

Border Women's Aid Ltd Housing Support Service

Hawick

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 November 2024

Service provided by:
Border Women's Aid Ltd a company
limited by guarantee

Service provider number:
SP2013012204

Service no:
CS2013321881

About the service

Border Women's Aid provides support, advice and refuge accommodation for women and their children who have experienced domestic abuse. At the time of the inspection visit there were two women living in refuge, and a further 70 women were being supported on an outreach basis. Since the time of the last inspection, the service has significantly expanded the community element, offering outreach support, group work and prevention work throughout the Scottish Borders.

Border Women's Aid is a registered charity which is managed by a voluntary board of directors.

The mission statement of Border Women's Aid states 'We are women supporting women to live empowered lives free from domestic abuse in all its forms'.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 and 14 November 2024.

The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with five women using the service
- spoke with four staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents and records
- reviewed survey responses from four external professionals and seven members of staff

Key messages

- Women received high quality support that was tailored to their own experiences, needs and wishes
- Women benefitted from trusting and reliable relationships with staff within the service and were supported to build valued networks of support within their community
- This could be further strengthened by ensuring people are involved in agreeing and reviewing their personal support plans
- The provider should notify the Care Inspectorate of all significant events, including protection concerns.
- Where required, robust safety planning and interagency communication helped to keep women and their families emotionally and physically safe
- The staff team were committed, passionate and share a depth and breadth of skill and experience.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

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| How well do we support people's wellbeing? | 4 - Good |
| How good is our staff team? | 5 - Very Good |

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for people and clearly outweighed the identified areas for improvement.

Women using the service benefitted from working with a staff team with a strongly held value basis recognising women as experts in their own experiences, needs and wishes. One woman told us: 'Support was tailored to me and I felt heard and not judged'. This gave the women confidence that they were being listened to and that any support would be highly sensitive to their situation and would not generate further risk.

This should be further strengthened by the embedding of co-produced and regularly reviewed personal support plans. The service has begun to introduce written support plans for all newly referred women, but this needs to be extended to all women using the service. Some women expressed anxiety about what would happen when support came to an end, and explicitly discussing this during regular reviews of support would provide greater certainty. (Area for Improvement 1).

Women using the service benefitted from working with a staff team who had a deep understanding of the significant impact of experiences of domestic abuse. The service runs regular group and individual work using the 'Own my Life' programme. Women told us that this helped them to understand what happened within their relationships and to begin to recover from the impact. Through this programme, some women also developed a community of support and spoke of the value of learning and sharing experiences alongside others. One woman said that within this group she 'felt so understood' and another shared how her group had kept in touch after the course ended and supportive relationships continued.

Safety planning was a significant element of the support offered by this service, both for women still living with people causing harm and for those who were separated. This planning was vital in ensuring women and their families felt and were kept safe. Reflecting on this process, one woman told us 'They called the police and everyone who needed to know was aware, and I felt like I had a safety bubble around me'. Where people's needs changed or where risk increased, the service took a proactive approach to ensuring information was appropriately shared with partner agencies. Specific risk assessment tools were used to support this process.

Staff within the service helped women to engage with external agencies where that was needed and wanted. However the service also aims to: 'build a process which enables Border Women's Aid to be the first and last contact for a woman experiencing domestic abuse, if she chooses'. This recognises how valuable it can be for some women to have their support needs met consistently by as few people as possible.

The service had not complied with their legal duty to notify the Care Inspectorate of significant incidents including protection concerns. Relevant guidance was shared, and the service acknowledged that this was something that had been missed as the service exponentially expanded its outreach work in the years since the last inspection. This did not impact on outcomes for women using the service but is required by all registered health and social care services. (Area for Improvement 2).

Areas for improvement

1. To meet people's individual care and support needs and ensure clarity about goals and outcomes, the provider should ensure the service implements an effective personal planning process that is informed by good practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

2. To promote positive outcomes for people and support effective scrutiny of the service, the provider should ensure that notifications of significant events are submitted to the Care Inspectorate in accordance with relevant guidance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19)

'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good

Women living in refuge accommodation were provided with a high level of support as part of this provision. This included: several prearranged support visits each week; the offer of weekend support where required; as well as additional support outwith these times where needed. For women being provided with support and advice as part of the outreach service, support is also highly personalised and provided according to personal preference and need. The staff team have the time to provide compassionate and meaningful support, which was life changing for many women.

Workers within the team had a variety of experience, skill and personal attributes. This includes people who have worked extensively in the youth work field and in previous roles supporting people who have experienced domestic abuse. The team have a strong appreciation of their different skills and share their knowledge and experience with each other to further support good outcomes for people using the service.

The staff team are committed, passionate, and compassionate in the work that they do. People using the service felt they had a good knowledge of the challenges they faced, and were able to support them at a frequency that was right for them. Staff within the service shared a consistent approach to supporting people, which contributed to helping people feel safe in all their interactions with the service. Women using the service were effusive in their praise of the staff team, stating 'Not all superheroes wear capes - they saved my life' and 'Working with Border Women's Aid has given me back my sparkle. They are a life-saving agency for abused women'.

Women being supported by the service usually experienced a prompt and reliable response whenever they made contact with the service. One woman told us 'they are always super quick to get back to me'. This could be further enhanced by ensuring all women have a clear agreement in their personal support plan outlining how they would seek support if their keyworker was not available.

Working relationships between the staff team are supportive and respectful. This contributed to a warm atmosphere within the service that some of the women spoke about experiencing. This was enhanced by all staff within the service, including those in business support roles, having a strongly held shared value base and commitment. One told us: 'They are so welcoming from the moment you lift the phone or walk into the building'. This supported women to feel safe and valued, encouraging meaningful engagement with the service. This all supported positive outcomes for women using the service and their families in many areas of life.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

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| How well do we support people's wellbeing? | 4 - Good |
| 1.2 People get the most out of life | 4 - Good |
| How good is our staff team? | 5 - Very Good |
| 3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together | 5 - Very Good |

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