

## **Commissioning with compassion and conviction:**

A report from the consultation to shape the recommissioning of women services



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## Summary of recommendations

A [summary report \(insert hyper link once this is uploaded\)](#) of the consultation has been produced which highlights the main findings and summarised the recommendations for commissioners.

The following are suggestions to be considered when commissioning women's support services:

**Apply the principles of the [GM VCSE Commissioning framework](#)** as a guide to good commissioning. Use light touch procurement routes to fund organisations, using all opportunities available including grants in order that you commission with grass roots and established organisations

**Pool resources from across the system to commission the maximum amount of provision possible**, over the longest term, and consider the use of pilot and review phases to respond to community need and building in flexibility for adaptations to the offer over time.

**Create commissioner and provider partnerships that foster the development of relationships and shared risk and opportunity**, which maximise the potential for real innovation and the ability to strengthen and sustain services to build legacy. Celebrate and recognise the diverse and rich services and expertise which exist across the VCSE Women's Support Sector. Map and understand the social value being sourced, invested and created by the women's support sector. Consider how an alliance or overarching network could support organisations to find their place in the ecosystem, plus promote and strengthen individual organisations.

**Fund a combination of prevention and higher intensity services across a wider range of organisations.** Create opportunities within the commissioning process for dialogue between a range of generalist and specialist organisation. Investment in the rich networks of peer support (which exist across the majority of agencies) to strengthen both preventative interventions and follow on/wellbeing support.

**Fund a diverse range of women's organisations to work together to co-create joint systems, process, and access points.** Help women find the nearest 'Front Door' to access a light touch triage services, in a language they understand to ensure women access support appropriate to their needs. Systems and process must recognise that when going through a crisis woman may not have the resources or ability to travel and that localised support is often preferred. Invest in agencies to carry out effective and consistent impact and value measurement.

**Commission activity from within the VCSE sector that increases awareness of the need for gendered services and develops system-wide training that listens to and learns from the experiences of women.** This is a misunderstood field and there is a lack of consistency across boroughs in endorsing and achieving this. Investing in expertise and the VCSE sector directly to improve awareness and impact of gendered approaches will build trust, consistency and enhanced results.

**Fund the development of a constructive challenge and co-design space for women who experience the services to bring real time insight and authenticity to the commissioning and service design processes.** The scope of this could include – test the recommendations in this report and ensure they are actioned, including that the VCSE Commissioning framework principles are applied, be an active partner in the commissioning selection, provide a consultation and research function for future reviews, and contributing to system-wide training and system change projects.

## Context

Support services for women are due to be recommissioned by GMCA. As part of the ongoing consultation and engagement, GMCA commissioned 10GM to seek the voice of women and women's organisations. The GMCA were keen to hear from women who might be considered 'vulnerable and marginalised', who may or may not have accessed current services in recent years and who have potentially had less opportunity to feed into consultations to date.

For the purpose of this work 'vulnerable and marginalised women' were defined by the GMCA as '*women who are accessing multiple services or need to be accessing multiple services and at risk of being in contact with justice services as either a perpetrator or a victim*'.

Flourish Together CIC were commissioned by 10GM to carry out this work from July – December 2020. They are an impartial organisation (who don't deliver women's services) and have strong trusted networks across strategic, community-led and thematic groups.

Many of the themes identified by the women and women's organisations are not new. To retain the trust of partners and avoid 'consultation fatigue', it will be important to consider this report alongside the learning and recommendations of pre-existing local research and insight listed in Appendix E.

## Methodology and approach

A mixed method approach has been used, combining qualitative and quantitative insight. A key aim of this consultation was to engage women with lived experience and VCSE organisations that are new to commissioners.

The following people, groups and organisations participated in the research (full list in Appendices B and C):

- Consultation and interviews with established VCSE Women's Support orgs and a call out through their networks to complete a survey.
- Consultation, interviews, and survey sharing with smaller grassroots Women's Support organisations and a call out through their networks to complete a survey
- Consultation with women with lived experience via one-to-one interviews, focus groups and via a survey
- Consultation, interviews, and survey with Housing Providers providing specialist accommodation and a call out through their networks to complete a survey
- Consultation and interviews with organisations supporting men and wider family members to feed into wider observations, perspectives and discussion

Between August and September 2020, Flourish CIC conducted 30 interviews, surveys (with 79 responses), and 13 focus groups. In total over 200 people engaged in this consultation from 80 organisations and the consultation reached and included women from across all 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester.

Flourish CIC presented a summary of the insight gathered at a virtual round table involving 45 people. A podcast has been produced of this and will be shared on the Flourish Together website. [Listen again link to Virtual Round Table and co-design event September 2020.](#)

Over 50% of people engaged in this consultation were women who have direct personal experience of needing to access support. A particular strength of this insight is the breadth of diverse views. 55 women with lived experience were involved as part of interviews and focus groups, 128 people engaged through the focus groups of which 30% were from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Community. 8 out of 13 focus groups had

women from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Communities, several had those from had LGBTQ+ communities represented and over half of those involved in focus groups were 'Experts with Lived Experience.'

Across the whole research views have been gathered from women who self-identify as from a BAME community and the range of communities within this, including those who are applying for refugee status or have this; those who are British born as well as those who are migrants to the UK. We also reached those from LGBTQ communities; women experiencing homelessness; women who identified that they have been a victim of child sexual exploitation; those who have been long term unemployed; women who have a physical or hidden disability; or are an ex-offender. The insight was also gathered from women who may never have engaged in mainstream or grassroots support before.

### Limitations

Whilst every effort has been made to do this consultation justice, we recognise there have been limitations due to time, capacity, and budget. We would like to have included more insight from the LGBT community, from a diverse range of younger women and we would highlight the need for further focussed research with women with disabilities. The voices of men in supporting the recommissioning of women's centres and services are also lacking in this consultation with less than 1% of respondents being men.

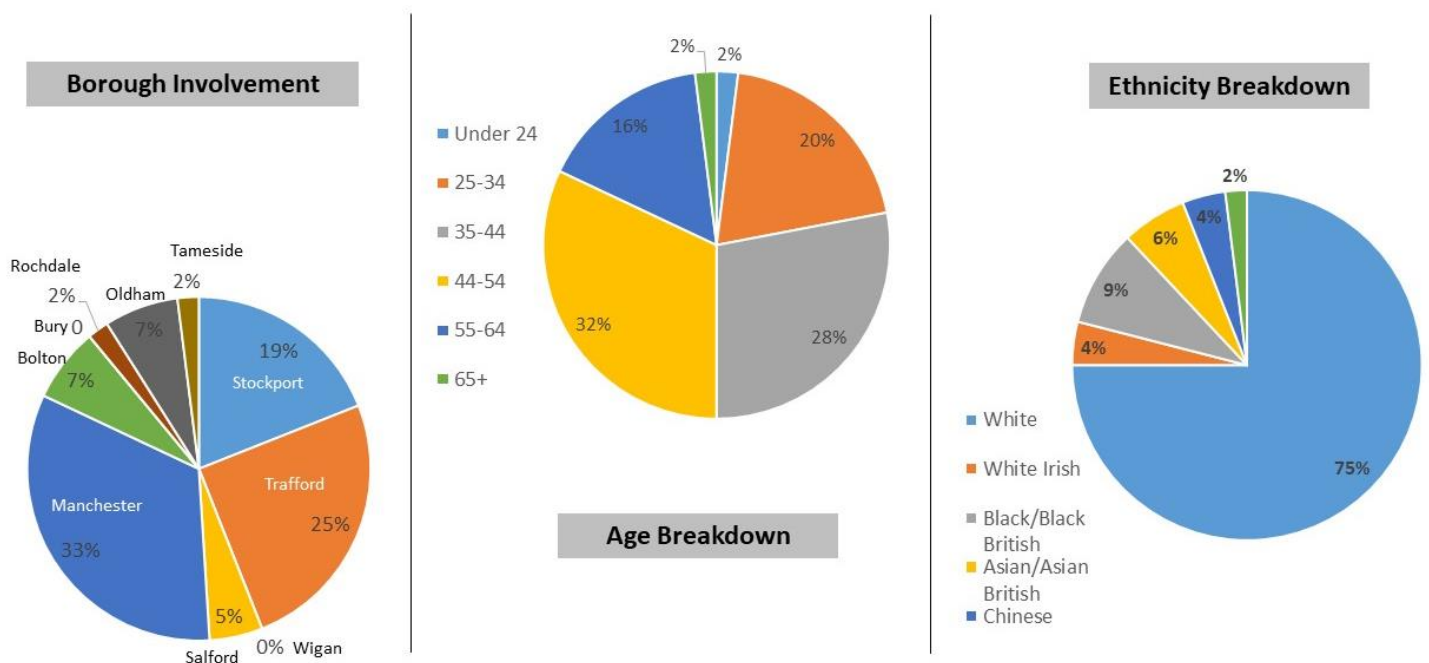
Flourish have created a podcast to amplify voices of 'Diverse Hidden Women' to a wider audience and act as a resource for commissioners and VCSE organisation to reflect on when designing or improving support for women. [Link to be added Jan 2021](#)

## What women have said

### Themed insight from the survey

The survey helped to reach a diverse range of women who are new to commissioners and have direct personal experience of trying to access women's services for support.

Demographic data for responses:



## Contact with the police

The table below shows that **50% of those who responded highlighted that they had previously contacted the police**. This was a higher number than we expected to find from a general survey and could indicate that there is scale of wider and/or hidden need.

These are not isolated incidents when considering that 12% know 5-10 people in their immediate social circles who have also needed police intervention. Whilst many are victims as opposed to perpetrators, it highlights a prevalence in support need and an opportunity for early intervention. The high levels of dissatisfaction through delays or never finding the support needed are also a concern and an area for attention.

50% of survey participants have needed police involvement to address one or more of the following:	Personal Experience	Know others	When seeking support (not just from police)			
			Easily accessed support	Experienced significant delays	Never got support needed	N/A
Mental Health Needs	83%	87%	14%	52%	17%	17%
Family / Relationship Breakdown	60%	58%	9%	24%	27%	40%
Housing Support	32%	53%	11%	16%	5%	68%
Nuisance/Anti-social behaviour	34%	42%	7%	14%	13%	66%
Substance misuse	7%	48%	3%	2%	5%	93%
Burglary	33%	50%	10%	10%	13%	67%
Cultural Prejudice	15%	35%	2%	3%	10%	85%
Immigration difficulties	7%	29%	2%	5%	0%	93%

## A good service

When asked what a good service looks like, women described it as:

- Feeling valued, by compassionate empathetic, non-judgemental staff
- Great communication in a language they understand and way they can access
- Appropriate triage of support needs and fast tracking to therapeutic and psychological support where that is needed
- Peer support has been a lifeline to many, helped them find their own solutions, build friendships, find the right support and make progress
- Good quality correct information - without this there is much at stake (losing children/housing/benefits/rights to remain/ lack of legal support/ ongoing trauma)
- Just in time support - quick referrals and quick action otherwise people disengage and/or spiral into further difficulties
- Feeling deeply listened to with respect
- People centred / holistic services
- Having ongoing, consistent support with a key contact person for the long term, who can act as an advocate, motivator, and champion for them, when everyone else (sometimes including themselves) has given up
- Access to support sooner or at a younger age
- Accessing to resources locally as they have no resources to travel
- Translated information and help to overcome language barriers
- Asks for info once and doesn't make people repeat themselves and trigger traumatic experiences  
Share reports and information about service users with them, so that they are able to amend/ input into this and help report on progress they make.

