

# Grampian Women's Aid Housing Support Service

Aberdeen

Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)  
Inspection completed on: 27 June 2017

**Service provided by:**  
Grampian Women's Aid

**Service provider number:**  
SP2004005315

**Care service number:**  
CS2003051770

## About the service

Grampian Women's Aid provides a confidential and non judgemental service to women who have experienced domestic abuse (and their children).

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.

The service has been registered since August 2004.

## What people told us

Women (and their children) were spoken with during a visit to a refuge and also by telephone. Women in the refuge were complimentary about their support. Though they were not always clear when a support worker would be in the refuge, they found the support helpful and had good relationships with the worker. They were positive about the support their children received from the children's worker.

Women who lived in the newly acquired flats in the community (which recently replaced group living refuges) were less positive about their support. They stated that contact with workers was positive, however, was not frequent enough and sometimes hurried, or workers were late. Concerns were raised about safety issues and an ongoing lack of response from out of hours support. There were some practical issues with the new flats which they felt they had been left to deal with and which had added to the stress of the move.

It was difficult to assess whether these were 'teething problems' related to the move from group living to individual properties and the different way in which support was provided or not. Women also felt they were not consulted or involved with the service. This feedback was given to the manager of the service at inspection feedback.

Two women returned questionnaires to the Care Inspectorate prior to the inspection. In response to the question "Overall I am happy with the quality of care and support this service gives me?" both stated "strongly agree".

One also added the comment:

"The service and support I received from (workers name) has been, and is, outstanding. She has helped me through the hard, difficult and emotional stages of my journey, attending appointments and assisting where possible. This is a great support to women like me, who perhaps feel lost and trapped in difficult situations. I am eternally grateful that such organisations exist to support women and children in need".

## Self assessment

In the inspection year 2017/18 no self assessment had been requested by the Care Inspectorate.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	4 - Good
Quality of staffing	not assessed

## What the service does well

Grampian Women's Aid provided a flexible service to women affected by domestic abuse (and their children). Within the team staff were skilled in providing domestic and practical support and domestic abuse advocacy.

On contacting the service women were made aware of the range of support which was available, including refuge provision and outreach support. Recent changes to the refuge provision allowed women a greater choice of accommodation, with the option of shared living or individual flats.

A children's worker had recently been recruited to the team. In addition to direct work with children who had witnessed domestic abuse, there were plans to extend the opportunities for support and education once the worker was established in her role. Staff within the team had also attended various awareness-raising events and delivered training to external organisations to raise the profile and understanding about domestic abuse.

The staff actively engaged with local partner agencies. A staff member attended the local MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) which helped to ensure the service was working collaboratively with other professionals to assess and minimise risks related to domestic abuse. They also worked alongside organisations which provided counselling services, employability advice, translation services, housing and legal advice.

Systems were in place to ensure the staff team were well-informed and well supported. Regular team meetings and supervision were in place. A board of directors met regularly to provide support and an overview of the service. Board members had relevant experience and skills to support the development of the service.

As a charity who received funding to support their work various reports and audits were compiled to demonstrate the work of the service, and successful outcomes and were monitored by funding providers. A five-year strategic plan identified the vision of the service and key objectives and linked to an action plan which was discussed at team meetings. All of these combined to provide structured quality assurance and to identify and monitor the progress of identified service development.

## What the service could do better

Systems were in place to record the initial assessments, safety plans and support agreed between the service and the women using it. The documentation was comprehensive and when completed fully would identify both risks and agreed safety and support plans. Many of the plans examined during the inspection were not well completed with important information missing, including initial referral information support plans, child protection information and information regarding referral to MARAC. Improvement in these documents would provide greater clarity about the support and safeguards in place for women and their children. **(See recommendation 1).**

A service user involvement policy identified a variety of ways women could engage and participate in the work of the service, however, there was very limited evidence of the involvement of women in the service (outwith their own support). Attempts at group work had been made but had not been successful. Consideration was being given to a suitable venue for the previously held refuge meetings, as these needed to have a different structure now accommodation was dispersed. Feedback from women spoken to during the inspection did not reflect their opportunity to be involved in the planning or participation in service delivery. **(See recommendation 2).**

A comprehensive child protection policy had been developed and recently reviewed. The document needed to be further developed to include Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and to make reference to 'The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014'. Staff needed to have greater awareness of the policy in relation to 'children subject to statutory interventions' to ensure the Organisation was fulfilling its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children. **(See recommendation 3).**

The out of hours on call system for women in refuge had been reviewed and discussed at recent team meetings. Despite this the feedback from women about the availability of out of hours support was not positive. They reported it to be unresponsive and therefore ineffective in keeping them safe. Further discussion with women using the service would be helpful to provide clarity about what on call support can provide. **(See recommendation 4).**

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 4

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.

### **National Care Standards Housing Support Services - Standard 4: Housing support planning**

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.

### **National Care Standards Housing Support Services - Standard 3: Management and Staffing**

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.

### **National Care Standards Housing Support Services - Standard 3: Management and Staffing**

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.

### **National Care Standards Housing Support Services - Standard 3: Management and Staffing**

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
30 Nov 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
22 Oct 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
10 Oct 2011	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership Not assessed
30 Mar 2010	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good
27 Mar 2009	Unannounced	Care and support 3 - Adequate Environment Not assessed Staffing 3 - Adequate Management and leadership 3 - Adequate

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