



The Scottish  
Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

# Equally Safe

Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating  
violence against women and girls



COSLA

'There is one universal truth,  
applicable to all countries,  
cultures and communities:  
violence against women  
is never acceptable, never  
excusable, never tolerable.'

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon

## Vision

A strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it

## Aim of Equally Safe

To work collaboratively with key partners in the public, private and third sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls

## Priorities

Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls	Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically	Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people	Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response
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## Objectives

Positive gender roles are promoted	Women and girls are safe, respected and equal in our communities
People enjoy healthy, positive relationships and children develop an understanding of safe, healthy, and positive relationships from an early age	Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour
Women and men have equal access to power and resources	Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated
Women, children and young people access relevant, effective and integrated services	Men who carry out violence against women and girls are identified early and held to account by the justice system
Service providers competently identify violence against women and girls, and respond effectively to women, children and young people affected	Men who carry out violence against women and girls change their behaviour, and are supported to do so
Women, children and young people's voices are heard and their rights respected	

## National Outcomes

We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger	We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society	We have strong resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk	Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to people's needs	We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people	We live longer healthier lives

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# Foreword

Violence against women and girls, in any form, has no place in our vision for a safe, strong, successful Scotland. It damages health and wellbeing, limits freedom and potential, and is a violation of the most fundamental human rights. The Scottish Government, CoSLA and key partners are committed to preventing and eradicating it once and for all.

This strategy, which was originally published in 2014 and has now been updated, provides a framework to help us do that. It was developed by the Scottish Government and COSLA in association with a wide range of partners from public and third sector organisations. This updated version has been supported by further engagement with children's organisations. We are immensely grateful to all those organisations for their support, and looking forward to working with them in implementing Equally Safe's vision.

Equally Safe is our country's strategy to take action on all forms of violence against women and girls. By this we mean the violent and abusive behaviour carried out predominantly by men directed at women and girls precisely because of their gender. Behaviour that stems from systemic, deep-rooted women's inequality, and which includes domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation (like prostitution), and so called 'honour based' violence like female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Whatever form it takes, violence against women and girls can have both an immediate and long-lasting impact on the women, children and young people directly involved. It is quite simply unacceptable for modern day Scotland and does not reflect the country of equality we aspire to become.

This is not to say that we haven't made progress in recent decades. The work of our partners and a wide range of organisations over many years has placed violence against women and girls firmly on the agenda. Significant investment in services and provision has been made by consecutive Scottish Governments and local authorities. The issue is a priority for Police Scotland and of key importance to statutory agencies who are serious in supporting victims and tackling perpetrators.

However, it is clear that much more needs to be done. We need to eliminate the systemic gender inequality that lies at the root of violence against women and girls, and we need to be bold in how we do that through prioritising a relentless focus on prevention. At the same time, we need to make the best use of resources and drive continuous improvement in ensuring that women and girls at risk of and experiencing violence and abuse receive joined up, effective mainstream and specialist service provision across Scotland.

Each and every area of government and wider society has an important role to play in tackling this issue. Specialist organisations remain key in supporting those affected by violence and abuse of course, but it is not just an issue for them. It needs the engagement of the full range of interests including, local authorities, Police Scotland, the NHS, local authorities, the civil and criminal justice systems, social work, housing, media, the business sector, trade unions, third sector organisations and individuals and communities too.

It is only by working together across every area of Scottish life that we will successfully prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. This is a strategy that demands major and sustained change from us all so that we can create a Scotland to be proud of, where all our citizens flourish and are Equally Safe.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Neil'.

**Alex Neil MSP,**  
Cabinet Secretary for Social  
Justice, Communities and  
Pensioners Rights



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harry McGuigan'.

**Cllr Harry McGuigan,**  
Community Wellbeing  
Spokesperson, CoSLA

59,882 

DOMESTIC ABUSE INCIDENTS WERE RECORDED BY POLICE IN SCOTLAND IN 2014-15. 79% OF ALL SUCH INCIDENTS HAD A FEMALE VICTIM AND MALE PERPETRATOR.

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4% OF WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED SERIOUS SEXUAL ASSAULT SINCE THE AGE OF 16.

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 1 IN 5 CHILDREN

IN THE UK WILL HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE BY THE TIME THEY REACH 18.

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79% 

ACROSS THE UK, 79% OF FORCED MARRIAGE CASES INVOLVED FEMALE VICTIMS.

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1 IN 3 GIRLS REPORT SOME FORM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS.

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 95%

1,901 RAPES OR ATTEMPTED RAPES WERE RECORDED BY THE POLICE DURING 2014-15. WHERE GENDER KNOWN, 95% HAD A FEMALE VICTIM.

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1. What we are trying to achieve

# 1. What we are trying to achieve

**‘There is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable.’** – Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General

**‘Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as ‘gender based’ this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women’s and girl’s subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women’s vulnerability to violence.’**

Our definition of gender based violence, which is based on the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

## **Vision**

Our vision is of a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it. No woman or girl in Scotland should be subjected to violence or abuse of any kind (physical, emotional, sexual or psychological) and no child or young person should have to experience gender based violence or have to live with the impact of it.

## Aim

Our aim is to work collaboratively with key partners across all sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. We are clear that there are no quick fixes to this deep-rooted problem. It requires significant economic, social and cultural change over the long term, that calls for the sustained commitment not just of a wide range of partners but of individuals and communities too.

## Our strategic approach

Equally Safe sets out a shared understanding of the causes, risk factors and scale of the problem. It highlights the need to prioritise prevention, and it sets out how we will develop the performance framework which allows us to know whether we are realising our ambitions. We are committed to working collaboratively with partners and achieve change by making best use of available resources and with a clear governance framework underpinning delivery. In keeping with our use of the UN's definition of violence against women and girls, Scotland's first National Action Plan for Human Rights<sup>1</sup> explicitly recognises that taking action to address violence against women and girls is needed to ensure we realise the human rights of everyone in Scotland. Equally Safe is a strategic framework to help organisations and partners – individually and within Community Planning Partnerships – align their work towards our vision.

We know that our approach is more developed in some areas than others, and this strategy provides a framework for helping to address this as part of future work. The relevant outcomes and indicators and the actions we need to take to deliver our aim and priorities are being developed with partners, whilst individual workstreams have been tasked with producing action plans that will inform an implementation plan to take forward our ambitions.

