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GM POLICY HUB



GM Policy Hub Seminar | Trusted communities, safer futures: rethinking support for survivors of domestic abuse

Tuesday, 3 November
1:00 - 2:30pm

The University of Manchester

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Division of Medical Education

Faith-Based Organisations and Ethnic Minority Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Abuse

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What we Know So Far

- Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) can affect all individuals, irrespective of ethnicity, social economic status, age, and other characteristics.

- Ethnic minority women experience additional barriers linked to:
  - immigration status
  - racism and discrimination
  - cultural expectations
  - mistrust of statutory services

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Why Faith Spaces?

Faith spaces are more than places of worship

- For many people with a faith affiliation, faith spaces provide:
    - emotional support
    - social belonging
    - trust
    - cultural familiarity
    - practical assistance
    - identity and meaning

Why Faith Spaces?

Why this matters

For ethnic minority women who participated in my research, faith leaders are the first point of disclosure before:

- police
- healthcare
- social services
- mental health services

Faith-based Organisations as Sources of Support

- Study Participants described their faith spaces as:
  - sources of encouragement
  - spaces of solidarity
  - places for emotional survival
- Quotes from Research Participants
  - “All my friends stood by me.”
  - “They used 30 mins to tell us about domestic violence… they put a number on the board.”

Faith-based Organisations as Sources of Support

- **Faith spaces provided:**
  - social capital
  - informal counselling
  - practical advice
  - emotional reassurance
  - trusted relationships

Faith Spaces as Barriers

- **Complex and conflicting role**
- Some women received advice focused on:
  - reconciliation
  - endurance
  - preserving marriage/intimate relationship
- **Participant quotes**
  - “Religion preaches you should not leave your husband…”
  - “They started quoting scriptures…”

Faith Spaces as Barriers

- **Consequences**
  - delayed help-seeking
  - prolonged abuse
  - worsening mental health outcomes
  - isolation from formal support systems