## Challenges in access to information and the level of knowledge of services that exist

Word of mouth, internet, search engines and social media tend to be the most effective ways of finding information. Women tended only to look for information at a point of crisis and often didn't know where to start or that information can become out of date quickly. The breakdown of where women generally look for information is listed below. It shows that as a 'first port of call' women are far more likely to seek help from family and friends or online than from a support agency.

Where you might seek information in a crisis.....	Generally	As a first port of call
Friends	47%	40%
Family	27%	27%
A mentor	17%	7%
Online search	40%	66%
A support agency	48%	27%
Social Media	40%	12%

When asked for their ideas of how this could be improved, the women we spoke to suggested; that public services should have access to this information e.g. signposting information by the police, GPs, chemists, schools

## Level of confidence to access agencies for support

When women reached out for support, the majority experienced significant delays or never got the support they needed. This points to system, accessibility, staffing and capacity issues to overcome across the board:

- 1/3 felt confident to do this and were happy to approach them directly
- 2/3 lacked confidence to directly contact an agency, some felt extreme anxiety about approaching agencies (some of the reasons given were: having to admit they needed help; that they didn't want to feel judged; that they felt like they were making a fuss)
- 1/4 of respondents added that they felt it would be a waste of time due to long waiting lists for services, complicated processes or a lack of appropriate staff who could meet their needs
- 11% cited experiencing delays
- 10% mentioned that they would not know where to look for support

## Positive experiences of accessing support

When asked about positive experiences of accessing support:

- 1/3 of respondents could not recall a positive experience
- Those respondents that did have a positive experience mentioned when unprompted, VCSE organisations, GPs and the Police as helpful when in crisis. Showing that there are areas of good practice to share and build upon, in spite of many women mentioning how they have struggled with accessing support through GPs and Police.
- Several mentioned via comments in the survey that what made the difference was having a champion, advocate or consistent support contact who helped them navigate and keep connected to support options available.

## Case Studies from interviews with women with direct personal experience

In the following section we have included the experiences of 7 different women who have all come into contact with the criminal justice system, whose experiences are similar to hundreds of women supported by agencies every year.

The Case studies highlight the complex nature of the lives that women's services need to support. They also reveal the numbers of agencies and 'touch points' in the system that require a joined-up approach to ensure women get the holistic, timely, compassionate and person-centred support they require.

### Case study 1

*R – Is a refugee from Syria and survivor of domestic abuse. She escaped from her marital home with her children and is having to start life again. She has faced language barriers; problems accessing benefits and her children have faced problems at school with bullying including her son suffering from a racial attack.*

R is a 42-year-old Syrian refugee who has been single for 4 and a half years. She has a son and a daughter who are both in their teens. R struggles with financial difficulties and her children have developed psychological issues because of the domestic abuse she experienced.

R has previously sought help at CAHMS and found it had limited effect, as well as struggling with the timeframe and putting the advice into practice. As her children's problems persisted, she spoke to a specialist who contacted the GP and spoke to her son's school nurse. They referred her to CAHMS again - which took 5-6 months on the waiting list. On one occasion, R called the police after her son was bullied and then attacked by boys at his school but found that it was a "bad experience" as they left her son very upset. Despite the police being respectful to her and her family, she feels they offered no help at all.

*"The police know who the boys are and yet they do nothing in spite of them physically attacking my son, making racist comments and saying they will kill us. My son has to face them every day at school. My son is a smart boy but he has become very anxious, withdrawn and this has affected his learning and progress."*

When R fled domestic violence, her friend recommended that she contacted [Rainbow Haven](#) for support.

*"When I experienced Domestic Abuse, I just needed someone to lead me, I felt so lost and traumatised – didn't know what to do."*

She found that the organization was very supportive and had a brilliant staff team, but was under pressure and couldn't meet the scale of demand. Rainbow Haven's busy schedule meant there were limited time slots for appointments which didn't work for R.

Finally CAHMS referred R to get mental health support from her GP, however the recent Covid pandemic has prevented her from getting into contact. Last year, R spoke to her GP and was asked to get 6-12 weeks of counselling at Rainbow Haven, however this referral was never made due to lack of capacity. With the recent pandemic, it has been a great deal harder for her to access support from her GP and her biggest challenge so far has been having no laptop to access virtual support.

Even though R wants to work, she found that because of her stressful home life she is unable to work full time. R has been in contact with the Job Centre, however the weekly appointments prove to be stressful to navigate. Even though she has worked for 9 years as a teacher, she feels as though the Job Centre undermines her skills. She has been in contact with social workers, but their main interest is to support children and not the parents. To add to her issues, R receives no financial support from her ex-husband.



## Case Study 2

*M – Is a former offender and has had treatment for substance misuse, plus has faced years of unsuitable housing and is still in temporary accommodation. Affected by DVA she lost custody of her son who she is fighting to get back and has faced years of barriers to accessing employment.*

M is aged over 40 and is fighting a custody battle for her child. She was the victim of an attack by her then-husband, but the police did not believe or follow up on M's report of the crime. Despite him being a perpetrator, social services decided her son was better off staying with his father. M feels that it is almost impossible to get help at this point, particularly as her involvement with the criminal justice system has resulted in negative publicity in the media, adding huge additional pressure which she was unprepared for and got no support with.

M was referred to the NSPCC in Oldham. She has also been through the [Freedom Programme](#) which helped her gain clarity, confidence, and resolve. Currently, she is on the verge of getting her son back now and sees him every other week.

*“The Freedom Programme is great but there is no follow on.”*

M believes that the commissioners should be representative of women on the street, so that they understand the needs of women without an education and those who may have addiction issues. She states that "when someone is living through such pain and they have an addiction problem, drugs become better than the reality," and that you are often suppressed and medicated when they move you into temporary accommodation. She feels as though she is often pre-judged and labelled as a 'troublemaker' and specialists refuse to give her the right support, as women are seen as aggressive if they stand up for themselves.

## Case Study 3

*S – Is young woman originally from Portugal and survivor of abuse. After being raped by father, she became pregnant and has needed a wide range of support having to navigate complex systems and processes in housing, immigration and benefits.*

S fled an unbearably stressful situation at home when she was 5 months pregnant, after being a victim of abuse and rape by her father. She approached the police, who found emergency women's accommodation for her and then transferred her to a hotel. She felt safe in this accommodation to begin with, but felt it became increasingly unsafe with her situation.

S came to the UK as a minor with her parents and has been here for 2-3 years. Her parents incorrectly filled out the settlement forms in 2019. She does not know how to navigate British systems and was helped by grassroots organization Rainbow Haven, who had to get specialist support from a London-based national immigration and legal support agency to deal with the complexities of her case. She faced huge barriers with her settlement status and Universal Credit claim, the stress of which caused her to give birth prematurely this summer.

*“I had a lot to think about and couldn't rest as they told me I didn't have a right to be here when I knew I did.”*

The Early Help team connected S with Rainbow Haven. The organisation has supported her through stressful and difficult situations where no one else would, for example fundraising to give her a small amount of money each week so that she could get to and from hospital. They do this for migrants and refugees despite getting no core funding.

S has not had such a good experience with NHS services. She has not been able to register with a GP despite multiple attempts. She needed counselling in March, but she felt that a lot of the staff got frustrated with her ability to speak English.

S is currently in a desperate situation, in temporary accommodation with a premature baby and struggles to find work. Being a new mum, a single parent and living through COVID has greatly impacted her ability to find work, although she was previously training to be Teaching Assistant. She is concerned she won't be able to feed her child or keep them safe.

*"Right now I am unsure what to do, but I hope in future to be able to go into teaching to support myself and my son."*

#### **Case Study 4**

C is a British women of a Multiple Heritage background. She is an ex-offender who has spent short spells in prison for petty crime. She is the first to admit that she had a chaotic lifestyle and that it took years to find the right support and be ready for the help on offer.

*"What made the difference was the compassion and consistency of one key person in a voluntary sector organisation who has fought my corner and for over 10 years and not given up on me. She knows me, she knows my Mum and I wouldn't be where I am today without her."*

This is now paying off with C having regained stability and regained contact with her family. She had her first child earlier this year who is currently in foster care due to C's history and track record. With support, she is working towards having her daughter back with her next year.

#### **Case Study 5**

T is White British. She has been on probation for 2 years after serving 5 years of a 9-year prison sentence. A critical factor for her was a lack of support upon release.

*"I went to my Probation Officer and they just said 'Oh I've not had time to sort you anywhere to stay – can you sort yourself out?' I couldn't believe it – If I was a drug taker I'd have been on the streets and straight back inside. I had to contact someone I wasn't supposed to see following the sentence to help me find somewhere. Two years down the line my Probation Officer still couldn't remember my name."*

T is now in part time work and finding her feet. She goes into schools and Pupil Referral Units to share her experiences in order to try to break repeat cycles of others offending. She said

*"They have months, if not years to try and help prepare you for release but constraints and a lack of time, care and interest mean you are ill prepared when you come out and often your family have long since deserted you."*

#### **Case Study 6**

J is a black woman of British heritage and a single mother. She is currently fighting a longstanding legal battle within the criminal justice system. She shared several insights and challenges she faced with victim support through court system and found the Court Escort system needed improvement, as they only offered the bare minimum requirements of the service and left her feeling isolated.

*"They stay with you until you get off the stand and then put on their coat to go home and have their tea and say 'Good Luck.'"*

The knock-on effects for her have been daily struggles with her mental health, as she faces up to ongoing complex trauma that she is only just getting support with.

*"I was asked over and over again my circumstances each time, which has prolonged me going to get help in the first place. This has caused heightened anxiety. Mental health issues have turned into physical ailments. I became agoraphobic then in turn developed a Vitamin D deficiency which has created additional and ongoing ailments."*

She does not always feel in the best place to support her son and cannot return to work, where she previously had a successful career.

## Case Study 7

A is a bisexual woman with autism. She was brought up in care and was a victim of child sexual exploitation.

*“Trauma is dismissed as a learning difficulty. I brought myself up no thanks to Social Services and the NHS – raised myself up by the bootstraps and am still doing.”*

She feels totally failed by all services set up to support her and knows many other young women in a similar position. She is now volunteering at Reign Foundation and helps train public sector workers to better understand the complexities of Child Sexual Exploitation to try to make sure other children get better support.

*“Asking children and young people to trust people who have victimised them in the past – when they’ve not believed you, had ingrained perceptions of you or arrested you – it just doesn’t work.”*

## What women’s organisations have said

This section includes the feedback and insights from the broad and diverse women’s support sector. It is split thematically and is a combination of the voices of the women’s organisations we collected through interviews and focus groups.

