

transforming lives

ANNUAL REVIEW 2016-17



 **MISSINGLINK.**
cutting edge
women's mental health services

 **NEXT LINK.**
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services

 **SAFELINK.**
transforming victims' lives

"It has been great being able to share experiences with the other residents and feel less alone."



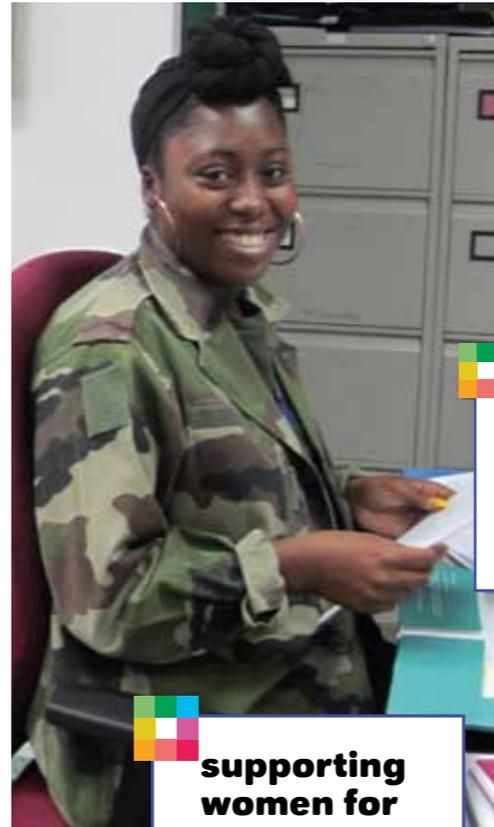
Our support is focused on building women's strengths and ensuring they have the opportunities to grow and create futures that reflect their ambitions and talent.



Annual Review CONTENTS

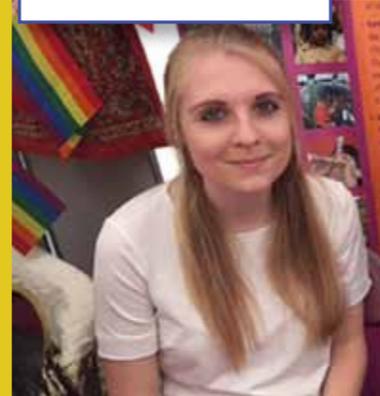
MISSING LINK Annual Report	1
Review of the services we offer	2
Core values	12
Management committee	16
Key events of the year	18
NEXT LINK Annual Report	24
NEXT LINK SOUTH GLOS Annual Report	32
SAFE LINK Annual Report	34

"I am so grateful for not being alone and all the incredible support and help with phoning people and arranging things for me."



supported 655 women during the year

supporting women for over 33 years



"Thank you for improving my mental health and learning life skills in a safe, friendly place."

An introduction to MISSING LINK

For over 33 years Missing Link has successfully supported homeless women with complex needs to recover, secure and sustain housing and live full and rewarding lives. We are the largest provider of women-only services in Bristol bringing innovation, expertise, established partnerships and extensive experience of engaging women in our wide ranging support services.

We provide a range of housing and support to women who have either acute or long term mental health needs. We support women who are homeless, sleeping rough or whose housing is at risk because of their mental health issues. We also provide a direct access service, Link House, as a preventative or alternative to psychiatric admission.

We specialise in working with women who have complex needs including substance misuse, offending and self-harm. Our support has a holistic focus looking at health, social care and mental health. All our support is tailored to each woman's needs, and builds on their individual strengths to help them to improve their well-being, secure their housing and sustain their long term recovery.

Take up of services
During the year Missing Link offered a range of support services and housing services to **655 women.**

High and Medium Support Women's Homelessness Services

In 2015 we were commissioned by Bristol City to provide high and medium level supported housing to single homeless women with complex needs aged 16 and over.



"It's been so helpful meeting new people and making connections, being in a safe environment."

"I really appreciate all of the help and understanding."

New Ways House

This is our high support 6 bedded accommodation service with staff on site 6 days a week and with an on call out of hours service. Women can stay for up to 4 months. The aim of New Ways is to provide a higher level of support to help women access and engage with other specialist services and to take the first steps towards developing the necessary skills to move on successfully into longer term accommodation.

During their stay women will have a flexible outcome focussed support plan including help with substance misuse, mental health issues, offending, building confidence, life skills and training. Support includes one to one, peer support, group activities and practical skills sessions.

The service is accessed through the Housing Support Register.

This year we housed and supported **23 women.**



"The sense of community was really important for me."

**supported
138
women in
Floating
Support**

Medium level Supported housing

Our shared houses are provided across Bristol and range from 7 self-contained flats to shared 2, 3 and 4 bedroomed houses. Women can stay for up to 9 months.

The aim of this housing and support is to act as a stepping stone to more independent living. Women can stay for up to 9 months to consolidate their recovery and successfully move into lower support or more independent accommodation. Staff provide practical and emotional support including group activities, drop-ins, peer support, one to one sessions and support at evenings and weekends through an out of hours emergency on call system.

The service is accessed through the Housing Support Register.

