



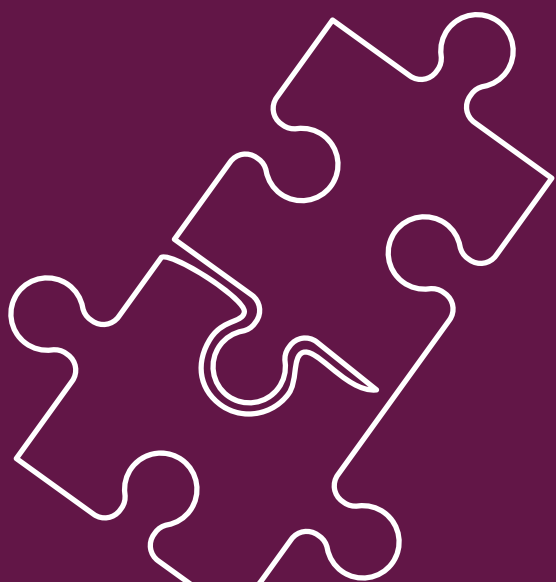
National
Violence Against Women
Network

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Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework

**Key Learning from 2023/24 Data
Returns**



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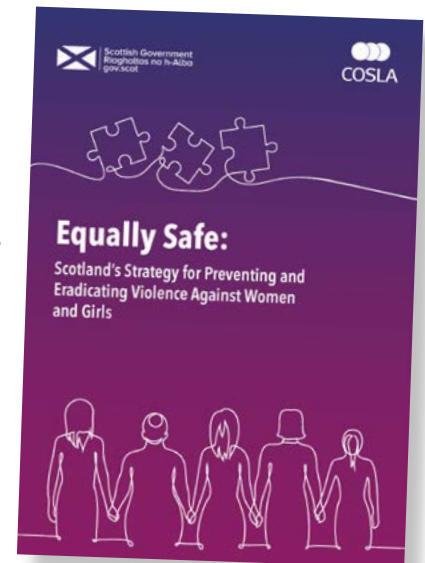
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Equally Safe

Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls was launched in 2014 and refreshed in 2023. The strategy sets out the Scottish Government and COSLA's joint vision for 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, abuse and exploitation – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.

To support this vision, Equally Safe sets out four key priorities:

1. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG);
2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically;
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people; and
4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.



The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework

At a local level, Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWPs) are recognised as the strategic mechanism for progressing these four priorities in a multi-agency and evidence-informed way.

The [Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework](#) was published by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Improvement Service in May 2018, in close collaboration with the National VAW Network and other stakeholders, to support VAWPs with this task.

The Quality Standards aim to raise awareness of the types of services, policies and processes that are most effective in tackling VAWG and capture data on the extent to which they are currently being delivered across Scotland. The Performance Framework aims to measure the impact that these services, policies and processes are having on the lives of people and communities affected by VAWG.

Collectively, the two resources aim to support VAWPs to capture key performance data and facilitate a consistent approach to measuring and reporting on the progress being made to achieve the ambitions set out in Equally Safe at a local level.

This report highlights the key learning from the 24 VAWPs that provided Equally Safe Quality Standard and Performance Framework data returns for 2023-24. The report comes at a critical time following the publication of Scottish Government and COSLA's [Equally Safe Delivery Plan](#) in August 2024, which outlines the key deliverables and actions to support the implementation of the refreshed Equally Safe strategy.

Key Findings from 2023/24



96% of local authority areas report fully meeting or partly meeting the quality standards in relation to Equally Safe Priority 1: Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls. This is up from 92% in 2022/23.



92% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the Quality Standards for Equally Safe Priority 2: Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically. This is a slight decrease from 94% in 2022/23.



97% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the quality standards for Equally Safe Priority 3: Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people. This is up from 95% in 2022/23.



85% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the quality standards for Equally Safe Priority 4: Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response. This is an increase from 79% in 2022/23.



96% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the quality standards for Multi-Agency Partnership Working. This is up from 90% in 2022/23.

