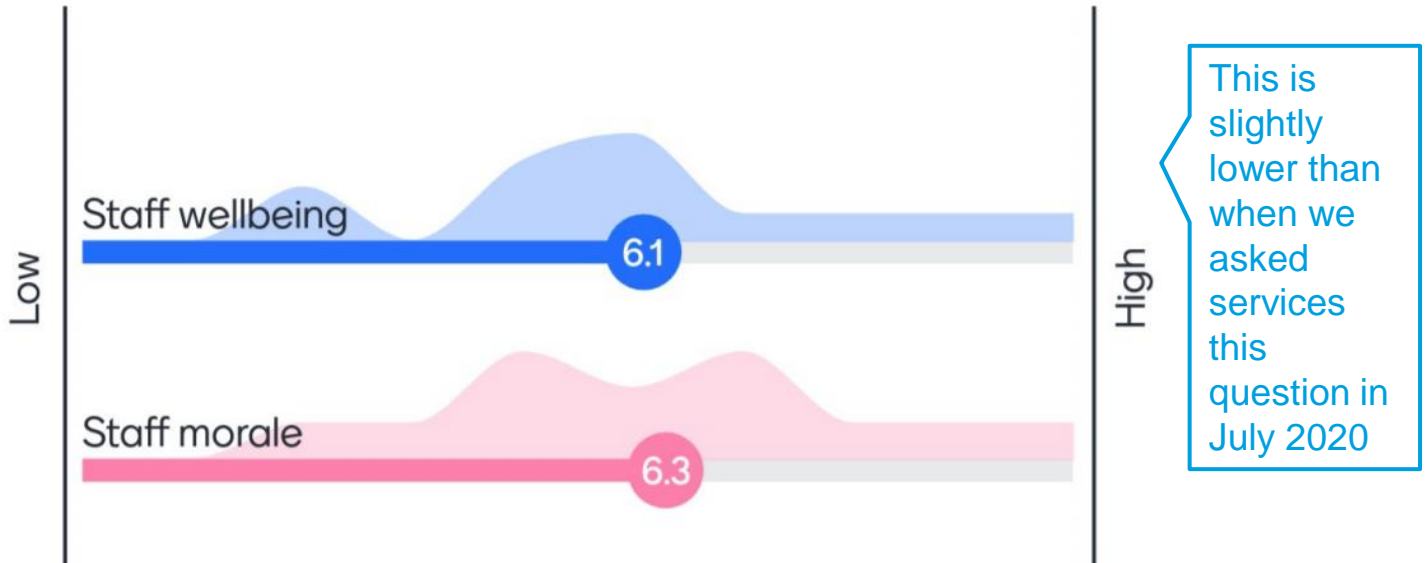




A network of services that support adult and child victims and survivors of domestic abuse in Scotland. Sharing practice, voicing questions and drawing on the expertise of colleagues in the sector, as we look to COVID-19 recovery planning

Call theme:
Resilience & reflection

We asked attendees to rate staff wellbeing and morale



Key factors continuing to influence wellbeing and resilience

-
- Isolation of lone working
- New staff inductions are tricky
- Pressure that staff should be able to cope and perform as ‘normal’
- Lack of informal peer support and team problem solving
- Challenges of home / work boundaries
- Bereavement
- Anxieties of return to work prior to vaccination
- Juggling personal challenges – home schooling, childcare
- Courts delays – trying to provide clients with solutions

- +
- Allowing flexible work patterns
- Virtual check-ins and socials
- Regular supervision
- Group activities e.g. sponsored walks
- Cross-team workshops and learning sessions



Reflecting on a year of Covid-19

Referrals



- Many services have seen periods of intense increase and also higher risk cases. Others have seen steady rates. Some have seen decreases attributed to **disrupted referral pathways**, e.g. less self-referrals, less informal identification such as in co-located services.
- Increased **case complexity**, especially victim mental health needs & isolation.
- **Changing abuse patterns** – one service discussed increase in elderly victims identified over lockdown, another described growing waiting lists due to historical abuse disclosures.
- **Partners** - some inappropriate referrals from ‘overloaded’ agencies (addiction services, GPs, mental health mentioned) leading to non-engagement. Lack of safe housing options – some victims returning to perpetrator as a result. Increased child protection concerns during the pandemic.
- **Longer case lengths** – court delays a big factor. Deferred cases stall court-mandated perpetrator work leaving victims in limbo. Survivors need linked in with other services before closure more than ever, e.g. befriending and financial support.

Ways of working



- Virtual communication can be positive, **staff and clients connected** in new ways, but can lead to overload which needs to be managed.
- Some clients prefer virtual meetings but **tech capacity** remains an issue for some. Services discussed **offering choice** where possible, including around homeworking which isn't right for everyone.
- Potential **increase in capacity** of some rural services, ability to engage survivors online. Potential for more joined up working.
- Some DA services now applying for funding for food banks, technology and monies for clients. This could have benefits but also increased workload.
- **Innovative practices** e.g. Cedar digital library for women which is working well. Victims Fund has been great for services, many hope its benefits continue as restrictions ease.

Coming out of lockdown - concerns



- Anticipated **rise in cases/referrals** as schools return and restrictions lift.
- The impact of ongoing abuse through the pandemic on women and children's recovery is significant but **recovery services have been impacted** in this time.
- With everything online there are missed opportunities to reach women e.g. at GP surgeries. **Less visibility** in the communities.
- Looking forward to getting face-to-face with clients when it is as safe as possible – not all workers vaccinated so services need to consider **new workplace risk assessments** for when support is resumed.
- **Delayed court cases** will cause issues for a long time. Some concerns that perpetrators are less likely to get remanded whilst awaiting trial.
- Will public awareness remain high as normality returns?



What's ahead for the sector

- Many services anticipate a surge in referrals based on their experiences over the last year.
- As services gear up for face-to-face work, there are uncertainties over how a 'new normal' will look and concerns over safety.
- Positive parts of new ways of working, such as virtual meeting options and new technologies, should not be seen as a way to strip costs and reduce funding for services.
- Some felt that the [Delivering Equally Safe Fund](#) doesn't reflect Covid-19 recovery as much as it could, which is a missed opportunity.

Participants reflected on their experience of the network over the last year...



Whilst the network meetings have now ended, we will keep in touch via our communication channels with any important updates.

Ending domestic abuse

Contact us at Scotland@safelives.org.uk