This year we housed and supported **58 women.**

Women's Mental Health Floating Support Service

This service provides housing related support, advice and/or assistance to vulnerable women living with acute and enduring mental health support needs that impact on their ability to maintain their housing. We offer resettlement support to women who are moving into new accommodation and tenancy support to women in their existing housing. The service is available regardless of mental health diagnosis or statutory care eligibility. The aim of the support is to improve mental health and physical wellbeing, including crisis management, facilitating access to other specialist support services and liaising with those services as appropriate.

It includes help with managing money, settling into a new community, finding voluntary work or training courses and help to find activities during the day. There is a high level of support in the beginning which is gradually reduced as the women feel better able to manage. The service works with women aged 18 and over, support is for up to one year in the first instance.

Our floating support services provided support for **138 women.**

We also offer a telephone support and triage service to women on the HSR support waiting list.



"The staff are so helpful with all the info on managing sleep, anxiety and depression."



62
women supported with our citywide Outreach Service

"I am so grateful for all your help and support."

Outreach Service

This service works with homeless women with mental health needs who have lost or are at threat of losing their tenancy because of a severe mental health need or are in hospital and are unable to return to their previous accommodation. They may be sleeping rough, living in Bed and Breakfast, in temporary and/or unsuitable housing, or inbetween tenancies.

The service is city wide and will take referrals from any route. The service will maintain close links with acute mental health services including admission wards and community mental health teams.

This year we supported **62 women.**

Two thirds of women in prison have serious mental health problems

1 in 3 girls between the ages of 11-19 have self-harming behaviours

Dedicated Self Harm Worker

A large number of women who use our services self-harm. Managing their self-harm remains a priority for them and we have a specialist worker to work with this issue.

The worker will work with a range of forms of self-harm including cutting, overdosing, alcohol and drug misuse and eating disorders, the worker will also work with women with dual diagnosis. The dedicated worker works as part of the Missing Link team and undertakes preventative and harm reduction work with any woman who is receiving our services.



During this year we worked with **73 women.** 81% of women said they successfully reduced self-harm and 98% used the safety plans they had made.

Counselling Service

Our counsellor works with any women who use our services. She offers support with some of the underlying psychological issues that may have resulted in homelessness or mental ill health. The counsellor offers each woman a set number of sessions followed by a review. She works closely with the other support workers and is included in the service user's support plan.

This year we received **110 referrals** and worked with **73 women.**

"The staff have supported me for my mental health recovery."

Link House for women in mental health crisis

Link House is for women who are experiencing a mental health crisis and are unable to cope in the community. It works to a social care model of recovery. It provides safe, high quality support that has an emphasis on the immediate crisis while also focusing on building resilience, support networks and maintaining good mental health on returning home.

The service is an integrated part of the mental health care pathway, has proved to be invaluable to mental health services and has been very successful in preventing hospital admissions and for those who are admitted into hospital, reducing their length of stay.

This year we supported **146 women**.

Satisfaction survey

Listening to residents experience and ideas is central to everything we do and a fundamental core value. One of the ways in which women who use Link House can feed back their views is to complete an exit questionnaire. This year the survey showed that 100% women found their stay a helpful experience; 98% said the support was responsive to their needs, 90% said they felt their mental health had improved, 98% found the activities and group sessions helpful and 100% said they would recommend Link House to a friend.

"You helped me gain life skills and the place is so friendly"



Admissions rates for self-harm are much higher for women in Bristol than men

"I didn't know how important it is to share experiences with such good support."



Mental health disorders are up to three times more prevalent in women than men

Bristol Mental Health

Missing Link is one of the 18 organisations which together make up Bristol Mental Health. We are one of five voluntary community sector organisations: Second Step (www.second-step.co.uk), Off the Record (www.otrbristol.org.uk), Nilaari Care (www.nilaari.co.uk) and Brunelcare (www.brunelcare.org.uk) that work with AWP and employ staff within the Bristol Community Services. Staff roles include Recovery Navigators, Mental Health Crisis workers, Facilitated Early Discharge workers, and Peer Support workers based in hubs in North, Central and South Bristol.



Community Rehabilitation services

We are a partner in the Bristol Community Rehabilitation Service. This service, led by Second Step, is a hub and spoke model and supports people from across Bristol. The Community Rehabilitation Service specialises in working with people with long-term mental health and complex needs. Its focus is to help people gain the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible in the community. We second staff to the service who provide a range of interventions to help women manage their mental health problems more effectively and to live as independently as possible.

To find out more about this service call 0117 909 6630.

Golden Key

We are a Golden Key partner. Golden Key is an innovative city wide partnership led by Second Step with an eight-year programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. We are working together to change the way services respond to people with complex and multiple needs including a broad spectrum of those furthest from services. Our Golden Key coordinator employed by Missing Link brings our specialist expertise in supporting homeless women with high complex needs to the service. We also take part in the operations group and attend the partnership board.

To find out more about the service please contact 0117 909 6630 or visit website www.goldenkeybristol.org.uk/our-story

"I don't know where I would be now without your help."



Bristol has the second highest suicide rate for women in England

Women's Court Service

This essential service is funded by the OAK Foundation to enable us to provide support to women defendants going through Bristol Magistrate court.

