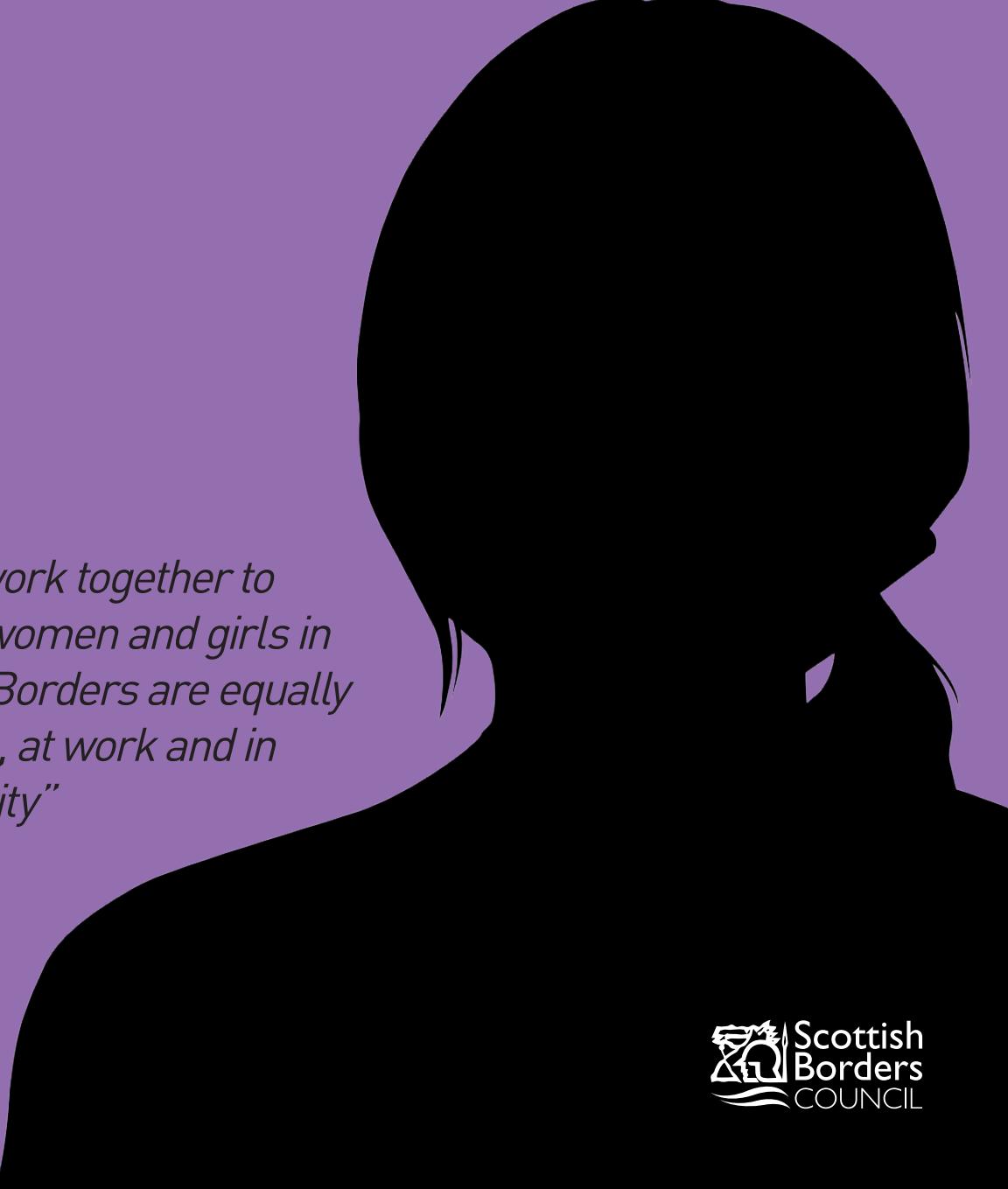


EQUALLY SAFE

Scottish Borders Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls

2016 - 21



"We aim to work together to ensure that women and girls in the Scottish Borders are equally safe at home, at work and in the community"

CONTENTS

Foreword	p3
Introduction	p4
Where are we now	p9
Where do we want to go	p13
How will we get there	p14
Equally Safe priorities	p15
How will we monitor progress	p20
Scottish Borders Violence Against Women (VAW)	p21

Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and 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 their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in the public or private life. It is men who predominantly or exclusively carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence.

Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- *Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community, or in institutions including: domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse*
- *Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography and trafficking*
- *Dowry related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, honour crimes.*

(Scottish Government 2009)

FOREWORD

Tackling violence against women and girls remains a priority for Scottish Borders Council, and the partner agencies it works with, to ensure that women and girls in the Scottish Borders are equally safe at home, at work and in the community.

Much has been achieved in the last five years; an increase in services for victims of gender based violence, as well as increased awareness in our communities of the support that is available. But, like the rest of Scotland, we see an increase in the levels of reporting of gender based violence and women/girls being abused in their own homes and communities - there is still much work to be done.

Equally Safe gives us the way forward to tackle gender based violence, shows how we can take direct action over the short, medium

and long term, and shapes our thinking to prevent the long and enduring effects on our children and young people.

Violence against women and girls is a tangible indicator of gender inequality, and we have to take the long term view that tackling gender inequality will make our women and girls safer, stronger and more able to thrive.

The Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy is our first strategy on violence against women and girls that asks us to look at the drivers for violence, the evidence of "what works", and resources required to achieve an "equally safe" society in the Scottish Borders.

Cllr Donald Moffat
Chair, Police Fire and Community Safety Board

SURVIVORS SAY?

Quotes and feedback from survivors on Equally Safe 2016 - 21

Equally safe have a task in front of them, one I'm sure those involved will put heart, mind and soul into."

Survivor, March 2016

I feel an end to violence or sexually based/gender based violence for all, is a more inclusive approach. This would address 100% of the population, and feels Equally Safe for everyone.

Survivor, February 2016

INTRODUCTION

“WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS ARE EQUALLY SAFE AT HOME, AT WORK AND IN THE COMMUNITY”

Violence against women and girls, in any form, has no place in our vision for the Scottish Borders. It damages health and wellbeing, limits freedom and potential, and is a violation of the most fundamental of human rights.

This Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy has been developed by the Scottish Borders Violence against Women (VAW) Partnership to enable the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls, as per the Scottish Government’s Equally Safe Strategy 2014. It is designed to provide a strategic framework and shared understanding of the issues including a more nuanced view of violence against women – evidence shows that the tactics of coercive control (a behaviour that seeks to strip away the victim’s freedoms and sense of self) are rooted in gender inequality, roles and assumptions.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with VAW Partnership members, the general public and survivors of gender based violence and is underpinned by a strategic assessment conducted in 2015. It also builds on the excellent partnership work in the Scottish Borders and a significant investment in specialist services over the last five years. However, Equally Safe takes a more radical approach in that it aims to tackle the causes and consequences of gender based violence, such as gender inequality in its widest sense, holding perpetrators more

accountable and addressing the societal attitudes that perpetuate gender based violence.

The four main aims of the Scottish Borders Equally Safe strategy will be working in partnership to ensure:

1. Scottish Borders’ society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.
2. Women and girls in the Scottish Borders thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and promoting women’s safety and wellbeing in the Scottish Borders.
4. Men in the Scottish Borders desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

This is a long term strategy requiring a phased approach. A Scottish Borders Equally Safe Delivery Plan will set out the short, medium and long term outcomes, directing the work and resources of partner agencies and maintaining gender based violence as a priority strategically and politically. Additionally, a gender based violence data set will be developed to ensure the local response is based on good evidence and can demonstrate step-changes in addressing violence against women and girls.

Note: reference to women includes transgender women.