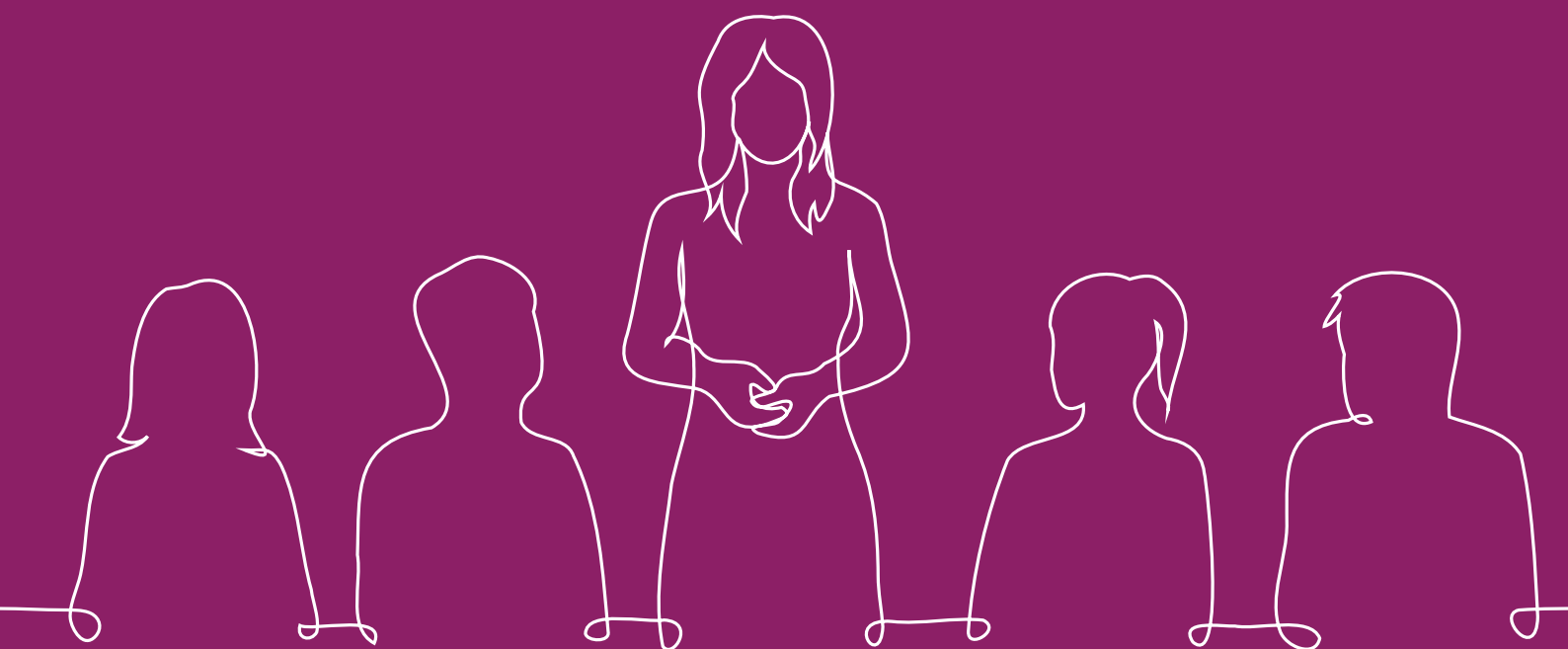
Despite the significant progress VAWPs are making in implementing Equally Safe locally, a number of challenges and barriers were highlighted throughout local partnership's data returns. The following are examples of recommendations and key findings which summarise the learning captured throughout this report, many of which reflect the recommendations set out in the [Independent Funding Review 2023](#):

- » The investment in developing the infrastructure of VAWPs is essential and should include a sustainable and consistent funding model to support the work of local VAWPs across Scotland. Whilst Partnerships are making concerted efforts to ensure that adequate levels of funding are available for local specialist services, the national funding climate has created challenges around sustainability and security, and in turn has impacted the support provided to women and children accessing services.
- » Appropriate supports and resources are required for VAWPs to build capacity to analyse and use the data provided by partners and those with lived experience of VAWG to inform local activities and identify priorities and actions.
- » Similarly to last year's report, there is a need to address and reduce waiting lists for VAWG support services (and other service provision such as housing) to ensure that victims/ survivors can get help to recover when they need it. This should also include adopting a visible intersectional approach in the appropriate resourcing of targeted interventions for those with protected characteristics and/ or complex needs.
- » The national programme on prevention should continue to be developed, resourced and progressed to enable local and national partners to adopt a public health approach to preventing VAWG.

For more details about any of the good practice examples included in this report, or if you would like to contact your local VAW Partnership, please email vaw@improvementservice.org.uk.

Equally Safe Quality Standards – Results and Key Learning

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



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

Percentage of Partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 1 in 2023-24:



100% of local authority areas report that there is some guidance about services available to support families affected by VAWG and how to access them.



93% of local authority areas report that some level of proactive engagement and communication takes place in the local community to increase people's awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of VAWG, and the role they can play in tackling it.



83% of local authority areas report that their local VAW Partnership collects/ analyses data to understand people's attitudes in relation to VAWG.



100% of local authority areas report that the VAW Partnership has some processes in place to engage with primary and secondary schools across the local community to help ensure they deliver age-appropriate evidence-based interventions to raise children, teachers and parents' understanding and awareness of gender-based violence, positive, healthy relationships and consent, as part of a whole school approach to tackling VAWG.



92% of local authority areas report that their local VAW Partnership has processes in place to engage with colleges and universities across the local community and works with them to identify opportunities to partnership working in preventing gender-based violence on campuses.



100% of local authority areas report that some youth work organisations across their local communities deliver interventions to raise young people's understanding and awareness of VAWG and the importance of positive, healthy relationships.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 1:

Aberdeen City - Safe Space for domestic abuse victims

In January 2024, a [Safe Space for domestic abuse victims](#) was opened in Aberdeen Art Gallery by Her Majesty The Queen. The space features a sculpture in memory of those lost to and survivors of domestic abuse. The Art Gallery's staff have received additional training on mental health awareness and domestic abuse, and the venue was chosen as it is open to the public seven days a week and is free to enter. The chosen location of the glass sculpture is visible both internally and externally to signify the venue as a safe space location. The space – and the gallery as a whole – can be used to seek help or simply to reflect and remember the tragic loss of life in Aberdeen.

Dumfries & Galloway - 16 Days of Action

During the lead up to 16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence, Dumfries and Galloway Rape Crisis launched a competition asking young local creatives to submit work inspired by the word EMPOWER to reflect their support model, and to send a strong message of strength and survival to communities. This culminated in a “Night of Empowerment” event at the Stove Network, a local community art collective. The work on display featured a selection of entries comprising of individual interpretations of empowerment, in some cases bringing to life the experience of surviving sexual violence and prompting important conversations. The exhibition also went on tour across Dumfries & Galloway.

