



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 14



Welcome

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Welcome to our spring newsletter! It's been another busy time for us at Jewish Women's Aid and we hope you enjoy reading highlights of the spring and winter.

Each year, we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW). This year, Chief Rabbi Mirvis joined us at a day of action at Brent Cross Shopping Centre, where staff and volunteers encouraged shoppers to engage with JWA and support us. In Manchester, our volunteers and fundraising team arranged a fantastic evening with speaker, author and domestic violence survivor Renee Matthews - read more on page 3.

This year we have reviewed our refuge service provision which will be changing from later this year – take an in-depth look on page 9. You'll also be interested to read our volunteer co-ordinator's perspective of JWA, on page 6, where Lee Wax talks about her experience of the organisation.

This is my last newsletter as Executive Director of JWA – I will be moving on in the summer and you'll be able to read my final reflections in the next newsletter. I will be leaving JWA in the capable hands of Naomi Dickson, who is currently JWA's Communications and Training Co-ordinator.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Jewish Women's Aid – an organisation I've been truly proud to work for and represent.

Emma Bell
Executive Director

'JWA helped me to feel secure and safe. You gave me refuge from the abuse I'd experienced and helped me to build up my confidence so I could move on in my life.' - client



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

Literary Evening in Manchester

No-one is better placed to warn of the dangers and implications of domestic abuse than someone who has had first hand experience of it, and that certainly proved to be the case when Renee Matthews was the guest speaker at a well attended meeting of Manchester Jewish Women's Aid at Manchester Maccabi.

Recounting her difficult times in an abusive marriage lasting more than 15 years, she warned of the dangers of hiding the suffering and evidence of both physical and emotional abuse. Renee hid her own suffering from her family who were totally unaware of what she was going through, even to the extent of helping her husband to find her when she finally plucked up the courage to escape from the family home.

"Don't make the mistake of thinking what you are experiencing is your fault, or that apologies and promises not to repeat the physical, mental and verbal attacks will be kept" Renee warned.

Now in a happy second marriage, Renee's family, husband Tom, son Jamie, and her sisters and other family members joined her at the meeting, where she signed copies of her book, *Black and White*.

Manchester Jewish Women's Aid keyworker Ziona Handler outlined the services JWA can offer to help those suffering abuse, revealing the disturbing statistic that one in four women will experience some form of abuse. She stressed the need for more awareness of the problem and the importance of education in being able to recognise the warning signs to identify a potential abuser. "We aim to teach young people to avoid getting into abusive relationships" she said.

Her message was reinforced by JWA's national chair Frances Turner, and Manchester chair Barbara Cohen, who thanked Renee Matthews for her inspiring and moving talk.

The organisation is dependent on its band of dedicated volunteers, and both Ziona Handler and Barbara Cohen appealed for more people to come forward and get involved in the work of JWA.

If you want to volunteer for JWA wherever you are based, please contact Lee Wax, Volunteer Co-ordinator either by email – lee@jwa.org.uk or on 020 8445 8060.

Joy Wolfe and Naomi Dickson



Flying the JWA Flag South of the River in Style

With tickets sold out and standing room only half a mile from Wimbledon's famous Centre Court, 42 women and one brave man watched a great doubles event in aid of JWA last November. It was a stylish, fast-moving match along a central aisle of Wimbledon's branch of Eileen Fisher.

The players in this friendly match were JWA , the Wimbledon branch of Eileen Fisher and local JWA friends. Umpiring, and warmly opening the proceedings was Emma Bell, with Frances Turner (JWA Chair) and Mildred Levison (JWA Hon Vice President) on the sidelines.

In June last year I received an upbeat email from JWA Trustee Dawn Freedman telling me that Gail Sackloff OBE, former merchandise director to Saks Fifth Avenue had obtained the services of a high-end fashion shop who were prepared to run a fashion show at their new Wimbledon branch in support of United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW).

Inspired by her own wardrobe needs - to put design ahead of fashion - Eileen had wanted

to enable women to evolve their wardrobes, connecting old to new. Her mission is to balance business with the environment and to empower women to support traditional crafts and cultures.

