

The Improvement Service

ELECTED MEMBER BRIEFING NOTE

Engaging Men in Tackling Violence Against Women



What is the purpose of the briefing note series?

The IS has developed an Elected Members Briefing Series to help elected members keep abreast with key issues affecting local government.

Some briefing notes will be directly produced by IS staff but we will also publish 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-members-briefing-notes.html

About this briefing note

This briefing is one in a series of elected member briefings raising awareness of the different forms of violence against women and highlighting some of the good practice around Scotland. It has been produced in partnership with White Ribbon Scotland and the National Violence Against Women Network.

The purpose of this briefing is to raise awareness amongst elected members of the role that men can play in tackling violence against women (VAW). It will detail how men's engagement can lead to effective prevention and challenging of VAW, and provide suggestions of how elected members can facilitate this.

Introduction

Historically, violence against women (VAW) has been seen as a ‘women’s issue’ with campaigning led mainly by women for women. For over 40 years women have managed refuge accommodation and rape support services, campaigned for greater service provision and for improved legal protections for women experiencing all forms of gender-based violence. However, violence against women has been recognised by the United Nations and by the Scottish Government as a human rights issue and as a major contributing factor to women’s continued social inequality. While women comprise the majority of victims, boys, girls and men can also be affected. Research and statistical analysis indicates that the perpetrators are most commonly male.

Until recently, men have not been involved in any substantial way in these developments. However, their contribution is recognised as essential if Scotland is to achieve its aim of eliminating violence against women. Men are best placed to challenge male peers who may condone violence against women and to challenge the persistent culture of victim blaming, particularly in relation to domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, rape and sexual assault, which effectively excuses or condones the actions of men who abuse women.

A positive engagement with non-perpetrating men can be achieved through ‘bystander’ approaches which are proving successful in the US. These offer men an opportunity to become key allies and role models in preventing VAW by challenging the abusive behaviour of other men and by questioning any unhealthy attitudes they observe among their peers. Men have a crucial role to play in teaching children and young people about gender equality, by challenging outmoded gender roles, the objectification of women and the commercialisation of sex. The aim of preventing and eliminating VAW would greatly benefit from the increased contribution of non-perpetrating men.

Men may be hesitant in engaging with the VAW prevention agenda for a variety of reasons. Some men for example, may think the issue does not affect them, especially if they have not encountered it in their family or wider social circle. Research suggests that prevalence rates for VAW are high, therefore it is quite likely that a family member, friend or colleague will have experienced some form of VAW during their lifetime. Some may also be unaware of the extent to which men benefit from social and financial privilege on account of their gender and that they will more than likely live a life free from the fear and impact of the particular forms of violence women face because they are women. Consequently VAW and its role in sustaining gender inequality has a profound impact on the lives of men and boys. With recent attitude surveys finding that men are less aware of the prevalence of domestic abuse, a great deal more work needs to be done in these areas to raise awareness.^{1, 2}

VAW is identified by both the UN³ and Scottish Government⁴ as a human rights issue and that it affects men in many ways. As VAW is mainly perpetrated by men it is important to place men at the forefront of

1 <http://www.thejournal.ie/men-domestic-violence-ireland-survey-1172111-Nov2013/>

2 http://www.whiteribbonscotland.org.uk/sites/all/files/AttitudeSurveyReportPDF_0.pdf

3 <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

4 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498256.pdf>

prevention strategies. Men must work with women in order to:

- pool resources - men comprise around half of the population, and possess more than half of the financial and political power
- share experiences of respective genders
- gain a consensus on the issues
- learn from perpetrators, non-perpetrators and survivors.

The Scottish Government has adopted a gendered analysis and definition of violence against women as an issue rooted in gender inequality and an abuse of power and control by men⁵. Most efforts to tackle violence against women focus on the male perpetrator or the female victim and ignore the vast majority of men who do not perpetrate abuse. Involving non-perpetrating men would ensure they are no longer distanced from the issue but rather work alongside campaigners to prevent violence against women.

5 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00454152.pdf>

Why is it important to engage men in preventing violence against women and girls?

Without men's involvement we stand little chance of eliminating violence against women. Men are best placed to challenge male peers who may condone violence against women⁶. There is still a high level of victim blaming, particularly in relation to domestic abuse and sexual assault, which effectively excuses or condones the actions of men who abuse women. Recent research shows that where those in authority don't intervene, children and young people perceive violence as legitimate⁷. If these attitudes are challenged there is a better chance that violence will be reduced in the longer term.