Highland - Data collection and sharing

In order to ensure all partners have up to date knowledge of key issues around violence against women and girls, Highland Violence Against Women Partnership (HVAWP) have put processes in place to ensure key information from surveys and research are regularly shared with partners, with discussions taking place during HVAWP meetings to identify any actions required to implement this learning locally. Education data collected on the needs of children and young people, along with data collected from Citizens Panel surveys, has highlighted learning about how safe people feel within their local communities and experiences of domestic abuse. NHS partners, via Public Health Data Specialists, are beginning a project with HVAWP to source available data streams for VAWG and to help develop a dashboard for partners to help improve access to up to date, online VAWG data which will help improve understanding of attitudes to VAWG and relevant issues such as community safety.

Midlothian - Youth 2000 Project

Mayfield and Easthouses [Youth 2000 project](#) (Y2K) aims to support young people in the Mayfield & Easthouses communities of Midlothian to be healthy and happy, feel safe and secure and to become confident and fulfilled individuals. The Y2K project regularly delivers healthy relationship sessions for young people in these

communities and uses Equally Safe resources to engage with boys and young men on topics such as consent, sexual health and safety.

North Ayrshire - Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Programme

[Mentors in Violence Prevention](#) (MVP) is delivered in schools as part of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy to support early prevention of gender-based violence. In North Ayrshire, all 9 secondary schools take part in the programme and have teams of staff trained to train and support senior school mentors, with lessons being delivered by peer mentors to S1 and S2 classes. There are regular communications and network meetings with school leads to ensure national messages, updates and examples of good practice are shared. Governance of the programme has been agreed to be provided by North Ayrshire's VAWP through quarterly reporting. Staff training is offered on an annual basis, and partners in youth services and active schools have also been trained in the programme.

Orkney - White Ribbon Campaign

[White Ribbon Orkney](#) (WRO), a status project of White Ribbon Scotland, has been developed over the last three years to encourage men to speak up about violence against women and girls. WRO is an active member of the Orkney Partnership for Action Against Gender Based Violence and Abuse (OPAAGBVA). A strong working relationship has been developed with the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) and volunteer speakers have shared the White Ribbon message with new students and teaching staff at Orkney College during Fresher's Week. This has supported a strong partnership approach between WRO and UHI, which has now been further developed with the Heriot Watt University Campus in Stromness. It is anticipated that this relationship will continue to evolve through inviting representatives from the college/university to join the OPAAGBVA to further enhance opportunities around partnership working to prevent Gender-Based Violence on campuses.

Perth & Kinross - 16 Days Campaign Activities

As part of Perth & Kinross' VAWP 16 Days Campaign, a wide range of multi-agency activities took place across the local area to raise awareness of the impact and prevalence of VAWG, highlighting the key role that people can play in their professional and personal lives to tackle VAWG. The programme of events was formally launched by John Swinney, First Minister of Scotland and MSP for Perth & Kinross, and included a silent vigil to commemorate and honour all of the victims of VAWG, a Reclaim the Night March, events on positive masculinity, human trafficking and consent, and a networking lunch for professionals across a wide range of agencies to support a joined-up, multi-agency approach to tackling VAWG.

Stirling - Multi-Agency Prevention Programme in High Schools

There is a comprehensive, multi-agency Prevention Programme in Stirling High Schools which incorporates the Mentors in Violence Programme, White Ribbon and prevention/awareness raising sessions with Forth Valley Rape Crisis and Stirling and District Women's Aid. In addition, there are plans underway to extend this to Additional Support Needs (ASN) provisions. Stirling VAWP also has a

positive relationship with Forth Valley College and the University of Stirling, who actively support the White Ribbon campaign work, and many of the events during 16 Days of Activism take place at the college and the University.

West Lothian - Gender-Based Violence Education in Secondary Schools

West Lothian VAWP have recently undertaken work with secondary schools to ensure a consistent approach in relation to gender-based violence (GBV), and that all pupils have access to the same education, regardless of where they reside. This has been a joint piece of work between the GBV Education representative, the lead officer for GBV and West Lothian Women's Aid and Rape Crisis. In order to gather students' views, an anonymised survey was issued in Spring 2023, and again in Spring 2024, to measure the impact of the joint work involving the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme, Rape Crisis and Women's Aid. There was a 75% increase in the response rate from 2023 to 2024, and the results demonstrated an overall increase in respondents' knowledge of GBV and in the number of respondents who found the information useful. Anonymised individual pupil comments are shared with the individual schools so that they are able to tailor the delivery of GBV-related subjects to best meet the needs of the young people.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- Although 83% of Partnerships indicated that they collected and analysed data to understand people's attitudes in relation to VAWG, there is limited capacity locally to analyse and use the data provided by partners and those with lived experience of VAWG, to inform awareness-raising activities;
- A number of Partnerships noted that communications activity is often distributed from a singular service/ organisation rather than through a coordinated, multi-agency programme. There is thus a requirement for further engagement across partners to support local engagement and awareness-raising activities; however, it was also acknowledged that this can be challenging due to capacity constraints across the workforce;
- 92% of Partnerships noted they have processes in place to engage with local colleges and universities. Partnerships highlights that there are further opportunities to embed training into the curriculum, given that sexual assault and domestic abuse are significant issues across universities and colleges; for example, there is currently lots of information in the curriculum on survivors but less about perpetrators. However, many Partnerships highlighted there is limited capacity for staff to proactively engage with local universities and colleges, or to increase engagement to extend the delivery of work to other groups (such as children and young people with additional support needs).

