

**THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT**

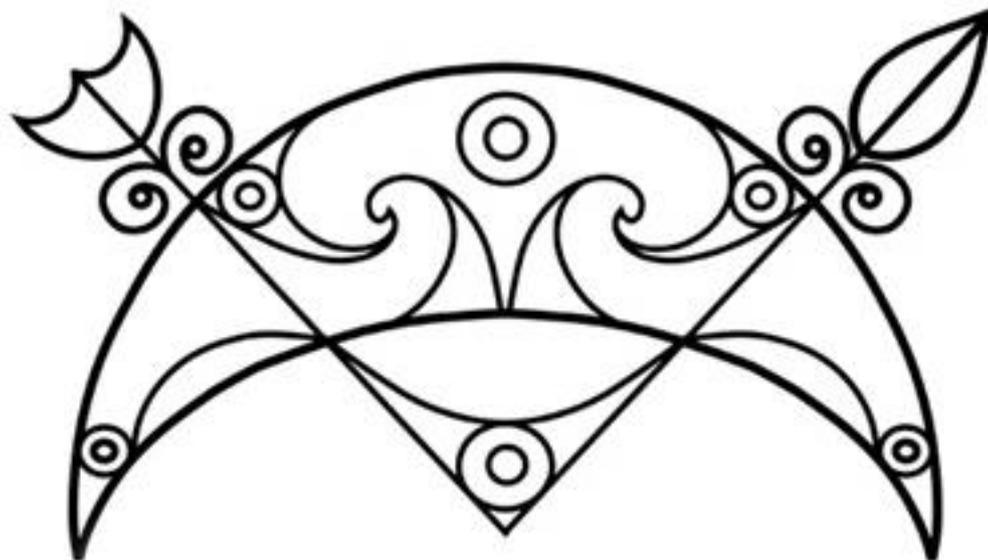
**EQUALLY SAFE STRATEGY**

**CONSULTATION WITH SURVIVORS**

**OF**

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

**2017**



**COMPILED BY WISE WOMEN GLASGOW**

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This Report on the Pilot Consultation with Women and Girl Survivors of Gender Based Violence in Glasgow and Central West of Scotland has been commissioned by The Scottish Government in Partnership with Rape Crisis Scotland and Scottish Womens Aid as part of its Equally Safe Strategy which aims to reduce and eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls.

## ***A Survivors Opening Statement***

Survivors of Gender based Violence seem to be put into a number of categories including damaged, traumatised, scared, timid, 'angry men haters', lesbians, liars, poor wee souls but brave and probably a bit "crazy".

And yes, while we can be all those things, show me a woman who isn't, or hasn't been at some point in her life.

What society fails to see is that we are campaigners, law changers, and supporters. We set up services. We work in services. We are activists, political and politicians. We are mothers, partners, sisters, daughters, grannies and aunties. We are colleagues, best pals and the woman sitting next to you on the bus and together we challenge the attitudes that would have us dismissed and silenced - not just as survivors but as women.

If you don't want to hear what we have to say, don't ask us. But not asking doesn't necessarily guarantee our silence!!

The Scottish Government requested this consultation, so we ask that you read this report on the experiences, attitudes and opinions of 112 women survivors of abuse and violence and remember that behind every statistic is a woman's life which those numbers represent.

Thanks to:

The **112** women who took part in this consultation. We hope this report does your honesty, openness and bravery justice.

Thank you to the services who worked with us identifying women to engage with this piece of work, encouraging women to have a voice and for all the work they do in working with, offering protection, support and empowerment to women and girls in Scotland.

Rape Counselling and Resource Centre  
East Ayrshire Womens Aid  
Wise Women  
The Daisy Project Castlemilk  
Glasgow Disability Alliance  
SAY Women  
Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis  
Saheliya  
Glasgow East Womens Aid

## The Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy

The **Scottish Government's** definition of gender based violence, which is based on the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women states that:

*'Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.'*

*It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as 'gender based' this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girl's subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence.'*

The **Scottish Government's** vision is of a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse - and the attitudes that help perpetuate it. No woman or girl in Scotland should be subjected to violence or abuse of any kind (physical, emotional, sexual or psychological) and no child or young person should have to experience gender based violence or have to live with the impact of it.

The **Scottish Government's** aim is to work collaboratively with key partners across all sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. We are clear that there are no quick fixes to this deep-rooted problem. It requires significant economic, social and cultural change over the long-term. That calls for the sustained commitment, not just of a wide range of partners, but of individuals and communities too.

### **Our strategic approach**

Equally Safe sets out a shared understanding of the causes, risk factors, and scale of the problem. It highlights the need to prioritise prevention and it sets out how we will develop the performance framework, which allows us to know whether or not we are realising our ambitions.

The **Scottish Government** are committed to working collaboratively with partners and to achieving change by making best use of available resources, with a clear governance framework underpinning delivery. In-keeping with our use of the UN's definition of violence against women and girls, Scotland's first National Action Plan for Human Rights explicitly recognises that taking action to address violence against women and girls is needed to ensure we realise the human rights of everyone in Scotland.

