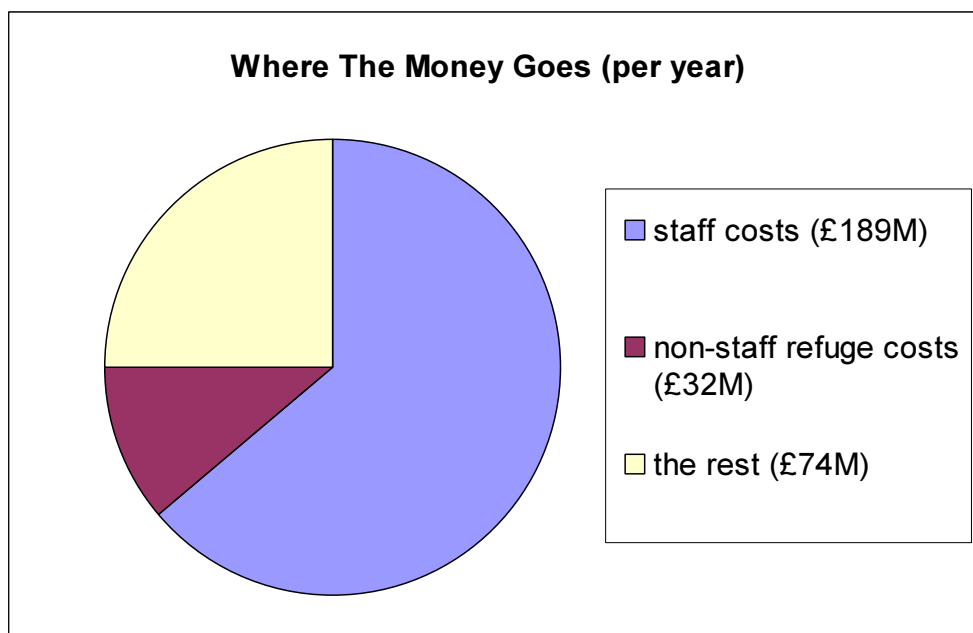
What is the overall level of public funding to UK Domestic Violence (DV) charities? The answer is not widely known (is it known at all outside the closed doors of the sector itself?). The financing of the DV sector is obscure partly because of the many hundreds of different charities in the sector.

The analysis presented here derives an estimate of total funding to the UK DV charities of £295M p.a. of which at least 68% is public money provided by the tax payer. Of the total income, 64% is expended on staff costs and only an estimated 11% on the non-staff costs of running refuges. The total number of women supported in refuges by Woman's Aid federated charities or Refuge in 2014/15 was about 12,650. This compares with an estimated number of staff employed in DV charities of 7,700 (not all full-time).

Averaged over the sector as a whole the cost of refuge accommodation is £77,000 per woman-year, noting that this includes an average of roughly one child per woman and also incorporates the cost of "other services" not just refuge accommodation. The size of this figure illustrates that the bulk of the funding to the DV sector is not expended on refuge accommodation, contrary to what the public might expect.

What are these "other services"? In view of the vast scale of the public funding involved, this raises questions about accountability and value-for-money. In particular, is the political lobbying carried out by the DV sector consistent with the Charity Commission's requirements? Are we in sock-puppetry land here?

The author emphasises that these questions are not motivated by any wish to reduce the level of service to victimised women and children. The issue is the cost efficiency of the service. Another issue is the validity of the activities of the DV sector in respect of the obligation for charities to be philanthropic rather than political. In this respect the guiding influence of the DV sector in formulating new laws is significant, as is the direct funding of the sector by the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and local authorities.



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## 1. Charities, Public Money and Sock-Puppetry

The charity Kids Company recently collapsed amid great controversy. With the wisdom of hindsight it is clear that the company had been badly mismanaged, both financially and in terms of the efficiency of its services. Questions had been asked even before Kids Company's demise about its value for money. Questions now arise regarding accountability. Criticisms are being aired about permitting public money to be spent with little or no critical overview of the company's activities or finances. According to the last submitted accounts (December 2013), Kids Company received about £6M in public funding in 2013. The company received [£46M](#)<sup>1</sup> in public funding over its whole existence, and [£37M](#)<sup>2</sup> of that over its last ten years (2005 - 2015).

What is the relevance of these observations to domestic violence (DV) support charities?

To quote Henry Hill, writing in [conservativehome](#)<sup>3</sup>, "*One of the main stories to emerge from the collapse of Kids Company, the superstar charity beloved of politicians and rock stars alike, was how little scrutiny there is of how charities disburse public money. Some charities now depend on public money for more than 80 per cent of their funding, at which point they are de facto agencies of the state. Yet the moral cachet attached to charities serves to shield them from critical scrutiny by the public, and their de jure distance from the Government means that they remain, as private organisations, immune from Freedom of Information requests*".

Another example is Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, a charity which has received over £1.2M in public funding in recent years and whose entire Board has [resigned in disgrace](#)<sup>4</sup> following concerns over how it is run.

For some charities, in addition to the issue of value-for-money, there may be concerns over sock-puppetry - the practice whereby public funding is used by the recipients to lobby the government. The practice becomes particularly egregious if the charity uses such lobbying as a means of securing further funding. It becomes even more so if the donating department shares ideological ground with the charity.

Is the domestic violence charity sector suffering from sock-puppetry?

If so, it differs from other examples primarily in respect of being so much vaster in scale. Several hundreds of different charities are involved, and, as will be shown here, public funding is in the order of hundreds of millions of pounds annually.

Questions are already beginning to orbit around the DV sector. Vera Baird, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, was [initially to be investigated](#)<sup>5</sup> earlier this year for using her position to donate £500,000 to a DV charity, "Victims First Northumbria", of which she is a Director. We were assured that, "*A Ministry of Justice spokesman confirmed it would investigate the circumstances to conclude whether any conflict of interest rules had been broken*". Days later, [minds were changed](#)<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps an investigation by the MoJ might have been less than fully reassuring given that there is another similar charity, "Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse", of which Vera Baird is a Patron which is funded by....wait for it....the Ministry of Justice - as well as the Home Office and Thames Valley Police.

In the context of these concerns, an analysis is presented here of the finances of the DV charitable sector. Are those responsible aware of the full extent of the public funding to this sector? The totality of such funding is effectively obscured by being

divided over many hundreds of smaller charities, and also due to originating mostly from local authorities.

The analysis below estimates that women's refuge and domestic abuse charities (typically affiliated to the Women's Aid Federation) have an income of about £295 million per year. Over a ten year period this would be nearly £3 billion of which at least 68% is public money. And yet are the overview and accountability issues raised by this vast public expenditure any better for these DV support charities than for Kids Company? And the concern over the latter relates to a public expenditure over ten years of a 'mere' £37M, less than 2% of the public funding of the DV support industry.

In both cases the desirability of their services, as regards support to disadvantaged or victimised women or children, is beyond question. However, the public has a right to expect value for money even for indisputably worthy causes.

