



Women and Sectarianism Report

March 2013

The SWC has undertaken this specifically funded work to explore the experiences, views and concerns of women throughout Scotland in relation to the topic of Sectarianism.

This report has been produced using the voices of women from communities and will be submitted to the Scottish Government on behalf of those who contributed.

The SWC was invited to undertake a six-month project, looking at what sectarianism means and its effects on women in communities throughout Scotland. Funding was provided through the Voluntary Action Fund, as part of work being undertaken by the Scottish Government Community Safety Unit.

Methodology

A survey, disseminated through SWC networks, asked broad questions as to what sectarianism means to women, how it affects them in their communities, why it is still an issue in Scotland and what needs to be done in order to tackle the issue.

Following survey feedback, focus groups were held with women in various parts of the country. Consultations have taken place with women in Inverness, Perth, Glasgow, Kirkconnel, Kilmarnock, South Lanarkshire and Paisley.

Discussions also took place with delegates at the SWC's Young Women's Event in December to ensure the views of young women influence the final outcomes.

Introduction

The SWC started this project in October 2012. Following initial research into the issue of women and sectarianism in Scotland, it was quickly identified that very little information was available on this subject. The SWC undertook a survey consultation exercise in order to gauge the opinions of women throughout Scotland on the issue of sectarianism in their community.

Survey questions were designed to be as broad as possible. The tick boxes were used as a way of encouraging respondents to think about the issue. Space for comment under each question allowed women to expand on any points.

Following the launch of the survey, the SWC was invited to talk about the work being undertaken on local and national radio.

As a result of the way the survey spread through social media, the SWC was approached by a number of organisations and individual women interested in the project. Discussion groups were targeted through the SWC's extensive mailing list and wider networks. As well as groups of women in local areas, the SWC liaised with police officers and Women's Aid services in various parts of the country. A number of young women also participated in sessions.



The questions in the discussion groups focused on the following:

- 1. What does sectarianism mean to you?**
- 2. Does sectarianism affect you/your community? If so, how?**
- 3. Why is it still an issue in Scotland?**
- 4. What needs to be done to tackle the issue of sectarianism in Scotland?**

What does sectarianism mean to you?

The initial response to this question was most commonly football, with Celtic and Rangers being cited in particular.

“It’s about these two teams really and their connotations.”

Religion is also an important aspect. In this context it was seen to be heavily interlinked with football, with assumptions being made as to whether someone is Catholic or Protestant as a result of which football team they support.

For many, one of the main words used to describe the issue is *“division”* - within the context of communities, families and in some cases homes. Most women, however, see sectarianism as an issue based on ignorance and misunderstanding.

“It’s ignorance that’s the real problem. Fighting between Catholics and Protestants for no other reason than the label.”

Does sectarianism affect you/your community? If so, how?

There are those for whom sectarianism means a threat to personal safety, with behaviours being used as an excuse to act in a certain way.

“I don’t feel safe going into Glasgow, especially travelling on a train or a bus, on Old Firm days or if I know there’s going to be an Orange Walk or a Republican March on. I don’t want my kids living in a country where sectarianism is still part of the fabric of society.”

Many of the women consulted stressed that sectarianism is more prevalent in men, however it can and does impact on women and differently on both genders.

Outwith the Central Belt, and in particular the West of Scotland, sectarianism and factors associated with it - such as football matches, Orange Walks and denominational schooling - are not considered a big issue.

“It’s ‘West Coast mentality’ and largely a West of Scotland issue.”

Female police officers consulted in Inverness and Perth regarding Orange Walks advised there are very little public order issues as a result. This is in stark contrast to what was often highlighted in the West of Scotland, where such marches are seen to attract trouble. Concern was also raised about policing levels for these activities and how much support is removed from communities when marches and walks of a ‘sectarian nature’ occur.

In more rural parts of Scotland behaviour which could be construed as sectarian is more often seen as ‘banter’, with very little to no violence resulting from comments and actions.

