

Grampian Women's Aid Housing Support Service

Aberdeen

Type of inspection:

Announced (short notice)

Completed on:

20 January 2020

Service provided by:

Grampian Women's Aid Limited

Service provider number:

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Service no:

CS2003051770

About the service

Grampian Women's Aid offers a free, confidential and non-judgemental, specialist service to women, children and young people in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire who have experienced domestic abuse.

The services they offer include: practical and emotional support, somewhere safe to stay, information about housing, benefits and legal issues, safety planning and signposting to other agencies who can help. They also provide training to interested organisations about domestic abuse.

This service has been registered since 2004.

What people told us

The inspector spoke to three women who were being supported by Grampian Women's Aid. Two questionnaires were also returned to the Care Inspectorate prior to the inspection. Responses were overwhelmingly positive with all of the comments confirming that women felt very well supported by caring, respectful staff who were knowledgeable about the issues affecting them, and about local services they might wish to access.

Two women using the service also returned questionnaires to the Care Inspectorate prior to the inspection. Comments included:

"Very supportive in every way both emotionally and practically. I would have had to move away to (another city) to seek help from my relative if I had not been given refuge accommodation".

"We are pleased with the services being rendered to us. Thank you".

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staffing?	not assessed
How good is our setting?	not assessed
How well is our care and support planned?	not assessed

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

Grampian Women's Aid (GWA) provided a very good standard of care and support to women who had experienced domestic abuse. Women enjoyed very supportive relationships with staff who were caring and insightful. Feedback from women using the service was very positive about staff being kind, understanding and accommodating.

Women felt they were listened to and that the support they were offered was in response to their individual need. Staff understood that this might change and were responsive and flexible. They were keen to promote the skills and independence of women and offer assistance at the individual level each woman wanted.

From the point of contact with the service women were made aware of the range of support which was available, which included practical and emotional support, advice and accommodation. In the near future there will also be the opportunity for women to be involved in group work, and potentially more opportunities for social activity and peer support. Staff at GWA had very good local knowledge and good networks with other agencies and organisations. Women choosing not to become directly involved with GWA would still be offered advice about other agencies who could be of assistance.

Grampian Women's Aid promoted the rights of individual women, but also educated and informed the wider public on issues of gender inequality and domestic abuse. Affiliation with Scottish Women's Aid also provided opportunities to be involved in National campaigns and research based on improving the lives of women.

Risk assessment and safety planning supported early identification of women at high risk and the opportunity for a referral to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to ensure that all agencies were working together to safeguard these women. All women were offered advice about their personal safety and, should they want it, the opportunity for refuge accommodation. GWA were involved in research which would hopefully result in better access for legal representation for women who needed this.

Comprehensive notes identified the support women were offered and how this was delivered. Improvements required in support planning are discussed later in this report. This did not, however, impact on the agreed support women were offered, which remained focussed and flexible to what women themselves felt they needed.

Refuge accommodation was in various fully furnished premises across the city. When moving in, 'starter packs' were provided to ensure women had all the essentials they would need. Support was provided (if needed) to access healthcare and educational facilities in the local area, and with housing applications.

'Out of hours' support was provided via a national helpline. Grampian Women's Aid also had a website which provided information about the support they could provide, with appropriate safeguards to ensure women accessing this could do so confidentially, and safely.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

Prior to the inspection there had been significant staff shortages, and a relatively new manager. The reduced staff team had continued to provide the same high quality service to women, prioritising their immediate needs over some of the systems and processes which would normally be completed. At the time of the inspection the staffing situation had improved and there was good news about a change of premises which would be large enough for some of the identified service development plans to progress.

A lengthy service improvement plan identified areas the service would like to develop and had been updated as progress had been made. The plan identified progress in relation to a number of policies and practices which would support a more flexible responsive service to the women supported by GWA. These included referral documentation, safeguarding policies, procedural flowcharts and plans for more effective support planning. Support plans and case reviews needed significant improvement to ensure they were in place, reviewed and outcome focussed.

There was comprehensive information about the support provided in ongoing 'notes', however, these did not inform the support plan, or any form of outcome focussed progress. The improvement plan identified the need for plans to be outcome focussed and to allow service users to have a real ownership of their own plans. This was a recommendation at the previous inspection **(see areas for improvement 1)**.

There were a number of supportive systems in place to ensure that staff remained highly motivated and skilled and that their sense of purpose was clear. These included team meetings, supervision and appraisal, and good learning opportunities. The manager, and team, were supported by a Board of Trustees with a range of skills and experiences which contributed to service delivery and governance. Affiliation with Scottish Women's Aid also provided support and training.

Affiliation to the National organisation also encouraged participation in initiatives such as the 16 days of action, and events and training in recent legislation regarding coercive control. Grampian Women's Aid had held a large well attended conference highlighting coercive control. Staff from the team were delivering quality training to other organisations - raising the profile of the service and educating people about domestic abuse.

Areas for improvement

1. All service users should have outcome focussed support plans which are regularly reviewed. They should demonstrate that women using the service have ownership of their own plans.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me'. (HSCS 2.17).

How good is our staff team?

This key question was not assessed.

How good is our setting?

This key question was not assessed.

How well is our care and support planned?

This key question was not assessed.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

Documentation which identifies assessment, support and safety planning should be fully completed to ensure greater clarity about the support and safeguards in place for women and their children.

This area for improvement was made on 27 June 2017.

Action taken since then

There was further development required to ensure this recommendation was met. It has therefore been re-stated.

Previous area for improvement 2

Consideration should be given to ways in which service user participation can be improved and the aims of the service user involvement policy met.

This area for improvement was made on 27 June 2017.

Action taken since then

The service have plans to extend the opportunities for women involved with the service. This recommendation is therefore deemed as met.

Previous area for improvement 3

The child protection policy should be reviewed and developed. Staff should be aware of its content and receive guidance about how this is effectively used to safeguard children.

This area for improvement was made on 27 June 2017.

Action taken since then

An appropriate policy was in place and staff aware of their responsibilities.

Previous area for improvement 4

The role of the out of hours worker should be discussed with service users. This should provide clarity about the support provided outwith office hours.

This area for improvement was made on 27 June 2017.

Action taken since then

An entirely different out of hours response system was in place at this inspection. It will provide responsive out of hours guidance and support.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.1 People experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 People get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
1.3 People's health benefits from their care and support	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	4 - Good

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