The focus for Scottish Borders Equally Safe will continue to be on all forms of violence against women, acknowledging that women and girls are at risk of such abuse precisely **because** they are female. Clearly boys and men can also experience violence and there is no diminution of the seriousness of the harms they can experience or any proposal to alter the support offered to them. However, Equally Safe acknowledges “**that being female in itself can lead to a range of discrimination and disadvantage, including experience of male violence**”

(Scottish Government Equally Safe 2014).

Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and 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 their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in the public or private life. It is men who predominantly or exclusively carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence.

Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- *Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community, or in institutions including: domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse.*
- *Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography and trafficking.*
- *Dowry related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, honour crimes.*

(Scottish Government 2009)

Children and young people

The definition we have adopted includes children of all genders as subject to harm through violence. Violence against women and girls can have significant consequences on children and young peoples' 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.

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.

Scottish Borders Violence Against Women Partnership

There has been a multi-agency approach to addressing gender based violence in the Scottish Borders for over ten years. The predominant feature of the work has been to tackle domestic abuse and rape/sexual assault, but the Scottish Borders VAW Partnership Strategic Priorities 2012-2015 focussed on all forms of gender based violence. This mirrored the Scottish Government's Safe Lives: Changed Lives (2009).

The Scottish Borders VAW Partnership draws its membership from the wide range of partner agencies who have a key role to play in tackling gender based violence – these include: Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Police Scotland, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Border Women's Aid, Children1st, Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre, solicitors and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. The VAW

Partnership has an independent, volunteer Chair and reports to the Police, Fire and Community Safety (PFCS) Board as a tasking group of Scottish Borders Safer Communities. The strategic overview of violence against women lies with the Reducing Inequalities strand of the Community Planning Partnership. The VAW Partnership Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix 1.

Gender based violence is a cross cutting theme, with the impact and consequences felt across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy will link directly to other stakeholder strategies:

Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy – Strategic Links



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.
---	--	---	---

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.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Addressing gender based violence remains a priority for the Scottish Government, Scottish Local Authorities, Scottish Health Boards, Police Scotland, partner agencies and communities.

Scotland's National Performance Framework guides the resources required and the outcomes desired to ensure:

- We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger.
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
- We have tackled significant inequalities in Scottish society.
- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to people's needs.
- We have strong resilient 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 live longer, healthier lives.

In the Scottish Borders this is translated into the Single Outcome Agreement and is governed by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). Gender based violence is included in the Reducing Inequalities strand of the CPP.
(See Page 6)

This in turn relates to the outcomes for Safer Communities. In 2015 gender based violence was assessed as the top priority in the Safer Communities Business Plan.

Currently the range of gender based violence data that is used to demonstrate the extent to which the Single Outcome Agreement is

achieved is quantitative in nature and drawn from Police Scotland statistics, service provider data and statutory recording, eg Child Protection Registrations. However, such statistics are useful in monitoring trends/incidences, but are considered only "part of the picture" in revealing the true nature and extent of gender based violence in the Scottish Borders.

With an increase in service provision, more people accessing support, and a greater understanding of the local need, it should become possible to collate better more accurate data to demonstrate the longer term impact of the Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy.

We are now at the stage of needing to tackle the root causes of violence against women and girls with a wider focus on gender inequality and addressing perpetrator behaviour whilst maintaining a strong, effective and sustained service provision for victims of gender based violence.

Violence against women and girls occurs across all sections of society, but not all women and girls are at equal risk. Certain factors can increase vulnerability to abuse and keep women trapped such as age, financial dependence, poverty, disability, homelessness, insecure immigration status and ethnicity, mental health, substance use, offending. Therefore, it is vital that a partnership approach is maintained to addressing violence against women and girls: there is a cost-benefit to partner agencies understanding the impact of gender based violence on their service area.

(Equally Safe, 2014)

Preventing violence against women and girls takes the long term approach, challenging the notion that violence is inevitable or acceptable. Equally Safe takes an ambitious approach demanding a determined effort over the long term. It requires those working in public service delivery to engage with communities and those affected by violence and abuse to reimagine services with a renewed and increased focus on prevention.