## **Wise Women Background**

Wise Women is a Glasgow City Council funded service which was set up in 1994 to address women's fears and experiences of crime and violence, through the provision of free 20-hour Personal Safety and Confidence Building Courses for women in local communities. The Courses make the links between different forms of male violence, challenging women-blaming attitudes, providing support and information on relevant services, and building skills to help women identify, avoid and escape potentially dangerous situations.

Wise Women has a proven reputation for successfully providing focus groups for women wishing to meet with others who have shared experiences and discriminations. These include survivors of abuse, BME women, disabled women, deaf women, women seeking asylum, refugee women, young women, older women, LGBT women, women dealing with complex social circumstances such as homelessness, addiction, commercial sexual exploitation, and poor mental health.

In addition to our courses, we run awareness raising sessions for staff, based on our work including: "The Media and its role in the socialisation and sexualisation of Women ,Men and Young People", "Women and Equality", "Violence Against Disabled Women", "Homophobia: History Facts and Myths" and "Survivors: What do you mean you've never met one?".

We have previous experience of facilitating consultations with people accessing services including: Disabled Women, Deaf Women, Evaluation of TARA services with Trafficked women, and 2 Scottish Government Consultations with women and men Survivors of Trafficking via TARA & The Migrant Help Project.

We are not consultants, researchers or academics. We are a grass roots violence against women ,equality and diversity organisation, which has stood us in good stead when working with women in local communities across Glasgow and women further marginalised by prejudice, bigotry, and inequality.

## Section 1: Women's Experiences of Violence and Abuse

*"You know you hope this will never happen to your daughters, but honestly the best you can hope for now is that if it happens, it only happens once"*

**112** Women attending the consultations had experienced **515** different types of Violence Against Women.

This figure does not reflect the number of individual incidences women experienced which, given the level and extent of assaults, could realistically run into the thousands.

Women reported multiple assaults, with those dealing with additional and different discriminations experiencing different and additional types of violence and abuse - i.e. Disabled Women abused through required personal contact, dependent on abusers as carers, and being held economic prisoners.

As expected, more BME, LGBT, and Disabled Women experienced more Hate Crime and Public Harassment. The number of reported incidents, however, varied depending on age and offences happening pre Hate Crime Legislation.

Under "Something Else" women included forced termination, forced sterilisation, and honour based violence.

During discussion, women expressed major concerns regarding young women's vulnerability to sexual violence, highlighting its increasing normalisation and the disturbing expectation that it has become part of young women's social norms. Issues were raised addressing the pressure on young women having to endure unwanted and disrespectful sex in order to be accepted, liked or "part of the gang", often disassociating from the process in order to tolerate it.

Domestic Abuse	71%
Rape	52%
Sexual Assault	53%
Sexual Harassment	42%
Stalking	41%
Child Abuse	40%
Child Sexual Abuse	39%
Prostitution	13%
Hate Crime	37%
FGM	12%
Forced Marriage	09%
Mugging	23%
Pornography	24%
Something else	07%

Women were clear this was Rape and by putting it in a social context society runs the risk of legitimising it.

It was agreed across all groups that these are issues that should be addressed in schools if the **Scottish Government** is truly committed to reducing and eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls. Women stated it should be "legislation" and not dependent on teacher or parent councils.

## Perpetrators

Gender Based Violence is, without a doubt, the most common and damaging expression of misogyny and sexism there is. Therefore it is unsurprising the vast majority of perpetrators were male.

Sexual Violence was predominately committed by men including Child Sexual Abuse at **100%**

The few women who reported being Prostituted and Trafficked had been so by men, however they commented on the role women were forced to take on in terms of the recruitment of others.

Women as sole perpetrators were more commonly represented when discussing LGBT relationships **8%** and child abuse, specifically physical, emotional, verbal and neglect **22%**

Some incidences of hate crime, street harassment and stalking were committed by both genders. Concerns were also raised about gangs, drinking, and drug dens contributing to a sense of feeling unsafe in local communities, at home and on the streets.

Regarding FGM, women discussed the role Cultural Practice played in sanctioning this, where that originates from, who benefits, and the impact on Women and Girls who refuse to participate, including facing further abuse, being shunned and excluded from your community.

*"Its men who want this done to us. Why? And women do it why? Because we are absent of choice"*

Similarly, women highlighted issues surrounding forced marriage which is often reported as something women instigate, despite being steeped in a male defined cultural practice.

### Male Perpetrators

Domestic Abuse	92%
Rape	100%
Sexual Assault	98%
Sexual Harassment	96%
Stalking	89%
Child Abuse	78%
Child Sexual Abuse	100%
Prostitution	100%
Hate Crime	77%
FGM	50%
Forced Marriage	09%
Mugging	88%
Pornography	100%
Something else	83%

It was generally accepted that, in terms of cultural practice, it's easy to pass judgement from the outside. This includes Scotland where it was felt there is a tendency to take a moral high ground on cultural practice, allowing us to ignore the unacceptable levels of abuse women and girls face as part of their daily lives in our own country.

Women strongly agreed that any culture that promotes, supports or fails to address the harm or suffering of women physically or emotionally is a "damaging cultural practice" which needs to be addressed at political and strategic levels nationally and globally.

## Section 1.1: Impact

All of the women recorded a variety of symptoms relating to the impact of Violence and Abuse.