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1 <http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/actionplan>

## Being aware of the national landscape

We are clear that preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls is essential to achieving the Scottish Government's overarching purpose, which is 'to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.' It contributes to the Scottish Government's strategic objectives – in particular, Safer and Stronger, Healthier, and Wealthier and Fairer – and to a number of the national outcomes contained in the National Performance Framework. Equally Safe also provides a strategic framework for the delivery of the Scottish Government's Equality Outcome on tackling violence against women. And finally, it sits at the heart of the strong emphasis the First Minister has placed upon achieving full gender equality.

## Our definition

Violence against women and girls encompasses (but is not limited to):

- » physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), within the general community or in institutions, including domestic abuse, rape, and incest;
- » sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space, including work;
- » commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking;
- » child sexual abuse, including familial sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and online abuse;
- » so called 'honour based' violence, including dowry related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and 'honour' crimes.

Our shared understanding includes a definition of gender based violence which was developed by the former National Group to Address Violence Against Women. It is based on the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), and it states: 'Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as "gender based" this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girl's subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence.' The definition extends to women and girls of all ages. Under international law, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a person under the age of 18.

Our definition is rooted in a gendered analysis of violence against women. This analysis firmly places the different forms of violence against women within the gendered reality of men's and women's lives, what it means to be a man and a woman in our society and the status and privileges which are afforded to us depending on whether we are born a man or a woman. This strategy flows from the Scottish Government's adoption of this gendered analysis of violence against women<sup>2</sup>, which is the subject of a considerable body of research, analysis and writing<sup>3</sup>. Equally Safe acknowledges that women and girls are at an increased risk of violence and abuse precisely because

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2 Orr, L. 'The Case for a Gendered Analysis of Violence Against Women' <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/925/0063070.pdf>

3 For an overview of a gender based analysis of domestic abuse see <http://www.crfr.ac.uk/assets/briefing-69.pdf>

they are female and our explicit inclusion of girls<sup>4</sup> aligns with the UN definition of violence against women that includes the girl child, reflecting that this risk is present throughout life.

### Where we've come from

Equally Safe builds upon a shared understanding of violence against women described in *Safer Lives: Changed Lives: A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women*, which was published in 2009<sup>5</sup>. Equally Safe was developed through a collaborative process involving a wide range of partners, whose contributions helped to shape the final document. Stakeholder events provided opportunities for the many individuals and organisations across Scotland with an interest to share their perspectives and experiences. We have considered a range of evidence sources, many of which are footnoted within this documents; whilst not exhaustive, this provides a critical underpinning to our thinking. Since the original publication of Equally Safe in 2014, we have engaged further with stakeholders to ensure that issues relating to children and young people are strengthened throughout.

### The scale of the problem

Too often incidents of violence and abuse against women and girls go unreported, and there is ample evidence on a whole range of fronts to support the view that violence against women and girls remains a serious issues in Scotland. Some key facts:

- » 59,882 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by police in Scotland in 2014-15 – an increase of 2.5% from 2013-14. 79% of all such incidents had a female victim and male perpetrator<sup>6</sup>.

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4 In line with the UNCRC, we recognise the girl child as under 18, and in Scotland we recognise boys and girls as 'young people' 11-26. Evidence indicates this encompasses an age of significant risk for forms of gender based violence such as domestic abuse, FGM and forced marriage.

5 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/06/02153519/0>

6 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/TrendDomesticAbuse>



- » There were 1,901 rapes or attempted rapes recorded by the police in Scotland during 2014-15. Where the victim's gender is known, 95% (1,278 out of 1,349) rapes or attempted rapes recorded by the police in 2014-15 had a female victim<sup>7</sup>.
- » Recorded crime statistics<sup>8</sup> for 2014-15 show an increase in the number of convictions for 'breach of the peace' to 15,580, an increase of 13%. This was partly driven by offences with a domestic abuse aggravator, particularly for offences such as stalking or threatening and abusive behaviour.
- » The same statistics also show an 8% increase in the overall number of convictions for sexual offences, up to 1,145 convictions. This in part reflects a 13% increase in the number of people proceeded against for such offences and includes a 40% rise in the number convictions of rape and attempted rape, and a 16% increase in convictions for sexual assault.
- » One in five children in the UK will have experienced domestic abuse by the time they reach 18<sup>9</sup>.
- » 3% of adults had experienced serious sexual assault (including forcing or attempting to force someone to have sexual intercourse or take part in another sexual activity when they did not want to) since the age of 16. This varied by gender, with 4% of women experiencing serious sexual assault since the age of 16 compared with 1% of men. 8% of adults experienced at least one type of other sexual assault (including indecent exposure, sexual threats and sexually touching when it was not wanted) since the age of 16. This proportion was higher for women, with 13% experiencing at least one form of other sexual offence since the age of 16, compared to 2% of men. 6% of adults reported experiencing at

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7 Recorded Crime in Scotland 2014-15 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/09/5338>

8 Criminal Proceedings in Scotland 2014/15 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubCriminalProceedings>

9 Radford et al., 2011

least one form of stalking and harassment in the last 12 months. While the overall risk of stalking and harassment was equal for men and women, the risk varied according to the type of stalking and harassment<sup>10</sup>.

- » Young women face a higher risk of violence from a partner than older groups. For example, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey found that younger adults were more likely to have experienced abuse by a partner in the last 12 months, with rates varying from 5% of 16-24 year olds who had contact with a partner or ex-partner in that time to less than 1% of those aged 65 or older;
- » In a study published by the NSPCC, girls experienced more frequent and more severe emotional, physical and sexual partner violence than boys – one in three 13 to 17 year old girls reported some form of sexual violence. Girls reported high levels of coercive control including surveillance through the use of online technologies and, unlike the boys in this study, reported that their welfare was severely detrimentally affected<sup>11</sup>.
- » On forced marriage, the most recent UK Government statistics found that 79% of cases involved female victims<sup>12</sup>.
- » Of those children and young people referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) the most common grounds of referral include 'close connection with a person who has carried out domestic abuse' and 'victim of a Schedule 1 offence'<sup>13</sup>.