As a founder member of JWA in 1992, I was keen to enlist loyal supporters, many of whom had been involved in the memorable 'Taster of Complementary Therapies Day' a few years ago.

A quick match ensued - Gail with her extensive connections, wonderful booty of luxury raffle prizes and my local networking set us on track ably backed by Tara at Head Office.

The result - a magical, winter's evening with delicious canapés and wine as we watched four confident young women stride the catwalk wearing chic blended outfits of subtle textures. With a 20% discount opportunity and a relaxed atmosphere, women lingered, socialised and purchased.... A great opportunity that raised awareness and funds.

Lorna Cohen
Former Trustee of JWA



Reception at Number 11 – Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis to be Patron of JWA

Marking International Women's Day on March 8th, JWA was delighted to announce that Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis will become its patron – helping to further raise awareness the importance of tackling domestic violence in the Jewish community.

This announcement came in the august venue of 11 Downing Street, at a reception hosted by Frances Osborne, wife of Chancellor George Osborne. While supporters enjoyed the sophisticated surroundings, they listened to Emma Bell speak about JWA's change in refuge service provision and then announce that Chief Rabbi Mirvis is to be JWA's first patron. The Chief Rabbi then spoke eloquently about the need for the important work undertaken by JWA in the community and how it is the responsibility of each individual to support those in need.

JWA continues to lead the community in the fight against abuse and to support those women affected by it, which is why Jewish Women's Aid is delighted that the Chief Rabbi has lent his support in such a public and prestigious manner.

The Chief Rabbi said, 'I am delighted to show my support for Jewish Women's Aid and to help draw attention not only to the excellent work that it does but, once again, to raise awareness of our responsibility as a community to eradicate abuse. No community is immune from this, and it is an issue that we as a community need to have the maturity and honesty to face up to and address. It is often harder for organisations such as JWA to receive public support than it is for charities covering softer issues or ones that we are more comfortable discussing. By actively supporting JWA I hope that we are all able to recognise the importance of this issue and to galvanise support for this cause. I am delighted to be JWA's first patron.'

Emma Bell, Executive Director says 'JWA needs communal leaders, rabbis and rebbetzins to speak out against abuse. It is only with support from the whole community that we can have a voice loud enough to genuinely tackle and challenge the domestic abuse that exists in Jewish homes. We are delighted that the Chief Rabbi has lent our work such public support'



Profile of a Volunteer - Lee Wax

I'm delighted to be working for JWA, as the Volunteer Coordinator. I have previously had lots of experience working with volunteers, in various contexts, which is one reason I was interested in the role. I started in September 2012 doing maternity cover for my predecessor, Selina, and enjoyed it so much that I decided to stay!

JWA is an exceptional organisation, of which I am proud to now be a part. Our mission, to support Jewish women victims of domestic violence, is one I have supported for a long time – since its very beginnings, in fact.

I often quote the journalist Elizabeth Renzetti, who said "Volunteers are the gears that keep the machine running". It's a great quote. It is a real privilege to be training, supervising and coordinating the 175 wonderful volunteers who, together with the staff, keep JWA running and such a special place. Whatever role our dedicated volunteers do, they do with passion and commitment, and there's a real sense of community in our work.



A favourite moment for me was when I attended a school's 6th form volunteering fair, representing JWA. It's really important for us to connect with teenagers, especially before they go off to uni., although it can be challenging (particularly with teenage boys!), so I was pleased to have the opportunity. As I was finishing talking with one teenager, I heard a boy's voice behind me saying "Oh, Jewish Women's Aid, they are really good!" I turned round and saw a young man talking to two friends, and he continued proudly: "My mum works for them." His mum is a JWA volunteer. I was so proud!

Lee Wax, Volunteer Co-ordinator

Save the date

Volunteer Conference

Sunday May 11th 2014

**Contact Lee Wax lee@jwa.org.uk
for more details**

Would you like to volunteer for JWA?

Roles include counselling, helpline, administration and education. Please take a look at our website – www.jwa.org.uk or contact lee@jwa.org.uk for more details.