Faith Leaders Recognise Gaps in Capacity

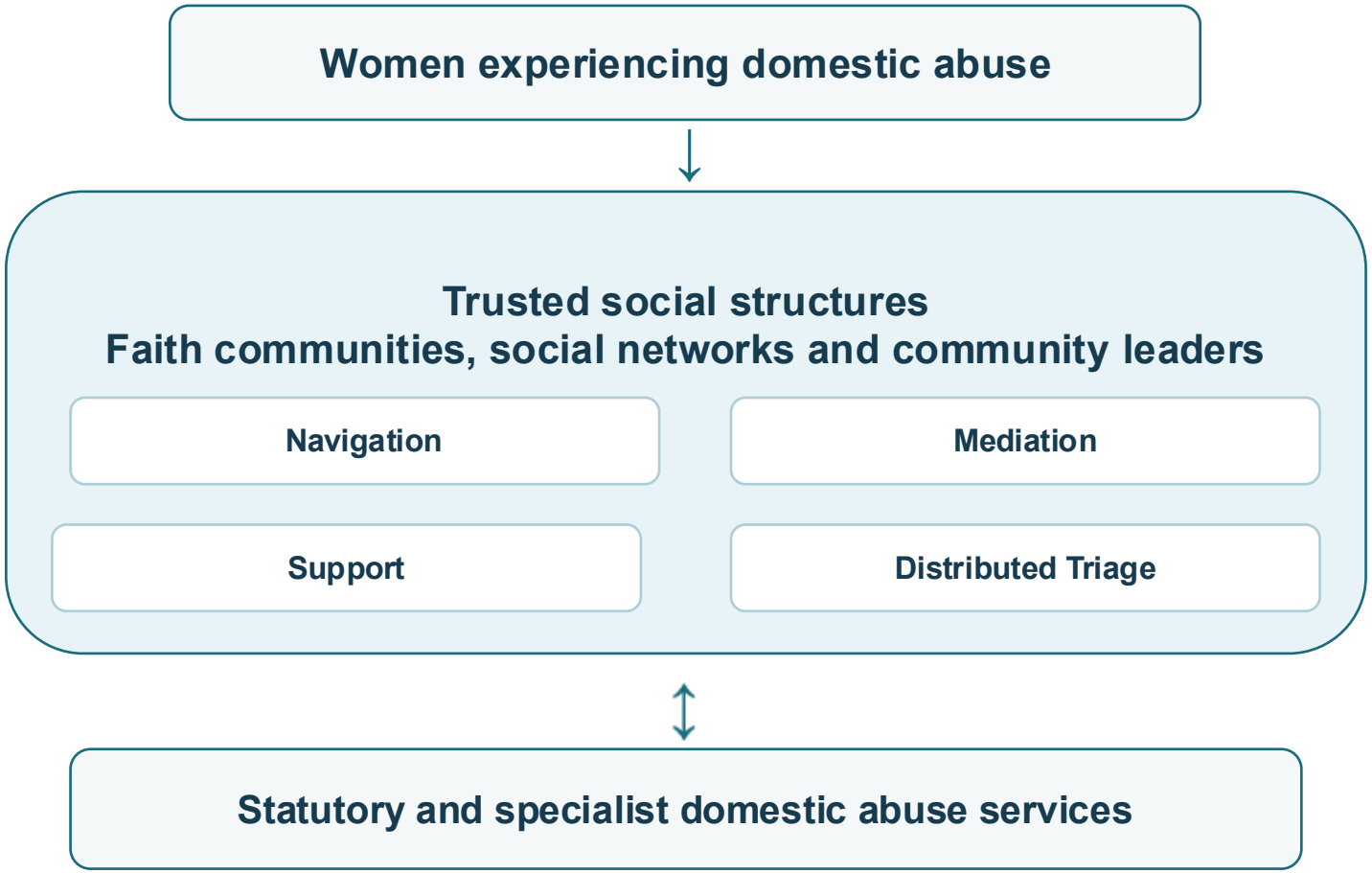
- **Faith leaders wanted more training**
  - Many leaders acknowledged:
    - lack of formal safeguarding knowledge when women do not meet the definition of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
    - limited understanding of referral systems
    - uncertainty about statutory pathways

Faith Leaders Recognise Gaps in Capacity

- **Important nuance**
  - Many leaders wanted to help, but lacked:
    - training
    - Knowledge of referral pathways
    - collaborative structures
    - confidence in statutory systems
- **Quotes from leaders**
  - “If I know more about what social services and other organisations do…”

Understanding the Role of Social Structures in Accessing Support

Social Structures in Health Navigation (SSHN) Model



Trusted structures can facilitate access to support, but can also delay or obstruct it.

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Policy Implication

- **Current systems are fragmented**
- Evidence from my research argue that:
  - FBOs are already functioning as frontline responders
  - but remain underutilised in domestic abuse strategies
  - Faith-based organisations should not replace statutory services, they should become trusted gateways into them.

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From Research to Action

- Build trusted referral pathways.
- Provide domestic abuse and safeguarding training.
- Strengthen partnerships with the NHS, local authorities and specialist services - extending lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Develop ongoing dialogue between faith organisations and statutory agencies.

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Take Home Message

Faith communities already have a role in responding to Domestic Abuse. The next step is strengthening that role safely.

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How can policymakers work with faith-based organisations to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse?

Collaborating

Empowering

Delivering

Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy

Kate Smith, Gender-Based Violence & Victims Principal

GREATER MANCHESTER

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Standing Together

Our plan for policing and safer and stronger communities in Greater Manchester

2024-2029



December 2024



together we are

GREATER MANCHESTER

Our strategy 2025–35

UK Government

FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE AND ABUSE:

A CROSS-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY TO BUILD A SAFER SOCIETY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Volume 1

Strategy

GREATER MANCHESTER

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Gender-Based Violence Strategy

September 2021

domestic abuse commissioner

Strategic Plan

2026-2029



Lived Experience Matters

Want to improve domestic abuse & sexual violence support in Greater Manchester?