“There is banter here in Hawick but nothing ugly. Folk from all teams have a pint together after the match.”

This is in contrast to behaviour in west and central Scotland, where there is a fine line between what constitutes ‘banter’ and what can become offensive.

In Kirkcubright, there was seen to be very little trouble as a result of sectarianism. For a time, ‘pro-IRA’ graffiti and swastikas were sprayed onto walls and the war memorial. In order to tackle this, the community formed a group called ‘Village Pride’. Members of the organisation cleaned up any graffiti, continuing to do so every time it appeared. This community-led approach was very successful and virtually eradicated anti-social behaviour.

In this area of Scotland, it is not uncommon for children and young people to switch allegiance between football teams, with loyalties often being influenced by peers, relationships, etc. Women are expected to be able to purchase the latest football strips for their children, which can add additional financial pressures due to the cost and the frequency with which teams change their kits. In these areas, children often want these tops because their friends have them and they do not want to feel left out, as opposed to a strong allegiance to a team.

In west and central Scotland, women can also be put in this situation, however pressure often comes from within the family home. Many women have commented on how sectarianism also has more of an impact on deprived communities, although it is demonstrated throughout society as a whole.

Parents, grandparents etc can expect children to be dressed in a certain team’s colours, listen to certain songs and be brought up to dislike *“the other side”* because of their religion and allegiance, or perceived religion and allegiance.

“When I was growing up it wasn’t uncommon for my parents to tell me that I wasn’t allowed to play with so-and-so simply because they were a Catholic. I didn’t even know what that meant, all I knew was I was to avoid them because of it. What’s scary is that those types of attitudes still exist.”

There are tensions both within communities and families.

“The problem is that the symptoms are seen as the cause and re-enforce the problem.”

Relationships/marriages between Catholics and Protestants are often still referred to as ‘mixed’ and can cause a number of issues. Family members often disapprove if, for example, a Protestant woman forms a relationship with a Catholic man. It is not uncommon for families to fall out and not speak to each other for long periods of time in these instances.

If these so-called ‘mixed relationships’ produce children, then women can be put under more pressure, for example with regards to which school the child will attend or which football team they will support. Women may be forced to make choices which they do not necessarily agree with.

Issues arising from sectarianism were seen to result, more often than not, from men displaying ‘macho’ behaviours and *“needing to feel as if they belong to something.”* They often feel that they must have a season ticket for their football team, travel to away games, European games etc.

This can put a real strain on household budgets, which in the main women take control of and run. It also has an impact on caring responsibilities, as mothers, grandmothers etc are expected to look after the children while the men go to the football.

Young women still encounter these deep-rooted beliefs, as they can be encouraged to find *“a good Catholic/Protestant boy”*. Such beliefs are perpetuated by older family members and can place stress on young women who do not want to be seen to ‘go against’ or disrespect their families.

Sectarianism can also bring out other forms of discrimination and sexism in particular. When discussing the issue in the context of football, girls have often had their views and opinions discounted by young men simply because of their gender. This type of discrimination is also shown between siblings of different genders.

“My uncle was arranging a treat for me and my two brothers. He took them both to the football and paid for me to get my nails done while they were away. He didn’t even ask if I wanted to go with them, he just assumed.”

Many young women noted that they do not feel safe walking through certain areas, mainly because of their gender but also because of the school uniform they wear.

“You really have to watch what you say and how you act in certain circumstances. I’ve often taken my tie or my blazer off so others can’t identify which school I go to. That way they might only say something to me because I’m a girl and not because I’m a girl that goes to a certain school.”

It is important to note that sectarianism is not an issue which impacts on every woman in Scotland. Women in communities outwith the Central Belt are aware it exists. However they have no experience of it where they live. There are also women within areas where the issue is seen as more prevalent but who are unaffected by sectarian behaviour. Many are aware it goes on and may witness it, even on a daily basis, however it is not something which they feel has an impact.