There are parallels between Kids Company and the DV sector. In both cases it is possible to question staffing levels, a matter relating directly to efficiency, value for money and accountability. The review below shows that staff costs absorb two-thirds of the DV charities' income. In both cases it is possible to question the activities in which the staff engage and their effectiveness in achieving the stated objectives. The review shows that housing victims of domestic violence accounts for only a small proportion of the DV charities' expenditure, non-staff refuge costs being around 11% of total DV sector income. Many DV charities do not run refuges at all. The bulk of DV sector expenditure funds 'other things'. Is the nature of these 'other things' being subject to a level of accountability commensurate with the huge public cost?

This review analyses the finances of the DV charities with a view to examining whether there is cause for concern over such issues.

A third potential parallel between Kids Company and the DV sector relates to company dissolution. The Kids Company debacle came to general notice only upon the company's demise. Attention is drawn here to the extraordinarily high rate at which DV charities are dissolved, at least 10 per year on average. This does not appear to relate to an overall diminishing in the income of the whole family of such charities.

## **2. Scope**

Any UK charity whose primary purpose is stated to be the provision of facilities or other support to victims of domestic abuse are within the present scope. It is likely that most, but not necessarily all, the charities reviewed here are affiliated to the Women's Aid Federation (WAF).

## **3. Women's Aid Charities**

Women's Aid is not one Company but a Federation of many. The Federation is divided into four, one for each of the four nations of the UK. It is not easy to compile a definitive list of Women's Aid Federation (WAF) affiliated charities, nor even their number. There is a web site called [uk refuge online](#)<sup>7</sup> which might be helpful in this respect but it is intended for industry members only and the current author has no access. (In passing I note that the maintenance of this central registry alone was granted *an additional* £131,000<sup>8</sup> by the government in July 2015).

Sources differ as to how many WAF-affiliated Charities there are, but an estimate based on various web sites indicates the following numbers,

- [Women's Aid Federation of England](#)<sup>9</sup> is the sole national coordinating body for the England-wide network of over 370 local domestic violence organisations, providing over 500 refuges, outreach, advocacy and children's support services.
- [Scottish Women's Aid](#)<sup>10</sup> site lists 46 federated WAF charities in Scotland
- [Welsh Women's Aid](#)<sup>11</sup> site lists 26 federated WAF charities in Wales
- [Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland](#)<sup>12</sup> lists 9 separate area charities.

This leads to an estimate of 451 WAF affiliated Charities in the UK. This will not include other DV support organisations which are not directly WAF affiliated. Hence the total number of DV charities in the UK may exceed 451, possibly markedly. However, for the present purposes it will be assumed that 451 is a reasonable working estimate for the number of UK DV charities.

#### **4. Central Government Funding**

In July 2015 [the Budget announced](#)<sup>13</sup> a £3.2 million funding boost to, "*support victims of domestic abuse and ensure offenders are prosecuted*". This announcement built on the £10 million funding for refuges [announced in March 2015](#)<sup>14</sup>. It is worth noting that this latter press release was entitled, "£10 million support for *women* facing the threat of domestic violence", and the text referred to "marking International Women's Day". Polly Neate, Chief Executive at Women's Aid, reacted to this announcement saying, "We warmly welcome the news that specialist domestic violence refuges in 148 local areas will receive additional funding. *Women* and their children across the country will benefit from this."

The July press release also stated that this builds on "steps taken by the government to end domestic violence, support victims and ensure offenders are prosecuted. These include: £40 million for Violence Against *Women and Girls* support services and specialist helplines."

Despite these being large sums of money, we will see below that the total public funding of DV charities is far greater, mostly coming from local authorities.

#### **5. Support Services for Male Victims and Female Perpetrators**

It is not the primary purpose of this review to discuss the gendered nature of the existing DV support arrangements. However it is pertinent in passing to make the following brief observations.

Despite the proud claim of the July 2015 announcement that the budget funding would "*ensure no victim of domestic abuse is turned away from help*", the foremost English helpline for male victims of domestic abuse, Mankind Initiative, receives none of the above government funding. Indeed it receives no public funding of any kind. Thus far it has operated on a shoe string and on private charitable donations alone. At the time of writing the operation of the Mankind Initiative helpline will cease at the end of January 2016 unless funds are forthcoming. It requires a mere £45,000 per year to maintain its operation at current levels. We will see below that this is loose change compared with the vast expenditure by the women's DV support services.

(There are those who claim that male victimisation is so rare as to not warrant support. This spurious claim is contradicted by a vast academic and survey literature which indicate that, in the UK, [at least one-in-three victims of DV are male](#)<sup>15</sup> and worldwide more like [half of victims are male](#)<sup>16</sup>. In 2012/13, CPS data give the number

of women *convicted* of domestic violence as [3,735](#)<sup>17</sup>, hardly a trivial number. And, despite men's well known reluctance to report domestic abuse to the police, nevertheless across the country in 2014 an average of [20% of reports](#)<sup>18</sup> of domestic abuse to the police were from men - more than this in many counties.)

## 6. Data Sources

Financial data have been taken either from the [Charity Commission web site](#)<sup>19</sup> or from a free web service provided by Company House, <https://companycheck.co.uk/><sup>20</sup>. In both cases the data were derived from the formally submitted company accounts. Many cross-checks were carried out which confirmed the two sites to be consistent. Both sites provide links to the submitted accounts (though not in every case).

## 7. Basic Company Financial Data

High level company financial data were sought and recorded as follows,

- latest cash-in-bank;
- latest net worth;
- net worth 4 years previously;
- latest turnover;
- turnover 4 years previously;
- latest annual staff costs (salaries and pensions);
- number of employees (latest figure).

The word "latest" refers to the last year for which data were available on either of the two sites when the search was carried out. The searches were carried out between June 2015 and December 2015, so in many cases the "latest" data recorded here refers to the 2014 accounts (though 2015 data may now be available in some cases). However, for many charities, "latest" does refer to the 2015 accounts. In a few cases the latest available data might be for 2013.

In the context of these DV charities the term "turnover" is essentially synonymous with "total income".

"Net worth" is just that - the total assets of the Company, including cash, minus total liabilities. It is the money that would be realised by winding up the business.

The following keywords were used to search for relevant charities on the Charity Commission site: "women's aid", "womens aid", "domestic violence", "domestic abuse" and "refuge". Hits were purged of cases which did not relate to DV charities. To these were added the first ten pages of hits resulting from a search on the CompanyCheck site using keyword "women's aid". After deleting charities which were no longer in operation, or for which no data were available on these sites, a database of 211 extant UK charities was obtained for which at least some of the above items of data were obtained. This master list is given in the accompanying Excel Sheet "top". Note that this is not a complete list of relevant charities. A definitive list of extant charities has not been identified. Moreover, financial data were not found for many known, extant, charities.

Estimates of the data for the whole complement of 451 charities are made below by simple linear scaling. For this purpose the company "Refuge" is treated as an outlier,

its annual income being particularly large (£10M to £11M) and hence is excluded from the extrapolation (though added to the extrapolation to give the final figure).

### 8. Salient Findings from Key Financial Data

The UK DV sector is assumed, for the purposes of the estimations which follow, to consist of 451 charities.

