

Last year was our busiest yet. Key achievements included opening new refuges in London and Cambridgeshire, developing outreach programmes for women from Eastern European Communities, launching a life-saving awareness campaign, contributing to the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) report on domestic abuse and supporting more than 1,000 women and children on any given day.



**None of this would be possible without positive support from people like you. For that I cannot thank you enough. 2009 promises to be even busier. We hope you will continue to support us through the challenges ahead; there is still so much to be done.**

In January this year the End Violence Against Women coalition, of which Refuge is a member, in partnership with the Equality and Human Rights Commission published the second 'Map of Gaps' report into service provision for women who have experienced violence. The report found that one in four local authorities in Britain have no specialised support services at all meaning women experiencing abuse face a 'postcode lottery'. This shows just how important it is for Refuge to grow. For more information, visit [www.mapofgaps.org](http://www.mapofgaps.org).

**In addition to our services, we provide a voice for women and children against domestic violence. Since the mid 1980s, Refuge has been lobbying for a national strategy on domestic violence and so welcomed the HASC's over-arching recommendation to Government to adopt a 'Violence Against Women' strategy. Refuge attended a stakeholder meeting at the Home Office in January to discuss the launch of a national consultation on the strategy. We will continue to attend meetings and consultations over the coming year.**

Our **communications** team works hard to raise awareness of domestic violence and the support we offer. We have recently been featured on Sky News, BBC and in numerous national papers. After a broadcast, we always see an increase in the number of people contacting us. Last year, hits to our website increased by 26%. So we know that our publicity activities do help women access the help they desperately need. This vital work could not continue without donations.

**We recently carried out a supporter survey by phone and have been enthused by your commitment to Refuge's vision of a world free from domestic violence. I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to answer our questions. We always welcome your feedback; email [supporters@refuge.org.uk](mailto:supporters@refuge.org.uk).**

Thank you once again for your support.

With warmest wishes

Sandra Horley, OBE, chief executive

## Rebuilding lives: Specialist community support

Domestic violence is wide-spread and affects anyone regardless of race, culture, language or background. A recent report (the 'Map of Gaps' study) found that just 1 in 10 local authorities has a specialised service for ethnic minority women.

Refuge recognises that women from different ethnic backgrounds have varied and specific needs. We strive to meet these needs, running a number of culturally specific refuges and outreach programmes. Here you can read about our Asian women's services and how they help women rebuild their lives.

### Sonia's story:

*I was 17 when I had an arranged marriage. My parents had not pressurised me in any way and I was looking forward to a happy life with my new husband.*

*However, as soon as we were married, my husband moved us to his parents' house against my wishes. Straight away my husband and in-laws began to control me and isolate me. The violence started when I was pregnant. My husband would kick me, strangle me and on several occasions, punched me in the stomach.*

*When my husband started to threaten our daughter a few years later, I made up my mind to escape. One day the door was left unlocked; I grabbed my daughter and ran.*

*My husband continued to harass me and last year started custody proceedings for our daughter. With little knowledge of the legal system and an unsupportive lawyer, I felt completely powerless against him. I didn't know my rights or how to fight for them and had to cope with constant threats and harassment from my ex.*

*It was then I came across Refuge. They referred me to one of their specialist Asian women's community support workers. The worker supported me through the complicated and daunting legal system and helped me take measures to protect myself from my ex. I won full custody of my daughter in February.*

**Getting in touch with Refuge felt like a miracle! My support worker is still helping me cope with the emotional effects of the abuse but without the custody proceedings hanging over me I feel I can finally start to move on.**

**£75 could fund a local support group session for women from black, minority, ethnic backgrounds**

## News: Refuge uncovers evidence of endemic financial abuse

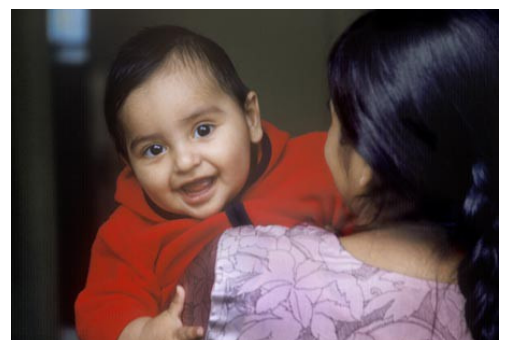
Last year, we conducted a **survey** of our service users in which 89% of respondents told us that economic abuse was a common part of their experience of domestic violence. **Financial abuse** includes controlling techniques like taking all of a woman's money, strictly limiting what she is allowed to spend, putting **debt in her name** and refusing her access to benefit entitlements. 41% of respondents identified this economic abuse as having a **negative impact on their emotional health**.

We are now calling on Government to recognise and address economic abuse within its work on equality, financial exclusion, child poverty and domestic violence, and to ensure that welfare benefits are fast-tracked for women who have experienced domestic violence. As part of this work, Refuge met with **Harriet Harman QC MP**, Minister for Women, in January to discuss policy developments in the domestic violence sector and to share with her our work on economic abuse.

As announced in our last newsletter, we have launched a **financial guide** containing practical advice for women on how to prepare financially to leave an abusive partner, how to access safe accommodation and how to take control of their finances in the long term. In doing so, it aims to increase women's awareness of the financial support available to them so that they can live their lives free from violence. '**You can afford to leave**', funded by **HBOS Foundation**, is available from our website: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk).