It was acknowledged that any woman can suffer from a variety of conditions, irrespective of their experiences. However, many felt that at some point the specific impact of violence and abuse, including multiple and prolonged abuse, had a particular effect on their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing.

During discussion, it was recorded that women felt the impact on physical and mental health caused new or exacerbated existing health conditions.

Some women reported a lifelong impact which limited and created barriers to potential personal development including engaging with education, employment, and ability to engage with others leading to social isolation and depression.

Others described it as a cascade effect, increasing their vulnerability to further violence, exploitation, and manipulation. For some, this led to unhealthy, dangerous life paths and complex social circumstances. These included addiction, prostitution, self-harm/injury and criminality.

Women wanted to stress that whilst all of them had suffered a variety of impacts from the fall-out of abuse (and from life in general) there is a tendency to “over medicalise” survivors. This implies that they are broken, damaged, and needing fixed, more often than not, through the prescription of drugs, as reported by **57%**.

Felt Nervous and anxious	79%
Had panic attacks	64%
Felt Scared of people	71%
Felt Isolated	76%
Felt depressed	79%
Felt low in self-confidence	86%
Felt suicidal	45%
Attempted Suicide	19%
Self-Harmed / self-injured	42%
Had nightmares / Flashbacks	69%
Had a nervous breakdown	29%
Headaches and pains	64%
Gynae Problems	32%
Prescribed Drugs	57%
Drank alcohol or used non prescription drugs.	46%
Ongoing relationship problems	65%
Other	09%

Participants agreed that this narrow approach is unhelpful, can lead to dependency and further reinforces negative stereotypes about survivors, potentially creating additional barriers to services, future employment, and social engagement.

## Quotes

*"Rape in marriage was only outlawed in 1991...20 years too late for me"*

*"There's a power imbalance. And society can't believe a Disabled woman would be abused by her husband"*

*"He got 6 months of 3 free meals a day, access to a gym, access to courses, free heating & lighting, access to support and counselling....I got post-traumatic stress and nightmares"*

*"In the Asian community it's not open or safe for women to speak out"*

*"My dad made me marry a man his age when I was 14 years old, because he owed him money"*

*"I was trying to disclose but my carer was just outside the door"*

*"I didn't report because I don't think I would be believed"*

*"This isn't incidences this is an epidemic"*

*"I was overeating so I would become fat. I hoped it would protect me...it didn't"*

*"While I was being raped the guys friends stole money from my purse"*

*"I told what happened a dozen times, I was exhausted and at one point skipped over a bit. I was asked (more accused) if I was changing my story"*

*I am deaf but from another country not BSL. Difficult to communicate. Easier for police to take his side, he speaks English.*

*"I had no trusted adults in my life. When I came out I knew if I had told them about the abuse they would have blamed that"*

*"I live with this every day. EVERYDAY!"*

*"When is this going to stop?"*

## Section 2: Reporting and Disclosure

### Disclosure:

The discussion on reporting assaults inevitably focussed on the Police, however women also wanted to recognise disclosing to other services including the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Services, as they were often the first point of contact giving the women access to information, support to report, legal advice and safe accommodation.

3<sup>rd</sup> Sector services included Womens Aid, Rape Crisis Centres, SAY Women, Action Against Incest (now closed), AA and other community addiction services. Health Services included G.Ps, Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Community Psychiatric Nurses and care providers.

**13%** of incidences were reported by others including family members, Health, and Education services for a number of reasons e.g. age, ability of the women and issues raised during "Routine Enquiry"

Women who had reported Rape to the Police immediately after the assault, commented that if they had left it they wouldn't have gone through with it, and didn't want to regret that decision later.

However, after reporting, others felt a loss of control in the process and pressure to go through with it for fear of being accused of wasting Police time, being branded a liar or an attention seeker.

### Women initially disclosed their experiences to the following Services

Police	42%
Third Sector	51%
Social Work	25%
Health Services	27%
Private Counselling	07%
Others	06%

Women who had experienced violence in another country or their country of origin didn't report.

Others felt what they experienced was not a crime and was normal practice.

*"What stopped me telling was the questions they would ask. Folk want to understand "why" but I didn't understand "why" all I knew was I felt ashamed and disgusting"*

## Section 2: Reporting to Police Scotland

*"I was relieved after I went. You hear horror stories, don't you, but they were quite sensitive"*

Of the number of women reporting to Police Scotland and regardless of the "outcome" we asked how women felt about this experience.

In relation to positive experiences women stated:

*"It's seems to have got better since I first reported."*

*"After I reported, I was referred to The Daisy Project and got help for me and my son"*

*"The officer I saw was brilliant. She really understood and was very patient"*

Although some women felt there was a perceived definite improvement in responses from Police Scotland over the years, others reported that the experience left them feeling upset, blamed and treated with a degree of "suspicion" stating:

*"I have a mild learning difficulty and they asked me if I was sure I was gang raped and not just confused"*

Women dealing with complex social circumstances felt they often faced a wide range of judgements from services in general, however specifically in regards to Police Scotland women told us:

### 42% of 112 Women reported to Police Scotland

Positive	49%
Negative	45%
Mixed	06%

*"I was put under pressure to grass on my abuser because he was a gangster"*

*"I was called hysterical by a female officer and told I can't deal with your crying. I had just been assaulted"*

Discussions addressed the further detrimental impact a negative response can have on a woman, reinforcing the "Blame, Shame and Guilt" culture frequently associated with violence against women.