Counselling Services Expand

JWA's counselling services have always been very well used by clients – last year, the 11 volunteer counsellors in the service supported over 50 clients. After a recent review, we recruited a Counselling Co-ordinator to make the service we give our clients even better.

All clients now meet the co-ordinator for an initial consultation before they are allocated to a counsellor. This gives them an opportunity to hear about our service and make sure that it's the best option for them at this stage.

Our counselling service is unique in the sense that our qualified volunteer counsellors have a deep understanding of domestic violence and the specific issues which Jewish women can face in abusive relationships, and many of them bring several years' counselling experience to their role at JWA.

JWA supports women from across the Jewish community, from a range of different backgrounds. Women from all over the UK can use the telephone counselling service and they find the support incredibly valuable. Most clients use the face-to-face counselling service, based at JWA's London office and we will soon be able to offer face to face counselling in Leeds, and are actively recruiting counsellors for this service in Manchester.

We are now also able to offer women places on a therapeutic support group work which is facilitated by two of our most experienced counsellors. Women can raise any issue they are dealing with, and be empowered by supporting other women whilst sharing experiences. Initial feedback has been very positive.

Another new aspect of the counselling service is a six week-long confidence building group, where clients work on issues such as boundaries, assertiveness, self-esteem and how they are affected by abuse. Women who completed the first group found it very effective and helpful.

We always want to make sure our counsellors are supported and have opportunities for professional development, so counsellors receive regular supervision with qualified supervisors. Additionally, counsellors now have an opportunity to benefit from their own in-house training programme, covering aspects of mental health, trained by JWA volunteer and psychiatrist Fran Raphael.

'At first I was shy and I scared to talk, but coming to the group and speaking to the other women gave us all us confidence to share our worries' - client on confidence building group.

For more information about JWA's counselling or groups call Anat at the office or email her - Anat@jwa.org.uk

Anat Rosenwaks, Counselling Co-ordinator



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID'S REFUGE

**The house hosted
23 women in
2012-13**

**The refuge accommodates
8 women and their children**

'For me the best thing was to find trustworthy people. I built my self-confidence here. My son learnt to be around strong people. I am thankful to all of the staff who helped me and my son.'

**It's Europe's only
kosher and Shabbat
observant refuge.**



**A five week CST personal
awareness and self-defence
course was run for all clients,
who said it increased
their confidence.**

**The monthly Rosh Chodesh
group and several pampering
evenings were held at the
refuge.**

**'I'd like to thank you for all
your help and getting me
through the hard times.'**

**Last year the refuge was
totally redecorated and
refurbished, including
a new computer
for the use
of residents**



Rethinking the Refuge

As you may know, in past months we have been rethinking how best to provide our refuge accommodation. We've been talking to our clients about what they want and need, and it has become increasingly clear that they would prefer to be in self-contained accommodation, rather than the communal living which our current refuge offers. Interestingly, JWA is not alone in exploring different housing options: other refuges across the country are also considering new models of safe housing.

We all know that it takes a huge amount of strength and courage for a woman to leave an abusive relationship, and to uproot herself, and her children, from home, local community and schools. We want to be able to provide these families with the type of safe and dignified accommodation they want and deserve: contemporary, private and self-contained, a space in which to recover and start again.

We have decided to go into partnership with an existing housing provider, JCHA (Jewish Community Housing Association) to make this new type of accommodation a reality. They have long been supporters of our work, and we think that pooling our expertise will make a really good partnership. Together, we want to be able to provide two self-contained flats for our clients.

The new arrangement will be for Jewish women and children only, and will be funded by the community rather than by the local authority. JWA will need to raise the rent and staff costs of the self-contained flats ourselves, and we'll be relying on the generosity of the community to assist with this.

Some of you have asked whether the move to flats, rather than a larger shared house, means that we will need to turn women in need of accommodation away. In fact, because of the brilliant work the community support team do, helping women to explore all kinds of housing options before thinking of a refuge place, there have been fewer Jewish women in need of emergency safe accommodation in recent years. For those women who do need it, it is a lifeline. And we will always promise to ensure that we have space for each Jewish woman who needs us; to do otherwise would be to betray one of JWA's fundamental reasons for existing!

