

The Scottish Women's Convention's response to  
Glasgow City's Health and Social Care  
Partnership's consultation on:

# Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan 2023- 2026



October 2022

## Premise

Glasgow City's Health and Social Care Partnership have released their Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. It hopes to improve services for people who experience, or have experienced, domestic abuse across Glasgow – while also implementing prevention techniques to reduce domestic abuse rates. Their plan is intersectional and is centred around a gendered analysis of violence against women and girls.

The consultation they have released asks organisations to consider whether their proposed priorities and vision align with the needs of domestic abuse survivors and those experiencing domestic abuse. We have used the voices of women to answer the offered questions and to assess whether the HSCP have missed any integral elements of reducing domestic violence.

After the HSCP receive the consultation responses, they shall consider alterations that are required and rectify their plan accordingly – incorporating suggestions made.



## The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

## Our Strategy

### **Do you agree with the proposed strategic priorities?**

Yes – completely

Women who have experienced domestic abuse have told us of the extreme toll it takes upon their mental and physical health and we, at the Scottish Women's Convention, welcome the proposed vision and priorities. Survivors have explained that domestic abuse is a difficult cycle to break, as children living in these environments are more likely to go on to be in, or create, abusive relationships. Therefore, we strongly support the inclusion of improved education and prevention techniques to circumvent possible negative outcomes.

- “There’s been no real psychological work done, so you’ve got one that’s left with this hatred and anger, now where’s that going to go? Into his relationships and into women. It’s a vicious circle.”
- “One thing I realise is that, if this is happening to women, it will have an effect on the children. This can then push them into an abusive relationship, either because they feel they want to run away from home, or because they think that it is okay to put up with relationships like that.”

We also support the focus on lived experience. As an organisation which prioritises first-hand experience and qualitative data, we believe that by consulting domestic abuse survivors the HSCP can create a more impactful strategy. This was further supported by women we have spoken to, who feel that their voices are not always listened to, despite their vast range of knowledge on the subject.

- “Involve the women who have the experience. Involve the survivors. Involve the people who are supporting the survivors. And keep going, keep moving forward.”
- “I would say listen to the women. Listen to their voices. They’re the experts, they know what it’s like. People much higher up the chain don’t they live in their bubble, so listen to the women.”
- “The answer is not just to keep throwing money at loads of different things. They need to give money and then get the evaluation and listen to the evaluation, and not listen from a management and strategic level but from grassroots, from people who can say here’s my experience, where’s where it’s still not working and then review everything again on a regular basis.”

### **Do you agree with our response to strategic priority: working together?**

Yes – completely

We feel that young men and boys play an integral role in domestic abuse prevention, and that by incorporating improved relationship education in the proposed plan, domestic abuse could be reduced. Currently young women experience sexual harassment from boys in schools,

with societal attitudes being performed on the playground. Therefore, more must be done to rearrange mindsets and provide better protections for young women.

- “I was speaking to my husband about [a documentary] afterwards and he was completely shocked about this. I started talking about the figures we’re living in today and how nobody wants to discuss them or put them on the front of newspapers, so unless you’re in it or you’re working in it, you’re not aware of it.”
- “When a boy, for example, pulls at a girl’s hair, and a teacher says ‘Oh, it’s just because he likes you’, so men are allowed from a young age to be cruel or hurt women as they are given this excuse.”
- “...there’s so much bullying, verging on harassment, boys towards the girls. They’re pinning their bra straps from the back, undoing their bras, grabbing, and groping in the corridors, so that’s all going on.”

### **What do you like most about the draft strategic plan?**

We strongly support the prioritisation of domestic abuse survivors and those who are currently experiencing domestic abuse. The precedence should be in reducing the trauma and likelihood of domestic abuse across Glasgow and by providing good quality care and support, the HSCP can do this. It is highly valuable to work with women across all life stages to promote positive relationships and reduce the immense impact domestic violence can have upon an individual’s life. Therefore, as women have told us, it is incredibly important that the HSCP continue to prioritise the women who need help – as well as to create a safer environment for all Glasgow residents.

