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ÁREA TEMÁTICA: "Família e Género"

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Looking into women's experiences in refuges: developing a model for outcome evaluation in women's refuges

(Fazer a diferença nas vidas de mulheres vítimas de violência doméstica: Um modelo de avaliação de resultados nas casas abrigo)

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### Resumo

A existência de um crescimento significativo das respostas de acolhimento temporário para mulheres vítimas de violência doméstica, tanto em Portugal como na Europa, num contexto de diversidade institucional, tem suscitado uma preocupação crescente com o impacto dessa intervenção nas respectivas utentes.

A presente comunicação apresenta os principais resultados de um projecto transnacional, - Refuges' Evaluation Modelling (R.E.M.) – desenvolvido no âmbito da iniciativa comunitária DAPHNE, cujo principal objectivo foi o desenvolvimento de um modelo que permitisse avaliar os resultados do trabalho de intervenção desenvolvido com as mulheres nas casas abrigo, em três países europeus: Portugal, Irlanda e Escócia.

Serão apresentadas as diferentes fases de desenvolvimento do modelo - desde a definição dos princípios orientadores de construção do modelo até à sua implementação experimental nos três países e respectiva validação.

Finalmente, será discutido o potencial de disseminação do modelo e as perspectivas que se colocam ao seu desenvolvimento futuro, quer a nível nacional quer europeu.

Palavras-chave: violência doméstica; casas-abrigo; modelo de avaliação





## 1. Why developing an outcome evaluation model for refuges?

The decision to develop an outcome evaluation model for women's refuges resulted from a number of factors. First, in 2004, the three partner countries (along with Denmark, France and Slovenia) were involved in a first Daphne Project – Shelters@net – which aimed at promoting, sharing and disseminating knowledge and experiences regarding refuge intervention practices among the different countries in the project<sup>1</sup>. Although outcome evaluation was not an intended focus of that project, it emerged as an important unmet need across the six countries. None of the countries participating in the project was engaged in systematically evaluating the work of refuges, largely because of a lack of resources and expertise.

Another factor driving the need for outcome evaluation of refuges in some European countries has been the increasing demand by funders for evidence that services are making a difference in the lives of women and children who use the refuges.

The final driving force for creating an outcome evaluation model for women's refuges came from the desire from refuges themselves to understand the impact of their work on women and children. Refuges have been in existence across many European countries for 25 years or more, and refuge workers felt a need to examine what was working and what might need to be improved.

Outcome evaluation assesses change that occurs as a direct result of the programme. Specifically, an outcome is a change in clients' knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviour, expectations, emotional status, or life circumstances *due to the service being provided to them*. Outcomes must be specific, measurable, and directly tied to programme activities.

The need for outcome evaluation in the area of domestic violence services has been recognized internationally. One of the 15 recommendations issued by the World Health Organisation's report "*Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*" (WHO, 2005) is that:-

*"Research aimed at informing the design and delivery of interventions where these do not exist needs to be accompanied by evaluation research on the short and long term effects of programmes to prevent and respond to partner violence (...)"* (WHO, 2005:97).

Significant work has been done in the United States since the late 1990s to evaluate the impact of domestic violence programmes. As federal funding for U.S. programmes has increased, so has the scrutiny of such programmes by funders. In response to this external pressure, a number of tools, manuals and workshops were developed in the U.S. for domestic violence service programmes (e.g., Lyon & Sullivan, 2007; Riger et al., 2002; Sullivan, 1998, 2007; Sullivan & Coats, 2000).

Although the extensive work that has been done in the U.S. was seen as a useful starting point in creating an outcome evaluation model for Europe, the model designed is specific to the European context.

## 2. The Shared Principles Underlying the Work

The diversity of expertise and working practices within the partners' organisations, combined with the different social contexts in the three countries, led to the establishment of shared principles that underpinned our field work and helped us to make the most of our expertise.

