



Glasgow City Council

Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee

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

Contact: Ann Fehilly Tel 0776 8728999

Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership Update

Purpose of Report:

This report sets out an update on key Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership activity.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to

- a) Note the operational and partnership activity contained within the Strategic Plan; and
- b) Note the current and emerging pressures across the system.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP) is a long-established, multi-agency strategic partnership bringing together statutory and third sector organisations to strengthen prevention, protection and responses to violence against women and girls (VAW&G) across the city.
- 1.2 The Partnership operates within the national policy framework set by the Scottish Government and COSLA's *Equally Safe* Strategy and Delivery Plan, recognising violence against women and girls as both a cause and a consequence of entrenched gender inequality.
- 1.3 This report provides Committee with an update on key strategic, operational and partnership activity progressed since the last reporting cycle, alongside analysis of current and emerging pressures across the system.

2. GVAWP Strategic Context

- 2.1 The GVAWP citywide Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan are firmly aligned with *Equally Safe*, Scotland's national strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The framework is internationally recognised for its rights-based, gendered approach and its clear articulation of structural inequality as a primary driver of violence.
- 2.2 Structural gender inequality remains the root cause of violence against women and girls. Evidence continues to demonstrate that harmful gender stereotypes remain embedded across education, media and public systems, and that public policy is not yet fully aligned to achieving gender equality outcomes.
- 2.3 Violence against women and girls remains at endemic levels locally and nationally. Key harms continue to include domestic abuse, sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation, online abuse, child sexual exploitation, so-called "honour-based" abuse and forced marriage. Treating these harms as isolated or individual issues undermines effective prevention and protection and fails to address their shared systemic causes.

3. Service Demand and System Pressures

- 3.1 Across Glasgow, demand for specialist VAW services continues to rise sharply, with increases in both referral volumes and case complexity. Recent information and data highlights significant escalation across multiple services.
- 3.2 **Glasgow Women's Aid** report that women and their children are now living in temporary refuge accommodation longer, the average was 12 to 24 months, this has now increased to up to four years for women with larger families, with a disproportionate impact on women from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

Prolonged stays in refuge accommodation can increase dependency on services, contribute to institutionalisation, limit autonomy, choice, personal development, independent living skills and establishing community relationships. Delays in accessing permanent housing also reduce Women's Aid's capacity to support new women, children and young people.

3.3 **Commercial Sexual Exploitation** referral data across the services shows:

- TARA service involved in supporting women trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation report an increase in referrals by **53% year-to-date**, equating to an **36% increase** in cases taken on within a single year. In 2025/2026 TARA worked with 159 individual women.
- **Routes Out** has continued to deliver consistent outreach to women, delivering 367 engagements in 2025/2026. Of the 77 women accessing services 37 women have been supported to exit prostitution. The consistent implementation of Operation Waterdale (joint work with Police Scotland, targeting kerb-crawling activity while maintaining a trauma-informed pathway into specialist support) has seen the number of observed sex buyers fall from 496 in 2023/2024 to 154 observations in 2025/2026.

3.4 **ASSIST** a court advocacy support service for domestic abuse victims engaged in criminal justice process report the following changes in referral data across the service:

- **5,151 referrals in 2024/25**, increasing to **5,768 in 2025/26**
- An additional **617 referrals**, representing a **12% year-on-year increase**
- Referrals remain predominantly from women (91.9%)

In Glasgow specifically, **ASSIST** referrals increased from **1,506 to 1,843**, representing a **22% rise**, significantly exceeding the service-wide average. Glasgow continues to account for a disproportionate share of system growth, placing acute pressure on local provision.

3.5 **MARAC** a multi-agency risk assessment process coordinated by Neighbourhoods Regeneration Sustainability (NRS) VAW Services the primary focus is to address the serious harm and risk of homicide presented by high risk adult victims of domestic abuse.

A comparison of referral data for 2023–2025 demonstrates a clear upward trajectory, with a **12.2% increase between 2024 and 2025**. This increase reflects growing demand on coordination functions, partner agencies and risk management capacity, alongside rising numbers of children associated with high-risk cases.