Women throughout Scotland are, at this point in time, more concerned about issues such as impending cuts to public services; welfare reform measures; opportunities for employment and education; lack of accessible, affordable childcare and public transport.

Why is sectarianism still an issue in Scotland?

“The public face of sectarianism is kept alive by men; the private face is kept alive by women.”

Sectarianism is perpetuated mainly through ignorance, tribalism and a *“hatred of something that most people don’t even understand.”*

The lack of understanding is seen to be one of the main reasons why the issue is still relevant.

“It’s one of those things that’s just not properly spoken about. It kind of bubbles under the surface under the guise of ‘banter’ and tradition but nobody seems willing to take the bull by the horns and actually talk about what it is and why it’s still allowed to go on.”

Many women have described the issue as *“ingrained”* in communities, families and homes. Sectarian behaviour and terminology is part of the fabric of the lives of many and is perpetuated through generations as a result. It is an *“accepted part”* of culture in areas parts of Scotland.

“The same people who go on e.g. Orange walks would still attend something else which gives them an outlet. It feels like the belonging to a group is mistaken for power or used as power.”

Context, tone and associations of sectarian language are also a contributing factor. Terminology associated with racism, homophobia etc, which was common as little as twenty years ago, is simply not used any more. It is grossly offensive and inappropriate and rightfully has no place in society. In contrast, words like ‘hun’, ‘tim’ and ‘fenian’ continued to be *“bandied about”*, often without people knowing the real meaning and having the understanding just how offensive they are.

“Why is it that it’s ok to say sectarian things? Nobody should be frightened to say ‘don’t speak about people in those terms.’”

The use of this language indicates that, where it has an impact, sectarianism is ingrained in communities and households. There is also the suggestion that because these words are used without question, the issue is not taken as seriously as it should be.

The use of social media plays a part in perpetuating sectarianism, as things can be said 'anonymously' and viewed by many. Much of the sectarian behaviour that is displayed through social media would not be said or done on a face-to-face basis. This is particularly apparent when either side of the Old Firm are playing.

"You would have thought it would have died down with Rangers being in a different league but in some cases it's actually gotten worse."

Judgments as to religious beliefs and affiliations with certain football teams are made based on 'obvious questions' such as where a person has gone to school and what team they support. However, even small things like the jewellery a person wears, the colour of the braces on their teeth or a plaster cast, can also lead to assumptions.

The media, in particular tabloid newspapers, have a part to play in *"fuelling the fire"*. Sensationalist reporting and too much focus on the negative aspects of particular football matches etc are not conducive to tackling the problem.

"The media perpetuate and sensationalise inherited myths and bigotry which creates a cycle of prejudice and discrimination."

The media often displays bias in its reporting of what would constitute sectarian behaviours and can skew attempts at focused and intelligent debate round the issue. Women have commented on the fact that some factions of the media don't actually seem to know what is sectarianism and what isn't.

There are women who have suggested that *"there are those who might not want the problem to be fixed."* Sometimes this is because it is not considered a problem and is seen as 'banter'.

It is, however, unclear when a comment or an action stops being a joke and becomes offensive. There are also those who do not see anything wrong with the way they behave as they are merely keeping history and traditions alive.

"You're fighting a losing battle with some people. Especially within families where it's part of everyday life. Kids will be reluctant to speak out against what their parents say or do in these instances."

What needs to be done to tackle the issue of sectarianism in Scotland?

Overwhelmingly women suggested that the best way to tackle the issue is through education. This includes both formal and informal education and applies to people of all ages.

“It’s hard to say whether you should target the older or younger generation first. It’s easier to educate children, but all ages need to be aware of the negative aspects.”

The issue should be brought up with children from a young age, so that they are aware how sectarianism is damaging to society as a whole. It is vital they know that *“just because mum and dad have said something, it doesn’t mean that’s the only way”*.