Three main principles, therefore, informed and guided our work, interactions, direction and, ultimately, the outputs of the project:

- To work from a strengths-based approach when considering women who had experienced domestic violence;
- Women's experience is central to the development of services, but is often not translated into research;
- The experiential knowledge of women and workers is a vital source of knowledge for the project.



These three principles informed and guided the choice of working tools, which were designed to capture the experiential knowledge of women and workers. Thus, a variety of research methods was used: self-administered questionnaires, focus groups, extensive exploratory interviews and advisory groups.

### **3. Developing the model**

The development of the outcome evaluation model occurred in five phases:

1. An initial analysis of outcome evaluation needs and concerns by country;
2. Construction of outcome indicators;
3. Initial creation of a model of outcome evaluation;
4. Implementation of the pilot study;
5. Adaptation of the model based on pilot study findings.

#### **3.1. Initial Analysis**

The first phase of the process was the independent development of a country-focused analysis of issues directly relevant to outcome evaluation, including:

1. legal and policy dispositions affecting evaluation procedures in refuges;
2. refuges' organisational profiles and capacity for participating in outcome evaluation;
3. refuge staff's expectation of outcomes of their work;
4. anticipated obstacles, benefits and challenges that may arise from implementing outcome evaluation procedures.

#### **3.2. Construction of Outcome Indicators**

The outcome indicators were built from a strengths-based perspective that appreciated and highlighted the strategies and resistances women have when they come to refuge. Safety, information and empowerment were the three major outcomes identified in the three countries; it was agreed that they were the most relevant, and they informed the building up of the tools.

The process that led to the identification of the three major outcome factors involved several key contributions: hearing directly from women themselves about their needs and experiences as service users; developing nation-specific structured questionnaires to identify key aims and objectives of refuges; discussing with refuge workers what they considered relevant outcomes; learning from team members' expertise, both as practitioners and researchers, about women's needs and expected outcomes; sharing and discussing prior research findings on similar processes for determining outcome indicators that were relevant to evaluating the effectiveness of refuges.

#### **3.3. Initial Creation of a Model of Outcome Evaluation**

After agreeing the outcome indicators, we chose a model for gathering information that would be simple, easy to use and easy to analyse. Our model entails pre and post-assessment of service provision by using two self-assessment questionnaires.

The two forms were designed to be used at different times: Form 1 would be used during the first week of the woman's stay in the refuge; and Form 2 would be administered when the woman was preparing to leave the refuge. The questionnaires were provided together with an individual envelope in order to ensure total confidentiality for the women's responses.

Form 1 was designed to enable us to learn more about what women felt they needed from refuge services. Form 2 focuses on actual changes experienced by women while in refuge. It was anticipated that women's



support needs might change after they had been in refuge for several weeks and had had a chance to deal with immediate concerns for themselves and their children - if any - and an opportunity to contemplate plans for their future.

### **3.4. Implementation of the Pilot Study**

The refuges were selected nationally according to common criteria: – a mix of rural/urban locations; a refuge's capacity to engage fully in the project; a commitment to participate; and a good geographical spread. A total of 15 refuges participated across the three countries.

The model was piloted in these refuges for 10 weeks. A training period took place just prior to the start of the pilot phase. The training sessions were designed to improve the workers' knowledge of the main objectives of outcome evaluation and to introduce them to the tools and implementation procedures.

An information pack was then distributed that contained forms 1 and 2, envelopes identifying the project, instructions on how to invite women to complete the questionnaires, a data collection checklist and large envelopes for returning the questionnaires.

By the end of the pilot stage, a total of 224 Forms (95 of Form 1 and 129 of Form 2) were returned. Refuges also gathered and returned information on the collection procedure, namely: the total number of women in refuge at the start of the pilot; number of admissions and discharges; and total number of women still in refuge at the end of the pilot. Reasons given by women for not wanting to fill in the forms were also collected as far as possible.