2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.



2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Overview of percentage of partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 2 in 2022-23:



96% of local authority areas report that public sector workplace policies recognise the need to tackle VAWG and outline clear paths for employees who experience some forms of violence and abuse.



100% of local authority areas report that public sector employers publish a gender pay gap and an equal pay statement (including gendered occupational segregation information), gather and use gender-disaggregated data, in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.



96% of local authority areas report that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken when developing some policies and processes at a local level and women's Equality Groups are included in their development to some extent.



88% of local authority areas report Public Sector workplace policies are gender-sensitive and identify clear actions to address some of the barriers to women's workplace equality.



92% of local authority areas report that they consult with some local equality groups to ensure that they are aware of the VAWG agenda.



79% of local authority areas report that their Partnerships (and their member organisations) actively engage with [Close the Gap's 'Equally Safe at Work' \(ESAW\) programme](#).

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 2:

Argyll & Bute - Engagement with Equality Groups

Argyll and Bute's VAWP Chair is a member of the Council's Equality Forum, a multi-agency forum that links to various equality groups. Regular reports on VAWP activities are shared and opportunities to take a joined-up approach to progressing work to tackle VAWG and promote equality are explored. Through connections with key groups such as the Living Well Networks, the Education LGBTQI Forum and third-sector equality groups, the VAWP works to identify opportunities to ensure that the needs of women and children with protected characteristics are promoted in all of its work.

East Ayrshire - Equality and Diversity Role

East Ayrshire Council have created a new Equality and Diversity role within their People and Culture team to ensure a dedicated focus on gender and employment. In line with meeting the criteria for Close the Gap's ESAW Bronze Accreditation, the Council now publishes mean and median gender pay gap in hourly pay, including combined, full-time and part-time figures for both; and horizontal and vertical occupational segregation information by pay grade. Since achieving Bronze accreditation, there is ongoing work to achieve the Silver criteria for Close the Gap's ESAW Accreditation.

Edinburgh - Equally Safe at Work

The City of Edinburgh Council are starting work towards the Close the Gap ESAW accreditation and this will continue over 2025. In preparation, the Council has started putting in place policies and procedures, accompanied by toolkits for managers to support women affected by violence and abuse. These include support pathways, links to services available through statutory and voluntary organisations, and paid leave to attend support/ legal meetings. The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee is fully supportive of this work and is keen to support the Council through the expertise of partner organisations.

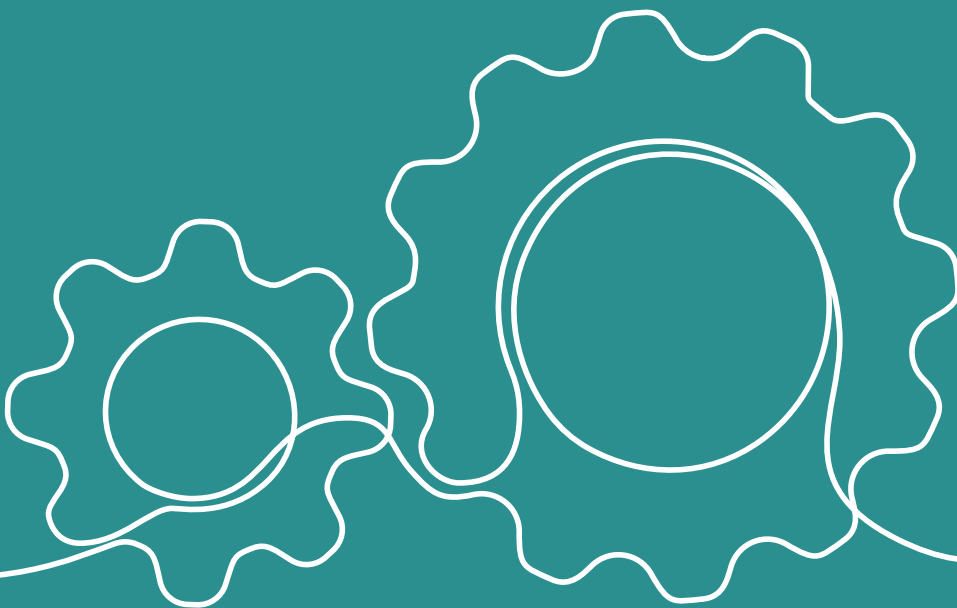
Inverclyde -VAWG Policy

Over a period of 18 months, Inverclyde Council has worked towards becoming a Close the Gap ESAW accredited employer. As part of this work, a VAW policy was created. A Sexual Harassment policy, originally part of Dignity and Respect, is now a standalone policy. The Employee Code of Conduct and the Equality and Diversity policies were updated to include sections on VAW. In recognition of all of this work, Inverclyde Council achieved ESAW Bronze accreditation in December 2023.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- Partnerships noted that there is a need to conduct regular reviews on workplace policies to ensure they are up-to-date and gender-sensitive and identify potential gaps and areas of improvement (e.g., developing a specific, standalone domestic abuse policy);
- In addition to policy reviews, Partnerships noted that there should be explicit and adequate support made available and accessible for colleagues experiencing all forms of VAWG. This can include having robust reporting pathways, safety measures and local 'champions' in place to support colleagues;
- Several Partnerships highlighted that whilst some work is done to consult with Equality Groups, this is often on an irregular basis and is dependent on local capacity and resource. In addition, many noted that further work was required to adopt a visible intersectional approach through engaging with key organisations and groups working support those with protected characteristics, including LGBTQ+ communities, black and minority ethnic women, those with additional support needs, disabled women, and those with refugee status; and
- Some Partnerships noted that an area for further development is to highlight gender and employment specifically within local Equality Outcomes.