Month	Referrals 2023	Referrals 2024	Referrals 2025	Children 2025
January	69	86	115	152
February	112	86	116	157
March	109	87	111	171
April	72	100	92	123
May	92	88	116	148
June	87	98	115	167
July	109	208 (2 cycles)	230	367
August	187 (2 cycles)	92	113	182
September	103	121	115	176
October	107	110	115	186
November	118	94	84	142
December	87	81	81	128
TOTAL	1,246	1,251	1,403	2,099

4. Financially Included Project

- 4.1 The Financially Included Project, a partnership between GVAWP/NRS VAW Services and Glasgow East Money Advice Project, has now been operational for four years and remains the first and most comprehensive initiative of its kind in Scotland addressing financial and economic abuse.
- 4.2 Since 2022 the project has:
- Supported **691 women**
 - Trained **251 practitioners**
 - Expanded staffing from **4 to 9 posts**
 - Secured over **£3 million in direct financial gains** for women
 - Established the **National Economic Abuse Response Network**
- 4.3 In September 2025 the project launched [*The Purple Phone*](#), a free, confidential helpline providing specialist advice and clear routes into support.
- 4.4 The project is now firmly established within Glasgow, with growing interest from neighbouring local authorities including East Renfrewshire and Clackmannanshire. Governance arrangements are being strengthened through the proposed transition from a Steering Group to a Multi-Agency Advisory Group, ensuring sustainability and strategic oversight.

5. Commercial Sexual Exploitation

- 5.1 Routes Out provided formal evidence to the Scottish Parliament Criminal Justice Committee during Stage 1 scrutiny of the *Prostitution (Offences and Support) (Scotland) Bill*. The Stage 1 Report was published in January 2026, followed by a Parliamentary debate in February.

Whilst the bill did not pass to Stage 2 the Scottish Government committed to an Independent Commission on the Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex. In March 2026 former Deputy Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Fiona Taylor was appointed to lead the Commission which will consider how to safely and effectively criminalise the purchase of sex in Scotland.

It is likely that there will be increased scrutiny of the GCC Services supporting women caught up in systems of commercial sexual exploitation as, alongside the Commission above, the Emma Caldwell Inquiry and the Public Inquiry into Group Based child sexual abuse will be scrutinising past and current responses to adult and child commercial sexual exploitation. The recent podcast by Bauer Media, Beware Book, evidences the continued public and media interest in systems of prostitution and how Glasgow has, and continues, to respond to some of the most vulnerable women in the city.

- 5.2 The Scottish Government has also launched [a public consultation on proposed guidance for Adult victims of human trafficking and exploitation](#) which includes a strong commitment to the meaningful inclusion of lived experience.
- 5.3 GVAWP, TARA and Routes Out also hosted an online webinar with the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner on Behind the Profile: Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking through Adult Services Websites. The research highlights the scale of digital exploitation and identifies Glasgow as one of the highest-impact locations nationally. [Behind the Profile: Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking through Adult Services Websites](#). Drawing on survivor testimony, large scale data analysis, and a legal and regulatory review, the report examines how Adult Services Websites form a major part of the digital infrastructure through which exploitation is initiated, scaled, and concealed. The research found that the 12 Adult Services Websites analysed (nearly 63,000 listings recorded in a single point in time) attracted 41.7 million visits in just one month. 59% of the adverts on the sites had three or more indicators of exploitation and trafficking, and 39% had four or more indicators. Out of the top 20 locations, Glasgow had the 2nd highest number of adverts listed with Edinburgh coming in at number 14.
- 5.4 In late 2025, three Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) submitted applications to renew their existing licences. In addition, two of these venues sought extensions to their permitted opening hours, requesting permissions to operate until 5.00am. The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP) lodged formal objections to both the licence renewals and the proposed extensions to

opening hours. The GVAWP further recommended that a refreshed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) be undertaken, citing the significant period of time that has elapsed since the last EQI assessment. This recommendation highlighted Glasgow's stated ambition to become a Feminist City and raised concerns on the increasing prevalence and normalisation of misogyny within communities.

6. Prevention and Public Engagement

6.1 A citywide Prevention Working Group is being established to strengthen coordination across education, community and third sector partners and to progress a whole-system approach to prevention.

6.2 Priority activity includes a proposed *Layered Prevention Test of Change* focusing on young men and boys and the prevention of misogyny.

6.3 GVAWP Let's Talk events

Significant engagement activity has been delivered, including events on commercial sexual exploitation, immigration barriers, FGM awareness and stalking, all of which have demonstrated strong uptake and positive practitioner feedback.