We also welcome the inclusion of an intersectional approach, recognising that women from a range of backgrounds experience domestic violence. By attempting to reach across communities the HSCP have the opportunity to bridge gaps in communication and involve those not often listened to. Women have explained to us that due to a lack of translation services, some ethnic minority women find it difficult to access support. This was further worsened by Covid-19 where some women, who would normally seek help through religious means, were unable to and were instead forced to stay in dangerous environments. Therefore, it is imperative that the HSCP commit fully to helping survivors who come from minority groups and as such may face continuous barriers.

- “I think it’s getting worse within my community. Over the last month, about six African women have been killed by their husbands... I don’t know if this has to do with culture and that women still don’t report the abuse... I think there is a lot of under-reporting within my community and that is where the problem is.”
- “I know some organisations did try to publicise their opening hours or how they are operating differently during Covid on their websites, but one thing that was lacking was translating that information into other languages.”

### **What do you like least about the draft strategic plan?**

Currently domestic abuse support staff do not receive adequate help or care from their employers. This is despite working in an emotionally stressful environment, and as such we are disappointed to see that there is a lack of commitment made to support staff in their own mental health. These employees have told us that they currently work incredibly hard on very small budgets to provide services, and that the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the situation greatly. Many felt that not enough has been done to prevent services closing and that the intense emotional strain placed upon workers was not properly considered – with poor benefits and pay. We do recognise that through improved training staff will feel more confident in providing assistance, however their wellbeing must also be considered if the HSCP for Glasgow is to be effective.

- “...the services are so overwhelmed and overstretched, and the demand for the services is just increasing.”
- “...once the restrictions ended, we got quite a significant spike in referrals, around 30% increase in referrals. What survivors were telling us was that during the restrictions often they had no safe space to actually access support and they didn't have opportunities to say to abusive partners”
- “We all have stories of our own... and it can be a burden, to try to support, encourage and help people. It can often be to the detriment of our own mental health and physical health”

### **Do you agree with our timeframe for the strategic plan (3 years)?**

No

We believe that the reduction of domestic abuse should remain a priority for longer than 3 years, with it being unlikely that the problem will be ‘solved’ in this timeframe. Longitudinal plans must be made to prevent and reduce abuse across Glasgow to ultimately save and better lives. Therefore, there should not be a set timeframe, and instead reducing domestic abuse should be a consistent commitment made by the HSCP.

### **Please note any final comments you have:**

We are concerned to note that the proposed strategic plan omits mention of social media and how these sites are contributing to abuse. Women have relayed to us that, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, social media is increasingly becoming a valuable tool in the kit of an abuser. Not only is the regulation of social media such that women experience regular hounding by body shame pages – they are also experiencing a rise in dangerous groups of men who wish to propagate fear and violence against women. Abusers can easily use social media to digitally stalk victims, through spyware and tracking apps, while also using sites like Facebook and Instagram to send explicit pictures or hate messages. Therefore, we highly

recommend that the HSCP attempt to prevent this issue from worsening by improving education around safe online usage, and to consider how they can prevent abusers using online sites to further terrorise victims.

- “I’ve been doing a monitoring media project as part of my work recently and the ways in which abusers are utilising technology is really innovative, but really awful. Because digital abuse is happening really rapidly, I don’t think that as a sector we have the resources to be able to challenge some of those issues right now.”
- “I think we’ve seen a huge amount of online abuse, particularly over the Covid period, and particularly in young people. Young women, and some young men as well, have experienced online abuse, but there’s certainly been a huge number of cases for us, and a lot of it is peer on peer with young people which is really disappointing.”
- “Online abuse has always been there, and we know it’s increased over recent years, but I think there has been an escalation... we’re supporting young people who have been quite severely abused online, either by peers or sometimes by older adults who have masqueraded as young people online.”
- “I did some really interesting training recently about incels: these groups of men who are completely misogynistic. What shocked me was just how many groups there are and the truly horrendous and vile stuff they post online.”

## Conclusion

Having listened to women, our three key recommendations on this topic are:

- Workers within domestic abuse prevention currently lack adequate support, and as such it would be valuable if better working conditions were provided.
- Domestic abuse must remain a priority for health boards across Scotland, with long-term strategies being required.
- Online abuse should be considered within the proposed strategy, as it is increasingly becoming a major issue for women across Scotland.

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Health and Social Care Partnership's consultation on **Domestic Abuse – Strategic Plan 2023-2026**. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to this topic and its effects on women's equality.

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