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10 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2012/13: Sexual Victimization & Stalking <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/3479>

11 <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/partner-exploitation-violence-teenage-intimate-relationships-summary.pdf>

12 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412667/FMU\\_Stats\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412667/FMU_Stats_2014.pdf)

13 SCRA statistics 1 April 2014-31 March 2015 [http://www.scra.gov.uk/sites/scra/cms\\_resources/SCRA%20Statistical%20Analysis%202014-15.pdf](http://www.scra.gov.uk/sites/scra/cms_resources/SCRA%20Statistical%20Analysis%202014-15.pdf)

## Developing a shared understanding

It is important that everyone involved has a shared understanding of violence against women and girls: the impact on women and girls who experience it, as well as children and young people who are affected; its causes, the scale of the problem in Scotland, and the risk factors which increase vulnerability to abuse of women and girls. Whilst violence against women and girls occurs across all sections of society, not all women and girls are at equal risk. Some factors can increase vulnerability to abuse and keep women and girls trapped. These include age, looked after status (current and former), financial dependence, experience of child abuse and neglect, poverty, disability, homelessness, insecure immigration status and ethnicity<sup>14</sup>.

## Violence against girls and young women

Equally Safe recognises that, as well as adult women, girls and young women are at risk of violence and abuse precisely because they are female. Some girls are victims of child sexual abuse, including child sexual exploitation. There are a number of specific issues prevalent in the lives of girls and young women; for example, sexting and non-consensual sharing of intimate images (also known as ‘revenge porn’) can also particularly affect young people. Young women disproportionately experience intimate partner violence in relation to young men, and report much greater negative impacts as a result<sup>15</sup>. The prevalence of and easy access to pornography is a constant presence in the lives of young women and men that ultimately contributes to reinforcing the gender norms that play a key role in perpetuating violence against women and girls<sup>16</sup>.

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14 [http://www.gbv.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/GBV\\_12ppA5-5.pdf](http://www.gbv.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/GBV_12ppA5-5.pdf)

15 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/partner-exploitation-violence-teenage-intimate-relationships-report.pdf>

16 <http://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/Projects/AttitudesResearch>

## Children and young people

The definition we have adopted explicitly includes children of all genders as subject to harm through violence. Violence against women and girls can have significant consequences on children and young people's lives, including (but not limited to) children and young people who are directly or indirectly harmed through violence and abuse perpetrated by adults in their lives. There is significant evidence of links between domestic abuse and emotional, physical and sexual abuse of children<sup>17</sup>, and children themselves can see domestic abuse as 'coercive control' of the whole family environment<sup>18</sup>, not just of their mother<sup>19</sup>. It is important to note that many women and children experiencing domestic abuse are no longer living with the perpetrator, so leaving home or separating does not bring an end to the abuse as is often assumed. It is also important to note that there is no predetermined 'cycle of violence', by which young men and women who have experienced the domestic abuse of their mothers will inevitably go on to abuse their own partners, or to become victims; although it is a common assumption, the percentages of abusive men who have and have not experienced it growing up are similar.

Children and young people increasingly live their lives in digital communities, and the speed of technological change expose young people to an ever-increasing range of new threats. Many of these threats demand new approaches to understanding their nature and prevalence. Other forms of violence and abuse also affect children and young people - including FGM, forced marriage, rape and sexual assault. Violence and abuse, however experienced, impacts negatively on the life chances of children and young people, and this must be addressed through the provision of effective support for survivors and those at risk, aligned with a strong focus on prevention and early

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17 See, for example, Humphreys and Houghton, 2008, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2008/08/04112614/5>

18 Houghton C., 2008, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2008/08/04112614/7>

19 Houghton C., 2008, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2008/08/04112614/7>

intervention. As duty bearers we have a responsibility to make sure that the rights of all children are protected, including their right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to create an environment that is safe for children and young people to grow up. Children have the right to be kept safe from harm, protected from violence and to be given proper care by those looking after them. In the context of gender based violence, children and young people must be regarded as 'victims/survivors' with the ability to access services in their own right and to be recognised as service users with an individual and collective voice in relation to the services they receive.

### **Intersectionality between gender and other characteristics**

Along with their gender, women and girls have other protected characteristics that increases their level of risk of experiencing violence and abuse. Drivers for this are often the continuing prejudice and structural barriers in society which cause inequality. There are challenges in relation to some minority ethnic communities, where traditional gender roles can be stronger and where cultural practices involving violence such as Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage are more prevalent. Disabled women and girls are more vulnerable to exploitation and coercion, whilst older women may be either caring for, or being cared for by, their abuser. Refugee and asylum seeking women and girls may have experienced particular trauma before or during their journey to Scotland. We are proactive in relation to ending Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage, and will seek to ensure that issues of intersectionality are reflected in the implementation of Equally Safe. We also recognise that forms of abuse, including abuse perpetrated by adults against children, can take place in situations where there are balances of power that go beyond gender and beyond minority status. These include (but are not limited to) age, physical strength, position of trust and socio-economic status, and addressing violence and abuse in the context of these risk factor will be a key requirement in our future work to prevent violence

against women and girls. With all this in mind, equality and child rights analysis and assessment will be an integral part of the process around the development of outcomes and interventions.

### **Violence against men**

The particular approach we are taking through Equally Safe brings a strategic focus to the issue of men's violence against women and girls, as underpinned by the definition we have adopted, which is in turn based on the principles of international law. A gendered analysis does not exclude men, but rather recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected by particular forms of violence that they experience because they are women and girls. Many men and boys are victims of violence and abuse. Some boys experience the forms of abuse outlined already in relation to children and young people, whilst some men are victims of domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and forced marriage. The prevailing societal view of what constitutes masculinity makes it difficult for men to identify themselves as experiencing abuse and can prevent them from seeking help. More fundamentally, masculinity and femininity are part of the underlying social construct of gender that contributes to the continuing prevalence of violence against women and girls in society. We condemn all forms of violence and abuse, whilst recognising that particular forms of violence are disproportionately experienced by one gender and require a strong strategic focus. Men have a critical role in challenging violence, breaking down gender norms and in helping to ensure greater gender equality in society – they are also entitled to support when they experience violence and abuse.



## The international context

Our approach is rooted in the UN's own understanding of violence against women and girls. Not only is it our moral duty to take action against violence against women and girls, and to uphold the rights of women, children and young people, it is also our legal duty as set out by several international treaties and human rights obligations. They include:

- » the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (sometimes known as the Istanbul Convention)<sup>20</sup>;
- » the Global Platform for Action calling on Governments to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls;
- » the Human Rights Act, which incorporates the protections set out in the European Convention on Human Rights into Scots law;
- » the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an agenda for action to end all forms of discrimination against women; and
- » the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people aged 17 and under a comprehensive set of rights.