### **3.5. Adaptation Of The Model Based On Pilot Study Findings**

The information collected through the forms was analysed by the national teams. This analysis had a dual objective: to check the consistency and validity of the data; and to enable us to ascertain how the information collected could be used to provide feedback to the pilot groups so that they could check how useful it was for their work. Although the results *per se* were not considered important to this project, they were an essential way of validating the process.

The implementation process itself was scrutinised from a comparative perspective and relevant adaptations were agreed.

## **4. Lessons Learned**

In order to determine whether the pilot had been successfully implemented, we agreed on two major criteria that needed to be checked: 1) whether the forms worked; 2) whether the information gathered was useful and relevant for service development.

In order to assess whether these two criteria had been met, we resorted to different strategies: 1) weekly contacts with all the pilot refuges in order to check whether the implementation of the forms was being successful (willingness of women to participate, obstacles arisen, support needed); 2) focus group with the refuge workers immediately after the end of the pilot to assess implementation issues (effectiveness of the training, usefulness of the information pack, interaction with the women, impact on work and workers, impact on organisation); 3) analysis of the consistency and validity of the data in all countries; 4) a second focus group with the refuges in order to assess the usefulness of the information collected for service development.

The first important piece of evidence to emerge was that the model worked. General feedback from workers regarding the implementation process was very positive in the three countries. During the project's development, the organisations expressed some relevant evidence for assessing how well the model worked:

- Instructions were clear and good support was provided by the three national teams during the whole process;



- In general, women willingly agreed to participate in the process;
- Women and workers found the questionnaires easy to fill in;
- Workers gained a more in-depth understanding of women's needs and an extra opportunity to reflect upon their work;
- Organisations became more aware of areas where services can be improved;
- The refuges/organisations found the findings relevant to their work;
- The organisations clearly expressed a willingness and interest in engaging in such a process in the future.

## **5. Listening to women and gaining insights: evidence from data analysis**

The tools developed (Form 1 and Form 2) allowed us to collect a range of potentially useful information for the development of refuge services.

We will now briefly present some of the most relevant data obtained, which is based on a very small sample (224 forms completed) of refuges and service users across the three countries. Given the pilot nature of the project and the size of the sample, the data presented here should therefore not be generalized.

Thus, the aim of this presentation is to illustrate the type of information that the tools can capture and their potential for informing the practice of refuges and providing data about service effectiveness and needs.

Given the different purposes of the two forms, the presentation of the data will be mainly structured around the two tools, and presented globally for the three countries.

### **5.1. Learning more about women's needs**

Form 1 allowed us to identify what women need help and support with when they first enter refuge. This information can be particularly useful for determining how to develop support services that will meet the needs of women new to refuge.

A total of 95 forms were received from the three countries.

