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You don't deserve this

Irka Omoboni-Soulat, who has worked for Shine, helping victims of domestic violence, for 11 years, reckons women often reach a turning point when she connects with them.

For the first time, they feel they're being heard and believed, Ms Omoboni-Soulat says. Once they reach that point, they often need her expert knowledge and networks, and also simply her "fresh eyes".

"Sometimes women get stuck because they've come to see the abusive behaviour as normal," she says. "They often think they're going crazy - they've been told that so many times, and their partners are experts at mind games.

"We can be their reality check and say, 'You are not crazy, that is not normal, you don't deserve this'."

Once women stop accepting the abuse they are often at greater risk, she says. Their partner might carry out his threats to try to stop them leaving.

"At that point, we can help her understand the system - for example, how a protection order works. We also know the right people, such as good lawyers, who can come to her home if she doesn't have transport or childcare.

"We have advocates based with police, at Child Youth and Family offices and at



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National Women's Hospital who can also help to connect the dots."

■ For information about Shine go to: 2shine.org.nz