Scotland is committed to meeting the benchmark set by each of these international treaties and obligations – as a modern democratic country, we aspire to the creation of an inclusive Scotland which protects, respects and realises the human rights of everyone. And whilst we are focusing on preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls in Scotland, we cannot forget that all over the world women and girls are experiencing abuse and violence every

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<sup>20</sup> As of 1 March 2016, the UK has signed but not ratified the Convention. Nevertheless, the Scottish Government supports the principles and aspirations of it.

hour of every day. The United Nations has endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals, which set out the international community's future ambitions in development. Goal 5 is the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and that goal applies to all countries everywhere. Scotland will play its part as a responsible global citizen to advocate for the fulfilment of gender equality worldwide and an end all forms of violence against women and girls – one of the ways in which we can do this is by being exemplar in our own approach.

### **Prioritising prevention**

Primary prevention is about preventing violence before it occurs. Our approach focuses on changing behaviour, building the knowledge and skills of individuals, and ultimately delivering a progressive shift in the structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence occurs. This is complemented by our ambitions in achieving gender equality and eradicating poverty, which will make a critical contribution to ultimately preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls for good. Adopting this approach challenges the notion that violence against women and girls is inevitable and suggest an approach which can contribute to realising our ultimate vision. It aims to change societal attitudes, values and the structures which produce inequality. In particular, it requires a step change in the attitudes which condone and excuse violence against women and girls, which enable perpetrators to deny the reality of what they are doing and place the blame on their victims. It raises fundamental questions about the way our society is currently organised.

Although this is a long-term approach, it is not a soft option. By adopting Primary prevention as a core objective in relation to Equally Safe, we recognise that violence against women and girls is not 'caused' by a single factor. Rather it is driven by a complex interaction between

a range of underlying or contributing factors, at different levels of influence – individual, relationship, community and societal. This is what we call the ‘causal story’ of violence against women and girls.

In the drive to achieve our long-term aim we are clear about the importance of focusing on primary prevention but we must also be realistic and recognise that women and girls will continue to experience gender based violence in all its forms for some time to come, and children and young people will continue to be affected by violence and the consequences of witnessing and experiencing violence. There are other forms of prevention too, and we will have to employ them all – these include preventing violence from recurring (secondary prevention) and reducing the impact of violence and abuse after it occurs (tertiary prevention). Early intervention and the provision of effective mainstream and specialist services will remain fundamentally important in our future work. The provision of high quality services for those at risk will continue to be important – we must ensure that women and girls are kept safe and that victims and survivors have the support they need to recover. However, we are clear that, by working towards ultimately eradicating the problem altogether we can deliver better outcomes. This is better for the individuals and communities we help keep safe from harm, and for society as women and men enjoy greater equality.

Prioritising primary prevention challenges the notion that violence is inevitable or acceptable. It demands a fundamental change in the societal attitudes, values and structures that give rise to and sustain the problem. It is the most ambitious approach we can take, demanding a determined effort over the long term. It may take some years for this approach to deliver noticeable benefits at a time when public resources are reducing and demand for measurable results is heightened – but prioritising primary prevention is the right approach if we are to achieve our aim of a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals, regardless of gender, live Equally Safe.





## 2. Where we are now

**‘A great deal of the literature on male violence discusses the areas of male violence separately, such as domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, child sexual abuse, pornography and sexual harassment. But women experience all of these forms of violence. If they do not actually experience the abuse personally, fear exists as a result of other women’s experiences. This has a controlling effect on a woman, curtailing their freedom, adding undue stress to their lives, and affecting their confidence.’** – The late Jannette de Haan, Women’s Support Project

### **Scotland today**

Scotland’s approach to tackling violence against women and girls has been recognised internationally, in particular because of the gendered analysis that underpins our approach. There has been significant investment in the issue and key partners have transformed their practice over recent years. This is welcome, but has not as yet led to a sustained reduction in violence against women and girls. Equally Safe is aimed at achieving that reduction and ultimate eradication.



## Achieving gender equality and tackling inequality

Gender inequality is a root cause of violence against women and girls, and despite the many advances being made there remain persistent inequalities between men and women. The gender pay gap of 9% (calculated as the median on full time earnings) is one example<sup>21</sup>, and the overrepresentation of women in lower paid sectors and underrepresentation of women in senior posts is another<sup>22</sup>. Women do not currently have the same life chances as men – there are a number of reasons for this, including institutional sexism and disproportionate levels of economic dependence. To help address these issues, we have launched an extensive programme of work aimed at increasing employability, addressing the gender pay gap, improving the flexibility of work and reducing occupational segregation. Leading by example, the Scottish Government has a gender balanced Cabinet and we are securing commitments to achieving a 50/50 gender balance on boards by 2020 within the public, private and third sectors. We have also legislated, via the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to increase the level of funded early learning and childcare which will help support parents both into and within the workforce. We have also engaged in a broadly participative process to ask the people of Scotland what they want to see happen to create a Fairer Scotland.

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21 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/7483/9>

22 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00473060.pdf>

### Relevant policies

Our policy approach to preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls links across many different parts of Government policy - ranging through the spheres of health, education and justice to name but a few. There are a number of specific policies which are relevant to Equally Safe, where we will work to strengthen links and connectivity with Equally Safe. These include (but are not limited to):

Area	Policy
Equality	Race Equality Framework; Disability Delivery Plan; Programme of work aimed at reducing discrimination against and improving attitudes to Gypsy/Travellers
Health	Equally Well; Mental Health strategy; alcohol and drugs partnerships; Sexual Health and Blood Bourne Virus Framework; the Keys to Life learning disability strategy
Social Justice and Fair Work	Fairer Scotland action plan; Adult and Youth Employability; tackling homelessness
Justice	Making Justice Work; Building Safer Communities, violence reduction; Reducing Reoffending Programme; implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Women Offenders; tackling human trafficking and exploitation
Education, Children and Families	Curriculum for Excellence; Positive Behaviors in Schools; child protection guidance; the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework; the Early Years Framework and Collaborative; the National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation; maternity policy; Children's Hearings
Other	Rural Strategy

## Relevant laws

There are a number of laws which contribute to preventing and tackling violence against women and girls. These include (but are not limited to):

- » The Human Rights Act (1998)<sup>23</sup>
- » Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004
- » Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005
- » Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005
- » Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
- » Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009
- » Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011
- » Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011
- » Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011
- » Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- » Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014
- » Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015

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23 UK-wide Act

## Shaping opinion

Raising awareness and changing attitudes is a key part of our approach, and the Scottish Social Attitudes survey on attitudes to violence against women sets out how far we still have to go<sup>24</sup>. A number of community-based organisations are raising public awareness through initiatives encouraging everyone, whether female or male, to take action. We are encouraging equality and mutual respect from an early age through Curriculum for Excellence with guidance on relationships, sexual health, and parenthood education<sup>25</sup>. This sits alongside programmes which focuses on improving relationships and reducing violence and aggression, and which promotes emotional competence and empathy. The media has a key role to play, sometimes giving a negative portrayal of women and girls, or using images which exploit, sexualise or reinforce gender stereotypes. As part of the BBC Charter Renewal process, the Scottish Government is consulting with stakeholders on gender portrayal and stereotyping.