Key numerical results are summarised in Tables 1 to 3 and Figures 1 to 5 below. The bullet points following the Figures pull out the salient features of the data.

**Table 1: Latest Data for Sampled Charities**

	<b>Latest £millions</b>	<b>Number of charities sampled</b>	<b>Excel Sheet</b>
Cash	57.5	205	cash
Net worth	81.9	203	NW now
Turnover (Income)	140.3	205	TO now
Staff costs	86.1	190	Staff £
Number of Staff	3,550	186	staff

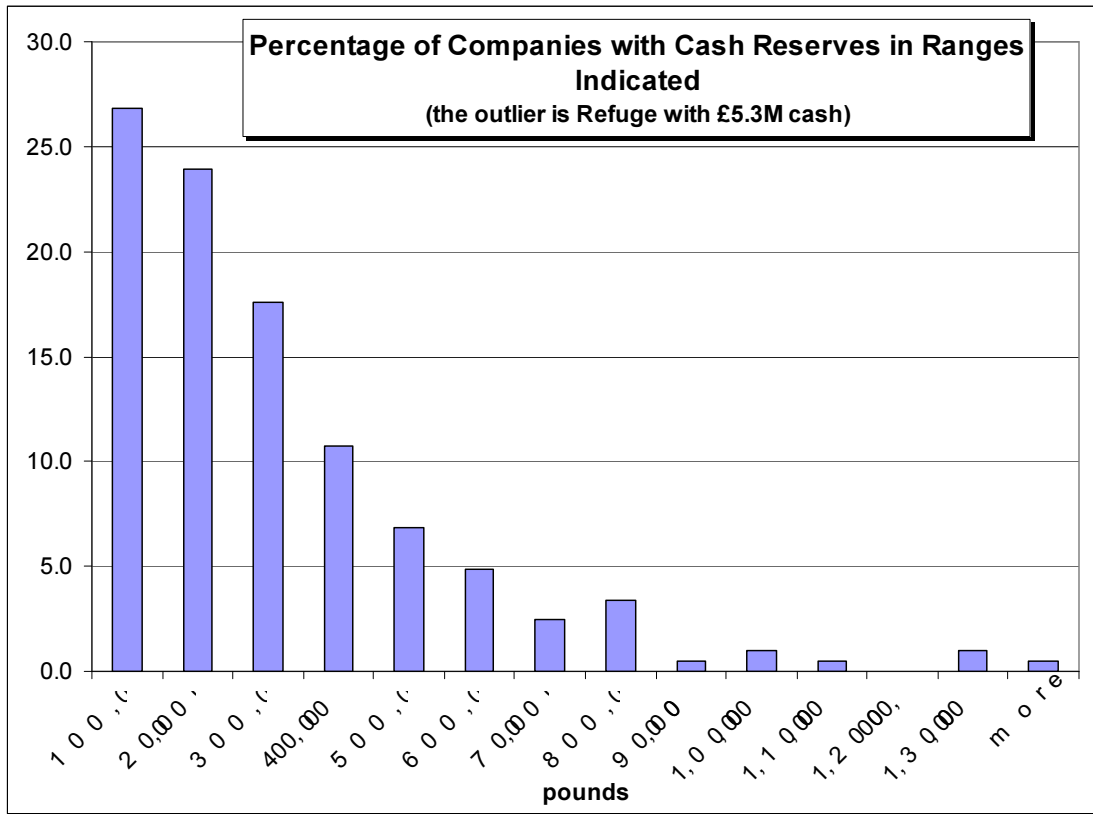
**Table 2: Latest Data of Data Four Years Earlier**

	<b>Latest £millions</b>	<b>4 years earlier £millions</b>	<b>Number of charities</b>	<b>Excel Sheet</b>
Net worth	78.6	64.1	186	NW both
Turnover (Income)	136.7	121.8	201	TO both

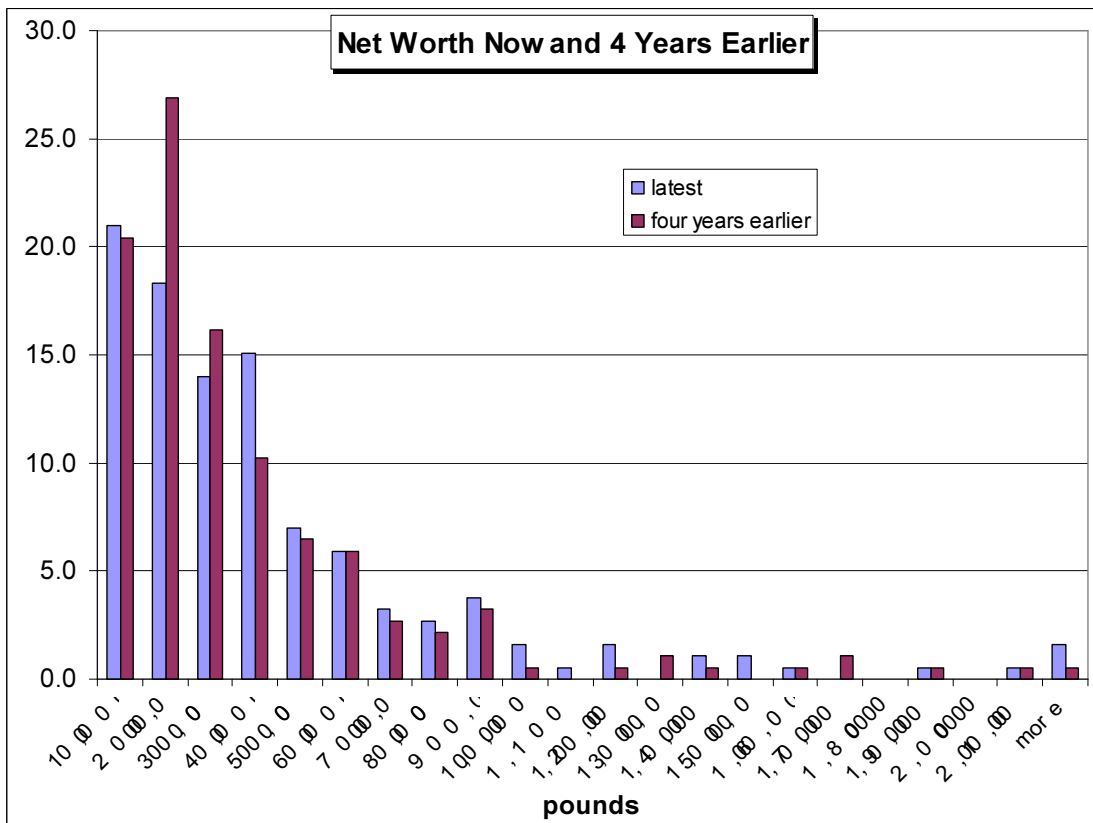
**Table 3: Data Scaled to Whole DV Sector (451 Charities Assumed)**

	<b>Latest £millions</b>	<b>4 years earlier £millions</b>
Cash	121	-
Net worth	183	153
Turnover (Income)	295	261
Staff costs	189	-
Number of Staff	7,700	-