The worker meets with women who are either in the cells or have to appear in court that day and offers support with attending court, liaising with the criminal justice system and health and social care needs.

We know that the women are often victims as well as offenders and that prison does not address the causes of women's offending.

More than one in three have histories of sexual abuse and over half have been the victims of domestic abuse.

Our service has shown a high take up of women wanting support with a range of needs including drug, alcohol, debt, housing, benefits, domestic abuse and mental health. The worker can offer support for up to 3 months and for those women that require ongoing support she will refer them to other voluntary groups including Missing Link and Next Link services.

This year we supported **155 women**.

Wellbeing Therapies Service

Our Wellbeing Therapies Service in Bristol and South Gloucestershire offers psychological support including CBT sessions at community venues and our head office. The service is open to self referrals plus anyone who has been referred by their GP.

We have supported **157 women** this year through the Wellbeing Service.



155
women supported by our Women's Court Service



"Volunteering with the team is something I'm hugely proud of."

Volunteering Programme

Volunteers are highly valued as part of our organisation. They bring energy, enthusiasm and wide ranging skills to build the capacity in our services. Women with lived experience bring a vital understanding and an extra dimension to our work and what we can achieve. Without volunteers, some of our most important and effective services would not be able to operate.

This year we had the support of **67 volunteers**.

"I would recommend volunteering with them to anyone and I've absolutely loved every minute."

"They are very focused on giving back to me and I've had some great, very enriching experiences".

If you want to know more about volunteering please **call 0117 925 1811** or text **07714 290011**

"I always feel welcomed and valued."



“The staff make time to listen and help you”

Service User Consultation and Involvement

Missing Link has always seen user consultation and involvement in the planning, reviewing and delivering of our services as pivotal in the setting of standards for our service provision and development. This year service users sat on interview panels, attended external consultations, took part in media campaigns and represented the organisation at a range of events.

Women’s Support Services Group

Missing Link co-ordinates the Women’s Support Services Group – this was originally the Women’s Homeless Pathway Group but has been rebranded to reflect its membership, which includes organisations providing a range of support services for women across Bristol. The group provides a forum for raising issues and concerns, sharing training and best practice and networking across services – to improve the care pathways into services for women.

Women’s Homeless Pathway

Changes are planned to the women’s homelessness pathway starting from October 2017 and Missing Link will be working in closer collaboration with key partners Elim Housing, St Mungos and Places for People to take a whole pathway approach. This is to improve the experience of clients moving on through the various level of supported accommodation, optimising support available to them through joint working and increased value for money.

Of the **1.15 million** people in the UK who have an eating disorder; **90%** are women

Peer Support

Missing Link are working in partnership with Changes, a local mental health charity, to develop peer support groups; women can share what’s going on for them in a safe, confidential space with other women who may have similar experiences. Existing and former clients have the opportunity to train to become facilitators helping them to develop skills, self confidence and self esteem.



Mental Health Awareness Week

Mental Health Awareness Week was an event over five days focusing on the aspects of Ways to Wellbeing. We worked closely with a number of organisations on the event.

The focus was different for each day and the event celebrated what everyone can do to boost their mental health and increase the positive connections people are having in their daily lives.



"One of the best things is the company and shared experiences with other residents."



"Thanks for listening."

"Thank you. I was able to get away from a bad place."

"I feel less alone and with your support I am feeling safe and accepted."

"It's been so important having my safe place where I can gather my thoughts and get on the road to recovery."

Our Core Values

Missing Link, Next Link and Safe Link are committed to the following core values:

To treat people as individuals

We believe in providing high quality personalised support, tailored to women's needs. Our support packages will provide an appropriate level of flexible support to maximise independence and self-determination.

To challenge commonly held misconceptions about mental ill health

We recognise the importance of addressing negative attitudes and perceptions about mental illness and how it is experienced. In our work we will challenge any prejudice or assumptions that prevent people from seeking help and realising their full potential.

To challenge commonly held myths about domestic abuse

We will challenge the many myths surrounding domestic abuse that make survivors feel that domestic violence is their fault and they are to blame for not leaving their violent partner. In our work we will make clear the reality of domestic abuse and tackle the obstacles that prevent women from seeking help.

To challenge commonly held assumptions about rape and sexual assault

We know that rape and sexual assaults on women happen far more than people think and the statistics indicate. In our work we will raise awareness of the issue and challenge assumptions that the women's behaviour and dress is often seen to be responsible for the attack.

Equal Opportunity

We are aware that domestic and sexual violence and mental ill health occur in all cultures and communities. We will strive to ensure that all women are treated with fairness and equity and that the organisation and its services are accessible to all.

Empowerment

We understand how domestic and sexual violence and mental ill health can make women feel disempowered and devalued. To challenge this we will ensure that the experience and ideas of the women and children that we support are heard and that we maximise their participation in the design, delivery and development of our services.

Cultural Diversity

We are committed to ensuring that the Organisation and its services are inclusive and reflect the rich cultural diversity of the community we live in. We understand that



women and children from Black and Ethnic Minority communities have to face the extra dimension of discrimination so we will offer culturally sensitive dedicated services. This will encourage women to come forward, seek help and give them a real choice about how they want to be supported.