In the Scottish Borders over the last five years there has been a significant improvement in the funding aligned to providing specialist services, an increased focus on addressing perpetrator behaviour, a commitment from partner agencies to develop a coordinated, community response to addressing domestic abuse, and an increase in resources to start prevention work in schools/colleges.

The policy and practice framework across Scotland has improved to ensure increased protection for those at risk of gender based violence through new legislation, eg Forced Marriage, Victims and Witnesses Bill, improved frontline response in universal services, eg routine enquiry, risk assessment training, and increased resources to address the gaps in service provision, eg Rape Crisis Sexual Violence Advocacy.

Caledonian System (Domestic Abuse)

Introduced in 2010/11, the Caledonian System is an integrated approach to address men's domestic abuse and to improve the lives of women, children and men. It does this by working with men convicted of domestic abuse related offences on a programme to reduce their re-offending while offering support and safety planning to women and children.

A VAW Strategic Assessment conducted in 2015 provided analysis by VAW of data from national and local organisations, key stakeholders and service providers in the Scottish Borders. The aim of the strategic assessment is to provide clear direction and focus for the VAW Partnership's Equally Safe Strategy. The Strategic Assessment covered the period 2012-15 and highlighted: Prevention, Activity, Community Engagement, Policy & Practice.

Prevention activity

- An increase in the number of young people taking part in sexual violence prevention workshops.
- An increase in the number of schools implementing Mentors in Violence Prevention.
- SHARE continues to be delivered in schools.

Community engagement

- A decrease in the capacity to deliver community activity in relation to gender based violence.
- An increase in access to survivors of gender based violence.

Policy and practice framework

- Routine Enquiry continues in drug and alcohol services, sexual health services.
- Disclosure Scheme on Domestic Abuse implemented 2015.
- Establishment of Survivors Unite group for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse
- Establishment of Reconnect Group for women at risk of offending.
- Establishment of a Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Support and Advocacy Service.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: SCOTTISH BORDERS

2013-16

Victims of gender based violence

95% female
5% male



AN INCREASE IN REPORTED INCIDENTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AND STALKING



A DECREASE IN reported incidents of rape and sexual assault



A SMALL DECREASE in the number of domestic abuse incidents resulting in a criminal offence



An overall increase in the numbers of adults and children receiving support for domestic abuse/rape and sexual assault

AN INCREASE in the number of high risk victims of domestic abuse discussed at a **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**



AN INCREASE in the number of prolific repeat domestic abuse offenders referred to the **Multi Agency Tasking and Coordinating (MATAC) meeting.**



Number of women accessing refuge

2012/13 11 women
2013/14 15 women
2014/15 10 women



AN INCREASE in the number of people accessing safer housing options in relation to domestic abuse



AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS
who received intensive outreach advocacy support



AN INCREASE in the **NUMBER OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN** needing statutory protection as a result of domestic abuse



AN INCREASE in the number of **routine enquiries** returning disclosures in addictions services



AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ADULTS presenting to homelessness as a result of domestic abuse



0 Reports of Female Genital Mutilation

5 honour based violence cases

0 Number of reports of human trafficking

However, in the Scottish Borders there are still gaps in service provision for victims of gender based violence, evidence of continued un-met need, and evidence of inconsistency in relation to victim's experience of help-seeking. This has been evidenced by the Strategic Assessment (2015), an independent evaluation of the Pathway Project, victim feedback and discussions with stakeholders.