- **February 2026 "Let's Talk About: Commercial Sexual Exploitation – Challenging Demand"** event. Evaluation feedback demonstrated strong engagement, with participants reporting increased confidence and intention to apply learning within their services.
- **February 2026 FGM Aware Event** to mark the international day of zero tolerance of FGM, the GVAWP supported the Women's Support Project to provide an update from the Scottish Government on the national FGM guidance and implementation of the 2020 Act and gave participants the opportunity to discuss and plan activities to raise awareness around the guidance, FGM orders, and services to help. Whilst also affording the opportunity to network and share examples of community engagement work
- **April 2026 "Let's Talk About: Violence Against Women and Women Subject to Immigration Barriers"** event. The evaluation from the event will inform a refresh of the WAIR (Women, Asylum, Immigration and Refugees) Group Action Plan in line with emerging GVAWP priorities.
- **April 2026 National Stalking Awareness Week "They Just Won't Leave Me Alone": Stalking in Young People's Lives Webinar** "hosted by the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership, the University of the West of Scotland shared insights from their 2023 study on adolescent stalking. ASSIST provided lived experience examples of the complex risks faced by young victims, particularly around safety planning, legal protections, and how social media can mask harmful behaviours. Action Against Stalking outlined their national work on legislation, research, and education, including programmes for young people and a forthcoming short film, Fishbowl. Glasgow Girls Club shared awareness raising work on domestic abuse and stalking, including their award-winning film Sophie's Stop and the development of the Sophie's Stop app to support young women.

- **April 2026** VAW Outreach Worker hosted a Show and Tell with NRS staff on stalking in the workplace.

7. **MARAC Developments**

- 7.1 A MARAC Short Life Working Group has been established with a defined programme, Terms of Reference and project plan.
- 7.2 A Test of Change will be implemented in one locality from June/July 2026 for six months, supported by a developing monitoring and evaluation framework.
- 7.3 Discussions with the Health and Social Care Partnership regarding financial commitment have concluded positively.

8. **Women's Safety and Feminist Urbanism**

- 8.1 GVAWP continues joint work with the Feminist Urbanism Working Group to reposition women's safety as a systemic responsibility rather than an individual burden.
- 8.2 A shared priority is the development of a **Women's Safety Charter**, intended to operate as:
- A signature commitment within the Feminist City Strategy
 - A cross-service framework for delivery
 - A visible mechanism for public accountability

9. **NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde (NHSGG&C)**

- 9.2 NRSVAW services staff have met with colleagues from NHSGG&C to discuss the need for NHSGG&C to provide formal, strategic leadership within Glasgow's Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP) and MARAC governance arrangements, reflecting the city's uniquely high volume and complexity of violence against women and high-risk domestic abuse.
- 9.3 VAW&G issues are recognised both nationally and locally as significant public health and safeguarding concerns, with links across child and adult protection, mental health, substance use and maternity services. As such, NHSGG&C insight, partnership working, and leadership play an important role in supporting prevention, protection, and system learning.

While there is valued involvement from NHSGG&C at an operational level within the MARAC process, there is an opportunity to further strengthen strategic engagement to support system-wide oversight and development. Enhancing this connection will help address broader governance considerations and support a more coordinated approach to risk management.

To support this, there is a request for NHSGG&C to consider nominating a senior NHS representative with appropriate authority to contribute at a strategic level, helping to strengthen accountability, inform policy and pathways, and support citywide safety and risk management for women and children.

10. Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review (DHSR)

- 10.1 [The Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews \(Scotland\) Act 2025 \(Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provision\) Regulations 2026](#) came into force on 1 April 2026. The legislation establishes a statutory framework for multiagency reviews of domestic homicides and suicides, with the aim of improving safety and preventing future deaths.
- 10.2 Statutory guidance for Domestic Homicide and Suicide Reviews has now been published. The guidance supports the Review Oversight Committee (ROC) and Case Review Panels in the discharge of their functions and sets out the standards to be applied where the ROC agrees that a review of a death should be undertaken. The guidance also outlines the interface with other review processes, including child death reviews, and confirms alignment with relevant legislation and existing healthcare standards. [Domestic homicide and suicide statutory review guidance is now published.](#)

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership remains firmly committed to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls through strategic leadership, partnership delivery and evidence-led practice.
- 11.2 While escalating demand and system pressures present ongoing challenges, the Partnership continues to strengthen prevention, improve coordination and deliver innovative responses across the city.
- 11.3 The Partnership welcomes continued engagement with Committee and will provide further updates as this work progresses.

12. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	NO
<i>Legal:</i>	NO
<i>Personnel:</i>	NO

Procurement: NO

Council Strategic Plan: Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-29? Please specify.

Outcome 4

Glasgow's work to end violence against women and girls results in:

- women and girls can access the right services based on identified need and are protected from further harm
- experiences of women and girls inform the planning and activity to eradicate gender-based violence
- prevention approaches support tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

No significant impact

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage. NO

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify: NO

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal? NO

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target? NO

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts: NO

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report
Y/N

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out

13. Recommendations

13.1 The Committee is asked to

- a) Note the operational and partnership activity contained within the Strategic Plan; and
- b) Note the current and emerging pressures across the system.