Young women highlighted the importance of ensuring that education within the school setting is not only done in a formal, lesson-based environment. It should not just be a module slotted into the Curriculum for Excellence where pupils are taught what to do and what not to do. *“Young people need to be able to talk about the issue.”*

Separate schooling was raised by women both through the survey and discussion groups. However, a majority view did not prevail.

Participation and discussion should form a part of any learning. Sectarianism becomes easier to understand and identify through expression of opinions, experiences etc. The most conducive environments in which to talk about tackling the issue should be conducted in spaces where opinions can be expressed without judgment.

The terminology and language around sectarianism must also be addressed in order to tackle the issue.

“Look at racism and sexism - ok these issues haven’t completely gone away but there are words you just don’t say and things you just don’t do any more. In order for anything to change we have to take that stance with sectarianism.”

As has been highlighted, the issue is frequently interlinked with football. There should be more effort on the part of the teams involved, who influence many people in society, to be seen to be doing something about the issue.

“If you watch, for example, Manchester United play Manchester City, they often swap shirts at the end of the game. Why don’t Celtic and Rangers players start doing this? It might not be popular amongst fans to begin with but what a positive message this would send out.”

It has been noted that there is *“no quick fix”* when it comes to addressing and tackling sectarianism. There are many women throughout Scotland for whom it is not an issue and who would rather see time and resources spent on issues which have a direct impact on them, such as transport, housing, the NHS, childcare and public services.



Additional Information to Main Report

The SWC held an event on Thursday 21st March, which brought together women who had participated in discussion groups and the survey. A range of speakers discussed sectarianism and a question and answer session allowed those attending to further discuss the issue.

Agnes Tolmie, SWC Chair

Agnes outlined how the SWC became involved in work around sectarianism and why it is important that women's voices are heard on this issue.

"It's still a very difficult subject to get people to talk about but the women we have spoken to have been very honest with us."

As well as outlining how the SWC undertook the project - through the online survey and discussion groups throughout the country - Agnes also gave an overview of the key findings, which are contained within this report.

Agnes concluded by thanking all of the women who have been involved with the project and explained how the final report will be submitted to the Scottish Government.

Nicola Thomson

Scottish Government Tackling Sectarianism Policy Team

Nicola provided an overview of the Scottish Government's anti-sectarianism work. There is a strong commitment on behalf of the Government to tackle the issue, with the First Minister announcing legislation to tackle bigotry in the form of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications Act 2012. The First Minister said in May 2011:

"Sectarianism must stop, and it will: not because it is embarrassing to our national image - though it is. Nor that it is embarrassing to ourselves - though it is that too. But because it is a pointless cause pursued by the pitiless. Such hatred - of the self, of others and of our society - shall end."

Roseanna Cunningham MSP (Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs), is the lead Minister for tackling sectarianism. There is also a policy team within the Scottish Government, which Nicola is a part of, consisting of four officials who work on the issue.

There is a strong focus on a 'Community Based Approach' to tackling sectarianism, with the aim of building *"strong, resilient communities that cannot be divided sectarian bigotry"*.

The Scottish Government has committed £9 million over three years (2012-15) in order to deliver this community based approach. They are currently working with over forty projects with twenty organisations, including community education, schools youth work, sports, arts and drama and gender projects.

The main outcomes to be achieved from this work are *“that the root causes of sectarianism will be identified and tackled by community projects and [the Scottish Government] will build safer and strong communities and allow diversity to flourish”*.

The Ministerial Group to Tackle Sectarianism, chaired by the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, coordinates work to tackle the issue across a number of Government portfolios. Ministers for Justice, Education, Local Government and Sport and Culture make up membership of the Group.

The Ministerial Group is given expert advice by the Independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland. The Advisory Group is made up of three men and two women, from both academic and non-academic backgrounds, all of whom have experience in working on the issue in Scotland and in Northern Ireland.