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



3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people.

Percentage of Partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 3 in 2023-24:



100% of local authority areas report that follow-on/resettlement support is available for all women and girls leaving refuge.



96% of local authority areas report that all public sector staff have access to training and a proportion have taken it up or received aspects of training relevant to their role.



100% of local authority areas report that high-quality accommodation options are available to some women and children affected by VAWG; however, in some areas the range of options available is insufficient to meet all women and children's needs.



92% of local authority areas report that targeted interventions are in place for some women and children with protected characteristics.



88% of local authority areas report that their local Partnership works to ensure that specialist VAWG services that contribute to their agreed outcomes and activities are adequately resourced. In some areas, however, there are no examples of partners working together to lever in additional resources where gaps in funding are identified.



75% of local authority areas report that they are in the process of, or have already developed, a clear position statement that recognises commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) as a form of VAWG.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 3:

Aberdeenshire -Safe & Together implementation

Aberdeenshire have trained colleagues across the VAWG Partnership in the [Safe and Together model](#). As a result, there are now approximately 100 professionals who have completed the Overview Training and 70 professionals who have completed the CORE training. There are further training sessions planned for 2025 and it is anticipated that this training will continue to be rolled out to staff across the area. This is supporting staff across the council to adopt domestic abuse informed practice and improved outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. All training has been delivered without Delivering Equally Safe (DES) funding and has been delivered from Aberdeenshire Council's limited budget.

East Renfrewshire - Trauma Implementation Strategy

East Renfrewshire Council continue to make progress in phase one of their Trauma Implementation Strategy following approval and two successful launches with partners. The training programme for skilled and enhanced training has been disseminated and uptake is increasing across departments, and a series of leadership briefing sessions will be rolled out, aligned with the [National Trauma Transformation Programme](#). The Trauma Steering Group will begin to focus on the next stage of implementation, namely how staff are supported to apply the learning in their respective services and a Collaborative Network has been established to support local champions begin this process.

Falkirk - Equally Safe Project

Falkirk has established the Equally Safe Falkirk Service, a partnership service between Barnardo's, Aberlour and Falkirk Council which aims to reduce the impact of domestic abuse by: (i) partnering with adult and child survivors of domestic abuse, giving them a voice and helping them to stay safe; (ii) working with those who cause harm to understand the impact of their behaviour; and (iii) providing training for professionals on the Safe & Together model. Lived experience is at the heart of the service with three groups set up to ensure that adult and child victims and survivors of domestic abuse have a voice and choice over the support they receive, and are able to influence change in future policy and practice. This includes the Serenity Wellbeing Group, the "Hear me Roar" Group and the Women Unite group.

Moray - Safe & Together Practitioner Forums

Moray has been delivering Safe & Together Practitioner Forums for the last six months. These are quarterly, online sessions where any local CORE-trained staff can refresh their knowledge on key features of the Model and share both problems and good practice with their peers. These are hosted by a local trainer and the Equally Safe Development Coordinator to ensure that problems which

cannot be dealt with at local level are passed along to the Safe & Together National Implementation Forum. From November 2024, these Practitioner Forums were opened to neighbouring local authorities, resulting in a very high uptake and supported collaborative working across North Scotland.

Scottish Borders - Adopting a Multi-Agency Approach to Tackling Human Trafficking

In response to an increase in the number of adult and child victims of trafficking being identified in the Scottish Borders, Scottish Borders Council established a short-life working group (SLWG) to explore opportunities to embed a multi-agency approach to trafficking with the aim of ensuring that victims receive an improved response. Using locally available data, and the expertise of those working directly with victims, the SLWG agreed that the response in the Scottish Borders needed to improve to ensure all agencies were aware of their obligations, and support/ safety planning was available to any potential victim(s) of trafficking. The existing Child Protection Learning and Development Framework tiered approach to the workforce was used to determine what type of training was required and for whom, with support provided by key national partners to develop bespoke training materials. A wide range of training courses were delivered over the course of 2023-24, which were highly evaluated, and a report was launched in 2024 highlighting key learning from progressing this work.

South Ayrshire - Training on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Following a Pan-Ayrshire conference on CSE during 16 Days of Action 2023, staff from all three Ayrshire local authorities have been trained to deliver CSE inputs. In addition, South Ayrshire Council is developing a module to be included as mandatory training for all Council staff, and Ayrshire Police have created a training input which will be delivered to all local officers and at the training academy for all new police officers.

South Lanarkshire - Partnership Approach to Providing Wellbeing Support

South Lanarkshire VAWP have established positive working relationships with a range of partners to support women and children affected by VAWG. This includes liaising with Care and Repair to successfully install security Ring doorbells, CCTV, locks and intruder lights to the homes of victims/ survivors of domestic abuse, as well as providing them with personal alarms to carry. In addition, South Lanarkshire Council have provided victims/ survivors of domestic abuse with health prescriptions for free gym memberships to support increased levels of health, wellbeing and confidence.

