

Violence Against Women and Girls Funding Workshop

MEETING NOTE

Summary

This report highlights the key learning and recommendations from the workshop that took place on Friday 16th August to explore:

- Where are the key gaps in funding that are acting as a barrier to progressing the four priority areas set out in Equally Safe at a local level?
- What resources do local multi-agency VAW Partnerships anticipate will be needed to effectively implement Equally Safe at a local level over the next 3 years?
- What would an effective model look like to help address anticipated funding gaps moving forward?

The report provides an overview of the key points raised at the event by members of local VAW Partnerships - including partners from local Councils, NHS and Women's Aid groups – as well as information provided by email by third sector and public sector partners who were not able to attend the event.

Key messages

- Provision of VAWG support/ services across Scotland is currently a postcode lottery. Funding is not reflective of the different needs that exist in different local areas. A number of vital services currently have long waiting lists due to under-resourcing, and some local authority areas have gaps in key services.
- All areas of Equally Safe are currently under-resourced, but some more than others. The majority of available funding available is directed towards crisis services, with little dedicated resources to support prevention/ early intervention and recovery.
- There is a much greater level of investment made in tackling domestic abuse than other forms of VAWG across Scotland, with services aimed at tackling commercial sexual exploitation, FGM and Forced Marriage in particular receiving little funding. While there is a need to increase levels of investment in specialist domestic abuse services, there is also a need to recognise that Equally Safe aims to tackle all forms of VAWG and that funding is needed to support this.
- Despite Equally Safe's strong focus on the value of multi-agency partnership working in identifying and responding to the needs of women and children affected by VAWG, there are no dedicated resources available to support this.
- There is an urgent need to adopt a more strategic VAWG funding model in Scotland, with dedicated VAWG funding allocated at a local level based on demand for services and strategic assessment of specific needs and priorities within local communities.

Investing in local systems and services for women and children affected by VAWG – Risks and Opportunities

- ***What are the social and economic benefits of investing in systems and services to improve the safety and wellbeing of women and children affected by VAWG within local communities?***

Key messages:

In addition to it being morally right to invest in interventions that improve outcomes for women and children affected by VAWG, there are strong social and economic benefits in doing so. These include:

- Investing in services to prevent VAWG and provide support to women and children at an early stage, reduces demands on health, police, criminal justice services in the longer term;
- Being a victim of abuse or growing up in household where abuse takes place have been shown to put children at increased risk of experiencing negative outcomes later in their lives. Investing in high-quality recovery services for children is key to ensuring that children affected by abuse grow-up to achieve their full potential.
- Investing in activities to improve the safety and wellbeing of women and children affected by VAWG helps create a sustainable, inclusive economy with equality of outcomes for all;

Reducing demand on other public services

- Investment in tackling VAWG leads will lead to decreased levels of demand on other public services/ budgets in the future, including A&E, mental health services, health, criminal justice. This will save both time and money in the longer term.
- Investing in systems and services that tackle domestic abuse and supporting children to stay with the non-offending parent can help reduce numbers of children on child protection register, which is costly.
- Women in the criminal justice system are likely to have complex needs, including severe and repeated physical, sexual and emotional abuse and victimisation. Investing in early and effective interventions for women and children affected by VAWG now, reduces their likelihood of going into the criminal justice system in the future.
- There are significant economic costs associated with domestic abuse, many of which will be incurred at a local level. These include direct costs, such as medical treatment, social services, criminal justice and housing; indirect costs related to alcohol and substance misuse and mental health issues; and economic multiplier costs, e.g., absenteeism at work or inability to participate in the labour market.

Improving economic outcomes

- Supporting women and children leads to improved economic outcomes. This will benefit all areas of society, including men.
- Support women to engage in employment/ volunteering generates positive outcomes in a wide range of areas, including supporting economic growth and productivity. A review undertaken by Close the Gap in 2016 highlights that the economic gains of closing the gender gap in employment could add £17 billion a year to Scotland's economy.

- Domestic abuse is estimated to cost the Scottish public purse £2.3 billion, which includes costs lost due to decreased productivity, administrative difficulties from unplanned time off, lost wages and sick pay. As one of the main employers in Scotland, there are significant benefits of public sector organisations investing in tackling VAWG.