The Group has a short working life and has met eighteen times over the past six months. Through its work, the group has recognised the gaps in evidence in relation to the impact of sectarianism on women. This is particularly the case as much of the research has typically centred on male dominated activities - namely football and marches and parades in the West of Scotland.

The first year of funding is coming to a close and the Scottish Government has invited organisations to bid for further funding in order to continue to tackle sectarianism.

“My colleagues and I welcome the SWC report and look forward to hearing the findings.”

PC Gillian Stirling, Strathclyde Police

PC Stirling has 19 years service with Strathclyde Police in South Lanarkshire, working laterally in Rutherglen/Cambuslang and now in East Kilbride. Her presentation focussed on the police response to Hate Crime and how the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications Act 2012 has had an impact.

“Hate crimes have the potential to ruin victims lives. They are a poison to society.”

Hate crimes emphasise sensitivities and feelings of difference and cause fear and exclusion in communities. It is important that the police address any instances of this type of offence.

Strathclyde Police - which will be merged into the Police Service of Scotland as of 1st April 2013 - provide an effective response to the issue and will tackle bigotry in all forms.

FoCUS - the Football Coordination Unit for Scotland - has a principal role to play in challenging bigotry and sectarianism and tackles issues related to football throughout Scotland. The team is made up of a mix of police officers and police staff from around Scotland and has a range of experience including community policing, football intelligence, Criminal Investigation Department, public order and football banning orders.

The Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications Act 2012 criminalises behaviour which is threatening, hateful or otherwise offensive at a regulated football match including offensive singing or chanting. It also criminalises the communication of threats of serious violence and threats intended to incite religious hatred, whether sent through the post or posted on the internet. The Act has closed 'loopholes' in other legislation and is split into two parts.

The first part covers sectarian and other offensive chanting and threatening behaviour related to football which is likely to cause public disorder. It applies:

“At, on the way to or from a ‘regulated football match’ ... and anywhere a match is being broadcast, except domestic property.”

The second part of the Act covers the sending of communications which could be construed as threatening, strengthens current law covering threats of serious harm and criminalises threats inciting religious hatred. This part is not restricted to football matches.

The legislation has been in place for a year and there has been an 84% conviction rate. The Act is widely used, which indicates there had been clear gaps in the legislation in the past.

Strathclyde Police are committed to a 'zero tolerance' approach to Hate Crime. In order to encourage more people to come forward they have introduced a '3rd party reporting system'. This allows victims to report crimes at designated points, such as libraries, community hubs etc, or alternatively online.

Yvonne Donald, Nil by Mouth

Yvonne's presentation focussed on the establishment of Nil by Mouth and the nature of the work undertaken by the organisation in order to address and tackle sectarianism in Scotland.

Nil by Mouth was established following the murder of a 16-year old football fan as he walked home from a match. Mark was attacked because of the colours he was wearing.

“Those colours meant everything to the person who took Mark's life - his religion, political views, what school he attended - everything about him.”

There was a general awareness as to the issues around the attack on Mark and why it was wrong. No person or group, however, seemed willing or able to really address the issue. Cara Henderson, a young woman of 19, decided to take action and wrote a letter to the Herald Newspaper. Eighteen months later Nil by Mouth was constituted as a charity.

“Despite being told time and time again that she was a ‘daft wee lassie’, it was Cara’s determination which made Nil by Mouth what it is today. There are only two staff but it’s not about what we do, it’s about the impact of our work”

The organisation provides awareness raising workshops to workplaces, schools and other groups. Nil by Mouth works to challenge, amongst other things, the terminology which is used around sectarianism, so much of which is *“just words”* to people who do not understand the history, connotations and impact of what they say.

“We believe that education is the answer, for people of all ages.”

As well as education in schools and workplaces, the organisation have worked closely with the police and have trained transport police officers to deal with sectarianism.