## Feedback: Campaign to save lives

In August last year we launched a campaign to help women recognise the **early warning signs of domestic violence**. Refuge secured nearly 400 pieces of media coverage for the launch, including national television news such as GMTV and BBC Breakfast. On launch day, visits to the website increased by 700%. We also received positive feedback from the public. One woman said "I think that a lot of women, especially young women (I was only 17 when I got involved with my ex, and 20 when he tried to kill me) tend to make the same mistake as I did, not realising the full danger of their situation until they are well and truly trapped. I think your advertising campaign is great - I really hope it raises more awareness about the techniques that abusive partners use to control their victims."



Photography by Julian Nieman



## Supporting Refuge into the future

Regular donations, of whatever amount, help us to plan our work into the future. We can confidently grow our services, reaching out to more women and their children, while ensuring we keep the promise we have made to those already accessing our support.

**£5 per month** over one year could pay for four sessions of counselling for a traumatised mother or child.

To set up a monthly gift, call **020 7395 7713** or visit: <https://www.edirectdebit.com/refuge/>

## Buy a new Avon empowerment necklace to help Refuge

We're delighted to let you know that beauty brand **Avon** has launched an exclusive **Empowerment Necklace** to raise vital funds for and awareness of domestic violence. They have chosen Refuge as the main beneficiary of funds raised from UK sales. Reese Witherspoon, global ambassador for the empowerment necklace, launched the fundraiser on International Women's Day.

The necklace is just **£3.00** and is **available now** from Avon catalogues and on the Avon website: [www.avonshop.co.uk](http://www.avonshop.co.uk). In 2008, Avon raised an incredible £100,000 for Refuge through sales of their empowerment bracelet. We hope that the necklace will prove another great success.

**Please buy a necklace and encourage family and friends to do the same!**  
**With your support, this will be a fantastic fundraiser for Refuge.**

## Thank you to all our supporters for your brilliant fundraising

On 6 March, the **City of London Corporation** held their third annual networking breakfast to celebrate International Women's Day and they chose Refuge as their beneficiary charity. The event was chaired by long term Refuge supporter Jo Brand and attended by over 360 women and men from across the capital. Thank you to all involved and to all corporate sponsors for raising £20,000 for Refuge.

Thanks to **PC Mel Sefton** for organising a five hour sponsored training session at Nuffield Health Club in Farnham, Surrey. Thirty-five people took part in the event in January, raising over £600.

Refuge has been England Netball's charity partner since 2006. On 12 December, **Ryland Netball Club** held a Christmas ball and raised £300 for Refuge. They presented the cheque to England Netball's Chief Executive Paul Clark at an international test match in February.

**Simone Harvey** held a sponsored spar at Miguels gym in South London on 8 March. Twenty ladies took part and there was a raffle on the day. Simone and her team raised nearly £3,000.

Thanks to students at **St Andrew's University** who have chosen Refuge as one of their charities for the 2008/2009 academic year. So far, they have raised over £1,000 through various activities, including a sponsored skydive on 7 and 8 March.

Thank you to all our champion companies, organisations and individuals who supported our **2008 Christmas Present Appeal**. Thanks to their generous contributions, every woman and child in our refuges received gifts. For a full list of donors, please visit our website.



## Rebuilding lives:

### Psychological support for children

**Where funding allows, Refuge provides specialist psychological support for children:**

*Peter, aged three, arrived at Refuge with his mother eight months ago. Peter had witnessed the abuse his mother had suffered at the hands of his father. When Peter first arrived at refuge, he barely ever spoke or smiled.*

*He experienced problems when trying to relate to other children – often pushing and hitting them as a way to connect with them. His behaviour was erratic, one minute aggressive, the next he'd be standing still on his own.*

*Following help from a Refuge psychologist, Peter is becoming an outgoing child. He smiles and greets staff when they arrive in the morning and he has made new friends. Some of the most rewarding moments have been to see him comfort his mother or other children when they cry – instead of hitting or ignoring them he shows concern by hugging them and fetching a tissue.*

## Don't ignore domestic violence: run for Refuge

**British 10k London Run**, Sunday 12 July.

Runners follow a fantastic central London course taking in Trafalgar Square, St Paul's and the Houses of Parliament, finishing in spectacular style on Whitehall.

**adidas Women's 5k Challenge**, Sunday 6 September.

This is the UK's largest women-only fun run and a great event for women of all ages and fitness levels.

Sign up at [www.womenschallenge.co.uk](http://www.womenschallenge.co.uk) and select Refuge from the drop down list of charities.

**Run to the Beat Half Marathon**, Sunday 27 September.

This unique event sees runners pounding the leafy streets of London's historic Greenwich area to the sounds of over thirty live bands.

To join our running team or for more information, call **020 7395 7724** or email [fundraising@refuge.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@refuge.org.uk).

**If you're taking part in a local run and would like to use your place to support Refuge, please get in touch so we can support you all the way!**

**Refuge relies on your donations and fundraising activity to keep many of its life-saving and life changing services going.**

**To set up a regular gift or to make a donation, please visit [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk) or call 020 7395 7713.**

**Alternatively, you can send your donation to the address below. Please quote reference N109.**



For women and children.  
Against domestic violence.

Registered charity number 277424

Refuge, Freepost RRKT-RRRR-TRGE, International House, 1 St Katharine's Way,  
London E1W 1UN *Please use a stamp if you would like to save Refuge the cost of the postage*

[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

Fundraising team: 020 7395 7724 or [fundraising@refuge.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@refuge.org.uk)

Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: **0808 2000 247**

Run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge

**When you have finished with this newsletter, please pass it on to a friend so they can find out about Refuge!**