

Wigtownshire Women's Aid Housing Support Service

Stranraer

Type of inspection:

Unannounced

Completed on:

16 January 2019

Service provided by:

Wigtownshire Women's Aid, a Company
Limited by Guarantee

Service provider number:

SP2014012390

Service no:

CS2014333198

About the service

Wigtownshire Women's Aid provides a housing support service to women and their children in the refuge and to women in their own tenancies in safe houses or in refuge accommodation in the Wigtownshire area.

The service is also provided to women and children who have suffered domestic violence and other forms of abuse. It offers a free and confidential service which includes support, information, practical assistance and advice with the aim of enabling women to deal with the disturbance in their lives and to determine their own future. The service helps women and children through changes in their lives, to establish and maintain their own tenancy, to take part in activities to raise self-esteem, to integrate back into community and to get health, legal and budgetary advice.

There are staff office bases in Stranraer and Newton Stewart.

The Mission Statement for the service states that it aims to:

"Provide information, support and temporary refuge where appropriate for women and their children (if any) where the woman has suffered abuse (mental, physical or sexual) in their home or within a relationship".

What people told us

During the inspection we met with five women using the services of the safe houses and refuge. We also received questionnaires issued by the Care Inspectorate from five women receiving support from the service. We also considered the responses to the service's own questionnaires. Below are some of the comments made to us and extracts from comments written by women.

"I was extremely frightened and anxious when I was first put in contact with women's aid and right from the start I was reassured and comforted. I was rescued and taken to a safe place".

"I am supported by XXX (support worker) who has helped me deal with the loss of my family, the abuse from males. She has never given up on me and makes me aware of the choices I have. She has made a huge impact on my life"

"If I need anything at all they are always ready to help me"

"The staff immediately started to help me and my kids on my arrival, the house was beautiful and so well equipped"

"They are fantastic, I can't express my gratitude, and I feel stronger and healthier every day. People that know me tell me I look so much better"

"I'm not sure what emotional help is there for me but I imagine that will come when things settle"

"My confidence has really improved and I am much happier now with my life"

"The support to the kids is great and it really helps"

Self assessment

The Care Inspectorate did not request a self assessment for this inspection year however we were updated on the service developments since the last inspection.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	5 - Very Good

What the service does well

Wigtownshire Woman's Aid was responsive to the needs of women and children who were suffering as a consequence of domestic abuse. The almost immediate response to requests for assistance was greatly appreciated by the women using the service. This included requests for safe accommodation for women throughout the United Kingdom. Outreach work helped women who were in vulnerable positions but had not yet decided to move accommodation and to work with those who had moved on from the linked accommodation.

Measures taken to maximise the safety of women included close liaison with Police Scotland, Social Service and local housing providers. Both the refuge accommodation and safe house had CCTV coverage with the locations being kept discreet from the general public.

Risk assessments completed with women highlighted those who were deemed at extreme risk were discussed at the local MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment) meetings to ensure a multi-agency response in protecting women from further harm.

On arrival at the refuge and safe houses women were provided with essentials, which included access to food, clothing and toiletries. This was greatly appreciated by women, many of whom had fled to safety with little or no resources. Further signposting included directions to the local food banks and to local health services and educational resources for children.

Wigtownshire Women's Aid has financed membership with 'Fare Share' which enabled women to receive quality surplus food on a weekly basis. This has been a very successful aid in the battle against food poverty.

Support workers helped women to access legal and financial advice, including help to navigate the benefit system. This enabled women to start to take back control of their lives, with a more secure future.

Emotional support existed with a high level of contact between workers and the women. Staff understood the enormity of the life changes for the women they supported and the impact of the trauma they had experienced. We were impressed at the respect and care shown to the women and the approach adopted by staff in keeping women central to decision making.

Women told us they had benefitted from this support and felt more confident, less fearful, happier and more positive about the future. Children were also benefiting from support and links with local education were helping the children recover from the impact of living in domestic abusive situations.

Social events such as pamper nights, days out and the celebration of special days, such as, Christmas and Burns night gave the women and children the opportunity to meet with others in fun environments.

This was also an enabling factor in allowing women to develop support networks with other women who had shared experiences and understood their circumstances.

There had been changes to the team since the last inspection. This had provided some challenges to the team with changes in membership and a new manager. Most staff felt that change was sometimes difficult, but that on the whole, the changes were of greater benefit to the service. The introduction of the new employee handbook provided clarity of conditions of service and policy and procedures had been updated and modernised. The use of electronic recording systems had also been expanded to be of more benefit to the service.

The changes to the team had created the opportunity for staff to move from existing posts to take on different roles within the service. This meant that staff were building on existing skills and continuing to develop professionally. This had been popular and welcomed by the staff members we spoke to.

Staff members confirmed that formal supervision took place and most staff told us they were able to approach management at any time to discuss work challenges or seek advice.

Management were seeking to update the service development plan and at the time of the inspection, were seeking the views of service users and stakeholders to help inform priority areas. Although this consultation was in the early stages, we were able to see from the responses received that the support provided was viewed positively, as was the partnership approach with other agencies.

A service planning day was soon to be held in which staff would receive training from Scottish Women's Aid and give the opportunity to seek staff views on the direction of the service.

The service continued to promote the work of Women's Aid and recently awareness raising sessions given by the manager throughout Wigtownshire had succeeded in securing an increase of referrals on behalf of vulnerable women.

What the service could do better

We asked that risk assessments be updated as soon as new information came to light and discussed a support plan in which this was required. We were told that the process of risk assessing would be reviewed and the instance we highlighted addressed.

We were advised that file audits were soon to commence and we welcomed this development as a way of monitoring quality and providing the opportunity for standardisation of assessment and recording.

We checked the Scottish Social Service register and could see the manager, depute manager and one support worker was registered. However we advised the manager that the remaining support workers required to undertake their responsibility to register with the SSSC immediately. We were told that the support workers would be reminded of their responsibility to carry this out without delay.

We found several staff had indicated that they did not consider that they had received adequate training opportunities. Although this was not what we found when sampling staff training records, we asked the management to explore this more with the team to establish if this is a commonly held view.

We suggested that exit forms be provided to staff who are leaving the service, in order to highlight any emerging themes which may require action within the service development.

We discussed the responses from the questionnaires received by the Care Inspectorate, which indicated some women were unaware of the complaints procedure. We agreed this could be routinely revisited, since women can sometimes be overwhelmed with information when first using the service.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

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

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
7 Mar 2017	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	Not assessed

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