Women also reported receiving contradictory information from Officers and felt they weren't aware of current legislation with one woman commenting:

*"If they don't know my rights how am I supposed to?"*

## The Criminal Justice System

*"it's just about got its head around Domestic Abuse but still has a long way to go regarding Rape and Sexual Abuse."*

Despite the varied experiences of women reporting to Police Scotland, it would be fair to say that most of the women recognised that reporting was just the first step.

While some expressed initial "relief" at receiving a positive response, the majority commented this support wasn't necessarily carried through when dealing with other departments in the broader criminal justice system.

Women listed fear, threats, causing pain to others, and pressure from their family and community as reasons for not reporting. Women living with chaotic and complex social circumstances also experiencing marginalisation didn't report.

Intense and lengthy discussions across all the groups highlighted the lack of cases that make it to court and the low conviction rates, stating the Criminal Justice System was, in itself, one of the biggest barriers to women reporting violence and abuse.

Women who had previous negative experiences of the court system said they would recommend others not to report.

Women who had supported others through the court system and witnessed the impact on the victim chose not to report.

Women who had access to information about the Criminal Justice System, and how it processes cases relating to Violence Against Women, also chose not to report.

Women who experienced abuse in another country chose not report and women who experienced abuse in their country of origin did not report to the Police, however it was disclosed to Immigration and the Home Office.

### 85% of Assaults were not reported to Police Scotland citing

- Lack of trust in the system
- Low conviction rates
- Poor sentencing
- Crimes against property / money taken more seriously
- Hostile attitudes & judgements
- Discrimination
- Being blamed
- Treated like the criminal
- Being disbelieved
- Lack of confidentiality
- Having to disclose multiple times
- Little understanding of Trauma
- Made to justify your behaviour
- Recount details in front of abuser
- Corroboration
- Subtly raising previous sexual history
- Poor communication
- Loss of control
- Fear of causing pain to others
- Family & Community pressure
- Fear of being deported
- Previous negative experience
- Abuser was well known & respected

Women expressed their concerns, not just about the messages this gives to women about their worth and what to expect in the way of justice, but also the significant message it gives to potential perpetrators which is: it's almost pretty much guaranteed they will face no or limited repercussions for this type of crime. In effect endorsing gender based violence.

The complex issue of juries was addressed as it's commonly known that women jurors can be unsympathetic to other women.

One of the theories offered was that, as women tend to blame themselves for the abuse they experience, there is a possibility they would blame others in similar situations.

Likewise women who have not experienced a particular type of abuse can often question why other women find themselves in that situation. This taps into social attitudes around women's "perceived role" in the assault, ultimately "Blaming the Victim"

The influence of the media was discussed, with women commenting on the unhelpful representation of certain groups of women. These include young women, women who have been drinking, or women in complex social circumstances as reasons why some are targeted for abuse, therefore implying an element of participation and responsibility in the assault.

From here we asked if women would consider Historical Reporting?

Historical Reporting	
No	62%
Yes	34%
Not sure	04%

While some perpetrators were dead, the vast majority of women cited the process of historical reporting would be too stressful and feared they would be judged for not reporting earlier, accused of attention seeking, or "jumping on the bandwagon" as implied in some media coverage.

*"A Guy got stabbed in a nightclub.....I was a witness...I was quite drunk at the time but my credibility as a witness was ok then!"*

*I asked if my statement could just be given to the judge and jury. But it was read out with him there, hearing the impact it had on me and my relationship. I felt he was getting off on it."*

*"I went thinking I would get justice and believed and hoped my honesty would be enough"*

Some women had experienced abuse in other countries stating that it wasn't a crime in their country of origin.

Women were clear that no woman wants, likes, invites or deserves to be abused. It is felt that until these attitudes are addressed, women will never get a fair or unbiased response from the Criminal justice System.

Again women reinforced if the **Scottish Government** is truly committed to reducing and eliminating Violence against Women and Girls, these issues must be addressed at political and strategic levels.

## Section 2.1: Accessing Support Services

112 Women accessed 277 services with 78% accessing multiple services

### Third Sector Services.

All of the women identified for this consultation came through 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Support Services. These figures reflect multiple services accessed.

Accessed Third sector	100%
Positive	95%
Negative	10%
Mixed	13%

The majority of women rated their experience with 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector services as positive, stating that:

- A particular level of knowledge and understanding.
- Flexibility around the needs of the woman, her children and family.
- Supportive and sensitive responses.
- Realistic and accessible ways of working.
- Expertise surrounding criminal justice, housing, benefits, legal and human rights and child protection.

all played a key role in increasing their sense of safety through the reduction of fear and abuse.

Women felt that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector had a more holistic approach enabling them to provide services for a wide range of women with additional and differing needs and experiences.

*"The service (Saheliya) welcomed and helped me with all my problems. They listened. That was all I needed. I just needed someone to care."*

Women who had **negative and mixed experiences** commented on the following

- Waiting a long time to be seen.
- Limited opening hours.
- Short term support only.
- Poor access to buildings.
- Lack of interpreters.
- No onsite creche or creche staff.

