



Welcome to the first edition of our Stepping Stones Luton newsletter! Twice a year we will keep you up to date with the latest developments in our charity and share news about our work and the women and children we support.

A Brief History

Stepping Stones was set up in 2008 to work with women affected by substance misuse and who are vulnerable due to abuse. The women who walk through our door can have incredibly complex needs; many are socially isolated within their communities and living in poverty.

Recognising that many of these women are mothers too, we quickly established our childcare support; providing not just care for under 5s but parenting advice, home cooked meals and help to understand the impact of a difficult home life on a child's development.



Our Work

Our services are shaped by experience and listening to the women we help. Our support is constantly evolving but includes:

- ◆ 1:1 support with a key worker both in a crisis and ongoing
- ◆ Advocacy with professionals including court, police and social services
- ◆ Weekly Group work courses including Positive Parenting, Freedom and Own My Life domestic abuse programmes, Beyond Trauma and Anger
- ◆ Free childcare (Ofsted rating - good) including a hot meal
- ◆ Counselling - 12 sessions delivered by supervised trainee counsellors
- ◆ Access to donated clothing and food (through Tesco)
- ◆ Legal advice clinic with a volunteer solicitor
- ◆ Informal monthly coffee, cake and chat drop-ins
- ◆ Specialist Education, Training and Employment support

"There's always someone to help you - it's been magical. I probably wouldn't be here now without you guys"

Service user- 2020



Our impact 2020-21

2020 was challenging for everyone; not least the women and children we help. In our latest Impact Report, we give an overview of how we adapted delivery during the Covid lockdowns and provided support that was so needed.

85% of the women we supported had experienced domestic abuse and 54% had mental health support needs (a significant rise from the previous year).

You can read more about our achievements by looking at our Impact & Accounts page on our website.

Our Covid response

2020-21 was one of our most challenging years!! With the temporary closure of our Luton office, our Practitioners quickly adapted to providing support to women over the phone and online. Some of our team even worked from their cars as their only quiet space away from where they could make their support calls. We are so proud and appreciative of their commitment over these past 15 months.

We supported women for longer as their needs and vulnerabilities became more acute, and their growing isolation led to a rise in poor mental health. At the same time, statutory services became more difficult to access so our range of support widened.

For our childcare team, things were harder as we had to close our doors and they missed the children. However, they did produce a whole library of videos and clips of from cooking to arts and crafts to stories and planting.

The local community was amazing in their support! Food, clothing, toys, gifts and toiletries were all donated throughout the year and these were delivered directly to homes by our team.

We are now emerging from another lockdown and delighted that our childcare service is back up and running and there are some face to face appointments taking place. We can't

wait to be back to normal and will gradually reopen as safely as possible.

A Day in the Life of a Stepping Stones' Practitioner

Our Practitioners work tirelessly to help the women they support safe. They are at the frontline and help resolve incredibly difficult personal situations - in many cases involving challenge to local services to get the best possible outcomes for women.

[Click here to read what a typical working day can look and feel like.](#)

Plans for the year ahead

Unsurprisingly, our main plan is to have a full team providing support from our Luton hub but we also hope to have exciting developments to broaden the service. These include:

- introducing a new peer mentoring programme for women with complex needs
- rolling out our mental health programme "Serenity" - to help women manage low level anxiety and stress
- a bespoke parenting programme for survivors of abuse
- delivery of the new community based services for women for the Probation Service in Luton.

Our Call for help!

One of the biggest challenges we face this year is reaching our funding target. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, many of our planned fundraising events including our Ball never went ahead. If you are able to help or wish to donate to support our increasingly needed service, please [click here](#).



Stepping Stones (Luton) is a charitable company limited by guarantee
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