



National
Violence Against Women
Network



16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2025

Spotlight Webinars

All Together to Prevent and End
Violence Against Women and Girls



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Introduction

This series of spotlight webinars took place during [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence 2025](#), focusing on key topics identified by the [National Violence Against Women Network](#) as crucial to supporting the delivery of the [Equally Safe Strategy](#). Each spotlight webinar provided a forum for participants to explore challenges and opportunities to improve outcomes for those affected by violence against women and girls (VAWG). The webinars also included presentations on examples of best practice, and interactive discussions about what actions are needed to foster collaboration across key sectors.

All sessions centred on Scotland's national theme for the 16 Days campaign: All Together to Prevent and End Violence Against Women and Girls. Participants reflected on what this future would look and feel like, and explored practical steps that systems and services can take to make this vision a reality. Each webinar had between 50-150 attendees, coming from a range of public and third sector organisations and policy areas, particularly within local authorities. The webinars were run by the Improvement Service and the National Violence Against Women Network, with support from partners in COSLA, Scottish Government, and Public Health Scotland.

The spotlight topics were:

- Tackling Economic Abuse in Scotland
- Understanding Pet Abuse in Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control
- Digital Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Scotland
- Exploring the Intersections of VAWG and Substance Use
- Scotland's Response to VAWG in Crisis and Migration

This document provides a summary of the key messages from the spotlight webinar series, and links to the recorded speakers' inputs for each event below.

Key Reflections from the Spotlight Webinars

What would it look like for systems and services to work All Together to Prevent and End Violence Against Women and Girls?



No single service can meet women's needs - particularly across the complexity of intersecting experiences of VAWG with economic abuse, digital harm, substance use, etc. - and a joined-up approach to information-sharing and coordinated responses are critical. Attendees across the webinars emphasise the need for agencies to hear from each other, align responses, and develop shared practice.



Cross-sector workforce development would support staff to embed shared skills, confidence, and trauma-informed practice across all services. A gendered approach must be embedded, ensuring that staff across a range of systems and service can recognise how gender inequality shapes experiences of all forms of VAWG, and respond with gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches.



Common language, definitions, and protocols across sectors would also support improved multi-agency working. A lack of consistent data, standards, and guidance was highlighted as a barrier to joined-up work for staff particularly across VAWG and other areas of public protection.



Effective collaboration is undermined when communication is inconsistent or inaccessible. Joined-up working is needed to improve access and safety, reduce barriers for migrant and refugee women and girls, and ensure that rights-based information is included in awareness raising information around VAWG.



An important collaborative principle is to centre lived and living experience of VAWG in design, policy, and practice. This means supporting organisations to embed meaningful lived experience participation opportunities for women and girls and also embedding lived experience engagement into strategic and policy decision making, utilising learning and expertise from specialist VAWG services.

A Scotland without violence against women and girls, would be a Scotland that is safer, kinder, more inclusive, and supportive, with less stigma around reporting violence.

Spotlight Summaries

Tackling Economic Abuse in Scotland

[Watch the video of 'Tackling Economic Abuse in Scotland'](#)

This webinar focused on defining economic abuse in Scotland and how it differs from financial abuse, the impact of economic abuse and how it can be addressed.

Presentations:

- Councillor Maureen Chalmers, COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson
- Understanding Economic Abuse - Jenn Glinski, Scottish Women's Aid
- Learning from Financially Included - Lizzy Wilson, Financially Included
- The NatWest Circle Fund - Jen Douglas, SafeLives

Key Messages

What actions would support joined-up working towards tackling economic abuse in Scotland?



- Embed economic abuse into local policy and procedures, including explicit recognition in areas such as rent arrears, tenancy management, welfare assessments, and debt-recovery protocols, so survivors are not penalised for abuse-related financial harm.
- Develop and adopt a shared national definition of economic abuse, including clear distinctions between economic abuse, financial abuse, and coerced debt, to ensure consistent responses across sectors and reduced gaps caused by differing interpretations.
- Expand training for frontline practitioners, particularly in housing, welfare, and debt-recovery teams, to build confidence, improve identification of economic abuse, and support safe, appropriate referrals.
- Increase public and professional awareness through sustained social media campaigns, local events, and information-sharing spaces to ensure economic abuse is widely understood and recognised as a core part of violence against women and girls.