## Improving and increasing services for women, children and young people

For those women and girls affected by violence and abusive behaviour, we are improving the consistency and availability of mainstream and specialist services across Scotland. The Scottish Government's investment of over £45m since 2012 includes the direct provision of funding to frontline specialist services, and local authorities are also commissioning specialist services that are critical to prevention, early intervention and support. Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland are key partners in improving and increasing services nationally, and at a local level Women's Aid organisations, Rape Crisis Centres and services like ASSIST in the former Strathclyde area and DASAT in West Lothian continue to provide a key component of

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24 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/11/5577>

25 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/HLivi/sex-education>

the support available. Multi-agency working is increasingly valued, with local multi-agency partnerships working to ensure a joined up approach in their areas and MARACs and MATACs ensuring that victims are supported and perpetrators tackled. Together, we are improving identification and response to victims and promoting greater clarity and uniformity across practices and procedures. To date, this has resulted in advances such as the NHS Scotland National Gender Based Violence Programme, a Standard Operating Procedures for Human Trafficking, and Inter-agency Guidance for Child Trafficking.

### **Driving a stronger justice response**

The Scottish Government has committed an additional £20m (over 2015 to 2018) from the Justice portfolio budget to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls. This funding is making a real difference through targeted resources to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, with cases involving domestic abuse are being sped up with waiting times from first calling to trial being significantly reduced. We have also provided additional support to specialist support services and to education programmes.

Recent years have also seen a concerted effort to improve other aspects of the criminal justice response to violence against women and girls. Improvements to the legislative framework include the criminalising of forced marriage in Scotland, the introduction of a specific offence for stalking, and the widening of the legal definition of rape through the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. In relation to civil matters, it is possible to obtain non-harassment orders and interdicts to protect against abuse (including domestic abuse). Under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011, it is a criminal offence to breach a domestic abuse interdict which has a power of arrest. The Scottish Government has introduced an Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Bill which will seek to improve how the justice system deals with

a range of matters including domestic abuse and sexual offending. The Scottish Government has published a consultation seeking views on the exact wording and effect of a specific offence to deal with those who commit psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour to reflect fully the devastating experience of the victims and enforce a zero tolerance approach on the perpetrators<sup>26</sup>. This approach is critical to embedding an understanding of domestic abuse and violence as more than purely physical in nature.

Scotland now has a single national police force, Police Scotland, which in its first year established the National Rape Task Force and Domestic Abuse Task Force to target the most prolific perpetrators, as well as a Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Unit and Specialist Domestic Abuse Units and Divisional Rape Investigation Units in every local policing division in Scotland. Police Scotland has established a National Honour Based Violence Action Plan and Prostitution Working Group. The commitment at the most senior level to this agenda within the police service in Scotland has been exemplary and the focus on driving down the incidence of domestic abuse in particular has been a positive development yielding real results. In October 2015 Police Scotland rolled out the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse nationally meaning that anyone who feels that they may be at risk of domestic abuse will have the right to ask for information about their partner, and the police, after appropriate checks, have the power to tell if they believe an individual to be at risk. Police Scotland have established a National Child Abuse Investigation Unit and a Human Trafficking Unit, and they coordinate Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination Groups operating across Scotland to target serious and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse.

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26 The consultation closes on 1 April 2016: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/criminal-law-and-sentencing-team/criminal-offence-domestic-abuse>



The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) has made the prosecution response to violence against women and girls a strategic priority over a number of years, with the leaders of the organisation publicly demonstrating commitment in this area and advocating for change in the law when this is required to bolster the justice response. The introduction of a lead specialist National Procurator Fiscal for Domestic Abuse, enhanced specialist training and guidance for prosecutors and robust policies favouring enforcement and prosecution where sufficient evidence exists to support a criminal allegation of domestic abuse have all been positive developments. COPFS established a dedicated National Sexual Crimes Unit in 2009 (the first of its kind in Europe) and developed the specialist response and expertise in this area of criminality, which now accounts for a significant proportion of High Court business. In other areas, the appointment of lead prosecutors for human trafficking and female genital mutilation further demonstrate the Crown's commitment to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls effectively.

### **In conclusion**

Scotland has made substantial progress, but there remains much to be done. The sections that follow set out what we need to do next to realise our vision of a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.



3. Where we want to be

## 3. Where we want to be

**‘I believe changes can be made to end violence but it must go back to the roots of education and gender conditioning.’** – Service user, Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project

### Introduction

In this section, we look at each priority area, what the supporting evidence tells us<sup>27</sup>, the key objectives and the approach that will be taken to shape relevant outcomes, indicators and performance measurement to ensure delivery of this strategy for Scotland. Throughout all four priorities, we want to ensure that women, children and young people’s voices are heard and their rights respected.

### Priority 1: Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls

Through this priority, we want to ensure that:

- » Positive gender roles are promoted.
- » People enjoy healthy, positive relationships.
- » Children and young people develop an understanding of safe, healthy and positive relationships from an early age.
- » Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour.

### What we know

Community attitudes towards violence against women and girls are a key predictor of perpetration of such abuse. They can also heavily influence women and children’s own responses to victimisation, as well as those of wider society and potentially be a barrier to

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27 See References for summary of evidence sources.

children and young people speaking out about gender based violence. Gender stereotypes play a central role, with individuals who hold discriminatory attitudes being more likely to tolerate violence and abuse against women. Evidence shows the criminal justice system has an important role not only in dealing with perpetrators but also in shaping community perceptions, with strong legal sanctions encouraging community intolerance of violence against women and girls. The media has a powerful influence in either reinforcing or challenging the attitudes and norms that contribute to violence against women. Numerous studies link sexualised violence in the media to increases in violence towards women, rape myth acceptance and anti-women attitudes. Despite the power of the media, it is generally recognised that cultural change will not be achieved through media campaigns alone, though some community development initiatives have been found to increase the effectiveness of such campaigns by reinforcing messages at the local level.