Greater Manchester has a rich ecosystem of women’s support agencies who are experts in varying forms of support. These span the following:

- *‘Social model’* approaches including peer support, mentoring and confidence building which aid with building independence, strong circles and preventing further need for more intensive support
- *‘Intensive models’* which combine therapeutic services and specialist trauma support following diagnosed support needs
- *‘Wellbeing models’* of service delivery, improving physical and mental health and building community connection to reduce isolation and increase independent progress

Women’s organisations have to meet the complex needs of a broad and diverse community across Greater Manchester. It is common for organisations to secure additional resources to fill gaps in need, innovate beyond commissioning priorities and balance budget constraints. Many organisations felt that the pandemic has strengthened their relationship with funders through the need for trust and flexibility.

## Commissioning services and support – design, processes and expectations

A common theme that emerged was that *“Sometimes process over-rides the needs and security of women and that is wrong.”*

- 2/3rds of the organisations we spoke to suggested *“Commissioners want a one size fits all approach, which is not appropriate or realistic”*
- Over 50% expressed that *“Commissioning priorities and processes are counter-productive to what happens in reality. We end up working in silos when we want to work with the whole family.”*
- VCSE organisation often having to find creative ways to meet the needs of their communities, which sometime conflict with rigid commissioning priorities and outcomes.

2/3rds suggested that *“Commissioners have lost the trust of the women’s support sector”*

- Several claimed *“The GMCA takes a lot of information and insight from us and never gives anything back.”*

- Some organisations were concerned that that *“working at a GM level alone was taking away from local partnerships and situations or methods that are working at a local level”*
- Equally, some organisations felt it was Local Authorities that were lacking investment or commissioning commitment
- Over 50% of focus groups highlighted the need to combine GM and Local Authority resources to tackle domestic abuse, provide support to women and families at a point of crisis and deal with complex housing, health and community and social justice issues
- There were also concerns commissioners set their bar for impact too low and were willing to accept outcomes which were not good enough

## **Differences across localities - provision, budget allocation and approaches**

Many organisations highlighted a *“postcode lottery”* for support services:

- 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of organisations highlighted that there is no standard approach or commitment to provide similar levels of investment into support services for women across the 10 boroughs
- 3 conversations mentioned the *“Bury black hole”* where a potential lack of provision or underinvestment was resulting in surrounding boroughs having to pick up support needs for women in crisis, such as specialist victim support, trauma support and access to refuges.
- Other areas including Salford, Trafford, Rochdale and Stockport highlighted challenging relationships in their locality, highlighting the need for further understanding of the local picture *“The GMCA do try and this is helpful, as we get no Local Authority funds. Our council is dependent on us bringing in the hundreds of thousands of pounds it takes to run our service annually as it saves them money. We bring in vast amounts of money and this is not reciprocated into our sector or matched.”*
- 5 of the 22 organisations highlighted that *“central Manchester disproportionately ends up picking up the support needs of other boroughs which in turn creates pressure centrally and doesn’t help women who often need a locally based service”*
- Several agencies mentioned currently having 17-20 women from outside of their boroughs accessing support without associated investment and that was unsustainable.

Other challenges experienced by some boroughs were the lack of consistency in the approach of the police service in relation to reporting and responding to serious issues for the women they support

- Stockport was one of the example referenced where *“a gender neutral approach is having a negative effect on the population and women struggle to be taken seriously – this approach needs to be re-considered and challenged.”*
- Agencies felt that in certain situations and cases, in particular dealing with Domestic Abuse situations, Sexual Assault, Social Care and the safeguarding of children, plus in the sentencing of women, that a gendered approach was needed and that some police forces refuse to accept or consider policies to support this.

## **Accessible and culturally competent support**

*“Women are not a generic group they are all different and all have different routes to engagement and different needs for support.”*

- All conversations highlighted the different cultural and practical needs of women within the ‘BAME’ community, for example whether they are British, refugees or migrants.
- Diversity within the LGBTQ+ community was also raised. *“You couldn’t get a more different group – sticking a pretty rainbow on your logo doesn’t address the real challenges of this diverse group.”*

- The needs and views of women by age, by locality, by whether they have experienced trauma and abuse, or by whether they have children or not vary hugely.
- 2/3rds of organisations say that a *“One size fits all approach is not appropriate or realistic”*

The importance of accessing safer spaces was also a key theme:

- Around half suggested that creating women only spaces and ‘protected environments’ were key *“There are a lack of cultural and safe spaces for women to go especially as you get out of the city centres, with budget cuts the pandemic is compounding the situation. Women with limited resources, knowledge outside their area or who are living through trauma can’t be expected to take 2 buses or travel for over an hour to access support – they can’t and they won’t”*
- All women with lived experience across diverse backgrounds said that ‘protected environments’ were of great importance.

Individual women and those representing organisations from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse communities felt that culturally supportive organisations were a particular area that needed urgently addressing:

- Organisations led by ethnically diverse communities felt uninvited and underrepresented in decision-making spaces
- The exclusion of BAME voices shapes service design and investment priorities, which ignores the ways in which culture and heritage affect how women reach out for support, discuss taboo subjects, perceive and deal with mental health issues and how they present themselves and communicate *“By excluding us they develop systems with will fail women time and time again and just looks as though some communities and areas of expertise aren’t worth investing in.”*
- There was also agreement that their contribution has been undervalued or tokenistic *“We have been knocking on their door for decades and for some reason we are not represented in their staff teams, commissioning teams, or fully involved at the decision-making table – we aren’t hidden they know where we are.”*

## **Invest in prevention**

All organisations want to see a shift towards prevention and more support before women hit crisis:

- Many noted the value of awareness raising, specialist training, social model activities such as peer support and wider wellbeing support for saving money and improving outcomes
- This was reflected in interviews with women *“If I had found this support (Eve’s Space) in my early twenties, I may not have ended up in a cycle of prison and prostitution, now working with social services to get my child because of my track record.”*

## **Celebrating and strengthening the women’s support sector**

Whilst we have sought to uncover examples of where the system may not be working as well as it could, the spectrum of existing organisations create a hugely beneficial ecosystem when they are easily understood, navigated resourced and accessed in a timely way. Agencies celebrated the work of other organisations, whilst also highlighting the need to strengthen the sector.

Community champions and grassroots organisations are often the ‘front door’ to support and are specialists in expert training for the Statutory Sector as well as other VCSE groups.

*“The grassroots Voluntary and Community Sectors provide an amazing ‘Front door’ to the women in their communities, however they need to be supported to triage and signpost well, rather than try and be all things to all people without some of the expertise and real resources to do so.”*

Specialist, timely and effective triage are paramount to ensure women don't end up in the wrong support, further traumatised by services on offer or having to re-explain themselves from one service to another. However, the specialist services and therapeutic services offered need real investment if they are to reach a wider audience and meet the huge demand which outweighs supply.

*“I was ping ponged from one service to another as no one knew quite how to help me or had the level of resources to offer me the intensive support I needed. This just made me lose trust in the system and feel like I would never recover.”*

Women are also presenting in community support centres and across the criminal justice, health, education and housing sectors with complex needs, experience of trauma and in crisis situations. The level of attention, time and expertise required to support those most complex cases often goes overlooked and under-resourced.

*“Supporting women through trauma and crisis, often alongside bring up children, let alone helping them navigate complex and inappropriate housing, immigration situations, criminal investigation and finding routes to become economically independent takes time, patience and a huge amount of skill. It can't be done through diagnostics, a bit of wellbeing support and a 6 week timeframe.”*

## **Significant risks to the sustainability of the women's support sector**

Whilst there are huge strengths to build on, feedback suggests that years of under investment in relation to need, competitive funding and commissioning processes, coupled with the effects of the pandemic, have created fragility in the Women's Support Sector.

- A culture of unhelpful competition fragments and dilutes support rather than building trust, genuine collaborations and creating innovative partnerships to fill gaps in needs to support more diverse communities of identity.
- High demands and a stretched workforce, compounded by COVID and growing demand for help from women at a point of crisis, are all ingredients which create increased fragility and risks to the sector.
- The 22 organisations involved in Focus Groups secure significant additional funds each year, ranging from grants and fundraising, but many of the large endowment funders will not have the same level of investments to make and funders are reporting 7 times the normal volume of applications
- One long standing service highlighted *“10 years of nil inflation rises and cuts means we do not have the staff, resources to meet the support needs of victims with complex needs”*
- *“The Victim Pot is being eaten away. Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Assault and Family Support needs are all grouped together which isn't helpful and a range of commissioners (CJS, Health, Housing, Police and Crime, Local Authorities) are squeezing the budgets, overlapping them and expecting us to somehow find the shortfall.”*

## **The impact of COVID - Fortalice case study**

It's been just over six months since our lives changed so completely. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 we entered 'lockdown', for an unidentified period of time. This measure was designed to keep the population 'safe', and to stop the spread of coronavirus. For most of the country this approach worked, people adjusted their lives to live with the 'new normal' and some even flourished.

Unfortunately here at Fortalice we experienced a darker side to lockdown. We witnessed a perfect storm as women and children found themselves trapped inside with their abusers. Victims shared with us that perpetrators' behaviour had become worse. Many used the virus as an additional tool of control, citing safety

as a reason for them to remain in the house, even as restrictions eased. Other perpetrators paid no heed to restrictions, behaving irresponsibly with outside social contact and creating more anxiety for those in the home.

Over 70% of callers to our Advice Line said that child contact was being used as a method of control. One woman said her ex-partner refused to return her child to her, breaking legally binding arrangements, because she was a key worker and at higher risk of carrying covid-19. The closure of many family courts (where these types of cases are heard) meant survivors felt powerless.

A young person we checked in with online told us they had begun self-harming. This sense of being out of control was prevalent and as schools and youth clubs closed, young people found their usual safe spaces taken away indefinitely.

A chat bot was introduced to our website to help victims in confinement with their perpetrator to contact us more easily. In April and May this addition literally saved lives, with two separate families who got in touch online being rehoused in our emergency refuge accommodation. We put more resources in to interpreting, removing barriers to support for those from our BAME community, and we bought our popular Freedom recovery programme online.

We knew that once lockdown lifted the floodgates would open. As the only provider of refuge accommodation in Bolton, we had to make difficult decisions as referrals exceeded bed spaces. Our 24 hour advice line dealt with twice as many calls over the 6 weeks following lifting of restrictions and our high risk team saw referrals increase sharply. Our children and young people's service remained a lifeline, offering virtual support to those with worsening mental health.

The Fortalice staff team has amazed me. During lockdown they shopped for the families isolating in our refuge flats and worked flexibly – delivering one to one support in the refuge garden and embracing new technology and moving support online. Local people and businesses have been effortlessly generous, supporting fundraising and donating goods. I could fill a page describing their kindness!

In Bolton, we now find ourselves in the unenviable position of having one of the highest rates of coronavirus in the country and back in a local lockdown. We have a waiting list of local women and children waiting to access services - my priority is to reduce this as quickly and safely as possible.

Prior to this pandemic, fleeing or living with domestic abuse was already a traumatic experience, now it is harder than ever, but together we can change lives.