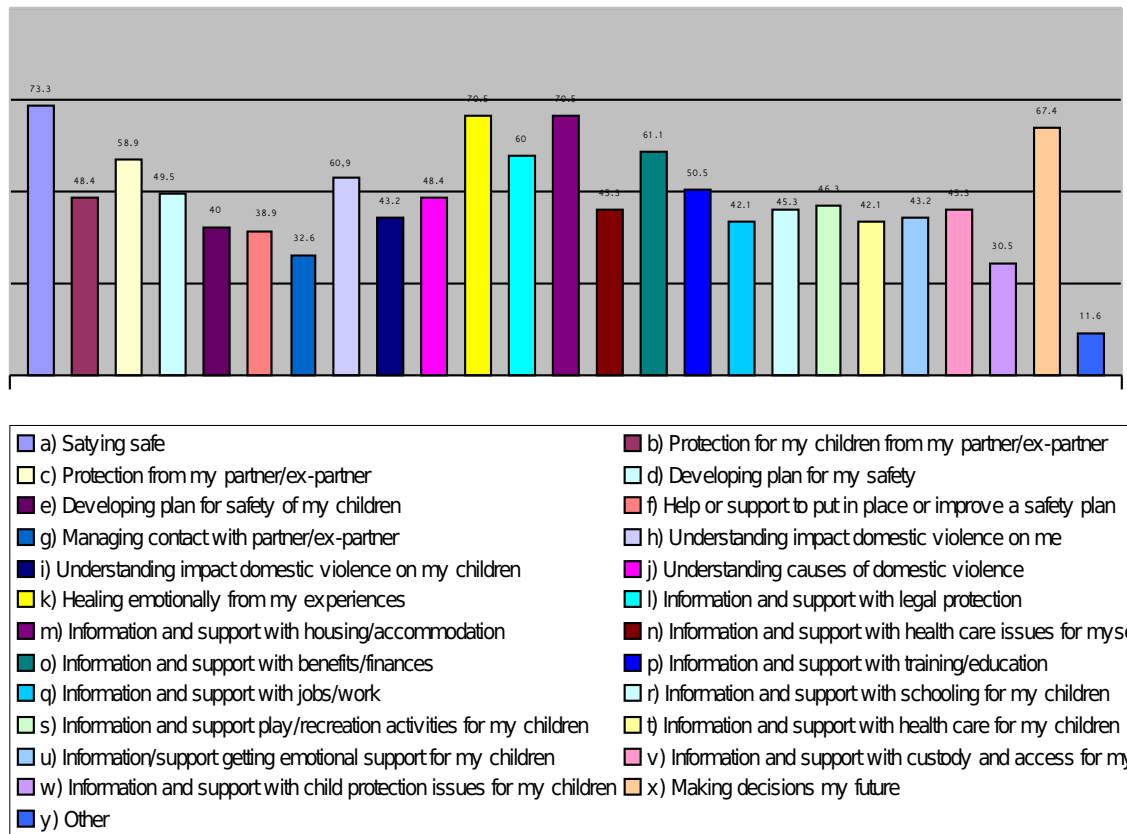


Figure 1. Help and support you may need while you are in refuge

Figure 1 presents a summary of the responses women gave when asked to identify the help and support they would need while in refuge. The three most picked options regarding help and support that women feel they need while in refuge are *Staying safe* (73.3%), *Healing emotionally from my experiences* and *Information and support with housing/accommodation* (70.5% each).

At the other end, the least picked options are *Information and support with child protection issues for my children* (30.5%) and *managing contact with my partner/ex-partner* (32.6%).

It is important to note that the options involving children must be read carefully since the questionnaire did not allow identifying whether women had children. Therefore, the low percentages obtained may be related to the fact that it was considered all women and not only those who are mothers. One of the recommendations made regarding the forms is precisely the introduction of a question on whether women had children or not, in order to obtain a more accurate picture of these specific needs

Section 2 of the form enabled to learn more about women’s knowledge and use of refuge services (previous as well as current use).

- More than one in three women (35.8%) found out about refuge through friends or relatives and less than one in four women found out through social work. Woman’s Aid groups were referred to by 13% of the respondents and the police by 10%. The least mentioned options were the helpline and the housing services: only two women found the refuge via either of these services.
- More than half the women (53%) responding to Form 1 were in refuge for the first time. The remaining group had used refuge at least once before. Among this group, almost half had been in refuge before one or two times, while three women reported having been in refuge 20 or more times.



In addition, it was possible to learn more about women's alternatives to going into refuge. Table 1 illustrates the range of responses women gave when asked what they would have done if they had not been able to come into refuge.

| Description                 | No. | %  |
|-----------------------------|-----|----|
| Stayed at home              | 16  | 17 |
| Stay with friends or family | 14  | 15 |
| Slept on streets            | 13  | 14 |
| Nowhere to Go               | 13  | 14 |
| Don't Know                  | 12  | 13 |
| Gone homeless               | 6   | 6  |
| Killed myself               | 5   | 5  |
| Other                       | 6   | 6  |

Table 1. Type of actions women would have done if they had not come to refuge

Coming to refuges was an important decision in women's lives. Asked **what they would have done if they had not been able to come into refuge**, sixteen women clearly stated that they would have stayed at home, fourteen would have gone to friends/family houses and thirteen would have slept on the streets. This latter situation might even be increased by the other thirteen women who clearly state that other than refuge they would have nowhere to go. Five women say they would have killed themselves.