**Figure 1: Percentage of Charities with Cash Reserves in the Indicated Ranges**

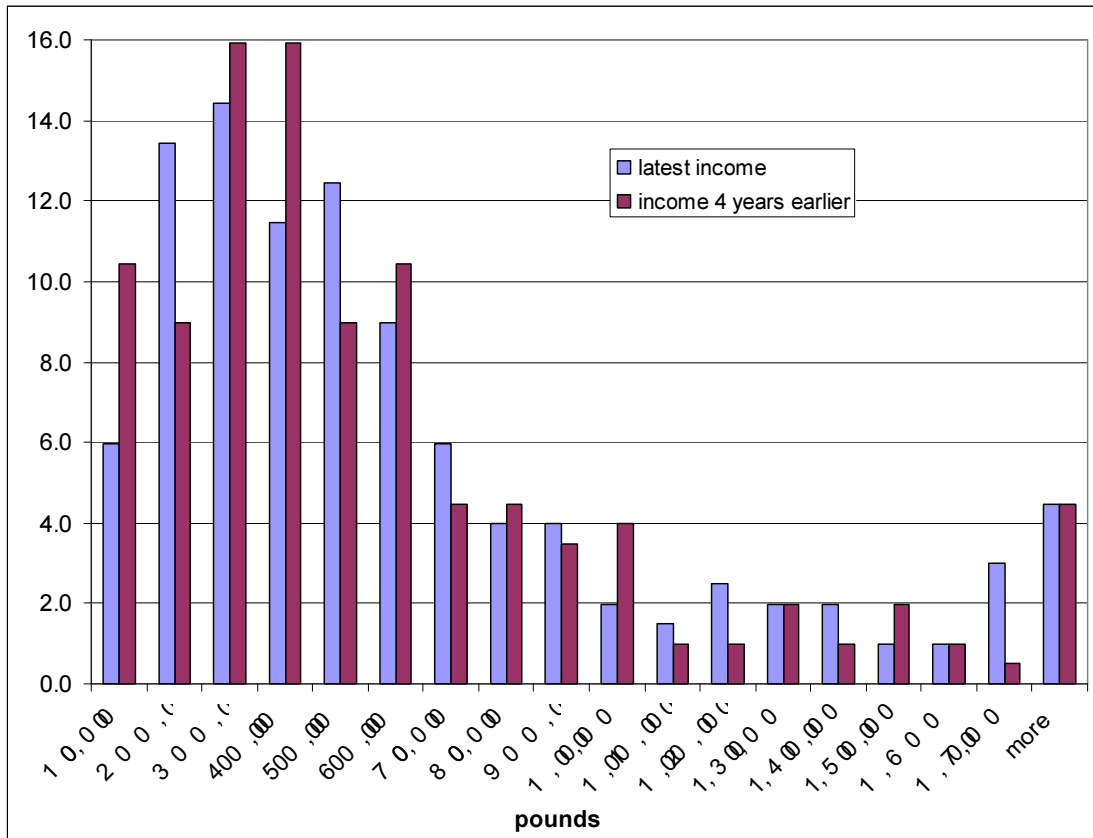


**Figure 2: Percentage of Charities with Net Worth in the Indicated Ranges**

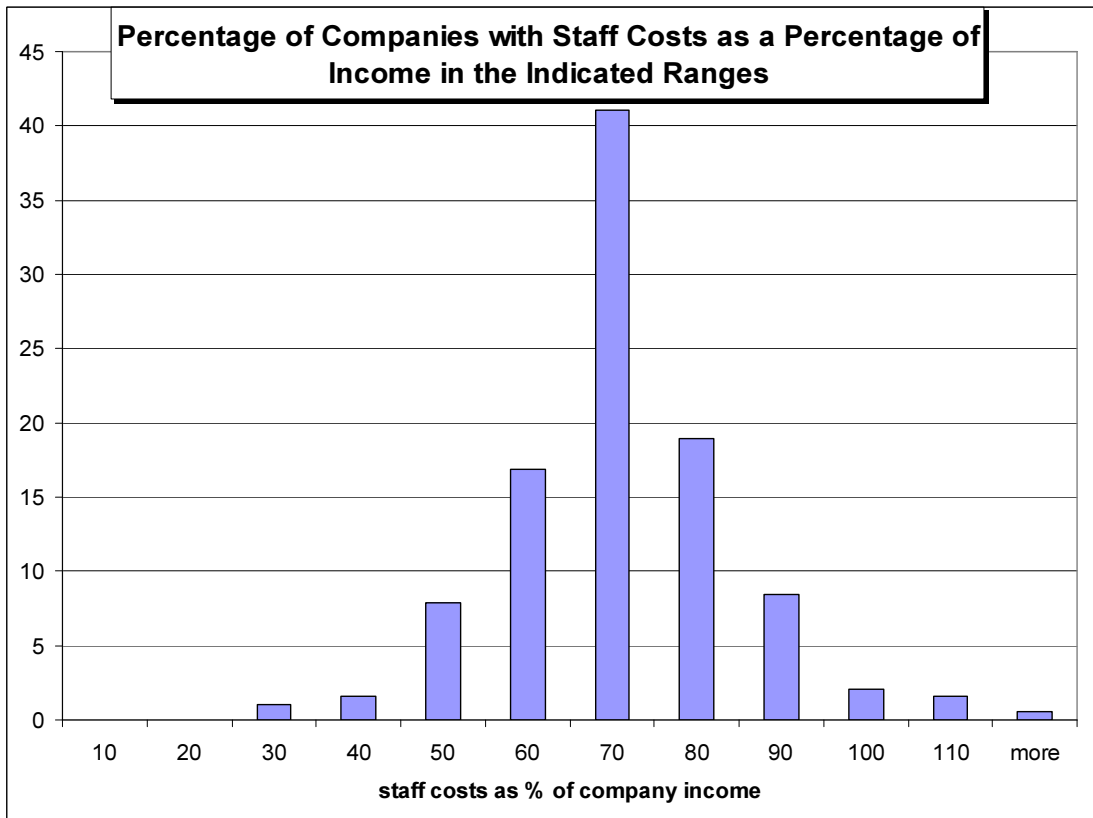


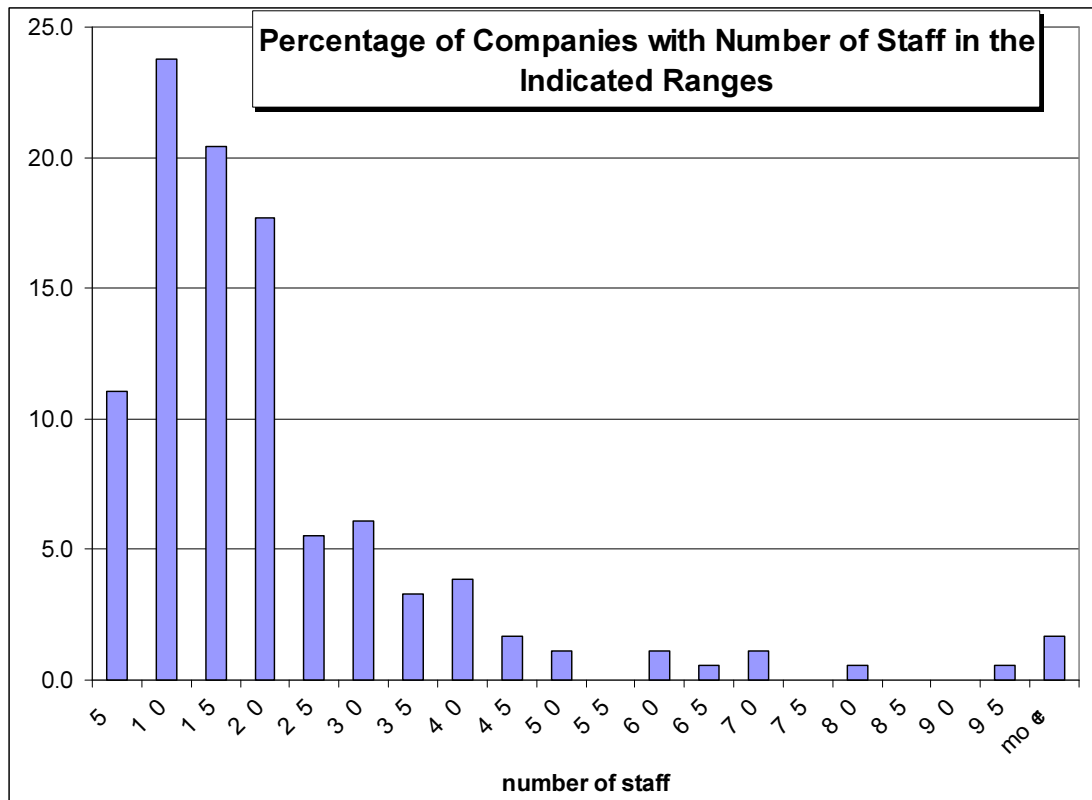


**Figure 3: Percentage of Charities with Income in the Indicated Ranges**



**Figure 4: Percentage of Charities with Staff Costs as a Percentage of Income in the Indicated Ranges (label = top end of range)**



**Figure 5: Percentage of Charities with Number of Staff in the Indicated Ranges**

Salient features of the data,

- The total current cash held in bank accounts by the 205 charities for which these data were obtained was £57.5M.
- Scaling yields an estimate of the cash held by the whole DV sector, £121M.
- The total current net worth of the 203 charities for which these data were obtained was £81.9M.
- For the 186 charities for which both the latest net worth data and the net worth data four years earlier were obtained, the total net worth has increased by £14.5M.
- Of the charities identified, those with the greatest current net worth are Refuge (£4.8M), Belfast & Lisburn (£4.1M), North-East Lincolnshire (£2.4M) and Birmingham & Solihull (£2.1M). The four "Federation" level Women's Aid charities, one for each Nation, have a combined net worth of £3.3M
- Scaling yields an estimate of current net worth of the entire DV sector of £183M, an increase over four years of £30M.
- The total income in the latest year for the 205 charities for which data were obtained was £140M.
- For the 201 charities for which both the latest income data and that four years earlier were obtained, the total annual income has increased by £15M.
- Scaling yields an estimate of annual income of the entire DV sector of £295M, an increase over four years of £34M.

- Of the 205 charities for which data were obtained, 9 had an income in the last year in excess of £2M, namely BAWSO (Cardiff, £2.9M), Belfast & Lisburn (£2.2M), Birmingham & Solihull (£3.6M), Harbour (Hartlepool, £2.3M), Refuge (£10.1M), Safelives (N.Ireland & Scotland, £2.7M), Safer Places (Essex, £3.0M), Solace (London, £6.5M) and the Women's Aid Federation of England (£2.6M). A further 28 charities had income in the range £1M to £2M.
- Over the 190 charities for which data were obtained the total staff costs were £86.1M (annual).
- Over the 190 charities for which data were obtained, staff costs were on average 64% of total income.
- The average staff cost per capita was £24,250. However, this includes part-time workers in most cases and so the meaning of this figure is not clear.
- The accounts for Refuge indicated that one person received between £190,000 and £200,000 in 2014 (£170,000 to £180,000 in 2015). One presumes this must be the CEO, Sandra Horley, though this is not stated explicitly. However, it is stated explicitly that the charity contributed to the CEO's personal pension to the tune of £54,884 in 2014 and £37,484 in 2015.
- Refuge is exceptional. Most charities' accounts contain statements like, "No employee received more than £60,000 during the year" or "one person received in the range £70,001 to £80,000".
