



## **BLOG – Domestic Abuse**

We are delighted to have been invited to speak about Hearthstone, our specialist domestic violence service, at the NFA Annual Conference this year.

Violence against women and girls is a huge international challenge, and the scale of suffering is immense. It affects people in all communities, rich and poor, old and young, all religions and every ethnic group. It can affect men and boys, but the greatest impact is on women and girls, who account for 95% of the high risk cases in Haringey. Women with disabilities are twice as likely to be affected by domestic violence.

The good news is that we can all do something to help. I'm really proud that Homes for Haringey and Haringey Council are committed to reducing this abuse and mitigating the impact on our residents.

I'm just as proud of the input from our staff. Right across Homes for Haringey people work hard to support people who have experienced domestic abuse, whether it's through our responsive repairs, tenancy and estate services, housing demand or our specialist service at Hearthstone. This is some of the most important work that we do as it keeps women and children safe and well, and free from fear. Over 350 women have approached Hearthstone alone this year. We also know that one in four women will experience physical abuse in their lifetime, so sadly many of us have direct experience. As a positive employer we want to support our colleagues in these difficult times.

Earlier this year Homes for Haringey signed up to the Institute of Housing's pledge to 'Make a Stand' against domestic abuse. We introduced a new domestic abuse policy for staff, based on recent good work done by the Council's Violence against Women and Girls Strategic Lead. Our Hearthstone service was shortlisted for a national Women in Housing award, and a party of women from across Homes for Haringey went up to Manchester to help celebrate the achievements of women in housing across the UK.

At the end of November I became a White Ribbon Ambassador. White Ribbon UK is an initiative that mobilises boys and men to take a stand against violence against women and girls. Ambassadors pledge not to commit, condone, or remain silent about abuse. As part of this initiative, local authorities and their partners can apply for the White Ribbon Award once they demonstrate their commitment to mobilising against violence against women and girls. Haringey Council was awarded the White Ribbon Local Authority Award in October 2017. The role involves being a champion in ending violence against women and girls. The training gives a clear insight into violence against women and girls, its impact, and how people can be supported. More men across our organisation will become Ambassadors during the coming year.

We hope you will come along to our session at the conference both to hear more about our work and the service that Hearthstone offers but also to share information on the great work that I'm sure you are doing too.

Sean McLaughlin, Managing Director, Homes for Haringey