A closer look at the data allows to perceive the impact of refuge accommodation as an alternative to an extreme situation: more than one in three women would have become homeless (homeless, slept on the streets, nowhere to go) if they had not been able to go to refuge.

Another interesting output from the data is that going into homelessness or sleeping on the streets is considered more often by women living in Ireland or Scotland, whereas "killed myself" is a situation referred to only by women living in Portugal. Cultural issues and the organisation of responses linked to homelessness services in the different countries would help explain these different types of answers.

## 5.2. Finding out about changes and interaction

A total of 129 Form 2s were received from the three partner countries. The women's responses are presented in table 2 and summarised below.





|   | WHO NEEDED |    | WHO RECEIVED |    |                  |    |                  |    |
|---|------------|----|--------------|----|------------------|----|------------------|----|
|   |            |    | ALL THE HELP |    | SOME OF THE HELP |    | NONE OF THE HELP |    |
|   | No.        | %  | No.          | %  | No.              | %  | No.              | %  |
| Staying safe  | 119        | 92 | 105          | 88 | 14               | 12 | -                | -  |
| Protection for my children from my partner/ex-partner                   | 90         | 70 | 77           | 86 | 12               | 13 | 1                | 1  |
| Protection from my partner/ex-partner                                   | 107        | 83 | 91           | 85 | 16               | 15 | -                | -  |
| Developing a plan for my safety   | 105        | 81 | 74           | 70 | 26               | 25 | 5                | 5  |
| Developing a plan for the safety of my children                         | 91         | 71 | 67           | 74 | 19               | 21 | 5                | 5  |
| Help or support to put in place or improve a safety plan                | 102        | 79 | 74           | 73 | 23               | 23 | 5                | 5  |
| Managing contact with my partner/ex-partner                             | 71         | 55 | 43           | 61 | 17               | 24 | 11               | 15 |
| Understanding the impact of domestic abuse on me                        | 104        | 81 | 71           | 68 | 27               | 26 | 6                | 6  |
| Understanding the impact of domestic abuse on my children               | 94         | 73 | 60           | 81 | 25               | 27 | 9                | 10 |
| Understanding the causes of domestic abuse                              | 103        | 80 | 68           | 66 | 28               | 27 | 7                | 7  |
| Healing emotionally from my experiences                                 | 113        | 88 | 66           | 58 | 37               | 33 | 10               | 9  |
| Information and support with legal protection                           | 101        | 78 | 75           | 74 | 21               | 21 | 5                | 5  |
| Information and support with housing/accommodation                      | 112        | 87 | 84           | 75 | 19               | 17 | 9                | 8  |
| Information and support with health care issues for myself              | 112        | 87 | 76           | 68 | 31               | 28 | 5                | 5  |
| Information and support with benefits/finances                          | 101        | 67 | 73           | 72 | 21               | 21 | 7                | 7  |
| Information and support with training/education                         | 85         | 66 | 52           | 61 | 19               | 22 | 14               | 16 |
| Information and support with jobs/work                                  | 73         | 57 | 38           | 52 | 23               | 32 | 12               | 16 |
| Information and support with schooling for my children                  | 73         | 57 | 57           | 78 | 11               | 15 | 5                | 7  |
| Information and support with play/recreation activities for my children | 98         | 65 | 56           | 57 | 22               | 22 | 6                | 6  |
| Information and support with health care for my children                | 84         | 65 | 63           | 75 | 14               | 17 | 7                | 8  |
| Information and support getting emotional support for my children       | 69         | 54 | 39           | 57 | 22               | 32 | 8                | 12 |
| Information and support with custody and access for my children         | 76         | 59 | 48           | 63 | 19               | 25 | 9                | 12 |
| Information and support with child protection issues for my children    | 69         | 53 | 47           | 68 | 18               | 26 | 4                | 6  |
| Making decisions about my future  | 109        | 85 | 64           | 59 | 38               | 35 | 7                | 6  |

