

SAFER STEPS

Wise Women Safety Tours

**Increasing Women's
Safety Together.**

**Glenavon Tour
March 2024**



1. BACKGROUND

Wise Women was established in 1994 as the Women's Safety Centre to "... Address women's fears of crime and violence by taking positive action through self-defence and personal safety courses."

The organisation has contributed not only to increasing individual women's sense of safety and confidence, but also to strategic approaches to reduce violence against women in Glasgow.

Despite best efforts both nationally and locally Scotland, as in other countries, continues to experience high levels of violence against women.

Although the responsibility for male violence against women lies with the perpetrators of such violence, the whole community can take a lead in mitigating against this violence and considering and responding to women's concerns regarding their safety at the point of planning and construction.

Violence Against Women 2020/21

- Number of sexual offences in Scotland in 2023/24 was 14,484
- 17% of reported sexual offences were rape or attempted rape.
- In 2022/23 at least 37% of sexual crimes reported to Police Scotland were against a young person under the age of 18 years.

2. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

In 2021 / 22 Wise Women undertook a survey, alongside partner agencies. The survey asked women to identify on a heatmap, housed on an app, where they experienced harassment and abuse on public in Glasgow.

Following on from the success of the app Wise Women began to work with other agencies and organisations to explore how the process could be adapted to respond to the needs of those organisations, the areas they worked in and the women who used those areas. This resulted in the Safer Steps Safety Tours.

The aim of the Safer Step tours is to collate information on women's experiences of safety in public spaces in Glasgow, influencing decision making on structural changes and service provision in the city.

Wise Women was approached by Maryhill Housing Association, (MHA), to facilitate a safety tour in the Glenavon area. MHA had identified a number of concerns and were keen to engage women to gather information on their experiences and their suggestions for solutions.

We welcome the opportunity to work across the Private and Voluntary Sectors and believe that future work would help women to influence tendering and procurement processes and the construction of safer cities and towns for all.

3. ENGAGING WITH WOMEN

After an initial session, which was attended by only 2 women it was decided to hold 2 coffee sessions to engage with local women, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, before running the tour. In between these sessions women were asked to take photographs of spaces in the area that felt / were unsafe for them. We felt that there would be a lot more women interested in this project if we had more time and engagement opportunities.

4. SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Wise Women's priority is women's safety. Staff from Wise Women and MHA visited the site to undertake a risk assessment and design the area the tour will cover. There were a number of concerns about the structural challenges of the site, e.g. concerns about items being dropped from homes in the high flats, overflow pipe flooding water down a steep hill, fast traffic on the road cutting through the area.

5. STRUCTURE OF TOUR

The final programme for the tour was;

- 2 coffee sessions
- Engagement of women throughout the time between coffee mornings and tour via What's App to collate photographs of areas of concern.
- Use of photographs to design safety tour.
- Safety Tour.

6. CONTRIBUTION FROM THE WOMEN

A total of seven women participated across the programme in the tour.

The women's feedback has been sectioned into four areas for ease of reference. These are;

- Maintenance
- Surrounding areas.
- Structural
- Lighting
- Roads / Public Transport

7. MAINTENANCE

Women reported concerns about maintenance, both in their homes and in the immediate local area. They found the situation not only practically intolerable, but also this has an impact on their emotional wellbeing. One woman stated;

"The overall physical and mental well-being impact it has when you experience the overall feeling of hopelessness."

Another complained about;

“Lack of accountability and engagement from local authority and MPs.”

- **“The area is severely neglected – yet they pay for services to be maintained yet nothing gets done.”**
- **“New heating systems are being put in and the increased number of reoccurring flooding is detrimental however taking over 7 days to come and even see the damage.”**
- **“Water runs from the corner of flats down the main road, in colder months it freezes, and many have been injured.”**
- **“Drain blocked – in the winter months it floods.”**
- **“Lots of rubbish piles were collected at the corner of the stairs and under the scaffolding.”**
- **“Mould in flats due to flooding from the installations of the central heating.”**
- **“Cladding on flats falling off in large chunks – extremely unsafe.”**
- **“Mold in flats due to constant flooding from neighbours – told central heating pipes size is reason for flooding.”**
- **“The hill brick wall surrounding one of the flats going down to the main road appears unstable – has a large crack at corner and water is seeping through running down the pavement.”**



“Blocked drain outside of 29 Glenavon – cause of much localised flooding.”



