

Press release

10 December 2014

The Surrey Women's Gift Appeal to support local domestic abuse charities

A Christmas gift appeal in support of local women affected by domestic abuse has been launched in time for Christmas by mums from Warlingham Park School, for the second year running.

Running right through the Christmas period, the Surrey Gift Appeal is looking for donations of toiletries, cosmetics, small luxury items such as chocolates, and other gift items. Once collected, they will be wrapped and delivered in time for Christmas to the Reigate and Banstead's Women's Aid refuge and ESDAS (East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services). Late donations can also be made right up to the 6th January as a further drop off will be arranged.

Class four mum, Sara Willcocks, who jointly runs the appeal, said: "Many women living in fear of domestic violence and abuse, suffer in silence and aren't able to reach out. Christmas can be an especially difficult time. The Christmas Gift Appeal is our way of letting them know that people care, and making sure they get a little treat at Christmas too.

"We're looking for donations from the wider East Surrey community. The items we're collecting need to be new, but they might be things that they already have, or they could just add a small item to their weekly shop. It could be one item, or a whole gift bag or box full. Either way, they will all be gratefully received."

Charlotte, the Reigate and Banstead refuge manager, said: "As a small charity we really rely on the support from the local community. All of the families that live in the refuge have fled their homes, leaving behind all of their possessions. Anything that is donated goes straight to the families, who are incredibly grateful for your generosity."

One in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime – many of these on a number of occasions. On average, **two women a week** are killed by a current or former male partner.

Domestic abuse is not just physical; it can be emotional/psychological, sexual, financial, harassment, threats and verbal. It is under reported and may be trivialised by both those perpetrating the abuse and those experiencing it. It's rarely a one-off event, but tends to escalate in frequency and severity over time.

The Reigate and Banstead Women's Aid refuge is home to up to nine families who have escaped abusive situations. Local independent charity ESDAS provides specialist confidential support and advice to anyone affected by domestic abuse living or working in the borough of Reigate & Banstead and the Districts of Tandridge and Mole Valley.

Donation alert:

New toiletries, cosmetics, luxury items, chocolates and gifts for the Surrey Women's Gift Appeal, can be donated between 9am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday, up to the 19th December. The drop points are: Elite Garages on the corner of Essendene Road, Caterham on the Hill; Amano Deli and Cafe, Limpsfield Road, Warlingham; and the Surrey Mirror offices, 1-3 Queensway, Redhill. Please note: confectionary should be within at least one month from its sell by date.

For further information, or to get involved, please call Sara on 07976 941585 or Janet on 07970 407444. You can also follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/surreygiftappeal

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About Reigate and Banstead's Women's Aid

Reigate and Banstead Women's Aid is a refuge for women and their dependent children who are fleeing domestic abuse. The charity provides access to temporary refuge in safe accommodation where service users can find protection from threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional). It also offers skilled practical help, advice and emotional support to enable service users to return to independent living, including a resettlement service and services for children.

The charity has a group home for seven women and their dependent children, and a move-on house for two women and their children. In these houses, women and children have their own bedroom, but all other facilities are shared. On average they support 35 women and 50 children per year.

About ESDAS:

East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (**ESDAS**) is an **independent** local charity, offering specialist confidential support and advice to anyone affected by domestic abuse living or working in the borough of Reigate & Banstead and the Districts of Tandridge and Mole Valley.

ESDAS run a **confidential** helpline open Monday – Friday between 9am and 4pm. We also offer face-to-face support, where it is safe and appropriate. We provide advice and information on a range of issues including housing, dealing with harassment, benefits, children/child contact and criminal/civil law (including injunctions and divorce).

Anyone experiencing domestic abuse should call our helpline number in **confidence** on **01737 771350**, or take a look at our website for information on support www.esdas.org.uk. Confidential answer phone outside of opening hours.

Suggested gift items:

- Make-up (please ensure all hygienic seals are in place)
- Nail varnish
- Manicure items
- Hand cream
- Face cream
- Deodorant sprays
- Hair gel/hair spray
- Hair brush
- Body scrub/face scrub
- Bath salts/ shower gel
- Box/ bar of luxury chocolate(s).

Note: please ensure that any perishable goods are within one month of sell-by date.