- Scaling yields an estimate of the total annual staff costs across the whole DV sector, namely 64% of £295M = £189M.
- Over the 186 charities for which data were obtained, the total number of staff was 3,550, or an average of 19.1 people per company.
- Of the charities identified, those with the largest numbers of staff were Refuge (156), BAWSO (Cardiff, 91), Birmingham & Solihull (98), Solace (London, 102), and the combined Federation level charities for the four Nations, totalling 124 staff.
- The above 186 charities had a combined income of £136M. Scaling based on income suggests the total number of staff involved in the DV support industry is about  $(295/136)*3,550 = 7,700$ .

## 9. Cuts? What Cuts?

Representatives of the women's refuge industry have repeatedly bemoaned funding cuts (i.e., cuts in public funding). For example, in Refuge's Annual Report and Financial Statement 2014-15, CEO Sandra Horley wrote, "*The last year has been particularly challenging for Refuge. Austerity measures have put a squeeze on local authority funding and, as a result, we are frequently being asked to provide more for less*". There have been many reports in the press along these lines over the last couple of years. For example,

[\(1\)](#) "*Domestic violence refuges all over Britain are being stripped of funding, or closed completely. Polly Neate, chief executive of Women's Aid, warns that we're on the brink of causing devastating and irreparable damage to this vital service.*"<sup>21</sup>

(2) *"Thirty-three safe havens have been axed by local authority funding cuts since 2010. Women's Aid said 6,337 of 20,736 women looking for help at a refuge were turned away last year."*<sup>22</sup>

(3) *"Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) has warned thousands of women and children are to lose specialist domestic abuse support. The two Women's Aid groups in West Dunbartonshire have already lost their support funding."*<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to these claims the identified financial data show that,

- Of the 201 charities for which income data have been found both 'now' and four years earlier, 128 (64%) have increased their income.
- Of the 186 charities for which net worth data have been found both 'now' and four years earlier, 123 (66%) have increased their net worth.
- The above estimates suggests an increase in net worth of the whole Federation over five years of ~£30M, and an increase in income of ~£34M.

However, these figures do not definitively establish that the DV sector is wealthier than five years ago. The reason is that many charities have ceased to exist over this time. The value of these charities has therefore been lost. The effect of this on the sector's total wealth is unknown to the author. However, the issue of the (very frequent) dissolution of refuge charities is taken up in Section 15. Here we note only that the rate of dissolutions appears to be a "steady state" process which is no worse now than historically (i.e., as far back as 1990).