Some women felt restrictions in supported accommodation were problematic. These included no men, no pets, limited alcohol, limited 24-hour access, and that places couldn't be kept open if they returned home for a trial reconciliation.

Some women commented that leaving supported accommodation with little or no follow up support added to their sense of social isolation. This was sometimes a reason for returning to the family home

During discussion it was noted that for women living in rural areas, accessing local support could be problematic due to limited services and confidentiality. Accessing services further away was time consuming, incurring additional travel costs and created additional barriers for women.

Despite this, women accepted that restrictions were often a result of limited resources and increasing cuts to services with one woman commenting;

*"Violence is going up. Bad mental health is going up. Addiction is going up. Budgets are coming down!!"*

## Social Work Services

Women accessing Social Work services generally accessed multiple services including the Police, 3rd Sector and Health Services. A number of women were referred to Social Work via other services and for some Social Work was alerted by other services.

Social Work involvement was mainly through a child protection process as a result of Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse. However, some women were referred as a result of being classed as vulnerable within the family environment which was the case for some younger and several Disabled Women.

<b>Accessed Social Work</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Positive</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Negative</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>12%</b>

Just under half of the women had positive experiences through Social Work. These included sensitive responses, support with their children, and information on other services, referrals for supported accommodation, counselling, refugee services, and taking women through a MARAC process.

*"I was really upset because I phoned the Police and they phoned Social Work. But they were brilliant. She got a place in Womens Aid for me and the kids"*

*"She knew straight away what I was talking about, she understood"*

In terms of negative experiences some women reported a number of issues including:

Having no control or choice over Social Work intervention when reporting to Police or Health Services.

Women accepted and don't disagree that the main function of Social Work is child protection. However, they felt there was an implication that abuse is okay if it is only happening to the woman and that women without children could not contact the service.

The assumption that some women couldn't protect their children was a constant strain.

The contradiction of child protection was highlighted by women who were having to give access to abusive partners causing further trauma and upset to the children.

Women accepted that contact and residency were court decisions, but some women felt that judgemental attitudes, discrimination, and stereotyping about certain women influenced those decisions when writing court reports.

*"As a Disabled woman, my parenting skills were really scrutinised when I left him. Would they have preferred I stayed?"*

*"I tried to do everything they told me. He (social worker) said I had let him and my family down. I felt like shit after that and just went and got pissed"*

## Health Services

Health Services included, GPs, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Psychological services and Hospitals particularly A&E.



**40%** of women found these experiences positive, highlighting that a history with some GPs and CPNs helped when dealing with abuse and the impact on variable physical and mental health conditions.

Some surgeries could allocate a longer appointment if the women felt that was required. They had also written letters of support for women when dealing with Benefit and Welfare services.

Some GPs offered access to alternative therapies and in-surgery counselling.

*"My Doctor gave me a leaflet for Rape Crisis. He was very supportive. He said they were the experts on this"*

*"I had to get a gynaecological procedure done. They knew about my abuse as a child. I had scarring. They gave me an appointment to talk it all through with me and gave me time to think about it"*

*"My Doctors have leaflets all over the surgery about Rape Crisis and Women's Aid. That's how I got help"*

In contrast women who had negative experiences highlighted them as:

- Judgemental & dismissive attitudes.
- A narrowed approach.
- Lack of Trauma awareness.
- Medicalising Trauma.
- Labelling women as having personality disorders, neurosis.
- Over prescribing of drugs.
- Changing prescriptions with no consultation.
- Waiting times for appointments.
- Revolving door approach.
- No choice in the gender of the doctor you see.
- Lack of understanding about the impact of abuse.
- Assumption that every problem you have is because you were abused.

Women accessing A&E departments as a result of self-injury were particularly scathing of the responses from staff. They reported flippant, disapproving, and hostile attitudes which were sometimes reflected in the standard of care they received.

*"She said...I have real patients to see, people who are genuinely ill"*

*"The nurse laughed and said "You're here more than me", then said shouldn't you just stop this nonsense now?"*

The issue of "Post Code Lottery" mentality was discussed, with women agreeing that standards of service are very much dependant on location. Women stressed that they recognise the impact budget cuts have had on services, however, respectful and supportive responses cost nothing.

## Section 2: Other Support Services, Gaps and Additional Barriers

### Other Support

Private Counselling 20%  
Positive 80%

Other including Family & Friends 07%  
Positive 80%

Religious Leaders 13%  
Mixed 100%

As a result of waiting times for support, lack of services in rural areas, and wanting to access more psychological trauma-based counselling including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, some women accessed private counselling services.

Whilst women found it a positive experience, it was noted that few women could afford it and those who did access it, only did so for a short time. This opened up a debate highlighting poverty as a barrier to certain services.

Women who initially accessed informal, but vital, support through family and friends reported this as a positive first step, but still feared an unsympathetic response on an ongoing basis.

A few women accessed support from religious and spiritual services - **13%**. Some explained this was where they got information on other relevant support services. Others reported a degree of judgement and doubt about their experience, feeling dismissed. This subsequently made it difficult to maintain a connection with their religious community, hence the **100%** mixed response

We asked if women felt there were gaps in services and what those were.