Understanding Pet Abuse in Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

[Watch the video of 'Understanding Pet Abuse in Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control'](#)

This webinar aimed to define pet abuse in domestic abuse and coercive control, identify the different types of pet abuse and demonstrate how stakeholders can take steps to prevent and end pet abuse.

Presentations:

- Councillor Maureen Chalmers, COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson
- The Use and Abuse of Animals in Coercive Control - Dr Mary Wakeham, Refuge4Pets and Dr Natasha Mulvihill, University of Bristol
- Learning from Dogs Trust Freedom - Julie Allan, Dogs Trust
- The Impact of Animal Abuse and Veterinary Responses - Prof. Jo Williams and Dr Andrew Gardiner, The University of Edinburgh and The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Key Messages

What actions would support joined-up working towards tackling domestic abuse and the abuse of animals?



- Embed routine enquiry about pets into service responses. This could include police using the health visitors recording household pets, and practitioners sharing concerns with social work, so risks to animals and people are recognised early.
- Expand training and awareness-raising for housing providers, vets, animal-care professionals, social care, and domestic abuse services to recognise animal abuse, understand its links to coercive control, and know referral pathways such as Dogs Trust Freedom.
- Improve approaches to accommodation to enable pet-inclusive safe options, ensuring refuges and homelessness services can safely accept pets or have clear protocols and partnerships with fostering schemes to prevent survivors experiencing barriers to housing options where they cannot bring pets.
- Strengthen public and professional communication, including shared guidance for vets, public education campaigns, and consistent information-sharing across agencies, so animal abuse is understood as part of domestic abuse and responses are coordinated.

Digital Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Scotland

[Watch the video of 'Digital Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Scotland'](#)

This webinar focused on forming a deeper understanding of digital violence and included the voices of lived experience, and steps that can be taken to prevent digital violence.

Presentations:

- Councillor Tony Buchanan, COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson
- Scottish Youth Parliament Work on Gender-Based Violence - Rajsee Saraf MSYP, Ziva Kinsman MSYP and Beth Mackay MSYP
- Equally Safe at School - Alison Thewliss, Rape Crisis Scotland
- Learning from Mhor Collective - Irene Macintosh and Shona Munro, Mhor Collective

Key Messages

What actions would support joined-up working towards tackling digital violence against young women and girls in Scotland?



- Develop cross-sector collaboration, including a national hub for information-sharing, good practice, and joint problem-solving around digital safety including risk assessment, referral pathways, consistent messaging, and accessible, jargon-free guidance for practitioners, parents, and young people.
- Strengthen education and training by embedding equality and online-harm learning from primary school onwards, providing dedicated digital-safety training for teachers and staff, and ensuring young people co-design content that reflects their lived digital realities.
- Support schools to take a preventative approach to VAWG through strengthening the use of online safety legislation and challenging harmful behaviours.

Exploring the Intersections of VAWG and Substance Use

[Watch the video of 'Exploring the Intersections of VAWG and Substance Use'](#)

This webinar focused on the intersections of VAWG and substance use, and explored support options for women experiencing substance misuse and VAWG, and highlighting priority areas for improvement.

Presentations:

- Councillor Paul Kelly, COSLA Health and Social Care Spokesperson
- Improvement Service Consultation - Ariane Beaver and Samantha Keogh, Improvement Service
- Saoirse Service - Lisa Kerr, Liber8 and Allison Whitelaw, Women's Aid South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire (WASLER)
- Experiences and learning from Scottish Drugs Forum - Louise Aitken and Kat McCallion, Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF)
- Experiences and learning from Simon Community - Maeve Elrington, Simon Community Scotland (pre-recorded)

Key Messages

What actions would support joined-up working towards improving outcomes for women affected by substance use and VAWG in Scotland?



