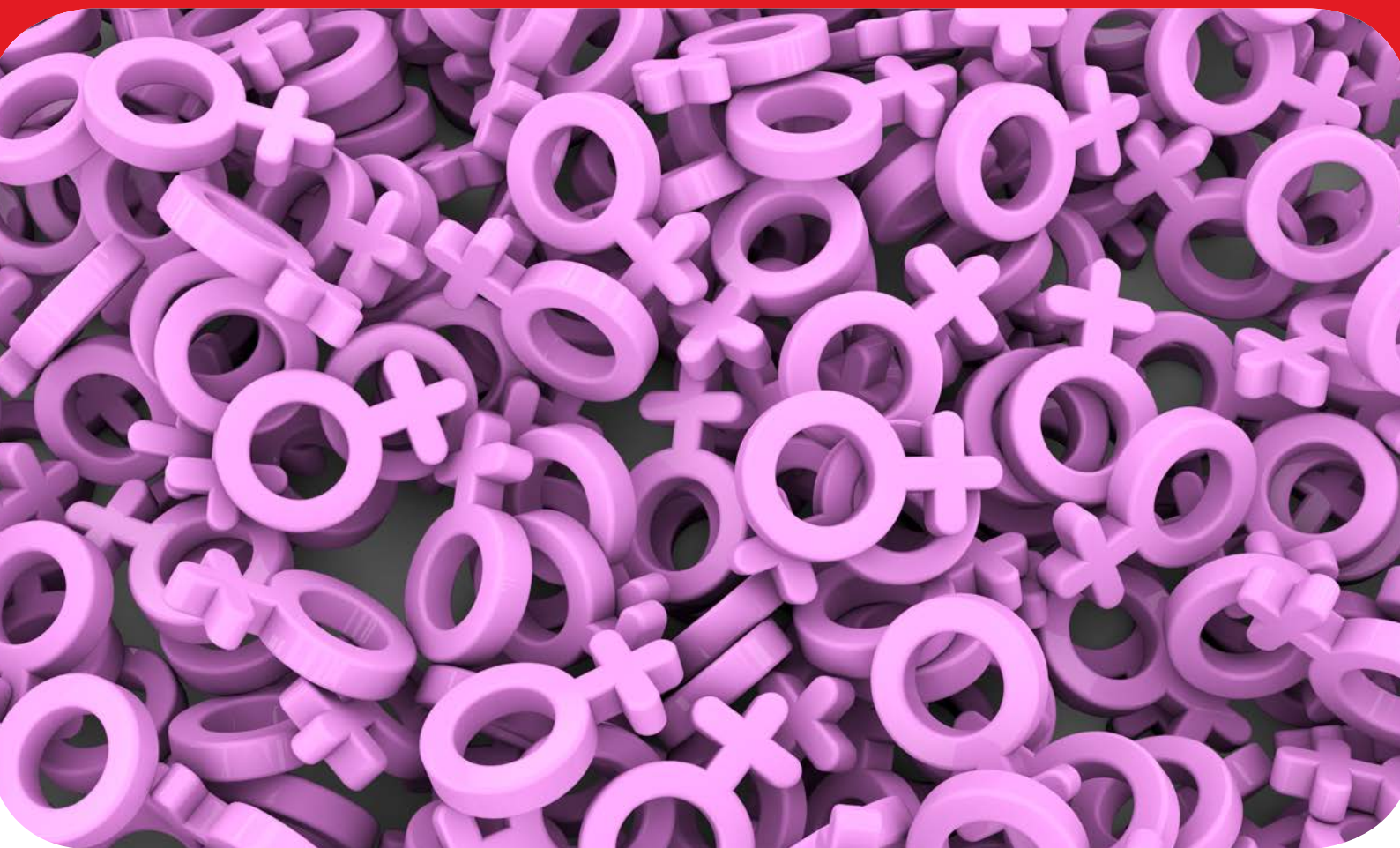


The Improvement Service

ELECTED MEMBER BRIEFING NOTE

Why Adopt a Gendered Analysis of Violence and Abuse



What is the purpose of the briefing note series?

The Improvement Service (IS) has developed an Elected Members Briefing Series to help elected members keep pace with key issues affecting local government.

Some briefing notes will be directly produced by IS staff but we will also make available material from as wide a range of public bodies, commentators and observers of public services as possible.

We will use the IS website and elected member e-bulletin to publicise and provide access to the briefing notes. All briefing notes in the series can be accessed at www.improvementservice.org.uk/elected-member-guidance-and-briefings.html

About this Briefing Note

This briefing is one in a series raising awareness of the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and highlighting some of the good practice around Scotland in tackling this issue.