Quality Children and Young People's Services

We understand the importance of children and young people having their own individual support. We recognise the value of play as a therapeutic tool in the recovery process and will provide quality play and activities within a safe and stimulating environment. We will engage and help children and young people to express their feelings, build resilience and receive specialist support.

Safe Quality Housing

We are committed to the provision of quality housing services that are responsive, accountable, meet the needs of the women and children that use them and are of a standard that re-enforces their self-esteem.

Partnership Working

We are committed to a holistic approach to our service users' needs and recognise that our service is a part of a patchwork of services that are required. This holistic approach can only be achieved through collaboration and co-operation with local and national authorities, health, police and voluntary and statutory sectors.

Quality and Efficiency

We have in place systems and procedures that make the best use of the resources available to us. We are committed to providing an effective value for money service while at the same time maintaining quality in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the women and children that come to us for help.

To offer quality advice and advocacy to enable clients to make informed choices about their lives.

We know that many victims suffer in silence because they do not know what options there are available to them to live without fear of attack. With our telephone support and face to face advice sessions we will ensure that all the legal, civil and support remedies are given to each caller that seeks help.

Campaigning and raising awareness

We are committed to campaigning to stop violence against women and children in all its forms. We will work collaboratively with our partners to promote the issues, highlight the importance of prevention and strive to reduce the impact of gender-based violence. We know that any assessment of women's mental health must consider the full context of their lives.



Management Committee Report

This year has been an exciting one where lots of hard work has come to fruition. We were delighted to have the Major of Bristol Marvin Rees launch the new Next Link services in the city. While we embedded these new services we were also thrilled to hear that we had been successful in our bid to provide new enhanced domestic abuse services in South Gloucestershire.

The combination of these services makes us one of the largest domestic abuse providers in the South West. It is an honour to have such an important role in the region and we will ensure our services are consistent and instrumental in saving victims lives and supporting them to live free from the fear of violence.

Once again Missing Link, Next Link and SAFE Link continue to provide essential services that respond to need and are innovative and cost effective. Over the year the combined services supported thousands of clients overcome the trauma, of sexual violence and domestic abuse.

We also supported hundreds of women with mental ill health to recovery and rebuild their lives.

As always our service users were key to the development and delivery of our current and new services. Their comments and feedback are peppered throughout the report and their energy continues to inspire us to do better.

Again this year I want to thank the various groups and individuals that have fundraised for us; we really appreciate people's commitment particularly as traditional funding is being cut. In these times of austerity donations become more essential if we are to give victims the holistic support they need.

I would also like to thank the committee members, staff, volunteers and service users for all the hard work that has made the organisation so dynamic and effective.

Cathy Morgan | Chair



Management Committee

Chair
Cathy Morgan
Consultant

Iona Phillips
Solicitor

Treasurer
Mary Welsh
Retired GP

Rowena Hastings
Recovery Service Manager

Vicky O'Loughlin
Press and Communications Manager (retired)

Megan Baker
Student

Monah Zealia
Public Health Officer

Joi Demery
Mental Health Manager (retired)



KEY EVENTS OF THE YEAR



Launch of Bristol Next Link Services

Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees was the key speaker at the launch of our new Next Link services. Over 60 people attended the event including a range of professionals, victims and representatives from the police. A highlight of the event was a young victim singing two songs she had chosen that reflected her experience and her recovery. The event was a great success and received excellent media coverage and as a result we saw an increase in the number of victims coming forward to seek help.



South Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Services

We were delighted to be commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council to provide the domestic abuse services across the county. The services include safe houses for victims that have to flee their homes, community outreach for victims that can remain in their own homes with safety measures and support in place. Services based at the A&E and Maternity departments in Southmead Hospital and an IRIS service working with all GP practices.



Visit from Jeremy Corbyn

To celebrate Comic Relief red nose day we had a visit from Jeremy Corbyn who met with staff and service users from Missing Link, Next Link and SAFE Link including the peer support service that is funded by Comic Relief. He spent time talking to staff finding about the work they do and listening to service users experiences.

Women's Information Sharing Fair

Again this year we delivered an Information Sharing Fair as part of Homelessness Awareness week in February. With contributions from over 20 organisations involved in delivering services to women including information stalls, survivor films and gathered support for our commitment to women only services within Bristol. The event was launched by Thangam Debbonaire MP and was attended by 100 people from over 40 agencies, including the Police, Lighthouse, Probation, Health services and Bristol City Council commissioners.



Phoebe's Story

As part of the "It's not OK" campaign we made a video of a survivor talking about her experience of being a victim and the support she received from SAFE Link. The video is on our website and went on the Avon and Somerset Police website.



SAFE Link PCC Pride Award

The SAFE link team leader and team won a PCC Pride Award. This was presented by the Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mounstevens. It's unusual to have a whole team nominated so it was an excellent achievement.

Domestic Violence Group Work

We were delighted to be given a grant by BCC to deliver of Domestic Violence Group work in Bristol. We have employed a dedicated Domestic Violence Group work co-ordinator to support facilitators to deliver groups such as Freedom, Recovery Toolkit and CRUSH at a range of venues across the city.