A summary of gaps identified or where data reveals the need for improvement include:

- A considerable number of stalking harassment incidents that do not receive a consistent response in relation to victim impact.
- A low conversion rate of incidents to crimes, and a resulting low conviction rate for domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Sexual violence prevention work not available across primary, secondary schools.
- Specific groups of victims, eg those from the LGBT or ethnic minority communities are under-represented in specialist services.
- Low numbers of people using national helplines.
- Reduction in capacity and resources to support front line staff to effectively respond to gender based violence.
- No coherent service user involvement (adults and children) across the violence against women agenda in the Scottish Borders.
- Evidence of only one key partner agency having a Workplace Policy on gender based violence.
- There is no policy or protocol framework developed for FGM, Forced Marriage or Trafficking despite new legislation.
- No recorded data or evidence for commercial commercial sexual exploitation in the Scottish Borders.
- Lack of a coherent funding strategy in the Scottish Borders for gender based violence.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

In responding to gender based violence under the guidance of Equally Safe –Scotland’s Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls (2014) we want to work towards:

- 1. A Scottish society that embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls by ensuring that:**
 - Positive gender roles are promoted.
 - People enjoy healthy positive relations.
 - Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour.
- 2. Women and girls who thrive as equal citizens; socially, culturally, economically and politically by ensuring that:**
 - Women and girls feel safe, respected and equal in our communities.
 - Women and men have equality of opportunity, particularly with regards to access to power and resources.
- 3. Maintain interventions that are early and effective, preventing violence and promoting women’s safety and wellbeing by ensuring that:**
 - Justice responses are robust, swift , consistent and coordinated.
 - Women and girls access relevant, effective and integrated services.
- 4. Encouraging men to desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and ensure that perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response by ensuring that:**
 - Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated.

- Men who carry out violence against women and girls are held to account by the criminal justice system.
- Men who carry out violence against women and girls are identified early and held to account by the criminal justice system.

In taking action to achieve the aims of Equally Safe, the Scottish Borders Violence against Women Partnership will create a strategic and operational framework under the four priorities listed above. Notwithstanding these, the Scottish Borders Violence against Women Partnership will commit to ensuring the following principle: ***“to promote and coordinate an effective multi-agency approach to gender based violence in line with efforts to Protect, Prevent, and Provide whilst supporting effective Participation”.***

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

The Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy (2016-2021) will only succeed in the short, medium and long term aims if partner agencies, stakeholders and communities collaborate in taking the range of actions required to address gender based violence at all levels – individual, community and societal.

This requires strong leadership at both strategic and operational level, underpinned by a shared understanding of gender based violence, sustained funding for specialist services, and a willingness to learn and improve our response according to the experience of those who need us to take action to end violence against women.

A shared vision to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls requires concerted effort from service providers, commissioners, planners, funders and partnerships, but with an acknowledgement that this will be a long term commitment which will return considerable benefit to Scottish Borders society.

Scotland's Equally Safe Strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls gives the Scottish Borders a clear mandate to adopt the key priorities and establish the mechanisms to deliver key outcomes/activities.



The following represents the high-level activities proposed to deliver on each Equally Safe Priority:

Priority 1

A Scottish society that embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls by ensuring that:

- Positive gender roles are promoted
- People enjoy healthy positive relations
- Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour.

Research shows that community attitudes to violence against women and girls are a key predictor of perpetration of such abuse and can influence how victims feel about their experiences, in turn influencing how they get help. It is therefore imperative that communities are supported to understand better the drivers for violence against women and girls and how societal and personal responses to victims can impact on help-seeking.

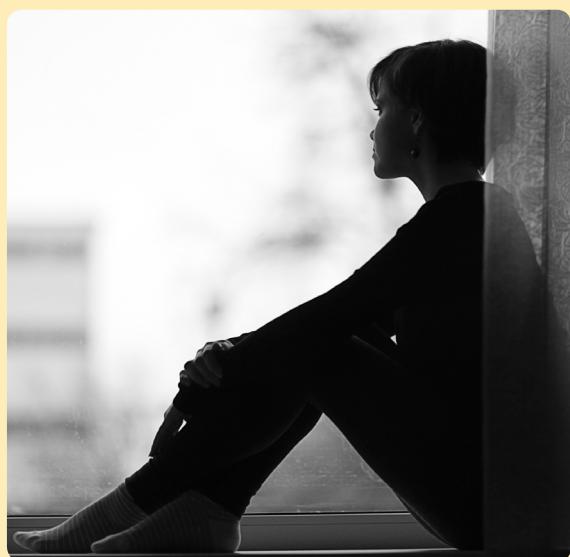
For example, in 2013 Household Survey in the Scottish Borders 76% of respondents believed alcohol and drugs "*cause men to be violent to their partners*", the Safer Communities Strategic Assessment (2015) revealed that alcohol was a contributing factor in only 22% of all domestic incidents reported to the police, thus supporting the understanding that alcohol does not cause gender based violence.