➤ **“Lots of rubbish piles collected at corners of stairs etc.”**



8. SURROUNDING AREAS

With many of our tours, it can often be the surrounding area that is the main area of concern for women. It is often not the role of the partner agency to address these issues, but we hope the inclusion supports them to request additional support from their own partnerships.

- **“Derelict wasteland – became a dumping ground for fly-tipping and rubbish.”**
- **“Secluded paths and stairs – access to the flats – not accessible for mobility issues or young children in prams and buggies.”**
- **“Derelict wasteland – old roads blocked by large boulders”**

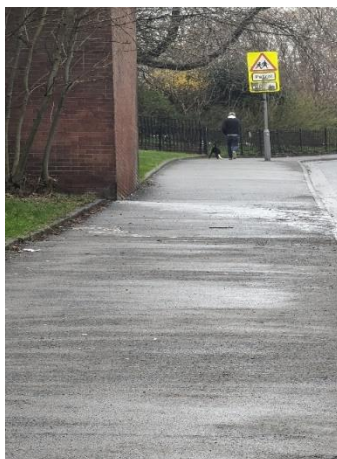


9. STRUCTURAL ISSUES

The flats on Glenavon Road were built in the 1960s. At the time improved sanitary conditions in modern homes. As time has past areas such as Glenavon can be challenging to maintain and restructure, partly due to size.

The women involved in the Safer Steps project identified a number of challenges. These ranged from structural faults to aesthetics.

- **“Lots of high buildings – imposing and intimidating.”**
- **“Scaffolding on the entrance has been there for a long time – looks unkempt, unsafe and uninviting.”**
- **“All blocks of flats have chunks of gladding coming off – again for years and no improvement.”**
- **“Lots of imposing high walls – concrete/brick – very grim and joyless.”**
- **“Play area is very exposed to the elements extremely spartan.”**



- **“Access to block flats across main road – either steep stairs secluded by shrubbery or long winding roundabout path.”**



- **Scaffolding surrounding the entrances to the flats appears permanent – covered in moss and dangerous.**



10. LIGHTING

One major areas of concern for all women contributing to Wise Women Safer Steps Tours is lighting. Glenavon was no different. Lighting is a relatively easy fix, although requires dedication and resources.

Although lighting is just one area that can support women's safety, even where areas are well lit women will consider isolation and escape routes before walking alone, it can increase women's sense of safety.

Furthermore, a positive response to complaints about lighting reassures women that their concerns are being taken seriously and not, as one woman stated;

"The challenge is the loss of hope being felt when you have been fighting for change and hearing the same thing over and over again, not important, hands are tied. Reinforcing the message that we are not important enough for change to happen."

- **"Lighting being a problem, at night and dangerous situations where a taxi couldn't see them and almost reversed into them, are major safety concerns."**
"Streetlights – not working properly but also being damaged by the bin lorries accessing the area to empty the bins and not being repaired."
- **"Streetlights not working are major issue – taxi almost drove into women waiting for out."**
- **"Bin lorries have reversed into streetlights knocking them out – waiting for weeks to be repaired."**

11. ROADS / PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Evidence has highlighted that road use, including the use of public transport is heavily influenced by whether you are a man or a woman. In 2018 The International Transport Forum published the discussions held at their summit in 2015. In the report;

"The authors mostly focus on urban areas where more women than men use public transport, and they heavily depend on these systems for their mobility needs. Transport safety and security are key factors in women's mobility habits and choices."

Ensuring roads and public transport are fit for use for women, also supports the wider community. Women provide the majority of unpaid care, are the main carers for children in the majority of families and are more likely to undertake small journeys within their communities than men.

It is therefore essential that women feel safe, both from traffic and also when using public transport.

The women of Glenavon highlighted a number of challenges they and their children experience on a daily basis.

Roads

- **“New speed bumps have been recently put in which she feels is a good start to stop the speeding cars, however this needs to be extended round the corner and down the hill.”**
- **“More speed bumps on main road to reduce speed of traffic.”**
- **“There is one lollipop person but be better if 2 at busy school times – make it much safer when crossing road with young kids.”**
- **“More school patrol there is currently one just now but feels like having two at the school times there would be much more beneficial and safer for children. They have two further down however there is the corner and hill in this area that is constantly full of speeding cars at all times and one patrol can't stop both sections so having two can allow people to cross safely.”**

Public Transport

- **“Bus from Asda does not stop at school times as well as when groups of youth are hanging around.”**
- **“Buses are frequent but has been incident of bus driving ignoring women waiting if groups of young boys at bus stop.”**

12. FUTURE PARTNERSHIP WORKING

This project brought many challenges and opportunities with it.