## **Key findings and 'pinch points'**

There is a significant strength of feeling from women and from women's organisations that it is time for a step change in the approach to commissioning and bold approaches are needed to create the shared and desired outcomes. Detailed analysis of the responses gathered have led to the following pinch points that need to be considered in future commissioning arrangements.

**Pinch point 1** - Disjointed commissioning arrangements and geographical variation leads to silo working amongst providers

**Pinch point 2** - Strict eligibility within the contracts leads to inability to provide holistic or sufficient level of prevention activity

**Pinch point 3** - Under investment in women’s services leads to not enough women being able to access what they need, when they need it. A mistrust and fatigue which has built over time which has led to fragmented services and adds to silo working and competition.

**Pinch point 4** - Well established, VCSE sector led provision brings in additional resources but leaves some organisations vulnerable and uses significant resources to ensure organisational sustainability

**Pinch point 5** - Some women struggle to know where and how to access the support they need as there are multiple access points, inconsistency of the offer due to short term funding and no system-wide coordination mechanisms

**Pinch point 6** - The offer for women facing acute needs and for communities of identity, in particular BAME, LGBTQ+, young women and women with disabilities, is under-developed.

**Pinch point 7** - The impact of non-gendered services is not well understood across the system.

**Pinch point 8** - Women who access and experience the services are not able to shape the offer meaningfully and consistently. There is a diverse range of experience and expertise from women that is not being recognised, particularly from communities of identity.

Women and women’s organisations also had a clear vision of how things could be different:

Current state / ‘pinch points’	Future state
Disjointed commissioning arrangements and geographical variation leads to silo working amongst providers	Joint commissioning arrangements in place between GM and LA leads to more joined up offer for women, with less geographical variation
Strict eligibility leads to inability to provide holistic or sufficient level of prevention activity	Any women that needs support, at whatever part of their journey, can access this. More women are helped earlier preventing personal distress and reducing demand on acute higher intensity work.
Under investment in women’s services leads to not enough women being able to access what they need, when they need it. A mistrust and fatigue which has built over time which has led to fragmented services and adds to silo working and competition.	A partnership with commissioners, joint investment and system-wide support to access resources leads to a more responsive service for women
Well established, VCSE sector led provision brings in additional resources but leaves some organisations vulnerable and uses significant resources to ensure organisational sustainability	Groups, organisations and networks funded to work together creates a more sustainable sector that recognised the breadth of the ecosystem that is its strength.
Some women struggle to know where and how to access the support they need as there are multiple access points, inconsistency of the offer due to short term funding and no system-wide coordination mechanisms	Investment in the strategic development of the women’s VCSE sector strategic enables the establishment of well understood pathways to support and means the help that’s available is easier to understand and to access.
The offer for women facing acute needs and for communities of identity in particular; BAME, LGBTQ+, young women and women with disabilities in under-developed.	The offer for women can respond to individual needs and the breadth of the provision is rich and diverse to meet the needs of all women.
The impact of non-gendered services is not well understood across the system.	Increased awareness of the GM system, training and support in place leads to a better



	understanding of the needs of women and better outcomes for women in GM.
Women who access and experience the services aren't able to meaningfully and consistently shape the offer. There is a diverse range of experience and expertise from women, particularly from those who identify as form a community of identity that is not being recognised.	The experiences of a diverse range of women are valued and lead to a responsive and inclusive offer.

## Conclusions

This report summarises the main learning and insight gathered from a wide range of women's organisations and from women directly. Whilst conducting this consultation we have met countless inspiring, compassionate, knowledgeable, and tenacious people working in the women's support sector. We want to thank each of them in taking the time to engage in this insight.

We also want to thank the women who participated in this and who shared their own experiences to improve the experiences of others. Many of the women we spoke to are currently experiencing extreme hardship and trauma and we want to thank them for taking the time to speak to us.

This report includes a wealth of rich insight, case studies and a detailed analysis of the interviews, focus groups and survey responses that were received. These are in the appendices and should be used widely across the system to directly share the views of women's organisations and of women.

This report has detailed:

- The experiences of women about accessing services and what a good service should look like, and the experiences of women's support organisations.
- The 'pinch points', the current state and future states that have been described to Flourish CIC throughout the consultation
- A series of recommendations for commissioners to consider as part of the commissioning process and to consider for inclusion within future specifications.

Given current uncertainties and increased pressures faced through COVID, this is a timely piece of insight work, which needs to lead to real change. We also want to recognise the ambition of commissioners who want to build on what works, invest in diversity, resilience and expertise. Progressing these recommendations will demonstrate a commitment to support, scale and sustain the important work of the Women's Support Sector, whilst ensure more women across Greater Manchester are helped at a point of crisis and ideally well before they get to that point. The coming 12-18 months being critical to setting the direction of travel, pace and depth of support for the next decade.

## More details

If you require further information about this report, please contact:

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Liz Windsor-Welsh, a Director of 10GM (and the CEO of Action Together) [lizww@actiontogether.org.uk](mailto:lizww@actiontogether.org.uk)

## Appendix A – A summary directory of agencies across Greater Manchester supporting women

Organisation	Website	Lead Contact	Email	Tel
Salford Women's Centre	<a href="http://www.salfordwomenscentre.co.uk/">http://www.salfordwomenscentre.co.uk/</a>		info@salfordwomenscentre.co.uk	0161 736 3844
Salford Women's Aid	<a href="http://www.salfordwomensaid.org/">http://www.salfordwomensaid.org/</a>		<a href="https://www.facebook.com/SalfordWomensAid/">https://www.facebook.com/SalfordWomensAid/</a>	0161 793 3232
Salford Survivors	<a href="https://thesurvivorproject.co.uk/">https://thesurvivorproject.co.uk/</a>		admin@thesurvivorproject.co.uk	0161 706 0468
Manchester Rape Crisis	<a href="https://www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk/">https://www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk/</a>	Anne Stebbings	<a href="mailto:anne@manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk">anne@manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk</a>	0161 273 4500
Manchester Women's Aid / Pankhurst Centre	<a href="https://www.pankhursttrust.org/contact-us">https://www.pankhursttrust.org/contact-us</a>	Gail Heath	<a href="mailto:g.heath@manchesterwomensaid.org">g.heath@manchesterwomensaid.org</a>	0161 660 7999
WAST	<a href="https://www.wastmanchester.com/contact">https://www.wastmanchester.com/contact</a>		wastmanchestercontact@gmail.com	0161 464 7374
Trafford Women's Aid	<a href="https://www.tdas.org.uk/">https://www.tdas.org.uk/</a>	Samantha McLeod	<a href="mailto:Samantha.McLeod@tdas.org.uk">Samantha.McLeod@tdas.org.uk</a>	0161 872 7368
Trafford Rape Crisis	<a href="https://traffordrapecrisis.com">https://traffordrapecrisis.com</a>		<a href="mailto:centremanager@traffordrapecrisis.com">centremanager@traffordrapecrisis.com</a>	0161 968 2820
Independent Choices	<a href="http://www.domesticabusehelpline.co.uk/">http://www.domesticabusehelpline.co.uk/</a>	Barbara Guest	<a href="mailto:barbaraguest@independentchoices.org.uk">barbaraguest@independentchoices.org.uk</a>	0161 636 7525
Rochdale & Oldham Women's Aid	<a href="http://wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/rochdale-and-oldham/2020/03/19/womens-aid-until-women-and-children-are-safe/">http://wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/rochdale-and-oldham/2020/03/19/womens-aid-until-women-and-children-are-safe/</a>		<a href="mailto:ROARreferrals@turning-point.co.uk">ROARreferrals@turning-point.co.uk</a>	0300 555 0234
Stockport Women's Centre	<a href="https://www.stockportwomenscentre.co.uk/">https://www.stockportwomenscentre.co.uk/</a>	Kate Fraser - GM Women's Support Alliance Manager	<a href="mailto:kate.fraser@stockportwomenscentre.co.uk">kate.fraser@stockportwomenscentre.co.uk</a>	0161 355 4455/ 07540 703 360

Stockport Women's Centre	<a href="https://www.stockportwomenscentre.co.uk/">https://www.stockportwomenscentre.co.uk/</a>	Nikki Guy - Manager	<a href="mailto:nikki.guy@stockportwomenscentre.co.uk">nikki.guy@stockportwomenscentre.co.uk</a>	0161 355 4455/ 07947 118 914
Stockport without Abuse	<a href="http://www.stockportwithoutabuse.org.uk/">http://www.stockportwithoutabuse.org.uk/</a>	Stephanine Mallas	<a href="mailto:info@stockportwithoutabuse.org.uk">info@stockportwithoutabuse.org.uk</a>	0161 477 4294
WomenMATTA	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/womenMATTAmanchester">https://www.facebook.com/womenMATTAmanchester</a>	Hannah Morowa – Manager	<a href="mailto:hannahmorowa@wipuk.org">hannahmorowa@wipuk.org</a>	0161 232 1778/ 07540 704 012
Women of Worth	<a href="https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/women-worth-wow">https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/women-worth-wow</a>	Dawn Giamas - Manager	<a href="mailto:dawn.giamas@gmail.com">dawn.giamas@gmail.com</a>	0161 785 7414
TWP (part of Salford Foundation)	<a href="http://www.salfordfoundation.org.uk">www.salfordfoundation.org.uk</a>	Maggie Langhorn – Operations Manager	<a href="mailto:maggie.langhorn@salfordfoundation.org.uk">maggie.langhorn@salfordfoundation.org.uk</a>	0161 787 8500
The Farida Women's Centre (Partners of Prisoners)	<a href="http://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk">www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk</a>	Debbie Seddon – Operations Manager	<a href="mailto:debbies@partnersofprisoners.co.uk">debbies@partnersofprisoners.co.uk</a>	0161 702 1000
Tameside Women and their Families Centre	<a href="http://www.jigsawhomes.org.uk">www.jigsawhomes.org.uk</a>	Debbie Petruzzelli – Operational Manager	<a href="mailto:Debra.Petruzzelli@jigsawhomes.org.uk">Debra.Petruzzelli@jigsawhomes.org.uk</a>	0161 331 2035 / 07718 783 070
Eve's Space		Tina Woodward - Team Leader - Children, Families and Adult Support Services	<a href="mailto:Tina.Woodward@urbanoutreach.co.uk">Tina.Woodward@urbanoutreach.co.uk</a>	01204 385 848
Eve's Space	<a href="http://www.urbanoutreach.co.uk">www.urbanoutreach.co.uk</a>	Steve Bottrill – Deputy CEO	<a href="mailto:steve.bottrill@urbanoutreach.co.uk">steve.bottrill@urbanoutreach.co.uk</a>	01204 385 848/07 802 804 652
Petrus (part of The Regenda Group)	<a href="http://www.petrus.org.uk">www.petrus.org.uk</a>	Edmund Clout – Petrus Service	<a href="mailto:Edmund.Clout@petrus.org.uk">Edmund.Clout@petrus.org.uk</a>	01706 658 559/ 07484 536 330