Supporting communities to be more aware and develop a more inclusive approach to gender based violence can be achieved by services and the media working together, by gender stereotyping being challenged at the individual, community and societal levels, by more effective legal sanctions, by grassroots

activity in the heart of our communities, and by survivors themselves through support to have their voices heard.

We will work towards achieving Priority 1 by:

- working with media colleagues to challenge attitudes and norms that contribute to violence against women and girls.
- increasing awareness amongst children/young people of gender based violence and improving access to support.
- increasing the opportunities for children and young people to actively be involved in tackling gender based violence.
- ensuring community engagement is meaningful and inclusive, that communities have increased opportunity to be involved in addressing gender based violence.
- providing support for survivors of gender based violence to have their voices heard and be actively involved in decision making.



Priority 2

Women and girls who thrive as equal citizens; socially, culturally, economically and politically by ensuring that:

- Women and girls feel safe, respected and equal in our communities.
- Women and men have equality of opportunity particularly with regard to access to power and resources.

We want women in the Scottish Borders to enjoy the same opportunities as men. This includes being more economically independent with equal opportunity to achieve their full potential in all sectors and at all levels. This requires action to tackle the barriers that women face in relation to employment, elimination of the gender pay gap, and the representation of women both in low paid jobs and in senior positions. The impact of welfare reform in Scotland is borne disproportionately by women and poverty is a key factor in preventing women and children finding safety and recovering from their experience of domestic abuse.

Living in fear, being abused and recovery from the long term consequences of gender based violence all impact on a woman's opportunity to achieve her full potential.

Employers across the public and private sector in the Scottish Borders employ a significant number of women, eg NHS Borders employs over 3000 staff, 82% of whom are women. However, the use of Employee or Workplace Policies to address gender based violence is inconsistent in the public and private sector.

Adopting a joint approach to workplace policies would enable a wider range of women to seek support and maintain gainful employment as well as their economic independence. Gender based violence produces a significant cost in relation to absence management for employers.

We will work towards achieving Priority 2 by:

- Working with partners in Corporate Equality groups to ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are conducted on all activities that could disproportionately affect women generally but more specifically victims of gender based violence.
- Supporting efforts to tackling poverty in relation to gender based violence in collaboration with partners.
- Addressing the need for an effective response to women who have "no recourse to public funds."
- Work in collaboration with partners to increase the mobility of women, decrease rural isolation, and improve access to public transport by ensuring their needs are considered in planning and public transport strategies.
- Work with partners in the public and private sectors to develop gender based violence workplace policies.

Priority 3

Maintain interventions that are early and effective, preventing violence and promoting women's safety and wellbeing by ensuring that:

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

The provision of effective and accessible services is vital to the support needed for victims and survivors of gender based violence – both adults and children.

Service provision ranges from direct protection of adults and children at risk of gender based violence through to support for families to recover from their experiences. Partnership working is essential as the capacity to provide such support is compromised - funding is predominantly short term, staff retention is challenged, rural delivery of services is expensive, considerable un-met need in relation to service access and a reduced capacity to enable universal services to adequately respond to gender based violence.

