



Item 3

18th May 2026

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:

- Consider the information provided and note the contents of the paper
- Note the current and emerging pressures across the system.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Safe Glasgow Partnership on the work undertaken by Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP).
- 1.2 The GVAWP was established to bring together key multi-agency partners to take forward actions at a local level as agreed in Scottish Government *Equally Safe Strategy* to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.
- 1.3 This report provides the Safe Partnership with an update on key strategic, operational activity progressed since the last reporting cycle, alongside analysis of current and emerging pressures across the system

2. Detail of Report

2.1 GVAWP Strategic Developments

The GVAWP citywide Strategic Plan and corresponding action plan is 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 Violence against women and girls (VAWG) 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.
- 2.3 Discussions are ongoing with colleagues from NHSGG&C to support wider strategic engagement. While NHSGG&C already contributes effectively at an operational level, there is a need to enhance strategic engagement, through senior representation to improve system-wide oversight, coordination, and risk management, ultimately leading to better safety outcomes for women and children.
- 2.4 NRS VAW Services represent the GVAWP at Feminist Urbanism Working Group. More recently the working group has tendered for the appointment of an external contractor to develop and produce a Feminist Strategy for the city in line with the aims of the group including wider women's safety and equality concerns.

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3. Prevention and Public Engagement

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 GVAWP Let's Talk About events on commercial sexual exploitation, immigration barriers, FGM awareness and stalking, all of which 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.

4. Service Demand and System Pressure

- 4.1 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 service demand across multiple services.
- 4.2 **Glasgow Women’s Aid** report that women and any children are now living in temporary refuge accommodation longer, average 12 to 24 months, increasing to up to four years for women with larger families,

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disproportionately impacting 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.

4.3 **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.

In late January 2026, ASSIST made temporary change to referral criteria, only accepting new referrals for Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDAA) support when risk met MARAC thresholds.

4.4 **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 trend 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

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December	87	81	81	128
TOTAL	1,246	1,251	1,403	2,099

MARAC is currently under pressure to ensure that all cases proceeding to discussion are heard within the agreed timeframe. Increasing referral volumes, alongside existing capacity constraints, are making it even more challenging to meet these expectations consistently.

MARAC coordination funding arrangements are agreed with NRS Services, Police Scotland, Glasgow HSCP Justice Services and Wheatley Group.

A MARAC Short Life Working Group was established in January 2026, with clearly defined aims and objectives. The group was tasked with developing a restructured approach to the delivery of MARAC across the city. This work includes strengthening referral criteria, redesigning processes, and establishing robust monitoring and quality assurance frameworks. A Test of Change is scheduled to begin in June 2026 and will run through to January 2027. The North East area is identified as the test locality.

- 4.5 **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.

5. Financially Included Project

- 5.1 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. The project works across all forms of violence against women and girls.

- 5.2 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**

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- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 In partnership with Money Advice Scotland, Financially Included are hosting a [national conference](#) on the growing impact of economic abuse and coerced debt. The event will take place 18th June, 2026 at Crown Plaza Hotel.
- 5.5 The work of Financially Included has made visible the high levels of financial and economic abuse hidden in plain sight across all forms of violence against women. The Team recently contributed to a [Scottish Women's Aid report](#) highlighting the prevalence of coerced debt within a context of domestic abuse.

6. Commercial Sexual Exploitation

- 6.1 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.

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 GVAWP, TARA and Routes Out 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

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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.

- 6.4 In December 2025, two 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.

7. National Work

7.1 Equally Safe Progress Report

In March 2026 Scottish Government and COSLA produced [Equally Delivery Plan progress report](#). This report outlines the steps being taken on national outcomes as set out in the Delivery Plan.

7.2 Delivery Equally Safe (DES)

In late February 2026, Scottish Government announced multi-year funding extension to Delivering Equally Safe fund until March 2028. This afforded organisations in receipt of DES funds, greater stability, retain staff and forward plan. This commitment is in line with current Scottish Government commitments to fairer funding but does not address the wider challenge of sustainable funding within the VAW sector.

7.2 Consultations

Scottish Government are consulting on [Protections in the Justice System for Women and Girls](#). This consultation will consider how criminal law can support prevention of violence against women and girls. Submissions by June 2026.

7.3 Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review (DHSR)

[The Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews \(Scotland\) Act 2025 \(Commencement No. 1 and Transitional](#)

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[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.

- 7.4 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.](#)

8. Recommendations

The Safe Glasgow Partnership is asked to:

- **Consider the information provided and note the contents of the GVAWP report.**
- **Note the current and emerging pressures across the system.**