Table 2. Women needing help and support according to the kind of help and support received

Women leaving refuge or those who were still staying there by the end of the pilot evidence the same type of needs identified by those who filled in Form 1 at arrival: *staying safe* (92%), *healing emotionally* (88%) and *information and support with housing*. They also indicated they needed *information and support with legal protection* (78%).

Overall, the data shows a positive evaluation by women of the **help received** while in refuge: in all the areas considered, around 90% of the answers are concentrated on both “received all the help I needed” and “some of the help I needed”. The option “I received none of the help I needed” is referred to significantly less.

However, more in-depth analysis of women’s responses enabled to examine the different ways women responded to individual areas of need identified. *Staying safe* is the area where more women said they got



all the help they needed, and no one said they got none of the help needed. Similar results are obtained regarding *protection from my partner/ex-partner*.

At the other end, *Information and support with training/education*, *Information and support with jobs/work* and *Managing contact with my partner/ex-partner* were the three domains where there are more negative answers.

A closer look at two items - *Healing emotionally from my experiences* and *making decisions about my future* - highlights interesting findings. The first item was the second most referred to in terms of help needed. More than half the women (58%) indicate they got all the help they needed and 9% say they did not get any help. The second item is also at the top end of the “needs list”, and, again, around 60% of the women got all the help needed, 35% got some of the help and seven women got none of the help needed.

Women’s words in the comments box give a qualitative insight into the figures above:

*“I do think women's refuges provide all true support you need. I certainly have become a stronger woman.”*

*“I think you have made my life happier (Child). I agree (mum).”*

This information can be used by refuge service providers to monitor how well they are meeting women’s needs.

Form 2 tried to identify **actual changes** women experienced as a result of the help and support received while in refuge. Overall, positive changes were experienced in all areas and the percentage of “no changes experienced” answers is very low across all the items. Table 3 summarises the information obtained.



|  | CHANGES EXPERIENCED            |       |    |      |    |      |    |
|--|--------------------------------|-------|----|------|----|------|----|
|  | TO WHOM<br>IT APPLIED<br>(No.) | A LOT |    | SOME |    | NONE |    |
|  |                                | No.   | %  | No.  | %  | No.  | %  |
| I am safer.  | 121                            | 103   | 85 | 17   | 14 | 1    | 1  |
| I am more protected from my partner/ex-partner's abuse.                      | 113                            | 92    | 81 | 17   | 15 | 4    | 4  |
| My children are more protected from my partner/ex-partner's abuse.           | 89                             | 73    | 82 | 13   | 15 | 3    | 3  |
| I am better able to manage contact with my partner/ex-partner.               | 80                             | 50    | 63 | 17   | 21 | 13   | 16 |
| I am more confident about making decisions.                                  | 119                            | 73    | 61 | 40   | 34 | 6    | 5  |
| I am better able to get what I need for myself                               | 121                            | 82    | 68 | 35   | 29 | 4    | 3  |
| I am more able to get what I need for my children                            | 96                             | 73    | 76 | 21   | 22 | 2    | 2  |
| I have more information that will help me                                    | 122                            | 76    | 62 | 40   | 33 | 6    | 5  |
| I have more ways to keep myself safer  | 116                            | 77    | 66 | 34   | 30 | 5    | 4  |
| I have more ways to keep my children safer                                   | 97                             | 69    | 71 | 23   | 24 | 5    | 5  |
| I understand more about the causes of domestic abuse                         | 114                            | 74    | 65 | 33   | 29 | 7    | 6  |
| I understand more about how domestic abuse affects me                        | 118                            | 79    | 67 | 30   | 25 | 9    | 8  |
| I understand more about how domestic abuse affects my children               | 100                            | 66    | 66 | 26   | 26 | 8    | 8  |
| I am better able to deal/handle/cope with the impact of domestic abuse on me | 119                            | 73    | 61 | 38   | 32 | 8    | 7  |

