

Grampian Women's Aid Housing Support Service

Aberdeen

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
15 August 2025

Service provided by:
Grampian Women's Aid Limited

Service provider number:
SP2004005315

Service no:
CS2003051770

About the service

Grampian Women's Aid is a housing support service providing support in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City for women who have experienced domestic abuse. It provides refuge accommodation within Aberdeen City for women (and their accompanying children) and outreach support services to women and children across Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The range of supports available includes: one-to-one support, advocacy (including domestic abuse court advocacy), and group and peer support. The service operates from premises in Aberdeen.

About the inspection

This inspection took place on 5, 6 and 7 August 2025. We visited the service's offices between 12:45 and 17:05, 09:20 and 16:55 and 09:00 and 15:45 respectively. We gave the manager very short notice of the inspection on the morning of the first visit. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- reviewed survey responses from 15 women using the service and 11 staff
- spoke with five people using the service
- spoke with seven staff and managers
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Women benefitted from strongly individualised support reflecting their wishes and preferences. They were supported to have a voice and to make informed choices.
- Preventing harm to women was a very high priority for the staff team. The service was a committed and effective partner in local multi-agency safeguarding forums. Processes for recording and notifying the Care Inspectorate of significant events needed further development.
- Women experienced highly supportive and positive relationships with a flexible and compassionate staff team who were committed to providing high quality support and achieving positive outcomes.

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

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very 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?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as **very good**. This means the service demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for women using the service.

The strongly individualised support provided by the service reflected women's choices and preferences. Women were free to decide what support they received from the options available. Staff's knowledge and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on women's emotional and physical wellbeing, along with empathy and kindness, underpinned this empowering approach. They supported women to develop insight and to make informed choices without judgement or pressure. Opportunities to come together with other women to share personal experiences also helped them develop confidence, reduce feelings of isolation and learn about the choices available to them.

Women were confident that staff would share personal information with others only with their consent or in exceptional circumstances. This provided reassurance and helped develop trust.

Women benefitted from being signposted to a range of other organisations providing specialist advice and support, with whom the service had developed strong links. Staff also played an important role in advocating for women and helping to ensure their voices were heard, and where appropriate in liaising and advising employers so they could provide the right kind of support.

Personal plans developed by staff reflected women's individual preferences and goals. There was scope for making these more specific, with clear actions and timescales, which should help the service to more effectively evaluate progress. Nevertheless, women told us they knew what to expect of the service they received.

Minimising the risk of harm to women was a very high priority for the staff team and there were regular discussions and reviews as circumstances changed. Moving forward, staff should improve recording of risk assessments and formally review them following significant events to ensure safety measures remain current. Staff were confident that the service's frameworks and procedures supported them to manage risk effectively and had had relevant training. Active participation in local safeguarding processes including MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) supported the aim of identifying and preventing harm. The manager acted promptly on our recommendation that all board members have appropriate protection training.

Recording of significant events needed further development to ensure these can be more easily identified and analysed by managers, and any learning implemented on an ongoing basis. There were also instances where the service had not submitted formal notifications of these to the Care Inspectorate. These support effective scrutiny of services and allow us to take action where required to promote positive outcomes. However, there was no indication of any adverse impact on women, and the manager very promptly reviewed processes to address this, hence we will not make a formal area for improvement in this report.

A review of recruitment and selection records demonstrated that the service had followed most good practice guidance to ensure they appointed only those staff who were suitable. We signposted the service to relevant guidance and offered suggestions for creating opportunities for women to take part in the selection process as appropriate.

How good is our staff team?**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as **very good**. This means the service demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for women using the service.

Managers monitored staff workload and capacity and used this information to inform staffing arrangements and deployment. Where they identified gaps in service provision, they made adjustments on an ongoing basis to maximise the use of resources. In some instances, in response to emerging need, the provider had taken steps to create additional posts providing targeted support for women.

This was a relatively stable staff team which meant women experienced greater continuity of support when their lives were often very challenging and stressful. Women valued the reassurance of the key working system but also described being able to access support as the need arose during the service's hours of operation. Staff kept in regular touch with them and showed interest in and concern for their welfare.

Staff had taken part in a range of relevant training, though the system for recording this was being developed to provide more accurate data for managers. Most experienced regular, high quality supervision and opportunities to meet as a team to discuss their work and contribute to ongoing improvement. This meant they were equipped to optimise the support they provided for women.

There was strong and effective teamwork and staff worked flexibly for women's benefit. Staff prioritised the development of trusting and supportive relationships with women, who made a number of very positive and moving comments about their experiences: 'Amazing, all very soft spoken, kind and give off a safe feeling to be around'; 'The staff are indeed a credit to GWA'; 'X is awesome, phenomenal'; 'Staff are all fantastic'.

Staff also described good quality systems for communication in the team. These included regular 'handovers', informal discussions and a daily recording system that ensured they were up to date with changing circumstances and could respond confidently and effectively to support needs.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

All service users should have outcome focussed support plans which are regularly reviewed. They should demonstrate that women using the service have ownership of their own plans.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me' (HSCS 2.17).

This area for improvement was made on 2 March 2020.

Action taken since then

All service users had a personal plan which staff reviewed with them. Plans reflected women's chosen goals. We offered suggestions for continuing to improve the quality of plans and have included an evaluation in the body of this report.

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

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.2 People get the most out of life	5 - Very 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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