In the Scottish Borders there has been a significant increase in funding for specialist services over the last five years resulting in a corresponding increase in the numbers of adults and children receiving support. This increase in funding has meant:

- increased capacity to respond to domestic abuse/rape and sexual assault.
- improved outcomes for victims and their children in relation to risk, safety and recovery from their experiences.
- increased capacity to enable victims and their children to have a better range of safe housing options.
- increased capacity to respond to victims living in rural isolation, or who experience specific barriers to services.
- increased numbers of high tariff. prolific offenders targeted in relation to domestic abuse/sexual violence.

However, there still remains a need to ensure that all victims/survivors have equitable access to services that meet their specific needs, for example, those experiencing stalking and harassment are reluctant to report and services have an inconsistent response to stalking with no agreed risk assessment tool or victim impact toolkit established in the Scottish Borders. Those who find accessing mainstream services challenging and have increased risk of abuse, eg LGBT community, ethnic minority communities, require barrier-free services to improve the equity of access to support.

The role of universal services in enabling a greater “reach” and increased access to support is key as these services. eg health, social care, community services are much more likely to be used by victims of gender based violence than specialist services. Additionally, close partnership working between specialist services and mental health, criminal justice, substance misuse

services, homelessness, child and adult protection will enhance the response to those with a range of support needs, and in many cases driven by their experience of gender based violence.

Early identification is essential in eliminating violence and the risk of further harm - we know that only a small minority of those affected by violence report it to the police or seek help from specialist services, and this remains an issue across Scotland. A move to a more integrated, coordinated approach affords us the best chance of meeting the needs of those experiencing gender based violence in the Scottish Borders. A small step-change, for example, would be an agreed Information Sharing Protocol adopted by all specialist agencies to reduce the requirement for victims to re-tell their story, decrease the length of time to access services and reduce the potential for service generated risks.

We will work towards achieving Priority 3 by:

- Working collaboratively to improve the sustainability of specialist violence against women services.
- Collaborating with funders and planners to embed a coordinated community response to gender based violence in the Scottish Borders.
- Providing support to Universal Services to enable frontline staff to be more confident/competent to respond safely and effectively to all forms of gender based violence.
- Developing a common, shared understanding of risk assessment and safety planning in relation to domestic abuse.

- Promoting a multi-agency approach to tackling high risk cases of domestic abuse, thus improving the effectiveness of scarce resources.
- Developing a policy/protocol framework for Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, and Trafficking.
- Developing and implementing a "first line response" to stalking.
- Undertaking a scoping exercise in relation to prostitution to inform a better understanding and response.
- Supporting the development of new initiatives such as the Reconnect Group, Survive and Thrive, Survivors Unite.
- Providing a mechanism for service user experience to shape the coordinated community response.



Priority 4

Encouraging men to desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and ensuring that perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response by ensuring that:

- Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated.
- Men who carry out violence against women and girls are held to account by the criminal justice system.
- Men who carry out violence against women and girls are identified early and held to account by the criminal justice system.

Globally there is a growing consensus that prosecution alone is not enough to eradicate the problem of violence against women and girls. Early identification of perpetrators and the opportunity for them to change their behaviour is key to more effective outcomes.

Prosecution is important to victims in relation to the crime they have experienced and the psychological recovery by acknowledging their status as victims. Unfortunately, there are still barriers to prosecution that are well evidenced, and attrition rates are higher than we would hope them to be. Support for victims to engage with and navigate through the court process is vital.

Caledonian System – to be completed

We will work towards achieving Priority 4 by:

- Engaging with partners to improve the court outcomes for victims of gender based violence.

- Engaging with partners in the court system to enable children's views to be considered in contact cases.
- Enable partners in the legal profession the opportunity to be better equipped to represent gender based violence victims in court.
- Work with partner agencies who have responsibility for early identification of men who carry out violence in order that current/future victims are protected.
- Work in partnership to ensure better information is shared with Courts in relation to risk of further harm and/or the victim impact.



HOW WILL WE MONITOR PROGRESS?

Governance and Reporting

The Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy (2016-21) will be the responsibility of the Police, Fire and Community Safety (PFCS) Board in relation to governance. A set of key performance indicators that will track progress of Equally Safe will be agreed by the PFCS Board. These are also required to support the outcomes associated with the Reducing Inequalities strand of the Community Planning Partnership.