### Gaps In Services ?

Yes 70%  
No 07%  
Not sure 23%

#### Including:

- Inconsistent or no specialist units at Police stations.
- Inconsistent or no specialist units in hospitals.
- Limited opening hours.
- Limited Services in rural areas.
- No drop-in services.
- Few or no Law Centres.
- Post code service provision restrictions.
- No alternative therapy services for dealing with women.

It was explained that several of these services do exist prompting discussion raising the following issues:

- Lack of general information about services, who they are, what they do, and where to find them.
- Lack of information on the law and your rights when and if reporting.
- How do isolated or women from rural areas know where to go?
- What happens if you don't have access to the internet?
- Limited leaflets or fliers about services in other languages

*"These TV programmes (soaps) only advertise websites when they are doing stuff on violence in the programme. Websites are no use to me."*

## **Additional issues and barriers for specific groups of women.**

**54%** of the women participating in the consultation experienced additional physical and language barriers accessing services, however the discussion mainly focussed on poor responses and negative attitudes towards women.

### **Disabled Women :**

Disabled women attending the session were generally more aware of their rights through their involvement with Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPO) which have a strong role in promoting Human Rights and Equality for Disabled People.

Apart from the most obvious issue of access, the women participating felt society has a reluctance to believe that they even have relationships, let alone be at risk of Domestic Abuse. Disabled women are often also reliant on abusers as carers, can be abused by their partners even if the partners are also disabled, can be abused as children, teenagers and adults through required intimate contact and kept as economic prisoners by families with no control over their finances all of which contribute to and created barriers to services.

Women generously accepted that some staff are under-confident when dealing with disabled people, particularly if communication is an issue. However, they felt that in 2017 this is unacceptable and no longer an excuse.

*"Its bad enough struggling to get into the building but when you get in there and you have to spend the first 15 minutes raising their awareness and challenging their assumptions or being patronised, you're bloody exhausted"*

*"What is this routine enquiry thing?.....No....they never did that with me!"*

### **LGBT Women:**

It was difficult getting a wide age range of LGBT women together as we wanted to ensure we reflected all LGBT women's issues, pre and post legislation. For this reason **9** one to one telephone consults were carried out.

LGBT Women also had a wider knowledge of their human and legal rights than other groups. The women felt that under the **Scottish Government**, huge positive strides have been taken in the pursuit of Equality for the community. These strides include scrapping Section 28, the instigation of civil partnerships and gay marriage, and the right to adopt and foster. These are credited with increased confidence, visibility and an increased sense of safety through Hate Crime legislation.

Women still felt we had some way to go in terms of attitude changes and commented that for some, as parents, they still faced additional scrutiny.

*"It wasn't that long ago your kids could be taken because you were gay. I stayed with an abusive husband for 18yrs because of that"*

*"The media imply that if kids are abused by gay parents then we all must be bad. I've never seen a headline implying all straight parents are bad"*

Trans Women reported higher levels of violence in public places resulting in depression and isolation. Trans Women felt they were targeted specifically for abuse, with one woman stating:

*"I don't think trans men get attacked as much. They just think they are gay (lesbian stereotype) but they hate us"*

## Sexually Abused Young Women:

Young women experiencing sexual abuse and violence at home reported high levels of additional barriers.

Young women commented that the overwhelming lack of control, lack of options, acting out, confusion, flashbacks and trauma impacted on their ability to express not only their feelings, but their needs. **78%** of the women had accessed multiple services often having to recount difficult details repeatedly.

Some young women felt that being young "under 25", was in itself a barrier and were often dismissed as "troubled". Others who expressed "chronic" low self esteem felt unable to have a say in what was happening.

All the young women accessing SAY Women for support and accommodation services, were open and candid about their experiences there, which were not always "plain sailing". However, they acknowledged the vital role it played in their safety and recovery from trauma.

*"it makes you think about the lassies that don't get help"*

*"I was off my head. I was kicking off and wrecking the place and they sat me down and talked to me. I would have kicked me out"*

*"It took me ages to talk and they (staff) and the other girls were good at getting me involved with stuff"*

## Women Experiencing FGM:

It was acknowledged that talking about FGM in large groups would be incredibly difficult for women. It was also appreciated that as both Wise Women staff, who were facilitating the session, were Scottish, White women, we had to approach the issue with caution, respect and sensitivity.

Women in the group were open to discussing the principle of Cultural Practices in their country of origin and how that can influence and limit women's personal development.

All the women had experienced street harassment and racist Hate Crime. However, none reported to the authorities stating they were fearful it could affect their application for leave to stay.

*"I didn't want to be troublesome"*

Women who experienced ongoing harassment often endured it for fear of escalating the situation.

The fear of deportation was a constant, creating stress and anxiety. Women expressed their concerns of being returned to face Honour Based Violence and forced "cutting" of their daughters.

*"It's illegal here. Why would they send me back to face it?"*

The women commented on the role services played in supporting them. This included Saheliya which offered them, amongst other things, access to English classes and training and support to help their transition into the Community.

## Women in prostitution.

Although we have worked directly with women in prostitution and women who have a link with it through other services, we knew getting women together would be problematic for the following reasons.

- Trust between women.
- Trust in services.
- Fear of their Pimps.
- Women's role in recruitment.
- Sharing punters.
- Fear of being informed on to Police and DWP.
- Womens ability to commit to the sessions.

There were, in our experience, too many barriers to overcome in the available timescales.

