Item 6

16th March 2023

Glasgow Community Planning Partnership

Safe Glasgow Partnership

Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability

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Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership Report to Safe Glasgow Partnership

Purpose of Report:

To report on the work of the city wide strategic multi-agency Violence Against Women Partnership.

Recommendations:

The Safe Glasgow Partnership are asked to:

- To consider the information provided.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 The purpose of this briefing is to update the Safe Glasgow Partnership on ongoing work undertaken by Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP).

1.2 The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership was established to bring together key multi-agency partners in order that they take forward actions at a local level as agreed in the Scottish Government Equally Safe Strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

1.3 Cllr Holly Bruce has been identified as the political lead for violence against women and girls and is the Chair of the GVAWP. Cllr Bruce assumed this role in January 2023.

2 Detail of report
GVAWP

2.1 Following on from the GVAWP review in May 2022, the GVAWP agreed the appointment of an external contractor to support NRS VAW Team in the development of a city wide strategic plan to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

2.2 As part of GVAWP accountability the partnership will also report to the Environment & Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee (ELN).

3 WAIR Group

3.1 This working group is concerned with responding to the needs of women who are subject to immigration barriers. This includes women asylum seekers, women on spousal visa's, student visas or other immigration status and women from the European Union, who have arrived in UK from 31st December 2020. The WAIR Group is the only working group of its kind in the UK.

3.2 The WAIR Group is now Chaired by British Red Cross, the previous Chair having resigned to take up a new post. The WAIR Group are currently reviewing and refreshing their action plan for 2023 and this activity will inform the city wide strategic plan to tackle violence against women and girls. Informing the development of the Action Plan will be the Labyrinth Report and recommendations from SEREDA Report.

3.3 The Women, Destitution and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Project has gathered interest across the UK. A cross party working group of the Welsh Senedd invited Chair of WAIR Group to present evidence to the group of the work of the project. The project to date has supported 6 women either in hotel or refuge accommodation. Fast track immigration advice and advocacy is

provided by Just Right Scotland. It also offers access to emergency accommodation, a cash based living allowance and assertive outreach support. This support service is available for women aged 18+, without dependents.

3.4 The WAIR Group continue to have concerns regarding the implementation of the UK Nationality and Borders Act 2022. The Act significantly limits any responses that statutory services can offer vulnerable women, giving grave concerns for the safety and wellbeing of women and girls, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking, prostitution, sexual and other exploitation.

3.5 The war in Ukraine has been a focus for the WAIR Group and the increased vulnerability of women and children fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, in transit to destination countries and on arrival in the UK. In every armed conflict there is evidence that violence against women and girls increases and continues long after a conflict has ended. There is no indication that this conflict will end any time soon and there is a need to robustly plan for the safe resettlement of displaced women and children. Despite the call for a gendered, trauma informed response internationally as well as in Scotland, including Glasgow, there is no evidence that this has been adopted and integrated into service responses. The WAIR Group is intending to host a follow up event 'What Next: A Gendered Response to Ukraine Refugee Displacement', in partnership with the Improvement Service and COSLA. We understand that dispersal of Ukraine refugees will be across Scotland. This has been raised locally within the Glasgow specialist Ukraine Hub meetings and nationally with the Scottish Government.

3.6 The lack of visibility and under reporting of violence against women within the Ukraine refugee community is a cause for concern. This has been highlighted and there is the need for additional awareness raising. It is not ideal that this is being done at a time when there is further displacement of this refugee community now that the MS Ambition is in the process of being decommissioned.

3.7 The WAIR Group were invited to Chair the launch of SEREDA Research https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/superdiversity-institute/sereda/index.aspx as part of 16 Days of Action. The event was attended by Elena Whitham, Minister for Community Safety. A recommendation from the launch was a request for Scottish Government to consider establishing a national advisory group to address the needs of women subject to immigration barriers.

4 Increasing Cost of Living and VAW

4.1 Hard on the heels of public health restrictions easing, the cost of living significantly increased for everyone and the impacts have been felt by communities across the city.

4.2 We are all familiar with the 'heat or eat' rhetoric experienced by many of Glasgow's population. Structural inequalities mean that women are more likely

to experience poverty, to stay in poverty longer and this is exacerbated when women live with or experience any form of gender based abuse, when this is intersected by immigration barriers, such as being from the BME community or having a disability then levels of poverty are further increased.