Supporting children to achieve their full potential

- Being a victim of abuse or growing up in household where abuse takes place have been shown to put children at increased risk of experiencing negative outcomes later in their lives. Investing in high-quality recovery services for children is key to ensuring that children affected by abuse grow-up to achieve their full potential.
- Unless we invest in addressing VAWG now, there is ongoing trauma and generational impact on children and families. This reduces people's potential and takes people out of the education and labour market.
- Harmful attitudes will continue to persist if children and young people are not being taught about healthy relationships and raised to challenge inequality

Preventing further harm to women and children

- While investment in legislative change and awareness raising activities are key to achieving the Scottish Government's vision of preventing and eradicating VAWG, it is important to recognise that this will result in increased numbers of disclosures and demand for support services which specialist services will not be able to meet without additional resources. Unless adequate levels of investment are made in both systems and services for women and children, with robust pathways put in place to support women and children who disclose VAWG, there is a real risk that people who disclose VAWG will be put in increased harm.
- In recent years, there has been increased pressure on local third sector organisations to fill the gaps caused by local government funding cuts. However, this is not sustainable, and specialist services cannot continue to meet the increasing demands placed on them.

From Prevention to Recovery - where are the current gaps in funding that are acting as a barrier to implementing Equally Safe at a local level

- ***Are adequate resources available to progress all areas of Equally Safe at a local level? If not, are there any particular parts that are currently under-resourced?***

Key messages:

- All areas of Equally Safe are currently under-resourced, but some more than others.
- VAWG support/ services across Scotland are a postcode lottery. Some local authority areas currently receive no funding from the Scottish Government to implement Equally Safe.
- Despite Equally Safe's strong focus on the value of partnership working in identifying and responding to the needs of women and children affected by VAWG, there are no dedicated resources available to support this to happen.
- The majority of funding available is directed towards crisis services, with little dedicated resources to support prevention/ early intervention and recovery.

Partnership working

- Partnership working is a key funding gap. There is a need to resource the coordination of VAWG activities locally to support a strategic approach to be taken to implementing Equally Safe at a local level.
- Local VAW Partnerships are expected to monitor and evaluate work happening locally to tackle VAWG and drive forward improvements, but no additional resources have been provided to enable them to undertake these tasks.

Prevention/ Early Intervention

- Insufficient resources are being directed towards preventing VAWG and tackling gender inequality. While it is vital that crisis services receive adequate funding, there is also a need to begin investing in initiatives/ services that prevent harm from occurring and reduce the need for crisis services in the future.
- Prevention work is significantly under-resourced yet remains a cornerstone of tackling violence against women.
- Early intervention services are also under-resourced. While Rape Crisis now have funded prevention workers, there is insufficient capacity to work in all schools across Scotland. Moreover, where early intervention work leads to disclosures, there is insufficient resource in place to respond to these at a local level. The analogy was made that current investment in early intervention is like investing in cancer screening without also investing in treatment to support those people who are identified as having cancer.
- More resources are needed to help understand and address young people's attitudes around VAWG/ healthy relationships. This needs to include investing in high quality work in schools and in youth work settings.

Pathways

- There is a need to begin investing in pathways of support, rather than individual services. A joined-up, person-centred approach is needed to making funding decisions that supports all work happening locally, from prevention to recovery.
- There needs to be a shared understanding of the different aspects of gendered based violence, for example domestic abuse and sexual violence services offer different types support at different times in survivors' lives, both services are invaluable but, the service design and funding requirements are different. The failure to make that distinction can lead to confusion and imbalance in service planning.
- National investment is needed to support embed models that support positive system change, like Safe & Together.

Perpetrators

- Current funding arrangements for interventions for perpetrators are a postcode lottery. Some areas have received a lot of funding to roll-out the Caledonian System, whereas other areas have nothing in place at all. There is a need to identify and resource interventions for local areas where Caledonian may not be possible/ suitable.

Training

- There is a need to ensure resources are in place to adequately train all staff to identify and respond to VAWG in a high-quality way and develop a VAWG-informed workforce at a local and national level. Funding for training is often only awarded to third sector organisations, but there is an urgent need to ensure public sector staff (particularly social workers) are adequately trained.
- There is a need to invest in training to ensure routine, sensitive enquiry is undertaken in all relevant health settings. No resources are currently available to undertake training with staff to ensure this happens effectively.
- Workforce Development is inconsistently resourced across the country. While Equally Safe demands effective and safe service delivery this is compromised by patchy delivery of good quality training to enable universal services to refer, respond safely and risk assess at source.
- The public sector relies heavily on the third sector to deliver specialised areas of training, but these organisations are already heavily challenged in relation to resources and funding to deliver on everything expected.
- Targeted resources are required to deliver effective workforce development based on different workforces' needs and key outcomes for the workforce at national level, e.g. akin to the Child Protection National Framework or Trauma Framework.