Challenging gender stereotypes and preventing violence towards women benefits men as well as women. A stereotypical construct of 'real' men pre-supposes a certain set of characteristics - for example that they are emotionally and physically tough. Imposing an emotional toughness on men adds further pressure and encourages the suppression rather than the expression of negative feelings, and often discourages them from seeking professional help. This can be detrimental for men, and can exacerbate loss of control leading to abusive behaviour towards their partners or children. Organisations who work with men, either as victims of domestic abuse (such as Respect), perpetrators (Safer Families Edinburgh Project) or men engaged in prostitution (Open Road) also use a gendered analysis of violence, and it's important that policy makers and practitioners understand how gender - and socially defined gender roles which determine how men and women are expected to look and behave - affects all of us.

Men benefit from a world without VAW knowing that their female relations, friends and children are safe from harm. VAW is often dismissed as something that happens elsewhere yet we know that it occurs in Scotland and affects all sections of society.

By engaging positively with non-perpetrating men they can become important allies in tackling the abusive behaviour of other men. Rather than imposing a sense of shame or guilt, it is vital that men understand that they have an opportunity to play a crucial part as positive role models in the prevention of VAW. By challenging the attitudes of peers, teaching children about equality between sexes from a young age, or by refusing to condone the objectification of women and the commercial sexual exploitation of women at any level, prevention of VAW can be achieved through positive engagement of non-perpetrating men.

6 <http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/kaufman-successfully-involving-men-and-boys-to-end-vaw.pdf>

7 <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/5613/1/briefing%2054.pdf>

What is the issue for elected members?

By promoting efforts to involve and engage men by speaking out against VAW and supporting equality between men and women, elected members can be instrumental in effecting change.

Key issues are:

- VAW is an issue of human rights and gender equality, and therefore an issue for men as well as women. Whether as perpetrators, friends or family of victims, or neglectful bystanders, the issue certainly involves men.
- VAW affects every community in Scotland and its personal, economic and social impact is profound.
- Men can play a vital role in ending VAW, by not committing violence, excusing it or remaining silent.
- Men who understand the full range of controlling behaviours that constitute abuse will ensure that they themselves do not commit controlling behaviour; see link to briefing paper on coercive control.⁸
- Men can communicate with other men that VAW and inequality must be tackled for the good of men and women.
- Men can be positive role models for other men and boys, whether as respected members of society, fathers or members of peer groups. If negative views in relation to VAW go unchallenged then the views of those who condone it will continue to dominate our culture.
- Many men deflect the issue by relating to statistics regarding the number of male victims of domestic abuse. It is therefore important to acknowledge male victims of domestic abuse as victims who require support services like any other, without detracting from the substantial imbalance in the number of female and male victims or an understanding of VAW as a gendered issue.

8 <http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/publications-resources/resource/what-coercive-control>

What does ‘good practice’ look like in this area of work?

White Ribbon Scotland Campaign

The White Ribbon Campaign is the world’s largest movement of men working to end violence against women, now active in over 60 countries across the world. The aim of the campaign is to engage with men and boys to raise awareness of violence against women and gender inequality, and to challenge negative attitudes which allow or exacerbate the impact of violence against women.

White Ribbon Scotland (WRS) was registered as a charitable trust in Scotland in May 2010. WRS has taken significant steps towards the goal of becoming an ongoing sustainable campaign. WRS has made progress in spreading campaign messages and in building up its media profile at national and local level. Men are encouraged to support the campaign by taking a pledge not ‘to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women’. The campaign seeks to complement the work of women’s organisations, and to highlight that the issue is a human rights issue that men and women must tackle together. To take the pledge, and to see what activities can be promoted throughout local authority areas, see www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk.

White Ribbon Areas: The White Ribbon Areas Award is for local authorities/cities/towns etc which carry out White Ribbon initiatives. To attain the award the local area will be asked to meet certain criteria in order to hold nationally recognised ‘White Ribbon’ status with the full support of WRS staff. In order to gain ‘White Ribbon’ status there is a requirement to set up a Steering Group of representatives from diverse work areas. Diverse membership of the Steering Group will enable campaign initiatives to be promoted through networks and to add capacity in delivering on actions identified within the project action plan. The criteria which are to be met in order to achieve the award form the basis of an action plan, detailing proposed activities including a timeline for completion. A monitoring framework which linked indicators of success as contributing towards delivering short term outcomes is established at the outset of the project and detailed in the work plan. Attitudinal surveys should be carried out at regular intervals to ascertain attitudinal change and awareness of the campaign and its aims. Indicators include the number of White Ribbon pledges submitted within the area; number of people engaged through training; numbers of ambassadors; numbers of school sessions delivered. A dedicated web/microsite is established to maintain a count of campaign pledges and to provide a forum for communication and networking as the project develops. This can also be used to capture qualitative information through comments pages to inform development of campaign initiatives. White Ribbon Scotland delivered Stirling as the first White Ribbon local authority in Scotland in 2011, and is currently working in three local areas to deliver status. A toolkit and application process will be published by the summer of 2015 for local authorities to access and make applications for future White Ribbon status accreditation.