		Manager		
Petrus (part of The Regenda Group)	<a href="http://www.petrus.org.uk">www.petrus.org.uk</a>	Liz Varey – Service Lead Petrus Hub Services	<a href="mailto:Liz.Varey@petrus.org.uk">Liz.Varey@petrus.org.uk</a>	01706 526 289/07970 951 581
Well Women Wigan and Leigh	<a href="http://wellwomencentre.co.uk/">http://wellwomencentre.co.uk/</a>	Lynn Addison - Manager	<a href="mailto:lynn.wellwomen@btconnect.com">lynn.wellwomen@btconnect.com</a>	01942 681411
MiSoL	<a href="https://manchestermigrantsolidarity.org/">https://manchestermigrantsolidarity.org/</a>		<a href="mailto:info@manchestermigrantsolidarity.org">info@manchestermigrantsolidarity.org</a>	07448506003
African Rainbow Family	<a href="https://africanrainbowfamily.org/">https://africanrainbowfamily.org/</a>		<a href="mailto:info@africanrainbowfamily.org">info@africanrainbowfamily.org</a>	07711285567
REIGN	<a href="http://www.reigncollective.org.uk/">http://www.reigncollective.org.uk/</a>	Zoe Cox	<a href="mailto:office@reigncollective.org.uk">office@reigncollective.org.uk</a>	07843 772847
Rainbow Haven	<a href="http://www.rainbowhaven.org.uk">http://www.rainbowhaven.org.uk</a>	Amanda Jones Said	<a href="mailto:amanda@rainbowhaven.org.uk">amanda@rainbowhaven.org.uk</a>	07985885039
Nestac	<a href="https://www.nestac.org.uk/">https://www.nestac.org.uk/</a>		<a href="mailto:info@nestac.org.uk">info@nestac.org.uk</a>	0170 686 8993
RCT	<a href="http://www.r-c-t.co.uk/">http://www.r-c-t.co.uk/</a>	Bev Place	<a href="mailto:Bev.Place@r-c-t.co.uk">Bev.Place@r-c-t.co.uk</a>	01706 345111
Inspire Women	<a href="https://inspirewomenoldham.co.uk/contact-us/">https://inspirewomenoldham.co.uk/contact-us/</a>	Sally Bonnie	<a href="mailto:sally@thecollectivepartnership.co.uk">sally@thecollectivepartnership.co.uk</a>	07969 174943
MASH	<a href="https://inspirewomenoldham.co.uk/contact-us/">https://inspirewomenoldham.co.uk/contact-us/</a>	Annie Emery	<a href="mailto:annie@mash.org.uk">annie@mash.org.uk</a>	0161 273 4555
Endeavour (Bolton)	<a href="https://www.endeavourproject.org.uk/">https://www.endeavourproject.org.uk/</a>	Jill Caldwell	<a href="mailto:Jill.Caldwell@endeavourproject.org.uk">Jill.Caldwell@endeavourproject.org.uk</a>	01204 394842
Saheli	<a href="http://saheli.org.uk/">http://saheli.org.uk/</a>	Priya Chopra	<a href="mailto:priya@saheli.org.uk">priya@saheli.org.uk</a>	0161 945 4187
Refugees and Mentors	<a href="https://refmentors.org.uk/">https://refmentors.org.uk/</a>	Amanda Littlewood	<a href="https://refmentors.org.uk/contact-us/">https://refmentors.org.uk/contact-us/</a>	07747 080523
Globe Multi-cultural Women's Community	<a href="https://www.globewellbeingcommunities.co.uk/about/">https://www.globewellbeingcommunities.co.uk/about/</a>	Sol Diaz	<a href="mailto:info@globewellbeingcommunities.co.uk">info@globewellbeingcommunities.co.uk</a>	07853 659 602

Keiras Kingdom	<a href="https://www.stockport.gov.uk/profile/keiras-kingdom">https://www.stockport.gov.uk/profile/keiras-kingdom</a>	Michelle Conway	keiraskingdom@outlook.com	07540556115
OWLS	<a href="https://owlsgroup.myfreesites.net/">https://owlsgroup.myfreesites.net/</a>	Claire Osment	info@owlsgroup.co.uk	0161 425 6300
Make a Pathway	<a href="https://www.makeapathway.org.uk/">https://www.makeapathway.org.uk/</a>	Louise Waddington	louise.waddington@makeapathway.org.uk	
Women Mothers/ Against Violence	<a href="https://mavuk.org/contact/">https://mavuk.org/contact/</a>		<a href="mailto:office@mavuk.org">office@mavuk.org</a>	0161 226 8134
Forward	<a href="https://forwardlgbt.org.uk/">https://forwardlgbt.org.uk/</a>	Tina Carnally	<a href="mailto:info@forwardlgbt.org.uk">info@forwardlgbt.org.uk</a>	07719 103201
The Proud Trust	<a href="https://www.theproudtrust.org/contact/">https://www.theproudtrust.org/contact/</a>	Ali Hanbury	info@theproudtrust.org	0161 660 3347
The Launch Project	<a href="https://thelaunchproject.org/about-us/">https://thelaunchproject.org/about-us/</a>	Natalie Lek	info@thelaunchproject.org	0161 5050282
Visit from The Stork	<a href="http://www.visitfromthestork.co.uk/">http://www.visitfromthestork.co.uk/</a>	Kimberly Bond	visitfromthestork@gmail.com	07402 630 671
Community Pride	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/communitypridecic/?hc_ref=ARSqWuMgpUQEY5Ye8LJJ5ma8-fnPDIZwiz2aQAHrLxMB5FKP4bOXO6qLYT_P8QBLNxU&amp;fref=fn&amp;_tn_ =kC-R">https://www.facebook.com/communitypridecic/?hc_ref=ARSqWuMgpUQEY5Ye8LJJ5ma8-fnPDIZwiz2aQAHrLxMB5FKP4bOXO6qLYT_P8QBLNxU&amp;fref=fn&amp;_tn_ =kC-R</a>	Sarah Whitehead		07543 614751
Women With Wings	<a href="https://womenwithwingsgroup.org/">https://womenwithwingsgroup.org/</a>	Jasimine Bakhre	hello@womenwithwingsgroup.org	07466 380 504
Game Changers	<a href="https://tandemtheatre.com/game-changers/">https://tandemtheatre.com/game-changers/</a>	Fran Nutt	fran@tandemtheatre.com	7749110154
Just Psychology	<a href="https://www.justpsychology.co.uk/">https://www.justpsychology.co.uk/</a>	Iyabo Fatimilehin	info@justpsychology.co.uk	0161 262 1622
CDM UK	<a href="https://www.creativedesignmanufacture.com/">https://www.creativedesignmanufacture.com/</a>	Taslima Ahmad	<a href="mailto:info@creativdesignmanufacture.com">info@creativdesignmanufacture.com</a>	01613768049
Meyrick Street	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Meyrick-Street-WN5-413439409465219/">https://www.facebook.com/Meyrick-Street-WN5-413439409465219/</a>	Clare Hales	studioserenitycic@gmail.com	

BEE You Coaching	<a href="https://www.beeyoupd.com/about/">https://www.beeyoupd.com/about/</a>	Jackie Bailey	admin@beeyoupd.com	07956 198809
Benevolent Life	<a href="https://www.benevolentlifechange.co.uk/">https://www.benevolentlifechange.co.uk/</a>	Selina Hanley	benevolentlifechange@gmail.com	0161 273 7852
HEART	<a href="https://www.heartdomesticviolenceprevention.co.uk/">https://www.heartdomesticviolenceprevention.co.uk/</a>	Kelly Mattison	info@heartdomesticviolenceprevention.co.uk	7502 625857
Idle Women	<a href="https://idlewomen.org/">https://idlewomen.org/</a>		info@idlewomen.org	07564 679641
We are Gold	<a href="https://weareblack.gold/">https://weareblack.gold/</a>	Geraldine Esdaille	hello@weareblack.gold	
Calm Connexions	<a href="http://CalmConnexions.com">CalmConnexions.com</a>	Emma Lennihan	emma@calmconnections.org	07919 848558
City of Sanctuary,	<a href="https://cityofsanctuary.org/">https://cityofsanctuary.org/</a>		<a href="mailto:jeff@cityofsanctuary.org">jeff@cityofsanctuary.org</a>	0113 8800002
Light in the Darkness	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Light-in-the-Darkness-1516783681745119/">https://www.facebook.com/Light-in-the-Darkness-1516783681745119/</a>	Beatrice Guessie	<a href="mailto:guessiebeat@yahoo.co.uk">guessiebeat@yahoo.co.uk</a>	07450 201713
Refugee Action	<a href="https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/refugee-action-greater-manchester/">https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/refugee-action-greater-manchester/</a>			0161 831 5420
BRASS Bolton	<a href="https://www.brassbolton.org/">https://www.brassbolton.org/</a>		admin@brass-bolton.org.uk	01204 397 152
Carisma	<a href="http://www.urbanpresence.org.uk/carisma/">http://www.urbanpresence.org.uk/carisma/</a>	Dr Erinma Bell MBE		
Stockport STUFF	<a href="http://stockportstuff.vistaprintdigital.com/donate">http://stockportstuff.vistaprintdigital.com/donate</a>	Rev Dian Scott Fowler	stockport_uff@hotmail.com	07845 928227
Aspiring Boldly	<a href="http://aspiringboldlyassociates.org">aspiringboldlyassociates.org</a>	Aba Graham	<a href="mailto:aspiringboldly@gmail.com">aspiringboldly@gmail.com</a>	01614771914
Wai Yin/Welcome Centre	<a href="https://www.waiyin.org.uk/2014/10/new-welcome-centre-cheetham-hill/">https://www.waiyin.org.uk/2014/10/new-welcome-centre-cheetham-hill/</a>	Louise Wong (Community Project Worker)	<a href="mailto:info@waiyin.org.uk">info@waiyin.org.uk</a>	0161 833 0377
Salford Youth Service	<a href="https://www.wuu2.info/news/">https://www.wuu2.info/news/</a>	wuu2@salford.gov.uk	youth.services@salford.gov.uk	0161 778 0700
Unlimited Potential	<a href="https://www.unlimitedpotential.org.uk/">https://www.unlimitedpotential.org.uk/</a>		info@unlimitedpotential.org.uk	0161 743 0088