Next Link Flyers

Again this year we had a team running in the Bath Half Marathon. 15 people ran and collected sponsorship and raised over £4,000. The money was used to fund children's holiday activities.



Re-provide

This is a research pilot building on the success of IRIS. We were collaborators in the original IRIS pilot and main trial to support GP practices to identify and refer female victims to our services. This model is now part of NICE guidelines and seen as best practice. This new pilot is in two parts and aims to enhance the IRIS model to (1) identify children and male victims (2) Identify perpetrators.



Donation from Costas Kkolos, owner of Avenue Café.



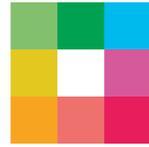
Candle Lit Vigil

To mark International Anti-violence against Women week we held our annual candle lit procession from Queen Square to College Green. We have held this event for 18 years and this year Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mounstevens spoke at the gathering. Each year the vigil has generated an increase in victims seeking help.



Visit from Emeritus Professor Gill Hague

We were honoured to have Gill come to talk to us about her work. Gill has worked on violence against women issues for 40 years, is well-known internationally as an activist and researcher, and Professor of Violence Against Women Studies at the pioneering Centre for Gender and Violence Research in Bristol.



“Being around others going through similar things is a great support”

An introduction to NEXT LINK

Next Link Domestic Abuse Services come under the umbrella of Missing Link. Next Link has been providing domestic abuse services in the city for the last 18 years. During that time the services have expanded, innovative new services have been developed and Next Link has built an excellent reputation for best practice quality services for victims and their families.

This year we delighted to be commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council to provide their domestic abuse services and to find out more about these please go to the South Glos. Section of the report.

Take up of services this year

Overall take up of Bristol services

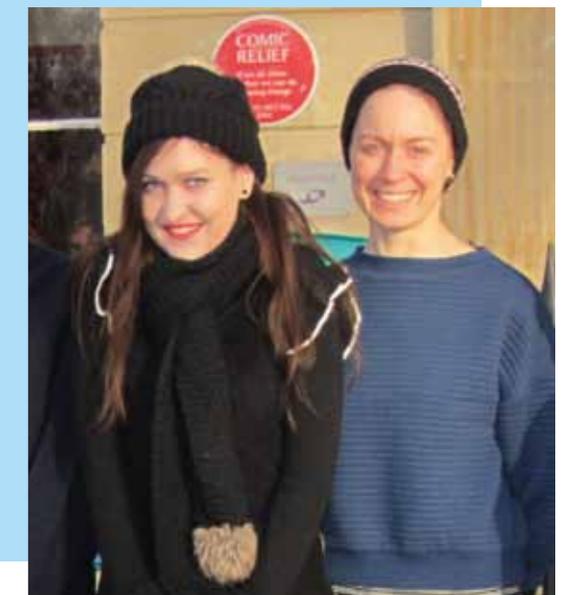
During this year we gave support to **1825 women** and **505 children**. We also gave advice and information to many more.

Referrals to All Bristol Services

The service has a single point of access and referrals are received by telephone. All referrals are triaged by our duty team who ask women about their situation, the number of children they have with them, what areas of the city are unsafe for them and whether they want a safe house, community support, crisis response or a dedicated BME service. We carry out a DASH risk assessment on all referrals and if appropriate refer to the Domestic Violence MARAC.



1825
women
supported
during
the year



Bristol Safe Houses

We have seven safe houses in the city including a dedicated house for black and ethnic minority women and children, a house for single women, a complex needs house and a block of self-contained units. In the safe houses we can house up to 38 families at any one time. The housing is direct access and women and children can move in immediately and stay for up to six months.

Where possible, when families move on, we offer resettlement support to enable them to settle into their new communities. For the women who returned to their partners we encourage them to keep in touch in case they need to use a safe house again.

This year we received **461 referrals** we housed **99 families** with **101 children**. Of the 99 families we housed 1 returned to their violent partner.

Complex Needs Safe House

This is a unique service to Bristol offering support to women who would perhaps be turned down from generic safe houses due the complexity of their needs. The service opened in February 2016 and offers a safe house for eight women at high risk of domestic abuse with additional support needs such as unmanaged substance misuse or mental health issues.

This year we received 62 referrals and have housed 31 women. We have a weekly support group run by BDP operating out of the house which is designed to support the women into accessing specialist substance misuse services whilst they are in a safe and calm environment.

We also worked closely with ROADS providers, Housing and Safer Bristol to form a referral panel to ensure we are accessible to the most vulnerable women within Bristol.

"The staff are amazing... we came up with a plan together."



Community Support Service

This service offers resettlement support to families moving on from the safe houses and tenancy support to women whose tenancy is at risk because of domestic abuse. Practical and emotional support is given to help families to keep safe, settle into their new home or remain in their own home. Also help with any court proceedings, making grant applications, registering with a doctor and schools or nurseries and planning the future. The support is offered for up to six months and is gradually withdrawn when the family is integrated into their community. We also provide drop in surgeries in central and east Bristol.

This year the service supported **346 women** and **404 children**.