Despite the uncertainty over the implications of dissolved charities, it seems unlikely that the DV sector as a whole could be experiencing reducing fortunes (in terms of income or net worth). Evidence for this assertion is provided by Women's Aid's last two annual statements. In 2013/14 the Annual Statement estimated that 9,500 women, plus their children, stayed in a refuge that year, whilst in the 2014/15 Annual Statement the estimate for the number of women supported in this way was 11,900. This substantial increase in the number of people helped does not suggest a diminishing, or fund strapped, service. Similarly, the Refuge annual accounts for 2013/14 stated that they supported 703 women and 738 children in refuges in that year, whilst the 2014/15 Refuge accounts state that "over 1500" women and children were supported in refuges, i.e., an increased level of service.

## **10. Public Income**

What proportion of the DV charities' income is from public sources? To determine the origin of their income requires delving into their accounts. This is a laborious business and has not been done for the whole dataset but just for a sample of 33 charities. This sample was chosen at random except for the deliberate inclusion of the nine charities with the greatest income, namely BAWSO (Cardiff), Belfast & Lisburn, Birmingham & Solihull, Harbour (Hartlepool), Refuge, Safelives (N.Ireland & Scotland), Safer Places (Essex), Solace (London) and the Women's Aid Federation of England. Of the remaining, randomly sampled, 24 charities, 15 had incomes less than £0.5M. The complete list is given in the Excel file, Sheet "accts". Of the 33 charities, the accounts for 32 charities provided some information on the extent of public funding.

The degree of detail given in the accounts varies. It is not always unambiguous whether a source of funding is 'public' or not. However, all income from charitable donations, or transfers from other charitable organisations, are taken to be 'private', as

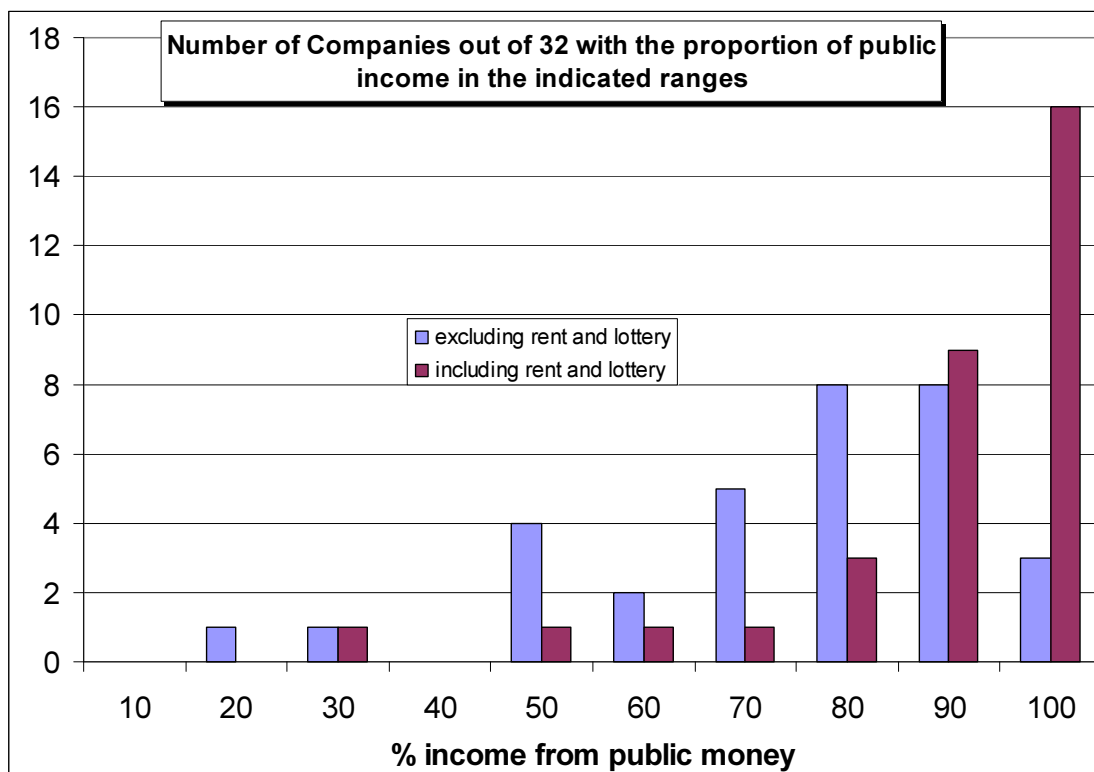
is any investment income or income from the selling of services. Initially any income from rent or from the national lottery was counted as 'private', not public, money.

However, it was notable that where charities had a lower percentage of public funding the balance was often dominated by rent or lottery grants. Lottery money might be regarded as a form of public money (because the Lottery is obliged to spend a certain proportion of its earnings on charitable endeavours). In as far as rent relates to the ownership of property, and if said property was acquired via earlier public funding, this rental income may be regarded as indirect public funding. Moreover, in many cases, a large part of the rents accrued are reclaimed on behalf of the clients as Housing Benefit, and hence is public money. In some cases the accounts make this explicit. However, even where this is not explicit, it is likely that much of rental income is actually Housing Benefit. One of the services the charities provide is assistance to clients in making claims for benefits.

The histogram of Figure 6 shows the percentage of income which is publicly funded, both excluding and including rent and lottery income (derived from the 32 sampled charities). **On average 68% of income is public money if rent and lottery funding is not included. If rent and lottery funding is included this increases to 84%.**

The case of Refuge bears particular consideration because of its size. Total "social housing" income was £3.66M (2014/15 accounts). However, £2.14M of this was eligible for Housing Benefit, and hence is actually public money. This leaves £1.52M as non-refunded rental income, or 15%. The Refuge accounts identify 21% of income as "voluntary". Assuming "voluntary" income is all non-public money makes a total non-public income of 36%, or 64% of income is public. [Making allowance for a proportion of grant income being privately sourced \(lottery\) reduces this to 60% public funding.](#) Including all rental income, and lottery funding, increases this to 76% public funding.

**Figure 6**



## **11. Rental Income**

As explained above, a large part of rental income may be obtained via Housing Benefit. However, irrespective of that it is of interest to examine what part rents play in the charities' incomes. Of the 33 company accounts examined, rental income was explicitly mentioned in 18 - amounting to a total of £9.9M. Of these 18 charities, non-staff refuge costs were also identified in 16 cases. It is striking that rental income exceeds the non-staff refuge costs in 13 of these 16 cases. Summed over the 16 charities there was thus an operating profit on the refuges of £3.3M before allowance for staff costs. One might reasonably ask why other public funding is required?

## **12. Explicit Public Sources of Funding**

The bulk of public funding is via local authorities. However, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice both provide large sums of money directly to many of the charities.