The purpose of this briefing is to raise awareness of the causal relationship between gender inequality and violence against women, and provide suggestions of the ways that elected members can help promote women's equality.

Why is adopting a ‘gendered analysis’ of violence and abuse important?

“Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege... 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.”¹

(Equally Safe²)

While men may be victims of violence and abuse, a gendered-analysis helps to make sense of the scale and impact of VAWG. Prevalence statistics regularly show that women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment, rape and sexual violence, domestic abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of VAWG. In comparison to men, women’s descriptions of abuse indicate a pattern which typically includes tactics of control, humiliation and degradation and the abdication of responsibility of the man and the blame of the woman.³ Moreover, the impact of violence and abuse is often different for women than it is for men with 31.1% of women affected by domestic abuse reporting experiencing four or more psychological effects, compared to only 8.8% of men.⁴

Research shows there is a causal story between gender inequality and violence and abuse, with societies with fewer economic, social or political differences between men and women experiencing lower rates of VAWG.⁵ Consequently, to effectively address VAWG a gendered-analysis recognises that there is a need to understand and address the attitudes and structures that underpin this violence and abuse. To achieve this, *Equally Safe* highlights the importance of focusing on changing attitudes and behaviours and delivering a progressive shift in the structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence occurs.

Adopting a gendered-analysis therefore means recognising that VAWG cannot be solely addressed

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- 1 This definition is based on the United Nation’s Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>
 - 2 Scottish Government (2016), *Equally Safe: Scotland’s Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls*, available at <http://blogs.scotland.gov.uk/equally-safe/files/2016/03/ES-update-18-April1.pdf>
 - 3 For more information please see, The Scottish Government (2010), *What Does Gender have to do with Violence Against Women*, available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/02/05102715/0> and McNeish and Scott (2014), *Women and Girls at Risk: Evidence Across the Life Course*, available at <http://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Women-Girls-at-Risk-Evidence-Review-040814.pdf>
 - 4 Scottish Government (2016), *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Partner Abuse*, available at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00500328.pdf>
 - 5 Scottish Government (2016), *Equally Safe: Scotland’s Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls*

as a 'justice' or 'public protection' issue but instead, a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach is required. This means considering how policy and practice in areas such as early years, education, employment, health, housing and welfare impacts on women's lives and what decision-makers working within these areas can do to tackle gender inequality.

At a time when budgets are continuing to decrease, there is growing pressure to make best use of all available resources. As *Equally Safe* highlights, the cost of failing to address the prevalence and impact of VAWG amounts to an estimated £4 billion. Moreover, dealing with the consequences of violence against women places a significant burden on public services. For example, Police Scotland report that dealing with incidences of domestic abuse is the greatest single demand on their time, with an average of one incident being reported to them every nine minutes.⁶

Adopting a gendered-analysis of VAWG supports a preventative approach by highlighting the value of ensuring that policy and practice effectively addresses the root cause of VAWG, rather than only dealing with the negative consequences of it.

6 As quoted by Police Scotland at <http://www.scotland.police.uk/whats-happening/news/2017/september/second-anniversary-disclosure-scheme-domestic-abuse-scotland>

What can elected members do to support this agenda?

As an elected member, you have an important role to play in promoting gender equality within your local community and scrutinising policy and practice to ensure that equality considerations are included in the decision-making and governance of the council.

Your role in leading, supporting and advocating for the people and communities you represent means it is important that you have a strong understanding of the attitudes, values and structures that underpin VAWG and the negative impact that gender inequality has on the lives of women and children.

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011,⁷ local authorities are required to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

As an elected member, this places a responsibility on you to ensure that you consider the impact that decisions on policy and practice will have for women and girls. You also have a responsibility to ensure that you have sufficient information to satisfy the legal requirement to pay 'due regard' to gender equality. An example of this includes considering the impact that welfare, employability and housing policies can have on women's lives.

This is not simply about ensuring that current and future policy and practice does not discriminate against women but instead, it provides an opportunity to ensure that gender equality is positively advanced through policy and practice.

⁷ More information about elected members' requirements under this Duty, please see the Improvement Service's *Elected Member Briefing: Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)* at http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/em_briefing_notes/EM-Briefing-PSED.pdf

What does good practice look like in tackling VAWG and promoting women's equality?

“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.”