Western Isles - New Refuge in Stornoway

Western Isles Women's Aid are working to build a new refuge in Stornoway which will enable them to support more families experiencing domestic abuse, including those with complex needs. The Homeless Department and Hebridean Housing Partnership work collaboratively to provide homeless accommodation for families and individuals, including providing ongoing support to help them to sustain tenancies.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- Similar to last year, Partnerships highlighted that there is inconsistent recording, monitoring and training in Routine Enquiry and a lack of a system-wide approach being adopted;
- Many Partnerships highlighted significant issues around housing stock leading to challenges around availability of high-quality accommodation options, suitable for women and children's needs. The lack of housing stock particularly impacts those in rural communities who often have to travel far from their homes, and there are ongoing challenges around housing for those who have unsettled residential status in the UK and have No Recourse to Public Funds;
- There are gaps in targeted interventions for women and children with protected characteristics, often due to a lack of specialist service provision in some areas. In addition, Partnerships highlighted that further work needs to be undertaken to identify the intersectionalities for women and children with complex needs (such as substance use, mental health issues or trauma) and protected characteristics;
- Further training on Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) was identified as an area of development by some local areas, with Partnerships highlighting that all VAWG agencies should be represented at meetings. In addition, Partnerships highlighted the need for an increased focus on the perpetrator throughout the MARAC process;
- Learning from Partnerships highlights that some local areas are making significant progress with implementing the Safe & Together model, while other areas report limited implementation and opportunities for multi-agency partners to access or engage in the training and other implementation activities; and
- Whilst there has been an increase in the number of Partnerships who are in the process of developing a local CSE statement compared to 2022-23, there is further scope to identify local training needs around CSE. This includes working with multi-agency partners to establish where women may be impacted by CSE (i.e., working with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and recovery communities). There are a range of available resources available from CSE Aware that can support VAWPS and their partners in their commitment to address violence against women and girls in Scotland, including CSE.

4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.



4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

Percentage of Partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 4 in 2023-24:



92% of local authority areas report delivering some level of training for public sector staff who come into contact with members of the public, to enable them to identify and respond to perpetrators.



96% of local authority areas report that Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) meetings are in place locally to support a multi-agency approach to identifying high-risk perpetrators of domestic abuse and ensure they are held to account for their behaviours.



96% of local authority areas report that measures are in place to ensure women and children who experience domestic abuse receive an appropriate response from the criminal justice system.



79% of local authority areas report that court-mandated programmes are in place at a local level that work with perpetrators of VAWG to hold them to account for and support them to change their behaviours.



63% of local authority areas report that non-court-mandated programmes are in place at a local level that work with perpetrators of VAWG to hold them to account for and support them to change their behaviours.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 4:

Angus - The Fergus Programme

Angus Justice Services currently deliver the [Fergus Programme](#), an intervention aimed at high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators where there is an identified pattern of coercive control and abuse, who are made subject to a Community Payback Order with Supervision and Programme Requirements. The Fergus Programme is a court-mandated programme delivered in two parts, starting with a six-month pre-programme, undertaken on a 2:1 basis, to prepare perpetrators for the group work elements and assess their readiness for change. This is then followed by 20-week groupwork intervention programme, which is tailored to individual needs and learning styles as appropriate if there is an identified need for particular parts of the programme.

Clackmannanshire - Justice Hub

Clackmannanshire's non-court mandated interventions provide access to a range of supports within the Justice Hub, including access to the Women's Support Service, one to one or group work support for perpetrators, access to addiction services, health services and housing. These additional non-court mandated interventions utilise the skills and experience of the Justice Team and are partly funded by key partners in housing and Police Scotland. Using our Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention (STRIVE) model, our community can be supported before crisis point and will be offered support from the identification of a difficult or turbulent relationship, to throughout the criminal justice process all the way through court and afterwards.

Dundee - Training in Responding to Perpetrators

Dundee VAWP ensure that online training and resources are available to staff. A training consortium (involving specialist services and other VAWP members) has developed a VAW Overview training day which includes basic awareness of good practice in responding to perpetrators. Criminal Justice Service staff are trained in the use of Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) and the VAWP are considering making this available for wider teams, such as Children and Families Social Work.

East Lothian - Caledonian Men's Programme

East Lothian Council offer the accredited court-mandated Caledonian Men's (domestic abuse perpetrator) programme to those who have been convicted of perpetrating a domestic abuse-related offence towards a female (ex)partner. The programme consists of one-to-one and groupwork support and lasts up to two years. Where a man is involved with the programme, his (ex)partner and any children are offered support on a voluntary basis. This 'systems approach' to addressing domestic abuse ensures that the perpetrator is held accountable for their behaviour and is tasked to change, whilst offering support to the (ex)partner. East Lothian also operate accredited programmes of work with Registered Sex Offenders.

Renfrewshire - Pilot in Paisley Sheriff Court

A pilot approach is being taken at Paisley Sheriff Court to improve the process for domestic abuse cases. The pilot aims to reduce the number of hearings at summary level through early disclosure of evidence and early engagement between the Crown and defence. Differentiated procedures were adopted for domestic abuse and non-domestic abuse cases.