“If they are armed with the knowledge they can deal with the issues”

Yvonne outlined the importance of women’s voices, and particularly young women’s voices, in tackling the issue. Nil by Mouth have a ‘Champions for Change School Accreditation Scheme’, which provides an exciting opportunity for schools to celebrate their anti-sectarianism work and have best practice recognised. This is an opportunity for young women to *“raise their voices and ask how to make real positive change. The next generation will be the ones who change the situation.”*

Sarah, Amy and Sarah **Pupils from St Joseph’s Academy, Kilmarnock**

The young women were invited to give their experiences of and responses to sectarianism.

“After speaking to the SWC it became clear that the issue was between Catholics and Protestants. We recognised this because we have witnessed it in our lives.”

Growing up, the young women often saw kids running around in different football strips, playing together within communities. These children were unaware that the ‘social norm’ would expect them not to be friends. It was also common for words such as ‘hun’, ‘tim’ and ‘fenian’ to be used in primary school playgrounds. Divides were perpetuated by the adults.

“I found out about two years ago that the reason I wasn’t allowed in one of my best friends house wasn’t because she wasn’t allowed to have friends in. It was because I’m a Catholic and her dad didn’t want me in his house.”

Fears about personal safety were also highlighted, especially after attending a football match and being *“scared to walk through the city centre wearing a scarf or a strip in case of an attack”*.

While it is seen as more of an issue as young people enter high school, there are instances of sectarianism in primary schools as well. By not allowing children to wear football colours, the issue is avoided and a *“real opportunity to teach kids tolerance from a young age is missed.”* This encouragement of ignorance is *“risky”*. If habits are not broken from a young age, then it is only natural that they will continue for generations.

Nothing is done to actively change children’s attitudes and this must be addressed. Words are used without young people knowing the real meaning behind them - for example many do not realise that calling a Rangers fan a ‘hun’ is effectively calling them a Nazi, as ‘hun’ was the word used to describe German soldiers in World War 2.

“It’s ignorance borne from intolerance and it’s something that we need to change.”

Question and Answer Session

Following the speakers presentations, those attending were invited to ask questions and raise points for discussion.

Marches and parades can be quite intimidating, however unless there are public order concerns no complaint can be made to the police. Any attempt to write to the Council, who control the licences for these events, receives a ‘woolly’ response. When do citizens have the right to ‘speak up’ about the noise etc associated with marches and parades?

Gillian Stirling: Stephen House, who will be the Chief Constable of the Police Force of Scotland and was previously Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police, has challenged why there are so many marches in Glasgow, especially as there are more here than there are in Derry.

“It’s difficult for the police. It’s not our choice to have marches happen. We know the aftermath and how many officers are needed to deal with it from both sides of the divide.”

Agnes Tolmie: There seems to always have been an intrinsic belief that people have the right to march, however public opinion has shifted against marches and parades. This is a sign that things are changing - *“maybe just not fast enough”*.

Police can stop people from playing sectarian tunes/songs in pubs under new legislation - is this also the case in the time leading up to marching season? What is the definition of a tune/song - does it have to be recorded, what about if it is, for example played on the street by a band?

Gillian Stirling: With regards to music being played in a pub, it is down to the words of the song. If a person has reason to believe the song has a sectarian aspect or contains offensive words then they can complain to the police. If a tune is played without words then the police cannot do anything about it, however if words with a sectarian aspect are heard on a march they can deal with it.

The language which parents use in the home can have a significant impact on children. Work has to be done in the home so that parents can see and understand the impact of their actions.

“It’s not that they’re bad parents, they just teach kids what they know. We have to try and break the cycle or nothing will change.”

Yvonne Donald: It is important to focus on the role parents play. Nil by Mouth run parent workshops as well as joint parent and child workshops. It is important to teach children that it’s ok to disagree with things that their parents have said. It won’t be easy but we need to start laying the foundations.

“When you’re working with kids it’s not just them, it 4, 5, 6 generations previous as well.”