"I could've never have done this on my own and would still be living in a nightmare."

supported **675** families in our Crisis Response Service

Northern and Southern Arc's

These services are part of our community support and are based in the North and South of the city. It is well documented that victims find it difficult to leave their neighbourhoods to seek help. These services reach into communities and have offices in south of the city in Hartcliffe and one in the North at Lawrence Weston. We also provide drop in surgeries at a range of local community venues these include Southmead Project; Brentry and Henbury Children's Centre; Long Cross Children's Centre; South Bristol Hospital; Headley Park Health Centre and Bishopsworth Children's Centre.

Each service responds to local need and offers high quality front line support to survivors and their children to increase their safety, prevent repeat victimisation and reduce levels of physical and psychological injury.

We provide outcome focused support to victims who want to remain at home safely and remove the violent partner, victims who are yet to leave their abusive partners, and victims who need to go into a safe house. The services also support any victim who wishes to use the criminal justice process to prosecute the perpetrator.

This year the services **supported 366 families** – 173 in the Northern Arc and 193 in the Southern Arc.

To contact the Northern Arc call **0117 9822495**

To contact the Southern Arc call **0117 3533853**

the Arcs supported **366** families



Crisis Response Service

This service is part of our triage team and offers intensive crisis support to women and children who are threatened with homelessness because of domestic abuse.

Often women become homeless when they are in a domestic abuse crisis because they feel there are no other options but to leave the violent home. This service responds the same day and will assist women to access emergency legal remedies to help her stay in her own home and extra security in the home to keep the family safe.

The worker will go with women to a solicitor and escort them to court.

When it is not safe to stay the worker will find safe housing accommodation within the city or outside of Bristol.

The support is part of a care pathway and offered for 4 weeks and then if appropriate the family moves seamlessly to other Next Link services.

This year the service supported **675 families**.



"The work you do must save people's lives."

505
children supported during the year



Domestic violence costs the public purse £23 billion a year



"Thanks for everything you have done with my housing. If it wasn't for you I think I'd still be in that house and be being made to live next door to him."

Dedicated children and young people's services

These services prioritise the needs of the children who use our services and have either witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. We provide a range of support including one to one support, after school clubs, play schemes, help with enrolling in schools and nurseries. We also help children integrate into their new communities when they leave the safe house. Our services regularly pass an Ofsted inspection.

This year the services worked with **505 children and young people.**

Dedicated services for black and ethnic minorities

Specific BME services

- Forced Marriage HBV
- Dedicated Polish, South Asian workers
- Dedicated IDVA court worker

We recognise the importance of diversity and to ensure our services are inclusive we have a dedicated BME woman's safe house and worker. We also have a dedicated BME resettlement worker and dedicated South Asian and Polish crisis response workers.

This year in the safe houses 40% of families came from black and ethnic minority communities. In our community services 30% of families came from black and ethnic minority communities.

South Asian domestic abuse crisis response service

Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness for South Asian women. Our dedicated South Asian workers provide crisis intervention to South Asian women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse.

The workers assist families in crisis, they offer culturally sensitive support and help to access legal and practical remedies to enable women and children to remain in their family home and lower repeat incidents of domestic abuse.

This service has proven to be extremely successful at both supporting women and raising the issue of domestic abuse within South Asian communities.

We also have a dedicated Polish worker who has successfully engaged with Polish victims and victims from Eastern Europe.

"Thank you for helping me learn that it isn't selfish to take time for myself and it's okay to say no."

Forced Marriage Honour Based Violence Service

As a result of the pilot funded by the Home Office Forced Marriage Unit we were able to use the results of the pilot to generate funding to provide a service for victims who have either been forced into marriage or those at risk of forced marriage or honour based violence. The service offers confidential advice and support to look at all the options available including accessing legal remedies and help to plan their future.

This year the service supported 8 women who were at risk of forced marriage or had been through a forced marriage and 73 who were fleeing HBV.

Forced Marriage Honour Based Violence Training Programme

This year we ran four training sessions, one for Hollie Gazzard Trust, two for South Glos. and Bristol Safeguarding and one for the Avon and Somerset Police Training School.

Our web based chat/advice facility which enables people to access real time advice anonymously is up and running. The Facebook page also links to our website and live chat.



"Now I know I am not alone...it is so important to me."

The Iris Service

Bristol and South Glos Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS)

We have two Iris workers in Bristol who support all of the city's GP practices to access the service. Our IRIS service in South Gloucestershire is fully embedded with all practices engaged.

For many victims of domestic abuse going to see the doctor is the only safe place they can go without their violent partner present. Our specialist domestic violence advocate-educators (IRIS) train and support primary care clinicians to recognise domestic abuse and refer their female patients to our service. The IRIS workers offer emotional and practical support to all victims referred and if appropriate help to access a range of specialist services.

In Bristol this year the service supported **162 women** and trained **192 clinical** and **37 non clinical staff**.

In South Glos we supported **133 families** and trained **81 clinical** and **7 non clinical staff**.

Family Intervention Teams

We are working in partnership with Bristol Early Help Team and have three domestic abuse workers based in the north, south and central Family Intervention Teams. The workers consult with early help key workers to help recognise domestic violence and abuse, improving professional responses and support for victims. The workers then offer direct support to the mothers and children identified.