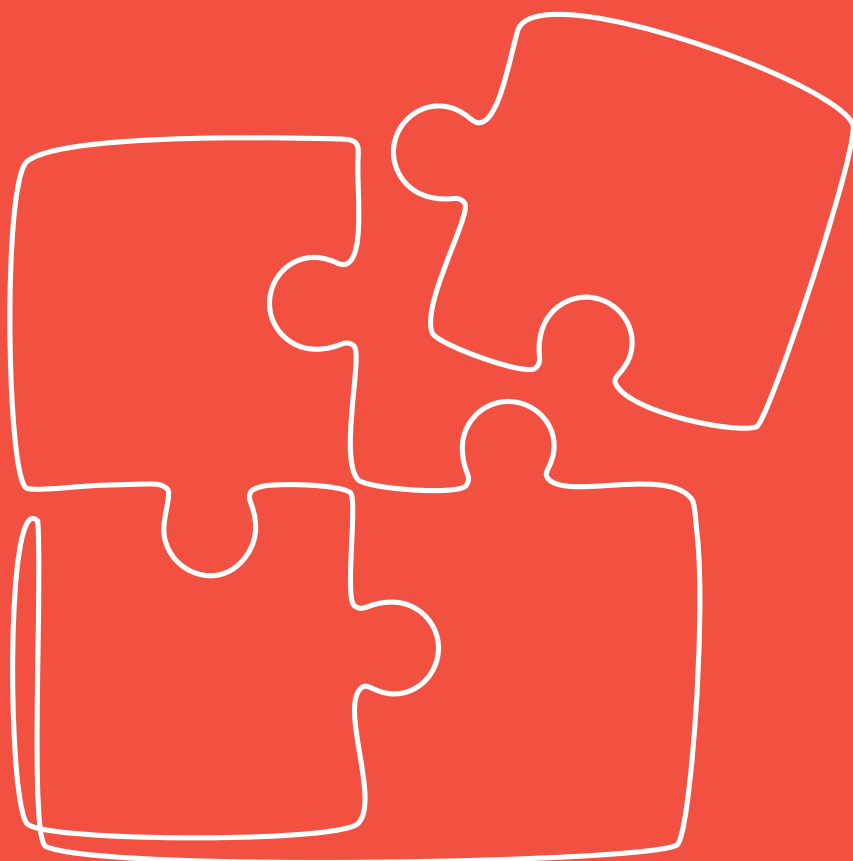
Early results have been really encouraging and include:

- i. A 23% **reduction of witness citations** in Paisley; and
- ii. A 5% **increase of evidence-led domestic abuse trials**, making it less likely for cases to be adjourned, not called or be resolved by a late plea.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- Several Partnerships noted that training on recognising perpetrators' behaviours and the impact they have on families (such as Safe & Together) needs to be made more widely available to staff groups (including those in frontline roles out with specific public protection remits, such as reception colleagues). In addition, Partnerships suggested that there should be continuous support provided to those who have completed the training to ensure that the key principles of the training are fully implemented when working with women and families affected by domestic abuse;
- Partnerships highlighted the challenges of limited funding for implementing non court-mandated and court-mandated programmes, including the Caledonian programme.
- Partnerships highlighted the importance of information sharing from MATACs with all relevant services and organisations. However, Partnership also recognised capacity constraints, mean the Police are unable to follow up on every enquiry from MATAC and there are resource challenges around investigations. This creates challenges in adopting a proactive approach to perpetrator engagement;
- Partnerships highlighted the need to ensure that women and children are given opportunities for their views to be heard in the court process, especially in relation child witnesses. Many Partnerships noted that lack of access to legal aid continues to be a challenge;
- Whilst Partnerships report providing ongoing support to women throughout the court process, they also highlighted that women often do not receive information on court outcomes and therefore do not know if a perpetrator is going to return to the family or go into custody. There are opportunities to link in with the work of specialist domestic abuse court advocacy services (such as the [Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy \(DACA\)](#) project) which provide specialist domestic abuse support, offer information about the criminal justice process and act as a conduit for client voice to be heard in the criminal justice process and aim to empower and support survivors and victims of domestic abuse to navigate a complex justice system in Scotland.

5. Multi-agency partnership working.



5. Multi-agency partnership working.

This section of the Quality Standards aims to generate learning on the extent to which the minimum standards and key activities set out in the [Scottish Government and COSLA VAW Partnership Guidance](#) (2016) are currently being met at a local level.

Percentage of Partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for 'Multi-agency partnership working' in 2023-24:



100% of local authority areas report that the Partnership aims to bring together representatives from key Public Sector and Third Sector organisations working to prevent and eradicate VAWG within their local area.



100% of local authority areas report that a Partnership is in place that is responsible for working to prevent and eradicate all forms of VAWG within the local area. In addition, 100% of Partnerships have an agreed Terms of Reference in place.



92% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has a strategic plan in place that outlines how the Partnership will implement Equally Safe at a local level.



96% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has a Framework in place for measuring its performance and progress towards achieving its agreed outcomes.



75% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has undertaken a self-assessment in the last three years using the VAWP Self-Assessment Checklist.



100% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has clear strategic links with other relevant thematic partnerships/ groups within the Community Planning Partnership who are working towards shared outcomes.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress multi-agency partnership working:

East Dunbartonshire - Partnership Working

The East Dunbartonshire VAWP have engaged in joint work with other strategic partnerships that share equivalent improvement tasks and developmental priorities in order to reduce duplication and increase collaboration. East Dunbartonshire's MARAC has been well attended since its inception, demonstrating partners' active commitment to risk management of high-risk domestic abuse cases. The VAWP are preparing to complete a self-assessment and have made positive progress in securing a Chair and reviewing the approved strategy and Terms of Reference for the Partnership.