### Going forward

An important first step is to raise awareness of what constitutes violence and abuse, and that it is unacceptable in any form. We will work to increase awareness of the appropriate actions that can be taken in response to violence against women and girls, whether in relation to services for those affected or legal responses. The earlier that there is a shift in discriminatory cultures, attitudes and behaviours the better, and the education system is a key settings for this kind of intervention. Education and early years professionals therefore have an opportunity to lead the way in attitudinal change, being in a prime position to nurture future generations on positive gender roles and healthy, equal relationships from an early age. Beyond education, leadership across the public, private and third sectors will be crucial in helping to develop positive cultures and behaviours around violence against women and girls, and create conditions where there is an understanding of the needs of those experiencing violence and abuse.

The different forms of violence against women will demand specific interventions and these will be explored further; for example, we will work with others to develop thinking around Commercial Sexual Exploitation and ensure that women working in this area are protected from violence and abuse, and supported to exit situations where they are being sexually exploited for commercial purposes. In relation to girls, children and young people, violence and the impact of violence require specific interventions based on the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child<sup>28</sup>, the national approach to improving outcomes through public services that support the wellbeing of children and young people. The more we all do to tackle the root causes of violence against women and girls, the sooner we will achieve our shared goal of preventing and eradicating the problem altogether.

## **Priority 2: Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically**

Through this priority, we want to ensure that:

- » Women and girls are safe, respected and equal in our communities.
- » Women and men have equal access to power and resources.

### **What we know**

Societies in which women's participation is valued, and where there are fewer economic, social or political differences in power between men and women, have lower levels of violence. But equality alone will not suffice; we know from Scandinavian countries, where high levels of violence against women and girls persist despite those countries being close to achieving gender equality in the workforce, that the attitudes and structures that underpin the violence must also be

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28 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

addressed. Women still do the majority of unpaid care work, whether for children or for older dependents, and this impacts dramatically both on earnings while in work and on pensions in later life. Adding to the problem, welfare reforms that have been introduced by the UK Government are predicted to have a significant negative impact on women's resources. Under the new Universal Credit system, payment will be made as one single household payment – representing a loss of independent income for women in couples where the Universal Credit is to be paid to the man. The single earnings disregard meanwhile, may weaken the incentive for many second earners and in turn, see a return to a male breadwinner model and a reduction in women's financial independence. This is in addition to welfare reforms already implemented that impact disproportionately on women<sup>29</sup>, a fact which has also been recognised by Parliament in the Welfare Committee's report on Women and Social Security<sup>30</sup>. It is now recognised that these changes will impact in a range of ways, including on young people who want to leave home to escape domestic abuse. Poverty restricts opportunities, increases health inequalities and impacts heavily on life choices. Alcohol and drug misuse are other secondary factors that can increase both the frequency and severity of violence against women and girls; we are clear that men do not abuse because of alcohol or drugs, but they can lower inhibitions and exacerbate behaviours. Women express much higher levels of fear for their personal security in public places, whether on or waiting for transport, or in the use of car parks, particularly at night. This fear can, in turn, place a constraint on the mobility of women and their participation in public life as they factor personal safety into routine decisions and activities. Addressing these issues alone will not eliminate violence, but it will support broader prevention efforts.

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29 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00432337.pdf>

30 <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/91066.aspx>

## Going forward

Tackling poverty amongst women is key if we are to reduce gender power imbalances. We will work to improve access to decision making structures and processes and increase political representation. Tackling occupational segregation is another aspect of this work, as is improving access to high quality child care for parents. We want the women of Scotland to enjoy the same opportunities in life as men – this includes women being economically independent, with equal opportunity to achieve their full potential in all sectors and at all levels of the labour market. This requires continued action to tackle the barriers to work facing different women, to eliminate the pay gap, and to address the overrepresentation of women in lower paid jobs and the underrepresentation of women in senior positions. We must address the systemic barriers to employment for women and their resulting lifetime earnings differential with men, basing interventions on a full understanding of the value and nature of women’s contribution to Scotland’s economy and society. And we want women to feel safe where they live and work and to be confident that they can go about all aspects of their lives without fear.

## **Priority 3: Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people**

Through this priority, we want to ensure that:

- » Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated.
- » Women, children and young people access relevant, effective and integrated services.
- » Service providers competently identify violence against women and girls, and respond effectively to women, children and young people affected.



## What we know

There is a range of expertise and support available in third sector organisations which provide support and provision to those affected by gender based violence. Public services have a vital role in delivering mainstream services and in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of women and children affected by violence and abuse, and collaborative working between both sectors through multi-agency activity has been productive. Women, children and young people can have different support needs depending on the form(s) of violence experienced and individual circumstances. Some of the areas where diversity of provision is relevant include maternity, mental health (including services for children and adolescents), primary care, substance misuse, accident and emergency, community nursing and sexual health services, safe accommodation, counselling and support services, advocacy and legal services and longer-term support for the recovery of those affected by violence. However, it is not just the range of services we provide that is important – where, how and when we provide them is also critical. Early identification and intervention is essential to eliminating violence and its negative consequences in women and children’s lives. We have known for some time that only a minority of those affected by violence report it to the police or seek help from specialist women’s services<sup>31</sup>. Whilst work by both women and children’s organisations and statutory agencies including the police continues to address the issue of reporting, this remains an issue.

## Going forward

We want an integrated system of mainstream, specialist and third sector services capable of delivering a coherent and consistent response across a diverse range of needs, that allows for flexibility to reflect local circumstances. It is vital that services that come into daily contact with women, children and young people are able to identify

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31 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/7483/9>

those at risk and offer an appropriate, safe and consistent response – from police officers, teachers, community workers, social workers and housing officers, to GPs, midwives, dentists, bar reporters, and children and young people’s services<sup>32</sup>. We must be able to offer those affected or at risk a professional, capable and compassionate response from their very first point of contact; an integrated response that is quick and easy to access, that shares information sensitively and appropriately between services and in doing so, supports women and children. Greater consistency of delivery and improved information sharing between services will also increase our collective ability to keep women and children safe and hold perpetrators to account, along with encouraging individual organisations to consider the implications that their actions have on other services. Responses must recognise the connection between different aspects of inequality and discrimination, informed by the perspectives of survivors and those at risk and include a range of complementary mainstream and specialist support services. We want to have clear priorities for public sector agencies: from routine enquiry within NHS services to support early identification, through to clear national and local protocols, and data collection and information sharing protocols. We want to ensure that women and children with complex needs or at additional risk of discrimination are supported. We want to intervene sooner for better outcomes, in a way that is informed by the perspectives of survivors. A number of projects are already adopting an early intervention approach – a trend most evident with regard to domestic abuse where the tendency towards repeat abuse highlights the importance of acting early to prevent further harm.