4.3 The price of safety has increased significantly for women. Financial and economic abuse are frequent features of coercive control. Women with low to no income are least likely to have the resources to seek safety. Studies and practice show that if survivors of gender based violence have resources to safely leave a relationship, and land in safe, affordable housing with a means to care for themselves and their children they are more likely to escape further abuse.

4.4 Making a House a Home Initiative is a GCC project which supports women with children. The project works in partnership with front line women's services to support women and their children recover from their trauma and live positively in their community.

4.5 Front line women's services report increased utility costs. For example, one project reported that annual costs of gas and electricity have risen from £16,000 to £70,000. per annum. The GVAWP intends to consult with front line services to gather information on the impact of rising costs on service provision.

5 Access to Justice

5.1 Access to justice remains a significant concern for VAW Services. ASSIST and other services continue to report that domestic abuse cases are subject to considerable delay. As a consequence, the risks for women and their children increase. They are subject to increased aggression, stalking and harassment, coercion and threats. Criminal Justice responses are poor with little or no sanctions when any protective orders are breached and the conditions imposed are failing to robustly manage risk.

5.2 There is an individual human cost to poor criminal justice responses to breaches of bail as well as a service generated cost. Of note are the number of repeat referrals to MARAC where sometimes multiple breaches of bail have occurred.

6. Scottish Government Funding Review

6.1 The Scottish Government have produced the report from the review of funding and commissioning of VAW services. The full report will be available in June https://www.gov.scot/publications/analysis-call-evidence-responses-violence-against-women-girls-funding-review/

7. Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

7.1 MARAC continues to operate in Glasgow. A shortfall in funding was previously reported to the Safe Glasgow Partnership and we are pleased to inform the partnership that funding has now been secured from NRS VAW Services, the Wheatley Group and Glasgow Health & Social Care Criminal Justice Services for the current financial year.

7.2 MARAC is a multi-agency process and no one single agency has a responsibility for its delivery. Funding will come to an end 31st March 2023. MARAC has been subject to discussion at the Community Safety Partnership Executive Group and while this has helped to resolve the immediate funding shortfall, sustainable funding model for MARAC is now required.

7.3 A paper is being prepared for the Glasgow HSCP Heads of Service and the GCC ELN Policy Committee.

7.4 MARAC is the only public protection process which has a focus on the safety of the adult victim domestic abuse victim. Should MARAC cease to operate there are a number or risks, including reputational risks not only for individuals but for key stakeholders. Please see attached EQIA (Appendix 1), approved by the MARAC Steering Group in February 2023.

7.5 In 2022 MARAC in Glasgow discussed **1,130** high risk victims of domestic abuse. The vast majority of those discussed were women. There were **65** male victims included within the overall number. At the same time, the MARAC discussed **1,588** children and young people.

7.6 MARAC is now established in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. The Scottish Government has established a MARAC Advisory Group, where short, medium and longer term objectives have been developed nationally for MARAC and this includes establishing national standards. Any decisions by the Scottish Government about MARAC funding will not be received before the current funding in Glasgow is fully utilised.

8. Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

8.1 Along with the review of the GVAWP city wide strategy a specific strategy to tackle CSE is in development.

9. Applying a Gendered Lens

9.1 The GVAWP hosted a workshop in October, 2022 on applying a gendered lens across mainstream responses. The GVAWP has a focus on violence against women and girls and there is a need to consider the issues raised in this report within the wider women's equality agenda. The learning report is now available. See Appendix 2 for full detail on the report.

9.2 The learning report on applying a gendered lens has been shared with Women's Work Stream of Social Recovery Task Force.

10. Restorative Justice (RJ) and Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (DASV)

10.1 The use of RJ practices within the area of DASV is an area of concern for those involved with delivering support and advocacy services to women who have experienced DASV.

10.2 In 2021 a position statement was developed by National Network of VAW&G Partnerships expressing specific concerns. Subsequently an open letter was drafted to Scottish Government, signed by front line women's services, practitioners and academics.

10.3 The GVAWP is concerned that wider, meaningful collaboration has not taken place to fully consider the risks posed using RJ as a response to DASV. Following on from discussion with Community Justice Team, a paper was presented to the Community Justice Glasgow Partnership highlighting the concerns.

11. Recommendations

The Safe Glasgow Partnership are asked to:

- To consider the information provided.