Operationally, the Equally Safe Strategy (2016-2021) will be managed by Violence against Women Partnership Executive. The VAW Partnership Executive will produce an Equally Safe Annual Report to demonstrate progress, as well as reporting to the PFCS Board twice yearly detailing progress against the agreed key performance indicators.

The delivery of outcomes associated with the Strategy will be the responsibility of a Violence Against Women Partnership Delivery Group. There will be some Short Life Working Groups established to take forward specific areas eg Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Protocol. This work will be driven by an Equally Safe Strategy Delivery Plan (2016-19). The Delivery Plan will detail the actions, outcomes, performance data, lead agencies and timelines for completion. The VAW Partnership Delivery Group will report to the VAW Partnership Executive Group twice yearly on progress of the Delivery Plan.

The Violence Against Women Executive will be chaired by an independent Chair and the Violence Against Women Delivery Group will be chaired by volunteer from the membership, and will rotate over a timeframe agreed by

the Delivery Group. The Chair of the VAW Delivery Group will be a member of the VAW Executive. The VAW Coordinator will report to the VAW Executive and be a member of the VAW Delivery Group.

Membership of both the VAW Executive and the VAW Delivery Group will be drawn from the key partner agencies. Members will be required to represent their agency at the appropriate level but it is expected that the VAW Executive will consist of senior members of the key public and voluntary agencies responsible for tackling violence against women and girls in the Scottish Borders.

The Equally Safe Strategy Delivery Plan (2016-19) will detail reporting timelines and key performance indicators evidencing the progress of the Equally Safe Strategy.

Further information on specialist services can be found on
www.scotborders.gov.uk/domesticabuse



SCOTTISH BORDERS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) PARTNERSHIP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aims:

The Scottish Borders Violence against Women(VAW) Partnership will raise awareness and increase the understanding of the impact of violence against women (including trans women), young people and children across the Scottish Borders.

We aim to work with our partners and stakeholders in an integrated way to prevent violence against women and improve on the range of services and provision available to women, young people and children. This approach will take into account the challenges of addressing violence against women in a rural setting and acknowledging the work needed to address the perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

What the partnership will do:

Provide leadership and set the strategic direction for the Scottish Borders Equally Safe strategy (2016-2021).

- 1 Provide expertise, knowledge, research and resources on violence against women and girls.
- 2 Monitor local activity, interpret the data available and address the gaps identified.
- 3 Provide data for annual reports as required by governance structures.
- 4 Work together on prevention strategies and foster/influence a more positive media reporting at a local level.
- 5 Work together to ensure that the provision in the Scottish Borders remains of high quality and is accessible to those in need.
- 6 Maintain an overview of budget constraints and work with partners to build resilience and sustainability of services and provision.
- 7 Raise the profile of violence against women in the Scottish Borders, maintaining visibility and presence within the structures of community planning.

The role of the partnership member:

- To participate in every meeting of the VAW Partnership and delegate where possible.
- To ensure that the experiences of survivors are fed into the strategic service and policy development for the Scottish Borders.
- To influence their peers and partners to address the impact of violence against women and girls in the Scottish Borders at all levels.
- To contribute to the partnership meetings and engage with the discussion and cascade back into their respective organisations.
- To contribute to consultations both local and national.
- To contribute to the short life working groups as agreed by the VAW Partnership.
- To support the Chair and the Violence Against women Coordinator to achieve the aims of the VAW Partnership.
- To ensure the Scottish Borders Equally Safe Strategy (2016-2021) is effective in addressing violence against women and girls in the Scottish Borders.

Membership

Governance: Meetings

The Violence Against Women Partnership is a tasking group of Scottish Borders Safer Communities and reports to the Police, Fire and Community Safety Board.

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

**Safer Communities Team
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
TD6 0SA**

safercapabilities@scotborders.gov.uk