Fife - Mapping Exercise

The Fife VAWP have recently carried out a mapping exercise to ensure that the Partnership has as wide-reaching influence as possible, with representation on all relevant groups and forums. Partners actively contribute to the Partnership and coordinators and partners attend other strategic and thematic partnerships/ groups, including the Chief Officers Public Safety Group (to whom they directly report), Adult and Child Protection Committees, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership, the Community Safety Partnership, the Community Justice Partnership, Lead Officers Linkage Meetings, the National VAW Network, the National Safe and Together Implementation Forum, the MARAC Strategic Officers Group, the Senior Equalities Group, the Trauma Steering Group, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Management Group, Children in Fife and other meetings/ groups focusing on key pieces of work. The VAWP has positive links with partners in Fife and there is strong engagement and commitment to achieve the aims set out within Equally Safe and the targets within their own action plan.

Glasgow - Financially Included

[Financially Included](#) is a partnership project between GEMAP Scotland and The Glasgow VAWP, funded by the Scottish Government's Delivering Equally Safe (DES) fund. Financially Included has supported over 360 individual women in Glasgow with benefits and debt advice and has achieved financial gains for these women of over £1.2m, made up of benefit gains, charity grants and debt write-offs. The service provides a holistic, trauma-informed, flexible and person-centred, responsive approach. Financially Included also co-produced training on economic abuse with the women's and advice sectors in Glasgow and have upskilled almost 150 frontline workers on the dynamics and impacts of economic abuse.

North Lanarkshire - Customer Journey Mapping

In Autumn 2023, North Lanarkshire VAWP undertook a Customer Journey Mapping exercise to gain a better understanding of the impact that local VAWG systems and services are having on the lives of women in North Lanarkshire. Six

local services made contact with women experiencing domestic abuse who had received support in the past to gain a better understanding of: (i) the range of specialist and non-specialist services that these women had come into contact with locally when seeking support; (ii) the response they received from each of these services and how this made them feel; (iii) the things that made a real difference to these women; and (iv) any changes they would like to see made locally so that women seeking support in the future receive the support they need, at the time they need it. The anonymised findings from the exercise were shared with local specialist and universal service providers and used to identify both good practice and areas for improvement.

Shetland - Partnership Rebrand

In December 2023, the Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership, which coordinates efforts by agencies in Shetland to raise awareness, prevent, and support those affected by all forms of Gender-Based violence undertook a rebrand and has now adopted the title of Shetland Violence Against Women Partnership (SVAWP). The members of the partnership include Shetland Women's Aid, The Compass Centre, Police Scotland, Hjaltland Housing Association, Shetland Island Council housing, social work, children's services, NHS Shetland, University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) Shetland, and Space2face. The rebrand brings Shetland in line with other VAW partnerships across Scotland and takes its lead from the Scottish Government Strategic Independent Review, which called for strengthening the role of local VAW partnerships in the coming years.

West Dunbartonshire - Refreshed VAWP

West Dunbartonshire's VAWP was refreshed in 2023, appointing a new VAW lead officer. There has been a strong commitment and collaborative effort from partners which has resulted in significant work being undertaken and progress made towards meeting the Equally Safe Quality Standards. West Dunbartonshire are developing their new VAWG strategy and are planning to undertake a self-assessment, which will inform their upcoming action plan, ensuring that local outcomes are aligned with the refreshed Equally Safe strategy.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- There has been an increase in the number of areas undertaking, or planning to undertake, self-assessments. A number of the areas that have not completed a self-assessment within the past three years have facilitated development sessions to strengthen links with and between partners, and have expressed an appetite to work with the Improvement Service to undertake a future self-assessment;
- Partnerships highlighted that maintaining a VAW coordinator post can be challenging due to funding constraints. Several Partnerships have used collaborative funding approaches with partners to fund posts; however, as outlined in the recommendations in the introduction of this report, Partnerships highlight that this is unsustainable in the long term and call for a consistent, sustainable funding model to be developed to support the

work of local VAWPs across Scotland;

- Due to capacity constraints, there can often be gaps in membership and/or attendance at Partnership meetings. Furthermore, Partnerships highlight that individual representatives don't always have the appropriate authority to take forward agreed actions within their own agency/ partnership body, and this has a knock-on effect on the effectiveness of the Partnership and its ability to progress actions;
- There is an appetite for Partnerships to work with other local partnerships, and strategic groups that have shared improvement tasks, outcomes and priorities, to reduce duplication of work and strengthen collaborative approaches;
- Following the publication of the Equally Safe Delivery Plan in August 2024, several Partnerships have highlighted their plans to develop and implement their own local strategies and action plans, ensuring these align with the national strategy and delivery plan, and several Partnerships are also consulting with lived experience groups as part of this process, to ensure plans and strategies are informed by those with lived experience of VAWG; and
- Partnerships emphasise that there is a need to review and enhance data collection mechanisms locally, and nationally, to enable closer monitoring of Partnership performance and progress. It is envisaged that the development of the National Equally Safe Measurement Framework and the upcoming refresh of the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework will help support this.

Glossary of Terms



Glossary of Terms

ASN	Additional Support Needs
CCTV	Closed-circuit Television
<u>COSLA</u>	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CSE	Commercial Sexual Exploitation
<u>DACA</u>	Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy
<u>DES</u>	Delivering Equally Safe
<u>ESAW</u>	Equally Safe at Work
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MATAC	Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination
MSP	Members of the Scottish Parliament
<u>MVP</u>	Mentors in Violence Prevention
NHS	National Health Service
OPAAGBVA	Orkney Partnership for Action Against Gender Based Violence and Abuse
<u>SARA</u>	Spousal Assault Risk Assessment
SWLG	Short Life Working Group
<u>STRIVE</u>	Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention
<u>UHI</u>	University of Highlands and Islands
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VAWP	Violence Against Women Partnership
<u>WRO</u>	White Ribbon Orkney

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