If you have lived experience, 10 minutes helps shape the future of support services

From vision to delivery

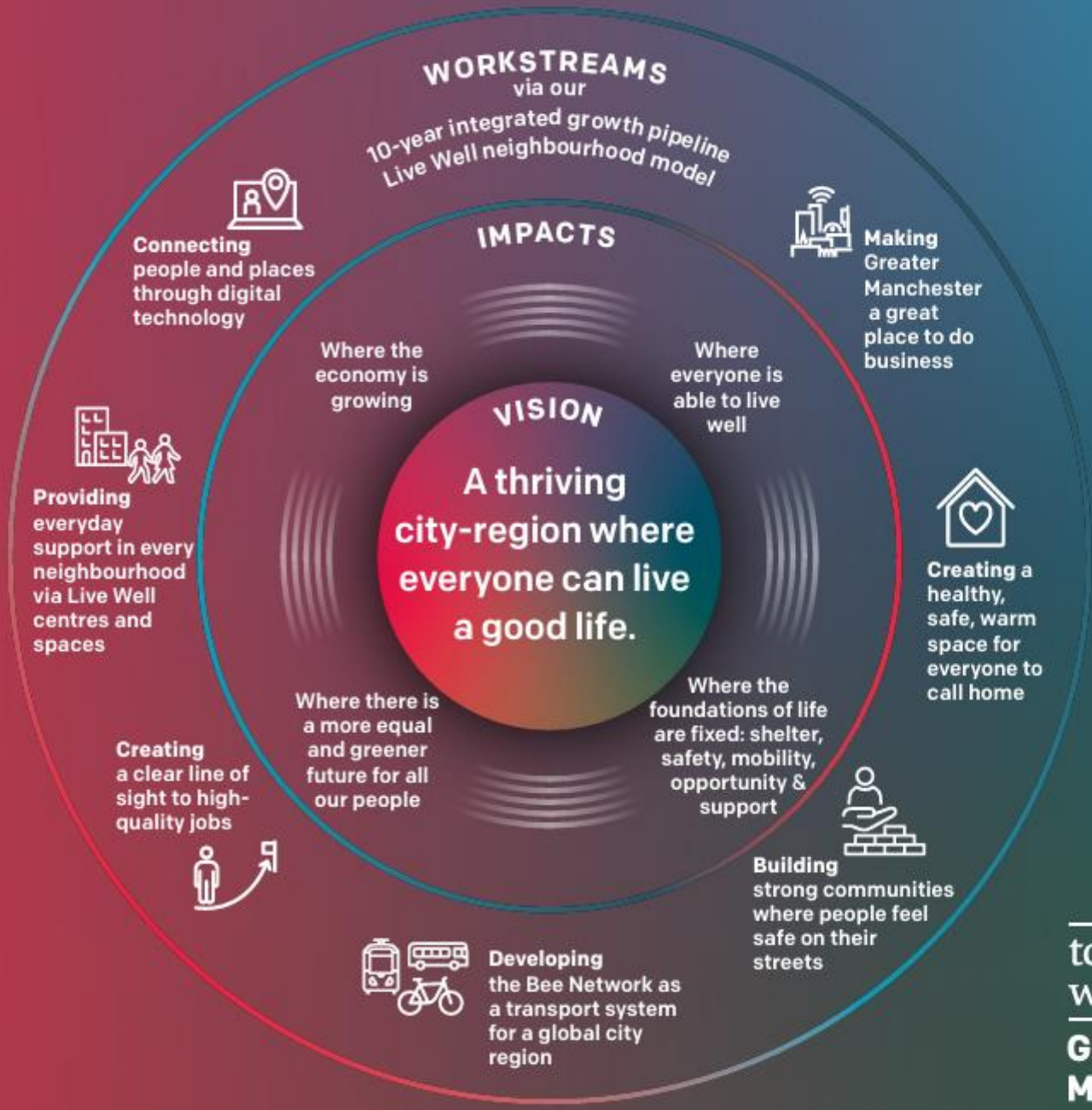
Economic and social progress have always gone hand in hand here, so Greater Manchester is only successful if every part of our city region and every person in our city region is successful.