The Women's Support Project, who have extensive experience working with prostituted women, advised that their recent history of working with women evidenced lengthy timescales in order to get a few responses.

In addition, colleagues in wider Criminal Justice Services we contacted who could, by default, have a link to prostitution reported "Consultation Fatigue", and the concerns that women may start to be seen as "samples for research" and not individuals.

We whole heartedly agreed and respectfully decided not to pursue this at this time.

The **13%** of women participating through other services were immediately concerned about their confidentiality as some of the services didn't know they had been, or were currently involved, in Prostitution.

Comments on the questionnaire reflected this, including:

*"I don't want them to know. They might look at me different. I feel different."*

*"Some people feel I deserved it because of what I do. I think that too"*

However other women noted:

*"Wise women talked about it at a group. Just hearing what they said helped me talk about it. I didn't choose this, I have nothing to be ashamed of"*

In bringing this discussion to a close we asked all the groups to list what they felt were Barriers to Services. We have listed a "small" cross section here

### Top 10 Barriers to services

<b>Fear of repercussions</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Judgments</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Low Conviction Rates</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Loss of Control</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Child Protection Issues</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Language and Literacy</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Poverty</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>No services in the area</b>	<b>16%</b>

Also see recommendations

### Section 3: Participation

It's fair to say that this section prompted extensive debates across all groups.

Discussion generally reflected women's cynicism and lack of trust in political parties and their representatives.

It was acknowledged during the debate that information concerning the **Scottish Government** was usually accessed through the mainstream media which can be at best, ill-informed and at worst, biased.

**56%** of women's perceptions were that historically, survivor's opinions and experiences had been gathered but had been widely ignored with women commenting on the "tick in a box" mentality with little change.

*"They know all this already, what's changed?"*

From this discussion we asked if women were aware of existing or current Scottish Government legislation and strategies on Gender Based Violence.

#### Aware of current legislation?

Yes	16%
No	52%
Not sure	32%

Facilitators took the opportunity to inform the group about historical, new and up coming discussions regarding changes to legislation and policies on gender based violence.

Whilst acknowledging these positive ways forward they expressed frustration at their lack of awareness stating:

*"If we don't know what legislation exists how do we know what rights we have?"*

The Equally Safe Strategy was referred to and, given it's not for general circulation, it wasn't expected that women would know about it. However only **50%** of the **18** staff from services in attendance were aware of it.

Some reasons offered for this, and for other general gaps in knowledge included services not having the capacity to engage at strategic levels or local networks, therefore reports and information are missed or not distributed widely enough and often found by chance.

In response, women commented that this could account for some services being ill informed regarding legislation surrounding Gender Based Violence resulting in women receiving conflicting information.

Women were clear that their opinions come, not just from their direct experiences of violence and abuse, but from being aware of the inequality of women and other types of discrimination. This should be seen as an invaluable resource with **83%** saying that it was important they have a say in developing strategic policies at local and national levels.

*"Survivors need to get involved. We need to speak up. Who knows better than us?"*

*"This report is from the horse's mouth that's how it should be. You wouldn't consult a bus driver about a new rule book for train drivers"*

Exploring ways of enabling participation were introduced to the conversation with women commenting on barriers to engagement including

- A lack of self-confidence.
- No access to the internet.
- Literacy needs.
- Politicians too 'jargonny'.
- Assumed Education levels.
- Assumed class levels.
- Lack of childcare (to engage with meetings).
- No money for bus fares (to engage at meetings).
- Poverty (being sanctioned for going to meetings).
- Survivor stereotypes.
- Accessibility i.e. Transport Language, Buildings.
- Support staff and PAs
- Times of meetings.

*"Politicians speak another language"*

*"They only want to talk to certain types of people. The ones who are polite and say the things they want to hear"*

*"They have all had a good education"*

It was recognised that some of these comments may be based on "presumption", and that some of the opinions and views expressed may be in themselves biased and ill-informed. Nevertheless, women were resolute that, based on the lack of information about the "positive" changes made at **Scottish Government** and the often "excessive jargon" used were problematic stating:

*"It's not surprising we would think this"*

*"The website is a nightmare!"*

Women felt that the **Scottish Government** had "dropped the ball" "when it came to promoting the positive stuff they do and acknowledged they were unaware of most of these "good changes" until these sessions informed them otherwise.

*"I didn't know they did all that until I came here today...why do we not know this?"*

*"I feel better about this now I know what they HAVE done and are planning to do"*

In summing up this discussion, we asked women that if barriers were acknowledged and reduced, would they be interested in participating and engaging on some level with Local and Scottish Government Policy development on Gender Based Violence?

#### Interested in Engagement at Local and National levels?

Yes	67%
No	18%
Not sure	15%

*"We can, and should, help make changes"*

*"I don't always like what they are doing but I need to stop shouting at the telly and just get bloody involved"*

*"Bring it on!!"*

# Recommendations

The nature of any work we do at Wise Women is to encourage the expression of opinions. Therefore it is not surprising that at the end of the sessions women offered a number of recommendations to be taken forward, seeing it as their first “role” in participating with the **Scottish Government**.

These recommendations are not new and many are already dispersed throughout the report, however for easy reading we have condensed the most popular into the following categories:

## Education and Training:

Compulsory education in Schools, addressing respect in relationships including GBV equality & diversity.