(Equally Safe)

Scotland is recognised as leading the way in terms of adopting a gendered analysis of VAWG but there is still more that can be done. The following examples of good practice have been identified in tackling VAWG and promoting women's equality.

Supporting multi-agency partnership working

Preventing and eradicating VAWG requires a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach. As part of the refreshed *Violence Against Women Partnership Guidance*⁸, there is an expectation that every local authority area in Scotland will have a multi-agency partnership (VAWP) in place that brings together the key public sector and third sector partners with a role to play in tackling VAWG and promoting women's equality at a local level.

As an elected member, you can help ensure there are no key agencies missing from your VAWP and that all relevant agencies are contributing to its agreed outcomes. You also have an important role to play in contributing to the leadership and scrutiny of your VAWP, and helping to ensure it has sufficient resources to effectively implement *Equally Safe* at a local level.

Highlighting links between gender inequality and VAWG

It is vital that policy-makers, practitioners and commissioners working across all areas of local government have a robust understanding of the links between gender inequality and VAWG and the role that they can play in effectively identifying, responding to and preventing it.

The training and awareness-raising work undertaken by VAWPs and their partner organisations is an example of good practice within this area. This includes VAWPs engaging with other local strategic partnerships and organisations and helping to ensure that they prioritise tackling VAWG and gender inequality in their work.

8 Scottish Government and CoSLA (2016), *Violence Against Women Partnership Guidance*, available at <http://www.cosla.gov.uk/system/files/private/vawpartnershipguidance-aug-2016.pdf>

Taking an evidence-informed approach to investing in VAWG services

To ensure that best use is made of available resources, it is important that an evidence-informed approach is taken to funding VAWG services. This includes ensuring that funding is prioritised for organisations and partnerships that adopt a gendered analysis approach to preventing and eradicating VAWG.

The *Good Practice in Domestic Abuse Services Guidance*⁹ sets out key principles for effective commissioning of domestic abuse services and includes a checklist of questions for commissioners to consider when making funding decisions. These include ensuring that services for women and children affected by domestic abuse that receive funding are underpinned by a gendered-analysis of VAWG.

9 CoSLA and Scottish Women's Aid (2016), *Good Practice in Commissioning Domestic Abuse Services*, available at http://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/good_practice_in_commissioning_specialist_domestic_abuse_services.pdf

Key actions for elected members to consider

- Engage with your local multi-agency VAWP and support the programme of activities it is undertaking to implement Equally Safe.
- Support your local VAWP to develop strategic links with other relevant thematic partnerships/groups within the CPP who are working towards shared outcomes, including tackling gender inequality and the inequality of outcomes experienced by women and children affected by VAWG.
- Support your CPP to take a preventative approach to tackling VAWG, by ensuring activities that promote women's equality are prioritised in Local Outcome Improvement Plans or other relevant strategic plans.
- Ensure Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken in a robust way when developing all new local policies and processes, to ensure they do not discriminate against women and identify ways to promote gender equality through them.
- Ensure public sector workplace policies are gender-sensitive and recognise the barriers to women's workplace equality.
- Ensure public sector workplace policies recognise that employees may be affected by sexual harassment and other forms of VAWG and outline clear pathways for women experiencing these issues.
- Consider the role that gender quotas or targets can play in ensuring more women are represented in decision-making positions within local government. A formal gender analysis or gender audit of policies and procedures may also assist in highlighting good practice in promoting women's equality, and where there are areas for improvement.
- Ensure early and effective interventions are available for women and children affected by VAWG within the local community, that are underpinned by a gendered-analysis of violence and abuse.
- Support activities and campaigns that take place in the local community to increase people's awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of VAWG, and the role people can play in tackling VAWG and promoting women's equality in their personal and professional lives.

Summary

- VAWG is a cause and consequence of gender inequality. To effectively tackle it, there is a need to address the social, cultural, economic and political inequalities that women currently experience within society.
- Adopting a gendered analysis of VAWG helps to highlight that the causes and consequences of violence and abuse are different for men than they are for women, as are the type of approaches that are likely to be effective in preventing and eradicating it.
- Elected members have a key role to play in helping to ensure that a gendered analysis of violence and abuse is understood and adopted. This includes ensuring gender equality is promoted in local policy and practice and in supporting the work of VAWPs.

Further support and contacts

The Improvement Service coordinates the National Violence Against Women Network, which provides support to multi-agency VAWPs across Scotland. Please contact joanna.mclaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk for more details on the work of the network or your local VAWP.

Alternatively, please visit our [website](#), join the Network's [KHub Group](#), or follow us [@VAWNetwork](#).

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