Atiha Chaudrey/ BME Network	<a href="http://www.manchesterbmenetwork.co.uk/">http://www.manchesterbmenetwork.co.uk/</a>		office@manchesterbmenetwork.co.uk	0161 257 0213
Safety for Sisters	<a href="https://www.safety4sisters.org/">https://www.safety4sisters.org/</a>	Sandyha Sharma	safety4sisters@gmail.com	
Orange Umbrella Project	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/orangeumbrellaproject/">https://www.facebook.com/orangeumbrellaproject/</a>			
New Beginnings Manchester	<a href="#">New Beginnings Manchester</a>	Fi Nicks	finicks36@gmail.com	07584 434537
Pillar of Women	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Pillar-of-women-100364591641383">https://www.facebook.com/Pillar-of-women-100364591641383</a>	Elyshia Cantrill		
Fortalice (Bolton)	<a href="https://fortalice.org.uk/">https://fortalice.org.uk/</a>	Gill Smallwood	<a href="mailto:Gill.Smallwood@fortalice.co.uk">Gill.Smallwood@fortalice.co.uk</a>	01204 365677
ETM - CGM & MCRC /North West - User Voice	<a href="http://www.uservoice.org">www.uservoice.org</a>	Caroline Evans	cevens@uservoice.org	0203 137 7471
Cheshire & GM CRC's - Interserve Division: Justice	<a href="http://www.cgmcrc.co.uk">www.cgmcrc.co.uk</a>	Karen Atherton - Case Manager	karenatherton@interservejustice.org	01442 296009
Merseyside, Cheshire & GM CRCs - Interserve Division: Justice	<a href="http://www.cgmcrc.co.uk">Website: www.cgmcrc.co.uk</a>	Gail Churchill - Community Director	gailchurchill@interservejustice.org	01442 296349
Cheshire and Greater Manchester Community Rehabilitation Company	<a href="http://www.cgmcrc.co.uk">http://www.cgmcrc.co.uk</a>	Kerri Bendon - Community Director, CHeshire	<a href="mailto:KerriBendon@interservejustice.org">KerriBendon@interservejustice.org</a>	01442 296166
Support and Action for Women's Network	<a href="https://sawn.org.uk/">https://sawn.org.uk/</a>	Rose Ssali	<a href="mailto:sawn.org@gmail.com">sawn.org@gmail.com</a>	07960501088
GM42028 Women	<a href="https://www.gm4women2028.org">https://www.gm4women2028.org</a>			

## **Appendix B - A list of People and partners involved in delivering Focus Groups**

### **Flourish Time to Grow Programme participants**

Time to Grow is a programme to support women explore career pathways in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector as a route to earn a living whilst create positive social change in communities. 10 women from across Greater Manchester, all Experts with Lived Experience were involved in the programme and we involved Jo Andrew a member of the programme and this group who has both lived experience and had previously worked for NOMS and supported Flourish as a volunteer facilitator at this session and a couple of others to support with the operations and analysis of the consultation.

### **Women with Wings**

Women with wings is a black led organisation primarily aimed at helping women take their first steps towards training employment or self-employment. They help women around Little Hulton and surrounding areas overcome barriers including those who have come into contact with the criminal justice system or been victims of abuse. They co-facilitated a BAME focussed group of 14 women from across Salford, Wigan, Bolton and Manchester.

### **The Goodness Collective**

The Goodness Collective is helping to connect businesses to their community and supporting unemployed women in Stockport through their Wave of Change programme. They have grass roots and strategic links across the Stockport area across Public, Private and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector and co-facilitated a focus groups of 20 women who were predominantly representing a range of agencies to consider observations, experiences and priorities for grass roots support organisations, commissioned services and cross borough needs.

### **Formerly The Barker Baker**

Francesca Barker ran an award winning social enterprise, The Barker Baker, which she was inspired to set up following a cookery course through probation services and through the lifetime of the enterprise supported several women with convictions into skills and employment opportunities. Fran co-facilitated a focus group of 7 women including women with lived experience and those with former convictions to bring perspectives from both perpetrators and victims to the discussions.

### **The Pankhurst Trust incorporating Manchester Women's Aid**

Alongside managing the Pankhurst Centre and championing gender equality, The Pankhurst Trust incorporates Manchester Women's Aid, to ensure that those suffering from domestic violence and abuse get the confidential help they need and work in collaboration to deliver a range of intensive and therapeutic support services to women in crisis. They co-facilitated a focus group with an emphasis on Violence Against Women and Girls which was predominantly agency focussed including 7 organisations from established organisations keen to build on previous consultations to shape and influence action.

### **Forward CIC**

Forward are an emerging, inclusive and innovative organisation aiming to provide a visible and dedicated safe space for local LGBT+ folks, family and friends, to meet, participate and share with the wider community. They were recently commissioned to carry out research into hidden needs of the LGBTQ+ community and how they have been impacted by COVID. They are part of the Flourish Together Resilient Leaders programme and co-facilitated a small focus group with representation from the lesbian, bisexual and trans community to bring additional insights.

### **Make A Pathway CIC**

Are an alternative youth education provision supporting young people and families with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantage. They have run a range of programmes supporting young people at primary, secondary and Further/Higher Education ages who are at risk or who are coming into contact with the Criminal



Justice System to advocate, overcome barriers and transition into positive lives. They co-hosted a small focus group with young people in partnership with Calm Connections CIC to help the under-represented voices of vulnerable young people be heard to shape and consider how preventative services would impact women's services and what young people need from current support.

### Calm Connections CIC

Calm Connections provide support to families going through tough times. They work with the whole family to have calm, positive relationships, to maintain wellbeing and good mental health. They support children, young people and their families to create a healthy and inclusive community, in which children and their families are heard and lead change. They joined the young people focus group to share good practice ideas and insights on better meeting the needs of young women.

### Safety for Sisters

Safety for Sisters address the exclusion of migrant women (particularly those with 'no recourse to public funds') from the most basic rights of safety and protection. They do this through policy work, educating and challenging organisations and the public to uphold the human rights of migrant women as well as creating of spaces for collective action and . They co-hosted a focus group with a diverse range of organisations involved in [GM4Women 2028](#) convening experienced organisations supporting diverse women facing all forms of discrimination and seeking to combat Violence Against Women and Girls.

### Action Together

Action Together are the voluntary, community and social enterprise infrastructure support organisation spanning Oldham Rochdale and Tameside. They support thousands of people changing lives, improving neighbourhoods and contributing positively to their local area. They believe that by learning together, sharing skills and pooling resources we can get more done. Action Together co-facilitated a focus group involving 22 women around two thirds were local women's support agencies and a third were women with lived experience with a view to informing the consultation, whilst initiating a new collaborative network locally to better support women.

### Women's Voices Group/MASH

As part of an 8 year lottery funded programme Manchester Action on Street Health and other partners are supporting a group of women facing complex and multiple disadvantage to influence change and service design through creating space for women to get their voices heard and their views and ideas acted upon. They co-facilitated a focus group with 9 women including those who are at risk of coming into contact with the Criminal Justice System be that as victims or perpetrators.

### REIGN Collective

REIGN is a collective of young survivors of child sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse. They provide training workshops, presentations and consultancy to any professional or organisation involved in the prevention of CSE. The REIGN team co-hosted a small focus group to bring in vital insights to the consultation, looking at the themes and priority needs of young women and girls often treated as perpetrators rather than victims and feel incredibly let down by the services set up to support them – hence why they set up their own unique, innovative services and organisation which is now an award winning national agency focusing on power not pity to create the change they see needed.

### H3 – Helping the Homeless into Housing

Is a homelessness support charity that works with people experiencing homelessness in temporary accommodation, in poor health or at high risk of homelessness. They deliver a range of services across 3 temporary accommodation hostels in partnership with Stockport Homes and have developed innovative peer support models. Following internal research they are undertaking training in how to better support BAME, LGBT and Young People developing their offer and services to offer bespoke support and are looking at delivering wider training to the public sector.

### **Salford Foundation- Together Women Project**

Are a 30 year old charity providing opportunities for young people and adults to create better futures. They are one of the commissioned Women's Centres and offer a gender specific service providing a one stop shop of support for female offenders with multiple complex needs and living in Salford. They are innovative outreach programmes looking at fuel poverty and the Emerge project tackling loneliness and isolation plus have established relationships with corporate partners including BUPA, Bank of New York and JD Sports to bring in wider resources and opportunities for their beneficiary groups.

This unique, innovative, trailblazing and compassionate set of organisations who took the time to co-host and facilitate conversations as part of this report are a credit to Greater Manchester and we celebrate, recognise and thank this group in particular for their insights, experience, as well as their energy, patience and commitment to creating and improving services which are inclusive, adaptive and fit for purpose when supporting the complex and wide ranging needs of all women across Greater Manchester.

## Appendix C: Summary of insight from focus groups and interviews

Key learning from perspectives of agencies and women with lived experience across interviews and focus groups is summarised in the table below.

	<b>New realities</b>	<b>Benefits/Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Agency feedback	Adapting services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-opportunity to re-shape and improve</li> <li>- remotely reaching more people</li> <li>-supporting more homeworking can be helpful in a predominantly female workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-stress, pressure and capacity to adapt fast</li> <li>-remote services not possible in some situations, pausing some services</li> <li>-women’s homes turning into school and office causing stress and a lack of work/life balance</li> </ul>
	Digital advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-a rapid upskilling in digital tech for many</li> <li>-ability to innovate as well as save time and resources</li> <li>-remote support can offer a lifeline to some, reach new audiences and save transport costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-having time and ability to upskill</li> <li>-having the resources to upgrade and access digital tech</li> <li>-digital support can put some women in further isolation and danger with a lack of privacy</li> </ul>
	Repurposing/adapting contracts, funding and commissioned work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-commissioners and funders have been forced to trust organisations and agencies</li> <li>-increased flexibility has strengthened services, taken some pressure off, allowed innovation and built funder/agency relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the cost of adapting and repurposing was in the main picked up by VCSE sector</li> <li>-fatigue has built up in an already underfunded and over stretched sector</li> <li>-maintaining the level of flexibility afforded through COVID</li> </ul>
	Funding and sustainability challenges – fog, unreasonable callouts and increased competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Significant resources/ local and national grant funds have been offered charities in the last 8 months</li> <li>-those with the skills and capacity have been able to respond to callouts and draw in short term funding to help with adaptation, technology gaps and survival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Government funding has been offered through a business lens and in many cases not appropriate for charities</li> <li>-All funders seem to have been throwing money at charities at the same time, with unrealistic deadlines, significant amounts of additional work, plus under incredibly competitive circumstances</li> <li>-there is a cliff edge come March 2021 and charities face an uncertain future</li> </ul>
Women’s Feedback	<p>Lockdown and being forced to stay at home</p>	<p>For some this has been a chance to slow down and refocus in spite of increased financial and health concerns</p> <p>Where those were able to flee from DVA or the lockdown kept perpetrators away for a short time</p>	<p>Women trapped in isolation</p> <p>Women (and children) trapped in dangerous situations</p> <p>An increased in DVA instances at a time when services have been adapting or reduced</p>

			Triggered trauma and a detrimental impact on mental health
	Reduced services and ability to access physical support (VCSE/Health/Housing)	Few benefits other than transport cost savings and an increase in awareness and in some cases ability to use remote services such as Zoom and WhatsApp	A lack of timely support leaving women and families at risk Increased isolation and growing mental health needs Increased instance of suicide A backlog of physical health needs from new illness, to ongoing chronic health needs to dentistry Housing support and diversity of wider wellbeing and therapeutic services reduced in hostels
	Financial instability	Slight increase in benefit payments to those who can access them	Women (and children) tapped in poverty Need and reliance on food banks increased Risk of crime increased to fund basic needs Sex work increased
	A pausing and now a backlog of court cases	Few benefits other than time to plan and seek support if not already in place	Perpetuated trauma, increased anxiety and depression Perpetrators at large No closure, justice or progress
	Prison access or progression for ex-offenders limited	n/a	Increased stress anxiety Setbacks in progress and preparation for release Limited family contact

## Appendix D: Examples of innovation – to learn from, adapt or scale

The following is an overview of some of the innovations and interventions that we became aware of through the interviews and focus groups. This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide examples of the innovation we found.

