

**REPORT TO SOUTH WEST GLASGOW
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FORUM (SWGDFV)**

**AGENCY REPOSSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND
WOMEN'S SERVICE NEEDS IN GREATER GOVAN**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**MAURA GALLACHER
ISLA LAING
ANN ROSENGARD**

ISLA LAING ASSOCIATES

January 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This study was commissioned by the South West Glasgow Domestic Violence Forum (SWGDFV), a multi agency body covering the Greater Govan and Greater Pollok areas of Glasgow.

1.2 Many women and children live with the threat of male violence that affects their physical and emotional well being. One out of 5 of all women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives while it is estimated that 100,000 children and young people may live with domestic abuse in Scotland¹. Male violence against women also takes many other forms, including rape and sexual assault. Sexual violence against children and female prostitution are other examples.

1.3 In recent years male violence against women and the need for coherent service responses has moved up the political agenda. The United Nations defined male violence against women as a human rights issue in 1993. A National Group to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland has produced a National Strategy covering the period 2000-2003.

1.4 Reflecting initiatives at Scottish level, developments in Glasgow have aimed to improve both strategic responses and service provision. A key development was the establishment in May 2000 of the Glasgow Violence against Women Partnership (GVAWP) - formerly the Glasgow Multi Agency Partnership on Violence against Women - with a remit to develop a strategic, co-ordinated response to violence against women across the city. The city-wide partnership has now been supplemented by 8 local forums, including the South West Forum.

¹ Scottish Executive 2000: Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse

2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

2.1 Research objectives were to:

- map all relevant services available to women and their children (if any) in Greater Govan who have been affected by male violence against women
- provide baseline information on current agency responses to assess the accessibility and appropriateness of services for women
- investigate the links between services and their impact on services to women
- define the strengths and weaknesses and gaps in these responses
- record perceived gaps in agency responses and any perceived structural or attitudinal barriers to addressing these.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The research involved a literature review, interviews with women from Greater Govan who have experienced male violence, a questionnaire-based survey and interviews with service providers.

Response Rates

3.2 There were uneven responses to these different methods. Overall, 16 women were interviewed of whom 8 were from ethnic minority backgrounds. However agencies were unable to identify sufficient interviewees to achieve the intended research sample of 30 service users. While there was positive participation in the agency interview programme, there was a disappointing rate of response to the 84 agency questionnaires distributed (36 or 43% were returned, of which 11 were from Greater Govan based services). Two agency focus groups were held, although a planned strategic-level focus group was cancelled, due to lack of participation. Overall

however, the research generated clear findings.

4 KEY FINDINGS

Seeking help and service responses

4.1 Women sought help from a variety of sources including the Police, GPs, Social Work Services, local authority housing services and local community based organisations. Some reported encountering difficulties in seeking and obtaining help and these reflected perceived stigma, concerns about outcomes and a lack of relevant local services. Service providers also reported that they lacked knowledge of other services' specific remits. They therefore lacked confidence in their ability to refer women on for appropriate help.

4.2 Women's views varied on whether and how far they found particular service responses to be helpful. The general picture reported was one of unevenness in the helpfulness of responses by different services and by the personnel within them.

4.3 Both women and service providers reported blocks to accessing appropriate services, whether because of long waiting lists or restricted service options. Waiting lists were starkly evident for counselling services, with waits of at least 3 months reported in some instances. Service providers further identified limited opening times of some services as a barrier to accessing services.

4.4 Women who had received support for their children through being in refuge, particularly welcomed this help.

4.5 Both the interview programme and the baseline information identified that:

- A range of services in the area provide relevant responses. These may reflect statutory obligations (the Police and

City Housing), a pro-active strategy (Greater Govan Victim Support), part of a wider role (e.g. advice services; health services; work with pre 5 children; or with ethnic communities).

- Most specialist services for women have a city-wide remit. Some are city centre based, while others are located in local communities.
- Other service providers with some remit to respond to the needs of women who have experienced male violence, cover Greater Govan plus other areas, generally on the south side of the city. Some have access criteria that may exclude women who have experienced male violence - as for a service that required an alleged crime had to be reported.
- Overall there is a clear lack of specialist, clearly profiled local services for women who have experienced male violence, within the Greater Govan area.

