



Springfield (Domestic Abuse Support in South Lakeland) is an independent charity which has been providing a safe haven for vulnerable women since 1915 (registered as a charity in 1964).

Why was your organisation founded?

Our overall aim is to give those affected by domestic abuse the skills and self-confidence they need to develop positive coping strategies, enabling them to recover from their experience and to develop a new life free from abuse, and to inspire them to achieve their own personal goals.

Domestic abuse can include physical, emotional, sexual, financial abuse, and coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender, cultural, social and economic background. New figures show the police recorded an average of one incident of domestic abuse per minute in the year ending March 2019. Some 746,219, domestic abuse-related crimes were recorded in total – a rise of almost a quarter on the previous year. However, the Home Office report that only a minority of domestic violence incidents are reported to the police, varying between 23% and 35% of incidents reported.

What services does your organisation offer?

The charity runs two services for people affected by domestic abuse: The Community Hub and a Women's Refuge. At our Community Hub, we offer dedicated one to one support, group sessions and peer support to women and a small number of men that are currently or have historically been victims/survivors of abuse. We also provide support to those still in a relationship with the perpetrator.

Springfield Refuge offers supported accommodation for up to seven unaccompanied women. We provide these incredibly vulnerable women with a safe and comfortable place to live and provide individual, person-centred emotional and practical support so that they can rebuild their lives. Our client base at the Community Hub extends to Cumbria, Lancashire and the Yorkshire area and our Refuge accepts referrals from professional agencies anywhere in the country.

How have your services changed during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, we have implemented new practices, enabling continued access to our support including an increase in the use of social media platforms. Our community service has adopted various ways of delivering services to meet our clients' needs during the pandemic, we now offer telephone support, virtual support via zoom, email support, counselling and online groups. Adapting our services during this time has ensured we can reach out to people living in rural communities, people with children and those with disabilities both visible and hidden.

Have you seen an increase in people using your services?

According to our clients the impact of lockdown has been described as feeling increasingly isolated and unsafe, especially if still living with their perpetrators. Child contact has become increasingly problematic and, in some cases, have led to feelings of extreme vulnerability. We have seen first-hand that the pandemic has in some cases proved not only to be difficult for victim/survivors but also dangerous as it can lead to the intensity and frequency of abuse, accessing support can be very difficult.

How can people get in touch?

You can contact the Springfield Refuge on refuge@springfieldsupport.org.

You can contact the Community Service on cs@springfieldsupport.org.