### Independent Choices - LGBT Support

The Independent Choices IDVA will work with people to reduce the risk of further domestic abuse, this can include safety planning. It can also include support with housing, signposting to health and wellbeing services, support with attending court and reporting to the police if appropriate. They want LGBT communities to know that there is a service that understands their needs and to discuss options to be safer.

**What can we learn?** The positive and negative impact of the language we use, avoiding heterosexual assumptions which may stop people disclosing their abuse.

### Freedom Programme

Freedom Programme is a domestic violence programme which was created by Pat Craven based in Wigan. She developed this from her work with perpetrators of domestic violence. It is now delivered nationally through a network of trained facilitators, a series of online resources, videos and books and has resoundingly positive feedback from women, men and families who experience

**What can we learn?** The programme focuses on information as opposed to therapy and combines peer support with practical accessible tools. It has a significant evidence base after being practiced of for several years and a train the trainer approach has enabled consistent Freedom Programmes to evolve across the UK.

### LGBT Foundation

The LGBT foundation's training academy is for anyone wanting to increase their knowledge and confidence of LGBT inclusion at home, at work and in the community. The training is perfect for anyone wanting to recognise the barriers and challenges that LGBT people experience within society, workplaces, accessing healthcare and other services.

**What can we learn?** How to navigate language and definitions relating to LGBT identities, recognising the barriers and challenges LGBT communities face when accessing services, develop the skills and knowledge to be a LGBT ally by identifying discrimination and making positive changes to challenge it.

### HEART

Heart, an expert by experience led social enterprise that delivers domestic abuse prevention support for children and young people working with girls and boys to break cycles. Their mission is to ensure that future generations do not become victims or perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.

**What can we learn?** How to break the intergenerational cycle of abusive behaviour, the value of investing in preventative services and the depth of expertise that people with lived experience bring in running charities and social enterprises. Additionally this service tackles domestic abuse in part, by focusing on changing the attitudes and behaviour of young men as well as young women.

### Blackcountry Women's Aid, IRIS Project

IRIS is a national project, which works with GPs to combat domestic abuse and make the most of their opportunities to reach vulnerable victims. The project offers training and advice for GPs and practice staff on how to recognise and enquire about domestic abuse, and a dedicated support service for victims identified.

**What can we learn?** How to carry out mass training in a consistent way with public sector workers and also deal with the root cause of other illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, self-harm, and use of alcohol and drugs due to experiences of violence.

### Just Psychology

Just Psychology provides clinical, legal and community services to improve the mental wellbeing of individuals and families. They collaborate with Professor Dawn Edge, to deliver her innovative [CAFI model](#) of culturally adapted programmes. Professor Dawn Edge, is actively engaged in working with communities to improve health and well being – especially among those who are marginalised, socially excluded, and experience inferior access to health and care.

**What can we learn?** There is a need for culturally adapted programmes to improve the accessibility and appropriateness of psychological and mental health services for Black and minority ethnic children and their families. A person's culture has a profound effect on how people develop and cope with situations they experience, therefore services need to be aware of this and be able to respond appropriately.

### Tameside Women and Children's Centre

Tameside Women's Centre came up in a range of conversations as a good practice approach to stakeholder consultation in their efforts to reshape services, build trust and meet the needs of their community. This is a centre for all women aged 18yrs+ and their families who live in the Tameside area. They offer 1-2-1 and group support for women who want to make changes to their life but don't know where to start. They deliver a range of groups supporting women with issues such as domestic violence, mental health, drugs and alcohol, employment and training, parenting, self-esteem and confidence.

**What can we learn?** Holistic, person centred community-based services run for and by people with lived experience can provide just in time support and help avoid crisis situations.

### The Manchester Maya Project

The Manchester Maya Project is a partnership of eight organisations: Saheli, Ananna, Wai Yin Society, Himmat, Women's Voices, Wonderfully Made Woman, CDMUK and Bauer Academy working together to support BME women and girls. The project was set up in 2016 to work towards jointly providing support services to vulnerable BME women in Manchester. A woman might come to Maya because of a crisis issue such as domestic violence and receive immediate support such as safe accommodation, then be supported to access longer term housing, develop social networks, build confidence and skills and may then complete her Maya journey. She may continue through a further range of support, learn new skills and get a job or set up a business and possibly go on to be a 'Maya Champion' – an inspiring advocate for other women.

**What can we learn?** Recognition that support services need to consider the journey individuals are on and that collaborative working across a number of organisations can help build capacity, connection and community. Targeted support for communities of identity can reach women who wouldn't otherwise access support.

### The Reign Collective

REIGN's training workshops are suitable for professionals or students wishing to gain insight into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) from survivor's perspectives. They have recently presented to the Judicial College, Frontline, and students at Manchester Metropolitan University. All their workshops are developed and delivered by a diverse group of CSE survivors, using a mix of activities, story telling, games, and discussions to suit all learning styles.

**What can we learn?** A model that recognises that training and support when provided by people with direct personal experience can be powerful and transformational for the organisation, women leading it and the clients they train.

## Appendix E: Service offer comparison across 22 women's organisations

Through the interviews and focus groups we sought to understand the differences between a range of diverse organisations that have been involved in this consultation. The table below highlights a comparison across 22 organisations consulted in terms of service provision and offer. Only three of those listed below are currently Women's Centres commissioned by the GMCA.

	Local Authority Relationship	Commissioned by GM at some level	Support 200+ ppl per yr	Beneficiaries linked to CJS: (Victim/Perp)	Provide Training to VCSE/Public sector	Policy work	Prevention services	Therapy services	Wellbeing Services	Crisis Helpline	Hostel/Housing	Specialist field in relation to 'Hidden/under represented groups'
Independent Choices	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	LGBT service BAME service
We are Black Gold	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V/P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAME
Women's Aid/ Pankhurst Trust	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BAME specialist
Saheli	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BAME specialist
Women Matta MCR	✓	WC	✓	V/P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Substance Misuse
Stockport Women's Centre	✓	WC	✓	V/P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Make A Pathway	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V/P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young People
Calm Connections	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young People /Families
MASH	✓	✓	✓	V/P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex workers
Safety for Sisters	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BAME Migrant Women specialist
Salford Foundation	✓	WC	✓	V/P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Women's Voices Project	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Homeless / BAME
Women with Wings	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAME specialist
Forward	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	LGBTQ+
H3	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	V/P	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	Homeless via Stockport Homes
Reign Collective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	CSE specialist
Wai Yin	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	V	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAME specialist
Fortalice	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
The African Pot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAME specialist
Rape Crisis	✓	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	
User Voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	V	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In prisons
Verve	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	V/P	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Foster Care

N.B 'Therapy Services' include counselling/talking therapies and other specialist therapies, trauma support, psychological and emotional support

## Appendix F: A copy of the Survey and Interview Questions

## Survey Questions

This was an open access survey which was aimed at women with lived experience directly. It was carried out through surveymonkey

### Background information given

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority are carrying out a consultation which they have commissioned Flourish Together to facilitate part of, in partnership with 10 GM. This survey, alongside a series of interviews, focus groups and discussions aims to reach out and seek feedback and involvement, to support the co-production and recommissioning of support services for vulnerable and marginalised women.

We are looking to hear from women who have accessed statutory and community support from women through women's centres, support services and wider organisations - this might be for health and wellbeing needs, family support needs, if affected by abuse, trauma or antisocial behavior or support when dealing with other complex situations where women have been at risk of harm or needing to come into contact with the criminal justice system.

We are particularly keen to make sure we hear from a diverse range of people, those who have not had opportunity to feed their experiences and needs into fully support them. We are having conversations with individuals and agencies alike.

This survey aimed professionals working in a support women in a statutory or community capacity, asks some in depth questions related to your personal and professional experiences and/ or observations to help inform the thinking of commissioners and wider colleagues. Your anonymous responses will help to ensure women's support services are as appropriate, accessible and effective as possible. Whilst this survey is totally anonymous and should you feel the need to contact someone whilst completing this survey for support please call Nickala Torkington at Flourish Together on 07815023363 or email [nickala@flourishtogether.org.uk](mailto:nickala@flourishtogether.org.uk) with any queries.

### *Details about you.....*

**Please circle your place of birth:** UK / other:

Are you a British Citizen    Yes     No     Applying to be

What is your current Postcode? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe your Ethnicity: White British     White Irish     White -other   
Asian and Asian British     Black and Black British     Chinese or Chinese British     other Ethnic group

Which age category do you fall into? Under 18     19 - 25 years     26-35 years   
36 - 45 years     46-55     56- 65 years     66-75     76 - 85 years     85+

Would you describe yourself as having any additional health needs or disability

YES     NO     DON'T KNOW

Have you ever had a criminal conviction?

YES     NO     RATHER NOT SAY

### *Your Experience & / or Observations of Women needing to access support*

**Have you ever needed to access support for the following?**



Mental Health Support needs Yes  No  rather not say

Family or Relationship Breakdown Yes  No  rather not say

A difficult housing situation Yes  No  rather not say

Experiencing nuisance or antisocial behaviour Yes  No  rather not say

Substance misuse awareness/education or rehabilitation Yes  No  rather not say

Burglary/ theft or damage of property Yes  No  rather not say

Racial discrimination Yes  No  rather not say

Cultural prejudice Yes  No  rather not say

Immigration difficulties Yes  No  rather not say

Have you ever needed to have police involvement or intervention as a result of experiencing any of the above Yes  No  rather not say

How did you feel about approaching agencies for such support? Did you feel you could find or access the help you needed?

If you were to look for support when facing difficulties where would you look first?

Ask a friend  Ask a family member  Ask a mentor  Look on the internet

Ask a support agency  Look on social media  Other

If you were to look for support when facing difficulties where might you seek support?

Ask a friend  Ask a family member  Ask a mentor  Look on the internet

Ask a support agency  Look on social media  Other

Have you any other thoughts or comments on your experience of how to find out about support services?

How satisfied were you with any previous support you needed to access?

Mental Health Support needs Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Family or Relationship Breakdown Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

A difficult Housing Situation Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Experiencing nuisance or antisocial behaviour Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Substance misuse awareness/education or rehabilitation Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Burglary/ theft or damage of property Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Racial discrimination Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Cultural prejudice Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

Immigration difficulties Highly Satisfied  somewhat satisfied  not satisfied  felt left unsupported  disengaged from support  never found support  not applicable

More Yes  No  rather not say

Can you describe a positive experience from accessing support?

Have you ideas on how to improve support - where it needs improve most?