Service gaps and deficits

4.6 Gaps identified were as follows:

- Both women and service providers identified a need for a women's only resource or 'drop in' centre within Greater Govan.
- Women highlighted a lack of services responding to the needs of children affected by their mother's experience of abuse, including children who are now adults. This was mirrored in professionals' views.
- Agencies' responses highlighted the extent to which Women's Aid refuges were unable to meet demand, as well as a wider lack of choice in respect of women's housing options.

- Just under a third of respondents operated waiting lists, with the lengthiest being to access counselling.

4.7 Service providers additionally identified gaps in services for women with particular needs including:

- Women from ethnic minorities, both because of cultural differences and problems in accessing translators.
- Women who have physical disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health problems, addictions, or multiple or complex needs.

4.8 More positively, in respect of physical access issues, most agency respondents reported their services offer wheelchair access and private interview space. However, the provision of childplay/childcare facilities was underdeveloped, with just over a third of respondents providing this.

Information and training

4.9 Service providers indicated a desire for more information, including a directory of services accessible to women from Greater Govan, and ongoing information sharing and networking.

Joint work

4.10 Most agency interviewees reported that they engaged with operational, rather than with strategic joint working. Ten (20%) were members of the SWGDVF. They reported improvements in networking and information sharing as a result of membership.

4.11 A quarter of agency respondents participated in multi agency working groups, including the GVAWP, the Routes Out of Prostitution SIP and the Voluntary Sector Standing Group on Violence against Women. Agencies reported

continuing constraints on the effectiveness of joint working, with organisational cultures being identified as the most common constraint.

Strategic planning

4.12 Beyond the work of the SWGDVF, the research detected little evidence that service provision for women who have experienced male violence in Greater Govan is a current strategic planning priority, either for local services or for strategic bodies, such as the SIP.

Monitoring information held

4.13 Few services were able to supply monitoring information on the demand for and use of their service. Only one service appeared to collect information on both the number of women service users who had experienced male violence and their original area of residence.

5 KEY ACTION POINTS

5.1 Some key action points and potential organisational roles in driving implementation are identified below.

Addressing service gaps in the Greater Govan area

5.2 The SWGDVF has a key role to play in ensuring appropriate service responses are placed high on the agendas of relevant organisations in the area. These include, the Greater Govan SIP, NHS services including the South West Glasgow Local Health Care Co-operative and Glasgow City Council Social Work.

5.3 The SWGDVF should investigate the desirability and feasibility (including resource availability) of locally based services developing targeted support, including for women with particular needs, such as those from ethnic minorities.

5.4 The preferences expressed for a locally based 'women only' resource should be considered, and its feasibility examined. A city-wide organisation such as the GVAWP should commission a review of the effectiveness of such centres across the city in responding to the needs of women who have experienced male violence. A working group in Greater Govan, convened by the SWGDVF could, in parallel, explore the appropriateness and feasibility of a local woman only service.

5.5 Consideration should be given to establishing peer support resources in Greater Govan. This could be led by Social Work services with appropriate input from other organisations.

Addressing service gaps city-wide

5.6 Funders/potential funders of counselling services should review demand for and provision of such services both city-wide and in Greater Govan.

5.7 Planning partners on the GVAWP should review support services for the children of women who have been abused, including those who are now adults.

5.8 Accommodation options for women must be optimised, particularly given the imminent transfer of council housing. Glasgow City Council and Housing Associations both have important and particular roles to play.

5.9 All services should investigate the barriers faced by women with particular needs in accessing services and develop appropriate service responses, both specialist and mainstream. While Glasgow Women's Aid's new barrier free refuge should help to meet the needs of women with physical disabilities, unmet needs for refuge persist, such as for women with active addictions.

5.10 All agencies should review the extent to which the services they provide are 'child friendly' and allow mothers peace and privacy when seeking help.

Information and training issues

5.11 The SWGDVF should produce a directory of services for women and children, for use by women and agencies.

5.12 Training and staff development should aim to maximise consistency and sensitivity of responses, including those that are culturally sensitive. The local training agenda should offer opportunities for information exchange on agencies' procedures and referral arrangements.

Joint work

5.13 Barriers to effective strategic joint working require to be addressed by all agencies, particularly by promoting service cultures that support collaboration.

5.14 Barriers to effective operational joint working should be tackled, recognising implications for training, staff resources and management support. Referral systems and other inter-agency arrangements should be monitored to ensure alignment of policy and practice.

Monitoring and evaluation

5.15 All services should systematically monitor presenting needs, service responses and unmet needs, to facilitate evidence-based service planning.

5.16 All agencies should review and evaluate their services and consult with service users, to identify best practice.