At least **750,000 children a year witness domestic violence**



Advice Quality Standard Mark

We have the Advice Quality Standard accreditation for our advice and guidance work. The AQS accreditation confirms we deliver well-managed domestic abuse advice services, provide ongoing help, ensuring staff have relevant, up-to-date knowledge providing high quality advice. This year we received **2,556 phone calls** and gave advice to **over 2,000 people**.

We also have LiveZilla (live chat line) active on our duty desk from 1.00pm – 5.30pm Monday – Friday.

Survivors Participation and Feedback

We firmly believe that domestic abuse services should be informed and guided by survivors. Throughout the year we have consulted with the women and children that use our services on new initiatives and their experience of our services. They have also been involved in recruitment of staff, fundraising and talking to the media and key stakeholders about their experience of domestic and sexual abuse.

100% of women in our safe house services said they felt safer after receiving support from Next Link. 66% experienced less anxiety and **100% felt more hopeful about the future** and have goals they want to achieve.

"Thanks for listening."

Promoting the Service and Raising Awareness of Domestic and Sexual Abuse

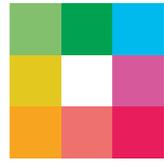
Throughout the year we have participated in events including Sexual Abuse and sexual violence awareness week, Southmead Festival, PRIDE, Women's Health Conference, Elimination of Violence Against Women Vigil, Domestic Violence Awareness Month and International Women's Day. We know that promotion is the key to raising awareness of the impact of domestic and sexual violence on women, men and children and to ensure that information about our services is readily available and accessible.

We know that domestic and sexual abuse is on the increase and there are many victims still living in fear that do not access or know about the help that is available.

Our commitment is to continue to raise these issues at a local and national level and at the same time reassure victims it is not their fault. Too often domestic abuse and rape are seen as the victims fault and we need to challenge this perception and put the responsibility for the crime where it rightly belongs with the perpetrator.

"I've had to speak to so many people since reporting to the police and I was just about starting to give up. You've been the first one who's actually helped – so thank you so much."





NEXTLINK. SouthGlos
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE NEXT LINK Domestic Abuse Services



This year Next Link was delighted to be commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council to provide the domestic abuse services across the county.

The services include:

more support for victims

Single Point of Access

All the services are accessed by one telephone number.

0800 4700280

All callers are put through to our triage service. All victims asking for support are offered a relevant service that meets their needs and responds to their immediate safety risks. Callers wanting advice and guidance can access our accredited advice service.

Safe Houses for women and families

We have safe houses for single women, women with children and women with complex needs. The housing is direct access and women and children can move in immediately and they can stay for up to six months. During that time they have practical and emotional support including staying safe, parenting, life skills and finding new housing.

support for complex needs

Safe House for men

We have a dedicated house for male victims of domestic abuse who need a safe place to stay. They can stay for up to 6 months and have support with safety, benefits, legal and housing options.

Community Outreach Services

This service offers practical and emotional support to help female and male victims to keep safe in their own home. The support we can offer includes someone to talk things over with, forming a safety plan, making the home safe, help to go to court and get legal protection, help with accessing benefits and budgeting. The support is reduced as victims feel more safe.

Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS)

For many victims of domestic abuse going to see the doctor is the only safe place they can go without their violent partner present. Our specialist domestic violence advocate-educators train and support primary care clinicians to recognise domestic abuse and refer their female patients to our service. The IRIS workers offer emotional and practical support and if appropriate help to access a range of specialist services.

Southmead Hospital IDSVVA Service

Often victims who present at A&E disclose high levels of abuse and are still living with their violent partner. This service supports female and male victims who present at the Emergency Department and Maternity Services at Southmead Hospital. They also train health clinicians to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse to enable them to refer to the service. Support is offered for up to 4 weeks.

more refuge spaces

Group Programme

This programme is open to all victims aged 16 years and over regardless of if they are using any of our services. It includes Freedom Programme groups and Recovery toolkit groups. The groups focus on both emotional and practical support including; self-esteem, confidence, coping strategies, skills and competencies, building friendship network, independence, ambition. To access these groups contact the telephone advice helpline.

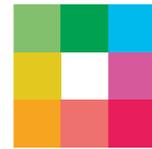
Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage Service

This is a service for victims who have either been victims of honour based violence or forced into marriage or are at risk of forced marriage. The service offers confidential advice and support to look at all the options available including accessing legal remedies to keep them safe and help them to plan their future. We have a secure live chat facility where we can talk to victims in real time safely.

increased capacity

Accredited Advice and Guidance

Our Advice Quality Standard accreditation confirms we deliver well-managed domestic abuse advice services. Available through the single point of access or through our live chat facility staff have relevant up-to-date knowledge to provide high quality advice to victims, professionals and others seeking help.



"My son has been suffering from PTSD, nightmares and lack of appetite. Having a CYPSVA to talk to and who believed him was so reassuring at times, I didn't feel that he was believed by others."

"I cannot thank Safe Link enough for this service. It has been a lifeline."