White Ribbon Scotland Speaker Network: After initially establishing a National Speaker Network using funds granted by the Robertson Trust for 2012-2013, WRS received funding to consolidate the Speaker Network during 2013-2014. There are currently over 150 trained speakers in Scotland, including some

trained elected members, based in over 10 local areas. A network of Section Coordinators has been put in place to support ongoing activity and growth of the local and specialised Speaker Networks. The two specialised Speaker Networks are the Maryhill Integration Network and the Scottish Prison Service Speaker Network.

Bystander Programmes

Rather than focusing on victims or perpetrators, bystander programmes see all non-perpetrators as allies in preventing gender based violence. A couple of these programmes exist in Scotland which deliver similar outcomes using material tailored for specific audiences:

Get Savi: The ‘Get Savi’ bystander programme was developed by a group of Scottish VAW organisations, including Scottish Women’s Aid and White Ribbon Scotland. ‘Savi’ stands for ‘Students Against Violence Initiative’ and to date, 10 students from across Scotland have received training as Get Savi ambassadors, trained as trainers, who have trained over 100 students. Training has been delivered to: Aberdeen College, Robert Gordon’s University, St Andrew’s University, Edinburgh College, Edinburgh University, Stirling University, Glasgow University and Glasgow Caledonian. Highlands and Islands University has explored the use of video training to deliver training in the area.

Get Savi has been used as good practise by organisations in England. A funding bid is being developed with the University of Lincoln to evaluate the impact of the programme over a four year period.

VAW issues affect a large proportion of the student community and with the recent proliferation of ‘lad culture’ which supports sexual violence as an honourable characteristic amongst male students, such an approach is absolutely imperative. Please see ‘I’m Not That Lad’ as an example of a campaign aimed at the student cohort.⁹

MVP Scotland: The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) model was developed in the USA for use originally with college American football players. It is a gender violence, bullying, and school violence prevention approach that encourages young men and women from all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds to take on leadership roles in their schools and communities.

9 <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/news/article/women/A-New-Resource-from-White-Ribbon-Scotland-and-NUS-Scotlands-Womens-Campaign/>

Key issues/questions to consider

You may find it helpful to consider the following questions and suggestions to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls and to review how you and your council currently engage with individuals and communities and whether there is scope for improvement.

- How does your council support the VAW Partnership's strategies to deliver on engaging men in the prevention of VAW?
- Are you aware of commercial sexual exploitation within your area? If so, could you do anything to oppose it perhaps through opposing the granting of licenses for sexual entertainment venues?
- Are there opportunities for you and other elected members to learn more about men's involvement in tackling VAW, such as through White Ribbon Speaker Training?
- Are there events which promote/allow for men's involvement in tackling VAW, such as during the 16 Days of Action To End Violence Against Women between 25 November and 10 December, or around International Women's Day on 8 March, which you could support?

Key messages

Violence against women is not a ‘women’s issue’, it is a human rights issue which affects women and men.

Individual elected members should understand the links between gender inequality and all various forms of violence against women, and should speak out and challenge attitudes or behaviour which condone such activities.

Male elected members are role models for other men, whether colleagues, constituents, or family and friends. They must be prepared to challenge violence against women where it occurs and encourage other men to do the same.

All elected members can play a key role in:

- raising awareness amongst local men about VAW
- encouraging debate and discussion about the issue among colleagues and constituents
- endorsing public campaigns promoting men’s engagement in tackling VAW to increase the reach of such initiatives
- encouraging the participation of colleagues who have yet to support this work.

Further support and contacts

- White Ribbon Scotland - www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk
- Local VAW Partnerships. To find your local contact, please email info@improvementservice.org.uk
- Improvement Service website - www.improvementservice.org.uk

Westerton House, Westerton Road
East Mains industrial Estate
Broxburn
EH52 5AU
Tel: 01506 775558
Fax: 01506 775566
Email: info@improvementservice.org.uk
www.improvementservice.org.uk

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