- Embed a gendered approach across all services, ensuring all Alcohol & Drug Partnerships (ADPs), VAWG services, and frontline practitioners understand how gender shapes women's experiences of violence and substance use, and apply this lens consistently in assessment, planning, and delivery.
- Strengthen trauma-informed and rights-based practice, including mandatory trauma-informed training, embedding the Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use, offering support beyond time-limited models, and treating women without judgement or stigma related to substance use.
- Embed meaningful lived experience engagement and peer support through methods such as recruiting peer mentors and creating feedback structures where women's experiences drive change within systems and services.
- Developing a national VAWG and substance use network to share learning and improve consistency across Scotland.

Scotland's Response to VAWG in Crisis and Migration

[Watch the video of 'Scotland's Response to VAWG in Crisis and Migration'](#)

This webinar focused on the unique challenges faced by migrant and refugee women experiencing VAWG, the barriers to eradicating these challenges, and approaches to resolve them.

Presentations:

- Councillor Shona Morrison, COSLA President
- Scottish Refugee and Migrant Centre Legal Support- Farida Elfallah, Just Right Scotland
- Empowering Black and Asian Women Reporting Domestic Violence: Health, Advocacy, and Integration in Scotland- Dr Khadija Coll, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit and Olivia Ndoti, Women's Integration Network
- Learning Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance- Bronagh Andrew, TARA Scotland

Key Messages

What actions would support joined-up working towards addressing the impact of VAWG for refugee and migrant women in Scotland?



- Strengthen multi-agency collaboration, including mainstream services, police, education, social work, and specialist by-and-for migrant and refugee organisations, to share information, coordinate responses, map barriers, and ensure culturally-specific, trauma-informed support for women and girls.
- Embed a human-rights-based approach and clearcommunication of rights across all services and strategies including [Equally Safe](#), the [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#), and [Ending Destitution Together](#), to ensure that women understand entitlements, feel believed, and can safely disclose experiences.
- Improve communication access and safety, through investment in trained specialist interpreters, communication support workers, and safe, trusted spaces where migrant and refugee women can speak openly without fear, judgement, or cultural barriers.
- Embed sustainable community-based support for local authorities to partner with community groups to provide cohesive education and awareness raising that addresses rights, equality, and prevention of VAWG.

Additional Resources

Economic Abuse

- [Post-Separation Economic Abuse Wheel](#)
- [Financially Included: website](#) and [Purple Phone Helpline](#)
- SafeLives: [Blog on financial abuse and the NatWest Circle Fund](#)
- Surviving Economic Abuse: [Statistics on coerced debt](#)
- [NatWest financial abuse support page](#)
- TSB support and [Flee Fund information](#)

Domestic Abuse and Pet Abuse;

- [Dogs Trust Freedom](#)
- [The Links Group training page](#)
- [Understanding Animal Abuse and How to Intervene with Children and Young People: A Practical Guide for Professionals Working With People and Animals](#)

Digital Violence against Young Women and Girls

- [Equally Safe at School website](#)
- [Mhor Collective website](#) and reports:
 - [Exploring Digital Inclusion](#)
 - [Exploring Digital Inequality and Misogyny](#)
- [Equally Safe Online: Young People Vs. Gender-Based Violence](#) - research
- [Zero Tolerance and Many Good Men](#) – briefing

Violence Against Women and Substance Use

- Tackling Drug Stigma - [Resources](#) and [Framing Document](#)
- Scottish Drugs Forum [Nitazene Testing Strips Pilot Evaluation](#)
- [Saoirse Service](#)
- [Simon Community Scotland](#)

Violence Against Women and Girls in Crisis and Migration

- [Just Right Scotland referral page](#)
- [Scottish Women's Rights Centre legal advice surgeries](#)
- [COSLA Migrants Rights and Entitlement guidance](#)
- [Women's Integration Network](#)
- [TARA Scotland](#)

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