**Has someone you know ever needed to access support for the for the following?**

Mental Health Support needs Yes  No  rather not say

Family or Relationship Breakdown Yes  No  rather not say

A difficult housing situation Yes  No  rather not say

Experiencing nuisance or antisocial behaviour Yes  No  rather not say

Substance misuse awareness/education or rehabilitation Yes  No  rather not say

Burglary/ theft or damage of property Yes  No  rather not say

Racial discrimination Yes  No  rather not say

Cultural prejudice Yes  No  rather not say

Immigration difficulties Yes  No  rather not say

More Yes  No  rather not say

More Yes  No  rather not say

More Yes  No  rather not say

Has someone you know ever needed to have police involvement or intervention as a result of experiencing any of the above? Yes 1- 2 people I know  Yes 3- 5 people I know  Yes 5-10 people I know  Yes more than 10 people I know  No  rather not say

*Your Experience & Observations of Women's Centres and support services.....*

**Have you ever needed to access any of the following:**

A women's centre

A women's refuge

Rape Crisis or similar support

Refugee Action or specialist services for asylum seekers and refugees

Substance misuse support services

A community support centre for support in the face of a crisis

A BAME led organisation to support with specific support needs

**Please describe what you find of most benefit from this support**

**Can you describe examples where things didn't work so well**

**Have you suggestions or ideas improvements could be made?**

**How do you feel about the development of digital or remote support services? Have you accessed, used or needed support remotely or digitally?**

Overall what do you think are the main issues women face about **accessing health services**<sup>1</sup>?

Are there any ways in which you would like to be further involved in helping influence, shape or help design improvements:

Invited to interviewed further on this topic

Invited to attend focus groups or activities which help redesign services

Invited to join an expert by experience panel

(If you have tick YES to any of these options please email [nickala@flourishtogether.org.uk](mailto:nickala@flourishtogether.org.uk) so as not to compromise anonymity of this survey and express your interest in being further involved)

**We held a prize draw as an incentive to take part and recognise people's involvement and the following prizes were selected at random at the beginning of December:**

£100 – 1 prize

£50 – 2 prizes

## **Interview/ Focus Group Questions for Agencies**

This set of questions was used as a guide and aimed at large and small support organisations. Due to capacity, time and knowledge of those being interviewed not all questions were covered in every focus group or interview. Questions were tailored to ensure the most natural and necessary conversations could take place.

### **Background information given**

We are looking to support groups/networks led by women with lived experience of multiple disadvantages so that we can hear the voices of women in these situations. Specifically, we want to make sure that these women can participate in, and contribute to, the re-design of the Greater Manchester 'Whole Systems Approach' for vulnerable and marginalised women and the re-commissioning of women's support services across Greater Manchester. This work is part of the response to a core recommendation of the Greater Manchester VCSE Sector Commissioning Framework

We hope that this will create opportunities for women who have faced multiple disadvantages to use their personal experiences to create change for other women in similar situations.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples...This may include registration with primary care (doctors, Dentists etc) or being able to access specialist health support such as substance misuse or mental health.

This work will be part of the recommissioning of women's support services and we would like representative(s) from this work to be part of the recommissioning process to help us ask for the right services to be provided and to appoint the best service provider/s to deliver this support.

We already have officers from local authorities, the probation service and health as part of this design group. Before we proceed with this work, we need to hear the voice of women facing multiple disadvantage and have their representation on the recommissioning panel.

This work is linked to the recommissioning being carried out by the unified probation services. For the purpose of this work we are defining 'vulnerable and marginalised' as; *'women who are accessing multiple services or need to be accessing multiple services and at risk of being in contact with justice services as either a perpetrator or a victim'*.

### Questions to be considered – AGENCIES

Questions in **BLACK** were asked in every case, those in **PURPLE** were addition in some instances

Company/Organisational Structure? How long been running?

Have you people from BAME backgrounds  with disabilities  with lived experience  on the board?

Income Generation Mix?

How many people do see each month?

Typical/ core target group

What services do you offer?

Where do you see yourself in terms of the spectrum and range of support? Examples of.....

Preventative:

Mild to moderate needs and interventions:

High Risk/ Crisis point

Criminal Justice Setting

Follow on support/ after care/ wider community support and connections

What are your views and opinions of how well women's services and centres are meeting the needs of women?

What is not working well and needs improvement? (eg.health services/ family services/ rehab/housing/ victim support)

How do people find out about you?

Are you aware of 'Hidden Women' / women not on your radar/ or accessing services – who are they, where are they, why are they not coming forward and what might they need?

Where do you refer people to? Are there gaps/ lacks of cross referral/ signposting?

How is covid compacting things?

Have there been times when things have worked better? Examples of innovation/good practice? Is the here and now better or worse than previous decades?

How do you go about developing collaborative partnerships? Can you highlight any key partnerships/referral pathways?

Organisations often have challenges in sustaining their work – have you any ideas or suggestions on ways organisations/ partnerships or consortium groups could strengthen their sustainability?

Often smaller organisations get frustrated as they fall through commissioning gaps, struggle to get funding and are often relied on for support – sometimes with no remuneration from larger agencies/councils or others. Should anything be done about this? If so what?

What are your views on developing/ using remote or digital support?

What should the **key priorities** be for budget holders/ commissioners for making **women's services**<sup>2</sup> as effective as they could be for you and other women?

*We know there is under representation in existing services from women from **BAMER communities** and we would like to understand the reasons for this (where appropriate)*

Are there particular needs in prevention support/ mild/ moderate crisis / Heightened Crisis support/ Follow on support and building/signposting to support networks – where do you think the money lies or should be focused?

What are the sticky challenges around commissioning and how could commissioners (of varying types) make the process easier/ more user led/ more transparent?

How would you like your views to be fed back into the co-production and recommissioning process?

(We're doing a survey/interviews/thematic and geographic focus groups/reports/podcast/round table with commissioners) are there other ways – better ways – more impactful ways we can help the commissioners to 'Get it' and get wider / more diverse/ more cross sector partnerships forming?

- What would show you that there is commitment to diverse women's representation in this process?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us or suggest?

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<sup>2</sup> Examples... Women's Service provides support in safe, women-only spaces that includes;

- One to one holistic support;
- Drug and alcohol support;
- Counselling and psychotherapy;
- Domestic Abuse programmes;
- Group work/courses and workshops;
- Drop in sessions;
- Sign-posting to other services / sources of support.

## Interview/ Focus Group Questions for Women with Lived Experience

This set of questions was used as a guide when having one to ones with women with lived experience. Due to capacity, time and knowledge of those being interviewed not all questions were covered in every focus group or interview. Questions were tailored to ensure the most natural and necessary conversations could take place.

**Questions in BLACK were asked in every case, those in PURPLE were addition in some instances**

**Background in addition to information given to agencies.....**

**Services to support women in vulnerable and marginalised situations – hearing women’s voices**

We would like to hear the views of women who have accessed and engaged with their local women’s centres **and** those that have either chosen to not engage or those who were not referred. We realise some of this will be sensitive information and may be difficult to talk about – only share what you feel comfortable with sharing today – there will be other opportunities to share further detail in a follow up anonymous survey and also through one to one interviews where capacity allows.

Age: Ethnic Background: Criminal Conviction:

What are your views and opinions of how well women’s services and centres are meeting the needs of women?

What is working well – where have you had positive experiences (eg.health services/ family services/ rehab/housing/ victim support)

What is not working well and needs improvement? (eg.health services/ family services/ rehab/housing/ victim support)

How / where would or have people sought support – who/ what is a first port of call when trying to find help? (friends/family/ mentors/internet/social media/ agencies/ directories/other?)

Any tips or thoughts on how women’s (and girls) services could make themselves more obvious and accessible?

What would you tell your former self or a women looking for support now about the best way to find help? (different for each situation – share what you can)

Have there been times when things have worked better? Examples of innovation/good practice? Is there here and now better or worse than previous decades?

How is covid compacting things?

What are your views on accessing remote or digital support?

What should the **key priorities** be for budget holders/ commissioners for making **women’s services**<sup>3</sup> as effective as they could be for you and other women? Are there particular needs in prevention support/

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<sup>3</sup> Examples... Women’s Service provides support in safe, women-only spaces that includes;

- One to one holistic support;
- Drug and alcohol support;
- Counselling and psychotherapy;
- Domestic Abuse programmes;
- Group work/courses and workshops;

mild/ moderate crisis / Heightened Crisis support/ Follow on support and building/signposting to support networks – where do you think the money lies or should be focused?

- How would you like your views to be fed back into the co-production and recommissioning process? (We're doing a survey/interviews/thematic and geographic focus groups/reports/podcast/round table with commissioners) are there other ways – better ways – more impactful ways we can help the commissioners to 'Get it' and get wider / more diverse/ more cross sector partnerships forming?
- What would show you that there is commitment to diverse women's representation in this process?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us or suggest?

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Examples... Women's Service provides support in safe, women-only spaces continued:

- Drop in sessions;
- Sign-posting to other services / sources of support.

## Appendix G – Existing research and insight

### Associated local research discovered in initial desktop review

#### [Women Offenders Whole System Approach \(2018\) – MMU/GMCA](#)

An evaluation of the extent to which the WSA is operating in line with its key features and achieving its key aims

#### [Voices of Survivors: Hearing Women for Change \(2018\) – MASH/RapeCrisis/MM](#)

A report into women's experiences of receiving and failing to receive support. This report provides a rich source of evidence on which improvements can be built upon

#### [Female Offender Strategy \(2018\) - MoJ](#)

A strategy that sets out the Government's commitment to a new programme of work for female offenders, driven by three priorities; earlier intervention, an emphasis on community-based solutions, and an aim to make custody as effective and decent as possible for those women who do have to be there

#### [The Personalities Capability Framework \(2003\) – NIMHE/DoH](#)

Guidance to ensure that staff would be equipped with the education and training they need to work effectively with people with personality disorder

#### [Strong Her Together Report \(2019\) – Inspire Women Oldham](#)

A report that represents voices of the most vulnerable women in Oldham to achieve equality in decision making and influencing

#### [Breaking Down the Barriers \(2019\) – Agenda/Against Violence & Abuse](#)

A report exploring the connections between women's experiences of domestic and sexual violence and multiple disadvantage

#### [Migrant Women's Rights to Safety \(2016\) – Safety for Sisters](#)

A report that documents the realities of vulnerable migrant women living at societies margins and shines a light on the experiences of those bearing the brunt of the current politically austere time

#### [Women's Voices Report \(2019\) – Prison Reform Trust](#)

A summary report compiled from a variety of sources reflecting the breadth of engagement with women through the Transforming Lives programme

### Recent Reports coming out to recognise and review include

#### [The Equality and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan \(2019 -2022\)](#)

A report that seeks to explore how equality and human rights work effectively in Britain to help people live well together

#### [The Case for Sustainable Funding for Women's Centres \(2020\) - WBG](#)

A briefing that argues that Women's centres are at risk of closure for lack of secure funding and makes the case for investing in a sustainable funding model

#### [Keeping the Faith: What survivors from Faith Communities want us to know \(2020\) Faith and VAWG Coalition](#)

A coalition that brings together a range of organisation and activists supporting survivors from faith communities to reflect on how survivors and communities of faith can be better supported

#### [Women in the Criminal Justice System – Women's Equality Party](#)

The Greater Manchester Branch proposed a motion for 'A Policy for Women in the Criminal Justice System' to the Women's Equality Party national conference in October 2020. The motion was agreed by 91% of attendees and is now party policy