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32 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/7483/9>

## **Priority 4: Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response**

Through this priority, we want to ensure that:

- » Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated.
- » Men who carry out violence against women and girls are identified early and held to account by the criminal and civil justice system.
- » Relevant links are made between the experience of women, children and young people in the criminal and civil system.

### **What we know**

The justice system has an important role in the enforcement of the law and prevention of violence against women and girls. The robust approach of Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to the detection and prosecution of offences involving domestic abuse and sexual assault sends an unequivocal message – there is no place for this type of offending in our society, it will not be tolerated, and that perpetrators of violence and abuse can expect the full force of the law to hold them to account for their behaviour. Prosecution is important for survivors because it addresses the crime they have experienced, and can help their recovery by acknowledging their status as survivors. But there are still barriers to prosecution; these range from the reluctance of victims to report, through to the length of time each stage of the criminal and civil justice process can take.

Domestically and internationally, there is growing consensus that prosecution alone is not enough to eradicate the problem of violence against women and girls. Where appropriate, perpetrators must be supported to change their behaviour and they must be identified early.

Currently, perpetrators are most commonly identified by the police although there is some evidence that a small minority of perpetrators may be identified by seeking help at crisis moments. However perpetrators are identified, what follows is intervention. One approach is the Caledonian System which has been piloted in 13 local authorities across Scotland. This involves running an integrated service (with parallel men's, women's and children's services) aimed at addressing domestic abuse perpetrated by adult male offenders and improving the lives of women and children. A evaluation of the System has been commissioned and is expected to report in 2016.

### Going forward

We must make it clear in everything we say and do that violence against women and girls in any shape or form will not be tolerated in Scotland. We want to reinforce the consistent message that all forms of violence against women and girls are not acceptable and perpetrators must expect to receive a response which is proportionate but equally swift and effective. We want women, children and young people affected by violence and abuse to be supported by a sensitive, efficient and effective justice system. We want the men who carry out such violence to be identified earlier and held to account for their behaviour. In this context, we will continue to take action to reduce unnecessary delays in how long it takes a case involving violence against women or girls to move through the court process and the impact on the victim, their children and effect on the level of attrition. We will take action to ensure the voice of the child is heard in family cases, and relevant links will be made between the experience of women, children and young people within the criminal and civil justice systems. We recognise that at the conclusion of a criminal case there may be a continued process in the civil courts, and we want to ensure that victims are treated with the utmost respect and compassion during the entire process of seeking justice, and that they receive effective support at all stages of their interaction with the Justice

system and beyond that. We want robust enforcement to address re-offending and to ensure that men get the support they need to change their behaviour at the earliest opportunity. We will ensure that the criminal law reflects the true nature of abuse within relationships, including coercive control, and that law enforcement agencies have the necessary powers to bring perpetrators to justice. We will consider the potential of technology, such as pre-recorded evidence, to better protect children and vulnerable witnesses within the justice system. And we will undertake research into jury decision making to improve understanding of the factors that influence juries' decisions in solemn criminal cases.





## 4. How we will get there

**‘Until we end violence against women, we cannot have true gender equality, either here in Scotland, or elsewhere around the world.’ – Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland**

### Achieving the change

We are clear about the need to address the full spectrum of violence and abuse against women and girls, and the systemic inequality that underpins it. We have identified our aim and priorities and set out the framework for achieving these. If we are to make the transformational change we envisage in this critical area, we need to develop an ambitious and aligned programme of action, with a robust performance framework including appropriate outcomes and indicators. This section explains how we intend to take this forward.

We already know that there is a great deal of activity already underway within the Scottish Government, local authorities, Police Scotland, statutory services, specialist third sector organisations and communities. We expect each and every one of them to work tirelessly to ensure that work is joined up and fully aligned with the vision, objectives and priorities of Equally Safe. Collaborative working with focus and pace will help us making progress towards achieving our vision, which is closely aligned with the Scottish Government’s broader vision of a country where full equality is achieved.

### Leading the way

Helping drive the step change needed is the Violence Against Women and Girls Joint Strategic Board, a high level group of senior leaders from across Scotland able to push for change and ensure momentum is sustained within their individual organisations, sectors and their wider networks. Chaired jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA, the Board oversees the implementation of Equally Safe, monitors progress



and identifies emerging issues at the strategic level. In addition to jointly chairing the Board, the Scottish Government has a key role in coordinating implementation of Equally Safe, and in ensuring that governance and accountability arrangements operate effectively.

### A phased approach

Our agenda is broad, reflecting the importance of different forms of prevention and effective early intervention, as well as recognition of the fact that different individuals have different characteristics and needs. It is realistic that we adopt a phased approach to the development and delivery of our outcomes and objectives, creating a programme of action that can evolve and be added to in order to deliver meaningful change over the long term. These phases include:

- » the progressing of initial action commitments which will support the delivery of Equally Safe's ambitions;
- » the establishment and development of the Violence against Women and Girls Joint Strategic Board to provide senior leadership and identify emerging issues;
- » the establishment of collaborative partnerships to take forward ambitions under three thematic workstreams - Primary Prevention, Capability and Capacity and Justice - that maintain focus on the priority areas identified within Equally Safe;
- » through a further workstream - Accountability - the development of an outcomes framework for Equally Safe that aligns with the National Performance Framework and contains key performance indicators that help us to assess progress and focus our targeted approach over the long term;
- » the establishment of a Stakeholder Reference Group on Children and Young People, to inform work going forward in relation to girls and boys both experiencing violence and abuse directly and witnessing it, and to strengthen collaborative working between key partners in different sectors; and

- » the development of meaningful, effective and sustained participation of women, children and young people across all aspects of Equally Safe.

## Workstreams

### 1. Primary prevention

This workstream is being coordinated by Engender, the feminist organisation. Under it, we will explore the existing evidence on what works with regards to preventing violence against women and girls; identify additional ways of addressing the systematic inequality, attitudes and assumptions that give rise to violence and abuse, and scope the costs and benefits associated with this; and consider primary prevention in the widest context – society, community and the individual.