Emma Bell, Executive Director



Chief Rabbi Mirvis meeting JWA's board, staff and volunteers at a day of action at Brent Cross in November to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Clare's Law

A scheme which gives people the right to ask police if their partner has a history of domestic violence has been extended nationwide. Named after Clare Wood, who was strangled and set on fire by her ex-boyfriend George Appleton in 2009, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme has been trialled by four police forces and will be rolled out countrywide later this year.

This comes as domestic violence rates have risen to their highest recorded levels with 1.2million women and 800,000 men having reported being victims of domestic abuse last year, up 10% in the past three years, according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Goodbye from Trustee and Founder Member Elaine Grazin

My involvement in JWA began in the 1980's when a small group of women in Leeds met round a kitchen table to talk about how we could help Jewish women suffering from domestic violence. Our inspiration was Sheila Saunders, who was involved in Women's Aid and had carried out research on domestic violence in Israel.

With a core group of volunteers we set up the national telephone helpline. Alongside myself, two of those original volunteers are still active in JWA: Naomi Shaw and Ruth Hurwitz. Since then, Judy Usiskin and a team of London women have taken JWA forward to become the professional organisation we know today.

I feel sad to have stepped down from the Board of JWA after a number of years as a Trustee, and

Yet, the number of cases the police refer for prosecution has fallen by 13%.

Under the scheme, as well as the potential victim, a third party such as a parent can also apply for information. But some charities have suggested that most abusers are not known to the police because domestic abuse is so under-reported and more should be spent on improving police responses to domestic violence and funding refuges.

Lucy Marks of Dawson Cornwall, member of JWA's legal panel.

latterly chair of the Helpline Sub-Committee, but I am very glad to say I am not leaving JWA! I am still a Support volunteer on the Helpline, and am part of the dynamic Leeds JWA group which includes Helpliners and Telephone Counsellors, and organises local awareness-raising events. Joanne Black now represents regional members on JWA Board, and the Helpline Sub-Committee is now ably chaired by Barbara Cohen from Manchester.



Women's Voices

In the words of one of our clients...

Maya's Story

When I was 14 I started a new school. A boy in the same year as me took a liking to me and we started going out. At first, he seemed nice and respectful and we appeared to get on well - we'd go to the cinema, bowling, hang out with friends.

After a short while, his behaviour changed. He would get angry with me over the most tiny things and he'd become violent and then emotional. His excuse was that he was suffering from mental health problems and he said he was self harming. I never doubted this and so I forgave him for his violent behaviour towards me.

Things became dramatically worse. On one occasion, he smashed a glass on the table and the glass cut me. He would often start arguments with me - sometimes I couldn't take it and tried to argue back but then he would become physical or threaten to jump out of the window. I knew my parents could hear arguing from my room but no-one came to help because they just thought it was a teenage argument.

I tried to finish with him several times but he would always say his life wasn't worth living without me in it.

Just before I left to go to university I managed to end the relationship by email. He became very angry and sent abusive messages but I stayed strong, knowing I was leaving to start a new life.

Although I was subjected to all sorts of things such as being slapped, punched, scratched, spat on and hair pulling, it was the psychological abuse which was worse. The physical pain went quite quickly but the fear of the things he would do to me was constant. It took nearly five years to finally get out of the relationship.

When I saw an advert for Jewish Women's Aid I called them. The support they offer is amazing and they really helped me to work through the abuse. I have since worked for them as a volunteer and I really wish I'd had the safe relationships education they offer to teenagers in schools.



A date for your diary

Jewish Women's Aid Lunch

Thursday May 8, 2014

Grand Ballroom
The Montcalm
32, Great Cumberland Place
London W1H 7DJ

Guest Speaker
Cressida Dick QPM
Assistant Commissioner,
Special Operations



JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

JEWISH WOMEN'S AID
Against Domestic Violence

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