Of the 33 sampled charities, 12 were provided with funds directly by the Home Office, to a total of £1.7M. The 33 sampled charities had a combined income of £51.2M. Scaling on the basis that the whole sector of 451 charities has an estimated income of £295M suggests total direct Home Office funding of approaching £10M. This funding is likely to be provided in most cases under the aegis of IDVA and MARAC programmes (Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

Of the 33 sampled charities, 11 were provided with funds directly by the Ministry of Justice, to a total of £0.76M. Scaling on same the basis as above suggests that the whole sector of 451 charities has a total direct Ministry of Justice funding of around £4.4M. Perhaps these funds are provided under the aegis of Witness Protection programmes? However, it seems most peculiar to a lay person that organisations which openly provide advocacy assistance to one side in court cases, whilst these cases are in progress, should be funded directly by the Ministry of Justice. Does this not raise questions about the impartiality of the justice process?

For one of the 33 sampled charities (Solace) funding was also provided by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Of the 33 sampled charities, 12 were provided with funds by the Lottery, to a total of £1.3M. Scaling on the same basis as above suggests that the whole sector of 451 charities is provided with lottery funding to the tune of about £7.5M.

## **13. Non-Staff Refuge Costs**

Excluding staff costs, how much of the charities' funds were expended on running refuges?

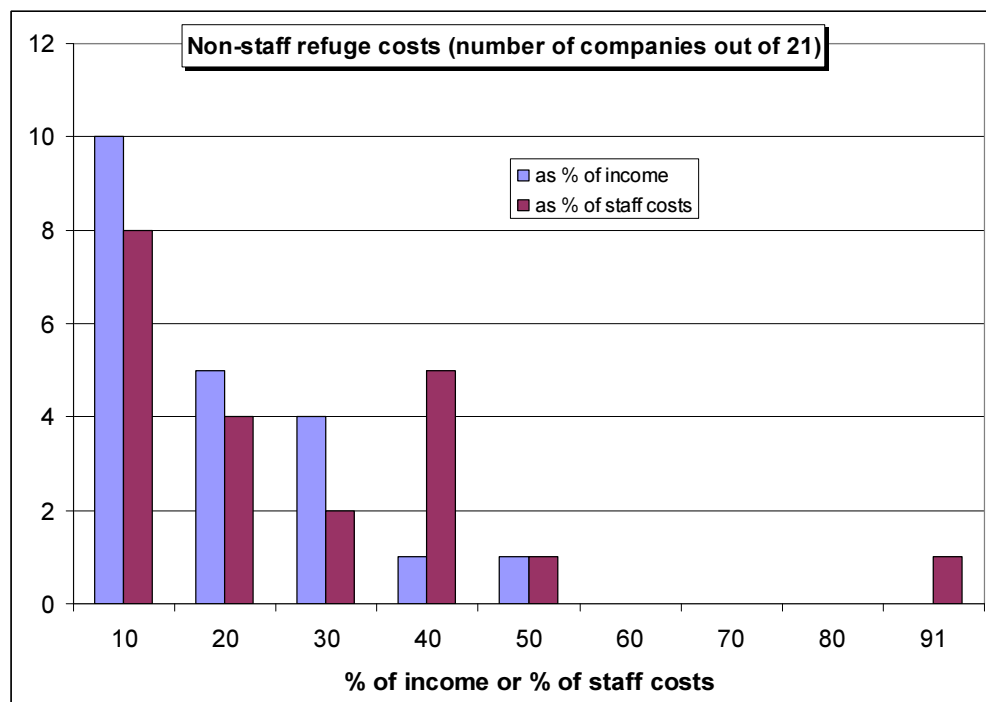
Of the 33 charities whose accounts were examined, 9 did not actually run refuges. For 3 charities which do run refuges, no data which permitted refuge running costs to be identified were found in the accounts. Data on refuge costs were found in 21 of the 33 sampled accounts. However, the accounts were often unclear about which costs could be attributed to the refuges (as opposed, for example, to office running costs). The words in the accounts which have been taken to indicate refuge costs are specified for each such company in the Excel file, Sheet "accts2". These indicative words include,

*Rent, rates, insurance, premises, repairs, renewals, maintenance, housing charges, cleaning, refurbishment, heat and light, fuel costs, building running costs, refuge*

*service costs, establishment costs, operating leases, refuge provision, equipment & soft furnishings, replacement furniture, social housing operating costs*

The non-staff refuge costs as a percentage of income (and as a percentage of staff costs) are shown in histogram form in Figure 7. Generally the non-staff refuge costs account for only a small proportion of the charities' expenditure. This is inevitable since it has already been noted that typically two-thirds of expenditure is on staff salaries and pensions (see Figure 4). Averaging over the 21 charities for which data were examined suggests that **non-staff refuge costs account for 14% of income**. But if all 33 sampled charities are included in the averaging this falls to **less than 11%**.

**Figure 7**



#### **14. Costs Per Capita for Women Supported in Refuges**

The Women's Aid Annual Statement for 2013/14 estimated that 9,500 women (with an average of very slightly more than 1 child) stayed in a refuge that year, whilst in the 2014/15 Annual Statement the estimate for the number of women supported in this way was 11,900. Similarly, the Refuge annual accounts for 2013/14 stated that they supported 703 women and 738 children in refuges in that year, whilst the 2014/15 Refuge accounts state that "over 1500" women and children were supported in refuges. Since the financial data identified here relate variously to 2014 or 2015, an estimate of the corresponding number of women supported in refuges is  $(9,500 + 11,900)/2 + (703 + 750)/2 = 11,427$ . Set against the total income of £295M, and assuming this equates roughly to expenditure, yields an average cost per woman supported in a refuge of £25,700.

Of course this is not the real cost of refuge accommodation because the support charities are engaged in a wide range of services in addition to providing refuge accommodation (see Section 17). However, indexing costs to the number of women accommodated in refuges provides a means of gauging cost-benefit, bearing in mind the other services provided.

The average cost per women of £25,700 does not, of course, relate to a full year in a refuge. The average stay is a fraction of a year. Firm data on the average length of stay in a refuge are hard to obtain. However some sources are as follows.

- The 2014 accounts for Fife WA explicitly state an average stay of 22 weeks.
- The [web site for Stirling WA](#)<sup>24</sup> states an average length of stay of six months.
- The [web site for Glasgow WA](#)<sup>25</sup> states, "In general there is no average length of stay although women can be with us from 3 months to over a year in some cases."
- The 2011 annual accounts for Saoirse Women's Refuge gives an explicit average length of stay of 35 days.
- The [web site for Newcastle WA](#)<sup>26</sup> states an average stay of 3 to 5 months.
- The [web site for Causeway WA](#)<sup>27</sup> indicates an average stay of 3 months.

So, perhaps an average stay of about 4 months is a reasonable figure, though with considerable uncertainty. This suggests that the average cost of refuge accommodation is around  $3 \times £25,700 = \underline{\underline{£77,000 \text{ per woman-year}}}$ , this being inclusive of an average of about 1 child per women plus the other services provided by the DV charities.

As a health check on this estimate consider Birmingham & Solihull WA with refuge places for up to 47 women at one time. This company's income of £3,579,366 thus corresponds to a refuge cost of £76,157 per woman-year, very close to the above average figure. (The number of spaces available for children exceeds that for women and hence is not constraining).