### 2. Capability and Capacity

This workstream is being coordinated by CoSLA. Under it, we will work to ensure that statutory services including health, education, social work and housing are increasingly competent in identifying and responding effectively to violence; and consider and work to improve the capacity and capability that exists across all services.

### 3. Justice

This workstream is being coordinated by the Scottish Government Justice Directorate. Under it, we will develop a coordinated approach within both the civil and criminal justice systems, that includes consideration of the law relating to sexual offences and domestic abuse, the support available for victims and their experiences when going through the system; the availability of statistics to build evidence

bases, particularly in relation to civil cases; training for professionals within the justice system; multi-agency working and opportunity for learning and spreading good practice; and the impact of justice interventions in changing both perpetrator behaviour and wider public attitudes.

#### **4. Accountability**

This workstream is being coordinated by Scottish Women's Aid in partnership with the Improvement Service. Under it, we will develop a Performance Framework with appropriate outcomes and indicators to enable us to measure our performance and progress, as well as supporting strategic investment planning to ensure that women and girls throughout Scotland benefit from consistently high-quality services.

Members of the different Workstream groups are drawn from a wide range of partners with a wealth of experience and informed by the experience of women, girls, children and young people who have been subject to violence or abuse. Working groups will be expected to report on their progress regularly to the Board, and will support the development of a Scottish Government implementation plan for Equally Safe featuring activity from all four workstreams.

## Action commitments

In addition to the activity initiated by the workstreams, partners are also driving delivery by taking forward a number of immediate actions. These include:

What	Lead Partners
Renewing guidance to support Violence Against Women Multi-Agency Partnerships	Scottish Government CoSLA
Building the capacity of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) through the development of a suite of resources	Scottish Government ASSIST SafeLives
Development of a Performance Framework for Multi Agency Tasking & Coordinating Conferences (MATACs) to measure outcomes and rates of re-offending amongst perpetrators of domestic abuse	Police Scotland
Developing the scope of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to provide responsible authorities with an ability to include people with criminal convictions who they assess as posing a significant risk of serious harm or violence to the public	Scottish Government
Developing public health guidance to support the implementation of the strategy within the NHS	Health Scotland

What	Lead Partners
Introducing an Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Bill to Parliament	Scottish Government
Consulting on a criminal offence of coercive control	Scottish Government
Developing guidance on strategic commissioning with key statutory bodies and partnerships	Scottish Women's Aid Scottish Government CoSLA
Challenging all employers, particularly public sector employers, to support those who may be experiencing or at risk of violence or abusive behaviour – and furthermore how they can develop a culture which contributes to the prevention of violence against women and girls through their HR policies and staff training	CoSLA Scottish Government
Implementing Scotland's National Action Plan to tackle Female Genital Mutilation	Scottish Government
Ensuring that key national strategies reflect and statutory bodies are aware of, and committed to, their role in achieving our aim – in short, how they can contribute to the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls	Scottish Government
Commissioning research into forced marriage in Scotland	Scottish Government

### Everyone's responsibility

Whilst these commitments and workstreams will help drive change, it is up to all of us to consider what more we can be doing to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. What we do to prevent the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls is crucially important, but so too is how we do it. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience across Scotland and beyond for us to tap into and build upon, much of which has been developed by our partners in the third sector from many years and decades of working directly with women and children who have experienced violence and abuse.

### Broad participation

We want to ensure that those affected by violence and abuse against women and girls, including children and young people, have greater opportunity to help shape the development of policy and practice. There are a number of positive examples where participation has directly benefited our approach, including the *National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People (2008)*, *Safer Lives: Changed Lives (2009)*, and Voice against Violence. Participation should be meaningful, effective and sustainable, and it should ensure that participants understand their rights; they have a chance to be involved; engage on the basis that it is their choice to do so; that they are valued and supported; that everyone works together; and that there is regular communication.

### **Increased strategic priority**

We will increase the priority given to violence and abuse against women and girls in local and national strategic planning. Community Planning Partnerships bring together public bodies and others to work together to improve outcomes for people, focusing on prevention at a local level. They agree their strategic priorities and resource and provide appropriate services in support of those priorities. Some Single Outcome Agreements and Community Planning Partnership activities already reflect a strong focus on violence against women and girls, and multi-agency partnership working at a local level is critical to tackling perpetrators, supporting those at risk and improving the response of services. We will continue to work with local partners to ensure that we can share across the whole system the benefits of localities focusing on violence against women as a strategic priority.

### **Making best use of resources**

At a time when resources are reducing, it has never been more essential to make the best use of the people and finances that we have. It is important to note that that dedicated funding for tackling violence against women and girls has been at all-time high in Scotland for several years now. Between 2012 and 2016, the Scottish Government has allocated £46.3m to tackling it through the Equality Budget, and the Justice portfolio has committed an additional £20m over 2015 to 2018. Utilising the collective resources of the public and third sector through greater partnership working and building a focus on prevention and effective and early intervention will be key. Over the next period, we will consider the focus of current dedicated funding for tackling violence against women and girls, and how this funding can be further aligned to meet the ambitions of Equally Safe.

## Measuring our progress

We will assess our progress in relation to our vision, aim and the outcomes and indicators that we are collaboratively. We want to demonstrate a steady reduction in all forms of violence against women and girls, moving towards our overall aim of ending it altogether. Identifying outcomes and indicators and measuring the progress made in achieving change will be important to delivering on the priorities identified. To achieve this, we are developing a performance measurement which will align as far as possible with the existing National Performance Framework which already sets the standard for the public sector. A crucial component of our work going forward is that we are able to measure our performance at a local level, and we will look to develop a suite of outcomes and indicators that enable us to understand the difference we are making at both a national and a local level. We acknowledge that there remain significant gaps in our data, and that not all relevant data will be captured through the Justice system. We require indicators to measure attitudes towards the different forms of violence against women and girls, and broader gender stereotypes. Helping to address this, the Scottish Government has published a Scottish Social Attitudes module report on public attitudes towards violence against women, which will act as a baseline to enable us to explore interventions in this area as well as monitor whether public attitudes are changing over the long term. As a multi-agency, multi-sector strategy Equally Safe requires all partners – at local, regional and national level – to put in place robust measures to capture and share data. Because the more complete our picture of the prevalence of the problem, the more effectively we can address it and ensure that every woman and girl in Scotland lives Equally Safe.



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