Our plans for growth and our people are underpinned by seven workstreams which are designed to fix the foundations of life: shelter, safety, mobility, opportunity and support.

Each and every one will be delivered in a way that ensures a greener, more equal future for all.

That means people thriving in nature-rich environments resilient to climate change, with businesses making progress to Net Zero production. It means people feeling included, valued and with the power to participate in decisions about their community.

We will treat people as names not numbers, with effective public services taking a preventative approach.



together we are

GREATER MANCHESTER

GM Gender Based Violence Strategy

- Our ambition: a radical transformation in GM's approach to gender-based violence - women and girls will experience a step change in their experience of abuse and violence in all its forms.
- Recognises that GBV does not exclusively affect women and girls. However, women and girls are exposed to a higher risk of gender-based violence
- Strategy informed by significant research, engagement & consultation incl with lived experience.
- Delivery focussed on prevention and co-ordinated response
- Focus on intersectionality, includes disability, No Recourse to Public Funds
- System wide and community based response is critical to tackling GBV working with our 10 Local Authorities , housing, criminal justice agencies, VCFSE, health, and communities including involvement of victims/survivors.



Delivery Over the Next Three Years:
GBV Delivery Plan 16 Priorities 2026-2029

- Lived Experience
- Public Engagement
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Equality Diversity & Inclusion
- Policing & Criminal Justice
- Perpetrators
- Employers
- Children
- Sex Workers
- Travel & Transport
- Governance
- Men and Boys
- Honour Based Abuse
  Technology Enabled Abuse
- Driving Change Together

A coordinated community response to delivery, working with faith communities and organisations, cross cuts these areas

Lived Experience Insight

- At the heart of our planning and delivery of the Strategy
- Working closely with our GBV Lived Experience Panel and networks across GM as well as with those supporting victims/survivors
- Ongoing research projects engaging with survivors
- The role of faith organisations is often raised
- In addition, to the challenges survivors face of fear, shame and trauma, some tell us that additional barriers include their immigration status; the views of their family and community; language barriers and that services that they seek support from won't understand or respond to their specific needs
- Culturally sensitive support is critical to these people accessing support and recovery

What we are doing that we can build on?

- Collaborating with 10 GM Local Authorities who have existing partnerships/relationships with VCFSE organisations on support to survivors in their communities and neighbourhoods
- Continued support for those with No Recourse to Public Funds fleeing abuse
- Commissioning specialist support from By and For Organisations
- Understanding, through ongoing research and engagement, intersectionality, its impact and opportunities to improve support pathways across all forms of GBV
- Prioritising support for victims of Honour Based Abuse and Harmful practices

What can we begin or do more of?

- Continue to act on inclusive research and lived experience insights
- Recognising faith communities as part of the support system survivors may draw upon
- Existing partnerships to collaborate through:
  - GM Live Well
  - GM Faith and Belief Advisory panel, GM covenant
  - Local partnerships
- Build strong relationships with community organisations, faith leaders to build trust and create safe spaces for individuals to disclose whilst ensuring safeguarding and access to wider advocacy support
- Further addressing intersectionality in our planning and delivery including training
- Recognise good practice in culturally appropriate service delivery including ‘faith sensitive responses’ to survivors
- Improving coordinated support for victims of Honour Based approach and harmful practices working with faith organisations

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Rochdale Women's Welfare Viewpoint:–

Rizwana Baleem & Nagina Ahmed

Points of reflection

How do you think policy-makers can effectively work with faith leaders? At a regional and local level?

Are there issues for faith organisations if they were to consider working more closely with statutory services? How could these be overcome?

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Any Questions?

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