All Primary school curriculums to include safety awareness raising.

Realistic and measured Training for teachers on GBV.

Clearer guidelines for Teachers reporting suspicion.

Better support for Teachers when reporting.

## Cultural Practice

For Honour Based Violence and forced harmful Cultural Practice in a woman's country of origin to be a good enough reason for women to have leave to stay status.

To challenge the hypocrisy of child protection when sending women and children back to countries of origin where FGM will be performed.

## Criminal Justice:

Compulsory ongoing training on GBV across all Criminal Justice Services including impact and survivor responses when reporting.

Clearer lines of communication throughout the reporting process.

Consistency of information.

For crimes against women to be taken as seriously as crimes against the state, finance, and property.

For crimes of GBV to carry sentencing that would act as a deterrent.

For GBV to be categorised as a Hate Crime.

## Class

To acknowledge and accept we have a class divide that has a negative impact on some women accessing services and putting strategies in place to improve this.

## Services

Compulsory ongoing training for services improving understanding of the complexity of GBV, therefore reducing discriminatory, judgemental attitudes and improving service provision.

For services to address and offer dignified, respectful and equal access.

For health services to explore alternative therapies to medication.

To have the choice to be examined by Female GPs

Improved funding for services in rural areas.

Improved funding for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector services to cope with increased demands due to awareness raising & public campaigns.

“Ring Fenced funding” for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector GBV service development.

## Poverty

To address and challenge sanctions imposed on women accessing support groups or attending personal development courses.

To provide realistic budgets to services allowing full and equal access including travel and childcare.

Improved access to information that's not reliant on having access to the internet.

## Scottish Government Ministers

Training for all politicians on GBV and not just the ones interested in it.

To not just be heard....to be listened to.

*“To not just flick through this report and then stick it in your knicker drawer”*

*“I don't think we can fully stop violence against women and girls but that doesn't mean we can't make a big bloody dent in it. We aren't called 'Scotland the Brave' for nothing!!!!”*

## Process & Methodology

### Programme & format of the sessions

Women taking part were mainly identified through existing violence against women organisations. Word of mouth for LGBT telephone consults.

Based on previous consultation the format of the day was:

#### Confidence Building morning addressing:

- Shouldering the Blame : Why do we do it?
- Surviving Abuse: The Skills, Qualities and Strengths of Survivors
- Thriving Beyond Abuse : The Evidence

And in the afternoon:

#### Discussion and Confidential Survey for The Scottish Government:

- What exactly it is women experience and the Impact it has on us?
- Services, good, bad and non-existent!
- What needs to be done to challenge / stop GBV.
- Challenging the myths and stereotypes.

There were 4 main purposes for this format

- 1: Set themes for the day, informing women what to expect, offering the opportunity not to complete the questionnaire.
- 2: Allow women to see where we stand on the issue of GBV
3. Acts as warm up for participation.
- 4: Gives women something to take away from the day.

From here we find women are more willing to consider completing the questionnaires.

We had a **100%** return on the questionnaires

### Participation

Organisations contacted:	17
Organisations Participating:	9
Telephone consultations:	9
Number of women participating:	112

### Adaptions to ensure inclusion

- Plain English materials & flyers.
- Some onsite sessions provided with services familiar to the women.
- Accessible premises identified.
- Support and prayer rooms provided.
- Travel expenses and taxis for Disabled women provided.
- Crèche provided.
- PA's and Interpreters provided.
- Support staff in attendance.
- Literacy support provided.
- Lunch provided.

### **LGBT consultations**

Initial contact was made with **11** women explaining the purpose of the consultation. Information on the content of the questionnaire was discussed and recommendations made for support before, during, and after the process. A 24 hour consideration period was offered and a date and time set for completion.

**9** women chose to complete.

### Areas Covered

Glasgow  
West Dunbartonshire  
East Dunbartonshire  
Renfrewshire  
Ayrshire

## Representation of women:

### Gender:

Female 97% Transwomen 03%

Age: 20-24	10%
25-39	45%
40-59	32%
60+	12%
Prefer not to say	01%

### Self-identified Ethnic Background

Asian Indian	05%
Asian Pakistani	03%
Black	02%
Black African	09%
Scottish Pakistani	03%
Mixed Kurdish/ Iraqi,	01%

White Scottish	51%
White English	05%
White British	06%
White African	01%
White Polish	02%
White Irish	02%

Other: Sri Lankan	03%
Blank	07%

### Religion

Buddhist	03%
Christian	06%
Church of England	01%
Scotland	12%
Ecumenical	01%
Roman Catholic	24%

Hindu	02%
Muslim	10%
Sikh	01%
No Religion	31%
Prefer not to say	03%
Blank	06%

### Disability

Yes	27%
No	67%
Prefer not to say	06%

### Sexuality

Bi Sexual	06%
Heterosexual	73%
Lesbian	14%
Other	01%
Prefer not to say	03%

## Representation of Services:

- Rape Counselling & Resource Centre Kilmarnock
- East Ayrshire Womens Aid
- Wise Women
- Glasgow Disability Alliance
- The Daisy Project Castlemilk
- Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis
- SAY Women
- Saheliya
- Glasgow East Womens Aid

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