Table 3. Women experiencing change according to the extent of change

Refuges do have an important positive impact on the safety and protection of women. More than four in every five women (85%) felt a lot safer and 81% felt much more protected from the abuser. Less positive are those changes related to *managing contact with my partner/ex-partner or handling/ coping with the impact of domestic abuse on me*, or even *understanding more about domestic abuse causes and effects*.



The actual impact of some of those changes is best captured by women's own words. Once again, the box comments open up that possibility:

*"Being so far away from the place of abuse I can see more clearly how it affected us all as a family. I feel so much more able to cope as a mother now."*

*"Now I could put a name to what I went through for 2.5 years."*

Interaction between women and workers within refuge is another important dimension in evaluating how services are or are not working for women and their children. The following paragraphs provide an illustrative insight into the data collected on this issue.

Overall, women evaluate positively the interaction established with the workers during their stay in refuge: over 80% of the women felt the workers supported them a lot, listened to them a lot and respected their privacy a lot.

Less positive is the evaluation made around issues such as "respecting my decision, in terms of my relationship with my partner/ex-partner", and respecting women, in terms of additional support needs, sexual orientation and religious beliefs. The issue of "time" is also significant; when questioned about whether workers spent enough time with them, more women (20.9%) answered "somewhat" compared with the other items.

Women's comments on the quality of interactions are particularly enlightening about the overall results:

*"Every worker I have met has been so caring and helpful. Both with practical and emotional support. Nothing has been a bother to them."*

*"I feel very fortunate to have the support worker that I have. She has been excellent support to me, in every situation that I have had to deal with. Thank you."*

*"I felt the workers didn't listen to me or the others as much as they could have due to a heavy workload, due to meetings and their SVQ's<sup>ii</sup>."*

Social work services, and friends and relatives are the two major sources of information women refer to when asked about how they found out about refuge (23% each).

Woman's Aid groups and the police are each mentioned by 12% of the respondents. The least mentioned options are the housing services and adverts.

Two in five women responding to Form 2 had been in refuge before, but for the majority of the respondents (56%) it was their first stay in refuge. Among the former group, 40% had been in refuge one or two times before and the remaining 60% had used refuge services three or more times. Particularly striking is the fact that 3 women indicated that they had been in refuge 20 or more times before.

Similar to what was indicated previously regarding the "alternatives" women had, other than coming to refuge, the decision and the opportunity to come to refuge for this group of women was important in their lives. Around 30% of women responding to Form 2 would have remained at home, 16% say they do not know, and 11% would have gone to friends/family houses. One in every four women would have become homeless (gone homeless, slept on the streets or nowhere to go).

The comments and ideas voiced by women should be an important input for refuges and staff when critically examining what might be improved. The suggestions made by women are either directly related to the refuge or offer a wider perspective. Overall, they can be clustered into 6 categories: no improvements needed; emotional support; physical conditions; working staff; state support; and other.



## 6. How to use the information gathered?

The overview presented above was merely illustrative of the potentialities of the data collected through the evaluation tools that were developed. However, the nature of the results can already give interesting insights into the usefulness of engaging in this process.

Information on the women's needs and on the way they were responded to can inform the practice of local refuges and enhance a systematic evaluation of both the services provided inside the refuge and the services provided by the larger community. Inter-agency working on specific areas can be improved on the basis of this information.