How do the young women see themselves - not as Catholics/Protestants, or Celtic/Rangers fans, but as young Scottish women - making a “wee dent” in tackling this issue?

Sarah, Amy and Sarah: We have to *“be seen to be leading by example”*. None of us are sectarian in our attitudes or behaviours and we appreciate different beliefs. If we show that awareness to other young people then maybe they will start to realise they shouldn’t use certain words etc. We also have to encourage all schools to get involved and have pupils within schools taking special assemblies to raise awareness. Pupils would feel more of a connection if they were listening to what their peers were saying.

“If we think it’s wrong then maybe others will start to question things too.”

Yvonne Donald: There are young women in the audience from Trinity High School, Rutherglen, who are part of Nil by Mouth’s Schools Accreditation Scheme. They have started going out into primary schools to talk to the kids about sectarianism.

Young Women from Trinity High: *“You can’t just have it as another lesson. That’s how it feels if an adult takes it. It needs to be interactive, in both primary and secondary, denominational and non-denominational schools.”*

Have the young women witnessed a difference in attitude between boys and girls towards the issue?

Young Women from Trinity High: Overwhelmingly, yes. A survey, similar to that of the SWC, was conducted within the school. Girls were seen to give more mature responses than boys to questions asked. Sexist values were also often displayed in the boys answers to questions, who would say that girls knew less about football etc simply because of their gender.

“We automatically split the responses into girls and boys because we just knew they would be different.”

Do the young women have any experience of changing adults minds about sectarianism?

Sarah, Amy and Sarah: Yes, in the first instance with parents, who wont say certain things or act in a certain way any more.

“That’s not to say they don’t still do it with their pals but my dad has definitely changed his behaviour around me.”

How do women in rural communities educate others about the impact of sectarianism?

Yvonne Donald: Nil by Mouth is not an organisation for people in West/Central Scotland only and would be more than happy to conduct awareness raising workshops in rural areas.

Are there ways in which behaviours, such as putting pictures of children on Facebook in Old Firm kits when they are a few months old, can be challenged?

Yvonne Donald: It is important that tackling sectarianism is not just done by vilifying two football teams. It’s not necessarily the teams and supporters who are at the root of the issue, but the attitudes put onto them, both by their own fans and others. People should be proud to support their football team, but it’s important to challenge the negative perceptions which surround them.

With regards to third party reporting, how can you tackle the rural community mentality where ‘everyone knows everyone else’ and that people may know what you’re going into a specific building for?

Gillian Stirling: The option for online reporting is always there, which means that crimes and intelligence about crimes can be submitted where anyone has internet access. The information goes straight into Force HQ and not local police stations which also helps to keep reporting anonymous.

Football seems to be the biggest driver for the divide which exists - how can sport be used in a positive way to tackle sectarianism?

Gillian Stirling: South Lanarkshire have rolled out an initiative called ‘Move the Goalposts’, a moveable pitch that is taken around the area and young people are encouraged to play football together.

“Kids can kick a ball about on a patch of grass but the presence of the pitch seemed to draw them together. Some nights it got a bit strained between them but they didn’t kick off. They knew that the initiative would be scrapped if they did.”



The work undertaken by the SWC reflects the views of women throughout Scotland. The quotes contained in this report were given by women at focus group events and as part of the on-line survey.

Sectarianism has a direct and indirect impact on women and young people throughout Scotland, although, through consultation, it has been highlighted as being more prevalent in the west of Scotland.

This report will assist the Scottish Government in the work being undertaken to tackle sectarianism in communities.

The SWC would like to thank all of the women who have attended consultation events and those who took the time to complete the online survey in relation to their views, experiences and perceptions of sectarianism in Scotland.

The Scottish Women’s Convention (SWC) is funded by the Scottish Government to consult with women in Scotland to influence public policy. The organisation was set up in 2003 to enable grassroots women to discuss issues relevant to them and since its inception the SWC has engaged with a wide range of women the length and breadth of the country.

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