Engaging women was extremely difficult and resource intensive, however the information the women were willing to share has been significant.

The Glenavon area is an area that Wise Women would prioritise due to the high levels of deprivation, numbers of families, in particular lone parent families and the structural challenges the area experiences, as well as the commitment from MHA to try to address some of these.

Wise Women will commit to holding a Confidence Building Course in the area in the next 6 months. This could be followed by more consultation with the residents of Glenavon.

If MHA improves some of the areas highlighted by the women in the report, Wise Women would be happy to support the distribution of the information.



SAFETY TOURS

POLICY

1. Background

- 1.1 Wise Women aims to improve women's safety from male violence in Glasgow. Established in 1994, Wise Women has provided Personal Safety and Confidence Building courses to women across Glasgow.
- 1.2 Although these courses have been well received, with positive feedback, the numbers of women that continue to experience violence and abuse in Glasgow has remained consistent.
- 1.3 Wise Women believes that this consistency is due to the structures around women, rather than women's personality, resilience and / or history of violence and abuse, can only be addressed by improving women's safety through structural change and by improving the protection women experience from social institutions, such as women's services, police, HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership) and criminal justice.
- 1.4 In 2021 / 22 Wise Women, alongside partners, undertook a survey with women to capture information on the experiences of public harassment and abuse. This revealed not only women's experience of harassment and abuse, but also how they are were often left to mitigate against this by themselves, with few protections.
- 1.5 Wise Women believe that women have a key role in influencing structural change in Glasgow City and the surrounding local communities. We are committed to supporting women to have their voices heard in a variety of ways, including through Safety Tours.

2. Safety Tours

- 2.1 Wise Women Safety Tours will be open to any woman who is resident in Glasgow and is over the age of 16 years old.
- 2.2 The aim of the Safety Tours will be to support women to safely walk areas of Glasgow that have been highlighted as high risk of violence and abuse and undertake

a session of consultation on their experience. Wise Women will then complete a report based on this consultation and submit to appropriate agency.

3. Planning a walk

- 3.1 Wise Women will recruit 8 women to volunteer to undertake Safety Walks. Additional participants will be attracted through social media advertising and the use of the Wise Women mailing list.
- 3.2 There will be a ratio of 1:6 for Walk Leaders and Participants. Where possible there will be 2 Walk Leaders at each group.
- 3.3 The planning of a tour should consider accessibility of the area and the availability of toilets. To assess this Tour Leaders should undertake a trial run of any walk being planned. Although, particularly during government restrictions, facilities may not be available, Wise Women will, as far as possible, inform potential participants of any access issues.
- 3.4 The beginning and end of any tour should be accessible by public transport via main streets / populated areas.
- 3.5 All travel expenses will be reimbursed to women.

4. Registration process

- 4.1 All participants must register their interest in advance of Tours to ensure numbers are not exceeded. Anyone arriving without registering will not be regarded as a member of the group and will be responsible for their own safety should they walk with the group.
- 4.2 The registration process will consist of a one-page form or registration through Eventbrite. Registration can be facilitated by Wise Women staff.
- 4.3 All registered participants will receive a pack with;
 - Participant Agreement.
 - Information on purpose of Tour, relevant partner agencies and when the final report will be available.

5. Safety Assessments

- 5.1 A Safety Assessment will be undertaken for each planned walk, see appendix 1.
- 5.2 The Safety Assessment will consider risks as they present to an adult over the age of 16 years.
- 5.3 Where risks are identified, women's independent skills will be considered in relation to options to resolve the risk.

- 5.4 The Tour Leaders will be identifiable by aluminium armbands / equipment throughout the walk.

6. Resources for each walk

- 6.1 All Tour Leaders will receive a pack with the following information included;

- A copy of this policy.
- Hate Crime Information.
- A copy of the relevant Safety Assessment.
- Register of participants.
- Photograph Permission Forms, to be used when photographs are taken for publicity purposes.
- Hygiene products, such as hand sanitizer, masks.
- First Aid Kit.

6. Review of Policy

- 6.1 This Policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

Date



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