An introduction to SAFE LINK

SAFE Link was established in 2008 and is a service that works across the Avon and Somerset Police Area and provides emotional and practical support to women, children and male victims of rape and sexual assault. It was recommissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2015. The service follows the Revised Victims Code of Practice.

The service offers:

- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- Dedicated Adult and child IDVSA for victims of historic abuse
- Dedicated Young Persons ISVA
- Children's ISVA
- BME ISVA
- Peer support groups

We have 9 Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, 5 for adults and 3 for children and young people, two specialising in historic abuse and one peer support worker. All offer confidential advice, practical and emotional support including a safe place to talk, access to counselling, support attending Sexual Health Services and help with medical attention. They also can help with supporting the family and practical problems such as help with housing, benefits and employment.

If the victim wants to report to the police they can give support with making a statement, assist with claims for compensation and give support before, during and after the court process.

The victim does not have to report to the police to access the service and the rape or sexual assault can have happened recently or in the past.

The workers work in partnership with the Police and our specialist sexual violence services and are based in hubs in

- Keynsham, BaNES with Lighthouse,
- Concorde House, South Gloucestershire with PROTECT Investigation team
- Express Park, Bridgwater, Somerset with PROTECT Investigation team
- New Bridewell, Bristol with Lighthouse team
- Kenneth Steele House, Bristol with PROTECT Investigation team
- MIND in Taunton

Staff deliver support by

- One to one support in person and by telephone
- Peer support groups
- Training and practical skills sessions
- Use of email, text, Skype and WhatsApp.

This year the service supported a total of **860 victims**; 646 aged 18 and over, 130 aged 14 -17 and 84 child victims.

Peer Support

This is our third year of running peer support groups funded by Comic Relief. Our peer support programme is made up of actual and virtual support groups. Each group has up to six victims meeting in a closed setting to talk about their feelings and learn from each other. The programme consists of 10 sessions, each with a theme including: flashbacks and nightmares; trust; sleep; safe relationships; managing thoughts and feelings; healthy body/healthy mind; anger and triggers, support from family and friends; coping mechanisms; future hopes and goals. Some members of the first group are now training to become peer facilitators and they will go on to run new groups. The virtual group uses WhatsApp to communicate and support each other and is a closed group. This year we ran 3 peer support programmes two in Bristol and one in Bridgwater.



Women affected by abuse are five times more likely to attempt suicide.

Truth Project

We are part of a collaborative bid to provide support to victims who want to give evidence to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) Truth Project. Two of our Safe Link ISVA's attended the Truth Project Training Course in Birmingham and are able to offer victims of institutional abuse support while they share their experiences to the inquiry. They are able to offer support to victims attending the Exeter or Cardiff inquiry venues.

Referral Pathways for victims with learning disabilities

We have put in place a new referral pathway with Safe Link, AVoice and the Brandon Trust. This has established a reciprocal referral pathway that enables the ISVAs to access specialist support for victims with learning disabilities and LD agencies refer and access to the ISVA service.

Specialist ISVA support for victims with learning disabilities and/or mental ill health

SAFE Link in partnership with Womankind has been awarded Home Office funding (applied for on our behalf by Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commission) SAFE Link are funded to provide a specialist ISVA and Womankind are funded to provide a specialist befriending service. The partnerships aim is to work together to improve lives and build resilience for the most vulnerable victims of sexual assault who have additional needs linked to either learning difficulties or mental ill-health.



"You have made me feel so safe."

"She believed me, reassured me and was honest with her advice."

Number of reported sexual offences rose by 28% in Bristol last year.

Promoting and raising awareness of Rape and Sexual Abuse

During the year we continued our ongoing training of STO officers across the whole of Avon and Somerset. We also delivered training to and networked with: AVoice, SARI, Young Victims service, SARSAS, Womankind, and Next Link Complex Needs Safe House.

We took part in a number of events including the #It's Not OK campaign, promoting the service at various fairs and events and had a stall in the City Centre.

Christmas present donation from Avon and Somerset Police.



"I couldn't have reported without you being there. Knowing you were there literally got me through it. I knew you were there if I needed you. Its changed the whole experience and you've changed the way I see myself and that I deserve to feel safe too."

"There is no quick fix to sexual abuse and my son was suffering daily. Thanks to Safe Link, he is getting better and moving forward with his life."



5 Queen Square, Bristol BS1 4JQ

t: 0117 925 1811
f: 0117 929 3290
e:enquiries@missinglinkhousing.co.uk
twitter @MissingLink_MLH
www.missinglinkhousing.co.uk



t: 0117 925 0680
f: 0117 929 3290
e:enquiries@nextlinkhousing.co.uk
twitter @NextLinkHousing
www.facebook.com/nextlinkhousing
www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk



t: 0800 4700 280
f: 0117 929 3290
e:enquiries.southglos@nextlinkhousing.co.uk
twitter @NextLinkHousing
www.facebook.com/nextlinkhousing
www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk/southglos



t: 0333 323 1543
f: 0117 929 3290
e: safe.link@nextlinkhousing.co.uk
www.safelinksupport.co.uk



Missing Link strives to create a culture that encourages and values everyone's differences and promotes mutual respect and shared understanding. Missing Link is a Housing Association with charitable status, registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act (2014), Register No. 24218R