The "alternatives" to refuge can be a powerful element in raising awareness among local and national authorities about why services exist and what would be the actual human costs of not investing in this type of response. The same point applies to the strength behind some of the comments voiced by women in the questionnaires. Funding issues are necessarily linked to this, and the information collected may be used to justify and reinforce funding.

Understanding what changes actually occurred and where women feel the main gaps are across the different dimensions will also feed internal discussion within refuges and women's organisations and discussion between them and other actors in the community.

At the present moment, the three partner countries have already engaged in different initiatives in order to make the best out of the information collected through the pilot.

In Portugal, the results of the Portuguese analysis have been discussed with all the refuges involved, and then presented and discussed individually with each refuge. In addition, the national body responsible for most of the funding of refuges in Portugal has engaged in promoting a series of workshops with refuge organisations to debate the importance of doing outcome evaluation and to gain a better understanding of the capacity of organisations to engage in it.

Scotland produced an individual report for each pilot group and these were circulated and discussed at the final focus group. The pilot groups recommended that Scottish Womens' Aid investigate the feasibility of rolling out the pilot to all members and providing training and/or producing a guide on implementing the process and on data input and analysis. A further suggestion was that groups provide an annual return of their analyses to SWA to produce a national report.

Ireland gave feedback to all the refuges who participated in the pilot project. They are preparing a detailed report on the pilot phase and the lessons learned. The NNWRSS is formulating plans to roll out the model to all refuges in Ireland in 2008. They also plan to adapt the model for use in DV Support Services and to pilot the application of this model in 2008. This will then be rolled out to all Support Services in 2009.

## 7. Discussing future Perspectives

The REM Project created a model for evaluating the effectiveness of refuges in the European Union in order to respond to an important unmet need identified in several European countries<sup>iii</sup>.

This section presents some recommendations for the next steps that we believe are needed to improve refuge services across Europe.

One important lesson to retain from this project is that European countries are at different stages regarding the demand for outcome evaluation, and the capacity of organisations to engage in evaluation and funders to understand its actual relevance. Thus, some countries are already very motivated to engage in outcome evaluation and will be extremely interested in seeing this model (e.g. Denmark), while others may not yet be thinking about outcome evaluation (e.g. Slovenia).

The following recommendations should therefore be read in the light of this diversity, and any further developments in this area will have to deal with it:



## Development

- Create a European Reference Group to develop the model and the support materials further;
- Develop a larger pilot in additional countries to examine similarities and differences, and test the tool's potential for generalisation;
- Create and pilot a model of outcome evaluation of other domestic violence support services;
- Map different levels of organisational capacity to engage in outcome evaluation in order to adapt dissemination/development strategies.

## Dissemination

- Produce a brief paper targeted at EU refugees to alert them to the increasing pressure for outcome evaluation, encourage them to see the value of evaluation, and inform them about the process, the model developed and contacts for further information;

## Training

- Create a training manual and resource pack to be shared with other countries, including tools and recommendations for collecting, analysing and using the data (in different languages);
- Create a Train the Trainers training package to be delivered to different countries;
- Validate the training and the manual in the three REM countries and in other European countries;
- Develop a dissemination strategy in different stages: 1) targeting neighbouring countries (e.g. Wales, England, Northern Ireland and Spain); 2) targeting particular regions (e.g. Scandinavian countries). Focusing on “blocks” of countries could make things easier in terms of communication, transportation, similar challenges/issues, and bridging into bordering countries.

These recommendations stem directly from the Project's development, as necessary and useful steps for responding to the growing need among refugee workers to critically examine the impact of their work on women and children.

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<sup>i</sup> Comprehensive information on the Project and its outputs is available at <http://www.shelters-net.com/>

<sup>ii</sup> SVQ means Scottish Vocational Qualification.

<sup>iii</sup> See Shelters@net project results available at <http://www.shelters-net.com/>