Similarly, consider Refuge with space for 268 women and their children. Assuming this implies about 130 women may be housed, the company's income of £10,148,011 implies refuge costs of about £78,000 per woman-year - again very close to the above average figure.

However, smaller charities, which may provide proportionately fewer other services, may have lower refuge costs. Thus, for example, Fife WA housed 109 women for an average of 22 weeks (hence 46 woman-years) in 2014. The company's income of £1,601,958 thus corresponds to a refuge cost of £34,800 per woman-year, far lower than the sector average. Similarly, Sheffield WA has space for 16 women and 22 children at one time. Assuming the refuge is always full, the company's income of £448,322 suggests a refuge cost of £28,020 per woman-year - again far lower than the sector average. However, we have seen that many of the DV support charities do not run refuge services at all, and this will increase the sector average.

## 15. Dissolved DV Charities

No attempt has been made to identify *all* dissolved DV charities, since the search would be rather open-ended. A large sample of dissolved charities has been obtained using the Charities Commission web site by searching on "Women's Aid" or "Womens Aid" or "Refuge" or "Domestic Violence" or "Domestic Abuse". Spurious hits were first removed (e.g., charities relating to animal welfare or religious retreats resulting from the search on "refuge"). Then all extant charities were removed. Finally, in many cases charities which had ceased to exist had merely been re-registered under a slightly different name (e.g., Thiscity Women's Aid becoming



Thiscity Women's Refuge). These cases were also removed to leave only charities which appeared to be genuinely defunct.

246 dissolved charities were identified in this manner (listed in the Excel file on Sheet "dissolved"). With just four exceptions the year at which these charities failed was 1991 or later (probably because electronic records do not extend to earlier dates). The percentage of the 246 charities failing per year from 1991 onwards is shown in Figure 8.

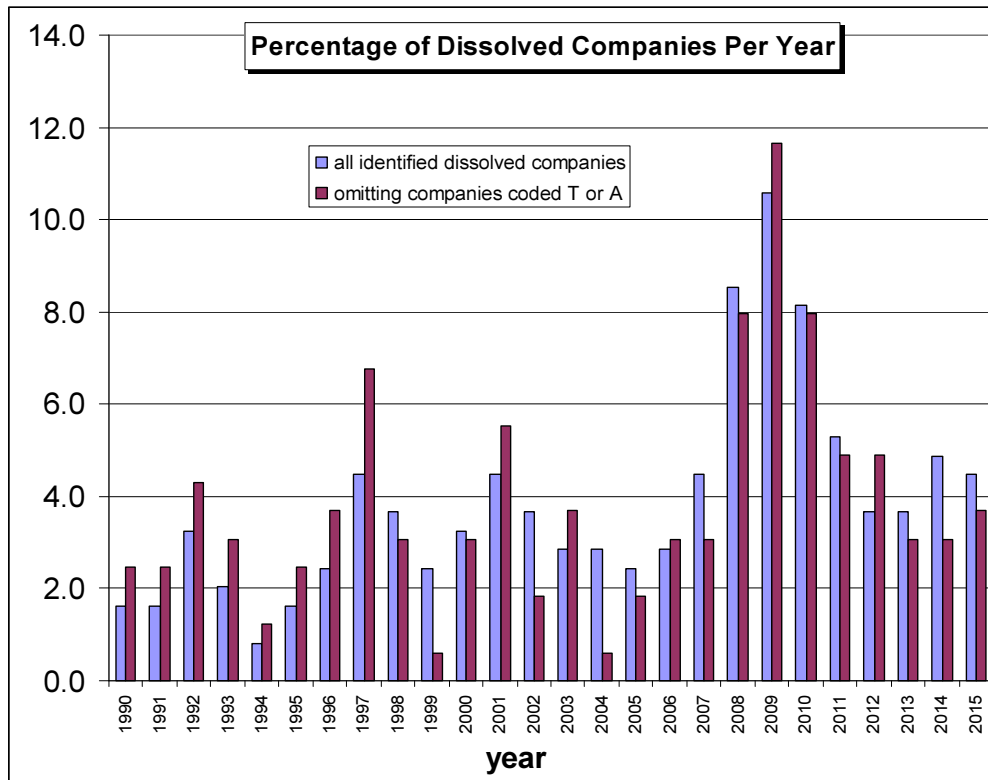
DV charities have been failing at a rate of *at least* 10 per year on average over the last 25 years. The actual failure rate may be greater because only a sub-set of dissolved charities has been identified.

The Charity Commission site labels such charities using four 'codes',

- ceased to exist (C)
- does not operate (DNO)
- funds transferred (T)
- amalgamated (A)

The last two categories suggest that the function of the company may have passed to another company by amalgamation, in which case it might be misleading to regard these charities as failed. By removing charities coded T or A, 163 dissolved charities remained (i.e., coded C or DNO). The percentage of these 163 charities failing per year is also shown in Figure 8. Accounting for possible amalgamations is seen to make little difference to the overall pattern of dissolutions.

It is notable that more charities failed in years 2008, 2009 and 2010, the year of the financial crisis and the two following years. It is reasonable to suppose this is not coincidence. More pertinently for our present purposes, however, is that - these three years apart - there is no great difference in failure rate between recent years (2011 to 2015) and historical years prior to 2008. This reinforces the tentative view expressed in Section 9 that the extent of services has not diminished in recent years (in fact it has probably increased).

**Figure 8**

## 16. Other DV Charities

Sheet "others" in the Excel file lists 173 other DV charities which are believed to exist, or to have existed previously, but whose status has not been explored nor data found for this review. The totality of DV charities mentioned by name within the Excel file is thus 211 (extant) plus 246 (dissolved) plus 173 (status unknown), making 630 charities in all. However even this is unlikely to be a complete list. There could be more than 100 further extant charities not identified.

## 17. What Do DV Charities Do With The Rest Of The Money?

This is rather the question.

However, it is not the intention in this review to discuss issues of politics or gender politics. This presents a problem in clarifying what activities are funded by the bulk of DV charity income, because these activities are irreducibly gender-political. The activities of the WAF charities are overtly gender-skewed. That they are also political in nature is clear from reading, for example, the Women's Aid annual statement 2015. The leading pages are dominated by political campaigning and lobbying, much of which can be associated with protecting and extending funding streams. Some of this is direct, some indirect. The mechanism for the latter is to lobby for law changes to bring an ever expanding set of behaviours under their remit, and thus ultimately motivate funding increases.

In other words: sock-puppetry.

More specifically, the activities of the WAF affiliated charities generally involves advocacy services in areas which are most succinctly described as any battles, especially legal battles, which a woman is having against a man. These include, for example, assistance with court appearances and solicitor appointments in connection

with divorce proceedings, children's hearings, child contact issues, and securing the conviction of an alleged perpetrator of abuse. The extreme gender bias of the WAF is such that it is unlikely that the latter often, if ever, involves assisting in the prosecution of female abusers of male victims.

## 18. Conclusion

The implications of this review is that the bulk of domestic violence charity sector funding is actually being expended on these 'other', overtly political, areas. This observation, together with the sheer magnitude of public funding, raises questions of accountability and probity.

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