Recovery

- No dedicated resources are available for VAWG recovery services, Recovery services for children affected by domestic abuse and victims of rape and sexual assault are particular gaps.

Participation

- Despite Equally Safe's strong focus on ensuring that women and children with lived experience of VAWG are able to shape policy and practice, there are no dedicated resources to support participation activities at a local level. To be undertaken in a

meaningful and safe way, specialist services require dedicated resources to support women and children to engage in participation activities. At a minimum this will include staff time, travel expenses and childcare costs. However, in order to ensure that women and children with barriers to engagement are also able to participate in this work (e.g. women with complex support needs) additional resources are likely to be required.

Embedding National models

- Adequate funding is needed to ensure that models/ approaches that are recognised as good practice nationally can be implemented locally – including MARAC, MAPPA, Safe & Together and Caledonian. MAPPA was highlighted as an example of a model that is well resourced across Scotland and it was noted that this same approach is needed with other models.
- Inconsistencies in relation to funding for “national” models means that some areas are better positioned to deliver on Equally Safe than others.

Advocacy

- Funding for court advocacy services for civil cases around child contact conflict is a key gap that results in the abuse of women and children is extended through the court systems.

- ***Are adequate resources available to tackle all forms of VAWG? If not, are there any forms of VAWG where support/ services are particularly under-resourced at a local level?***

Key messages:

- There is a much greater level of investment made in tackling domestic abuse than other forms of VAWG across Scotland, with services aimed at tackling commercial sexual exploitation, FGM and Forced Marriage in particular receiving little funding at local level.
- While there is a need to continue to invest in specialist domestic abuse services, there is also a need to recognise that Equally Safe aims to tackle all forms of VAWG and that funding is needed to support this.
- Funding is not reflective of the different needs that exist in different local areas. A number of vital services currently have long waiting lists due to under-resourcing.

Domestic Abuse

- Despite the considerable level of investment that has gone into domestic abuse services in Scotland, they are still significantly under-resourced with demand for these services growing.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

- Tackling Commercial Sexual Exploitation is under-resourced across Scotland. It is not even recognised as a problem in some local authority areas, let alone a problem where resources are needed to address it.

Rape and Sexual Assault

- Rape Crisis services are historically under-funded across Scotland.

FGM

- There are different levels of funding invested in tackling FGM across Scotland, with some local authority areas receiving no resources despite it being an issue everywhere.

Perpetrators

- There's inadequate investment in identifying and hold perpetrators to account for their behaviours across Scotland. Caledonian is a postcode lottery.

Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

- No investment in supporting the needs of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse in some local authority areas.

- ***Are adequate systems and services in place to identify and respond to the needs of all women and children affected by VAWG? If not, are there any particular groups of people whose needs are currently not being met at a local level?***

Women and children living in communities outwith the main cities

- Services for women and children living in rural areas and areas outwith the main cities are under-resourced.
- Services/ outside of cities can be more resource intensive but this is rarely recognised in funding arrangements.

Women with no recourse to public funds

- Women with no recourse to public funds are not supported, including asylum seekers. It can often be more expensive to support these families due to the need for translation services and immigration lawyers.
- Migrant women and children are likely to need more support after Brexit. More staff training and outreach is needed to support these families, within specific communities.

Women and children with disabilities

- The needs of children and young people with learning difficulties are currently not being met
- Women with physical disabilities are highly vulnerable and services do not have resources needed to pay for transport to enable them to access services.

Older women

- Needs of older women not being met, especially those being abuse by wider family members (e.g. teenage/ adult sons)

BME women

- There are insufficient support/ services available for BME women

Women with Complex needs

- Needs of women with complex issues not being met, especially women with substance misuse issues, homelessness and/ or involvement in the criminal justice system poverty.
- The recent *Hard Edges Scotland* report highlights that specialist VAWG services in Scotland currently struggle to meet the needs of women with complex needs and dedicated resources to support a joined-up, person-centred approach is required to address this.

Women without children

- Women without children are often invisible to services. There is a need to ensure pathways are in place to ensure they are also identified and can access support.

LGBT women

- Needs of LGBT community under-resourced, particularly trans women. There are specific barriers to these women reporting VAWG that need to be overcome.

Children

- Services for children affected by VAWG are not funded in all local authority areas.
- Dedicated support for children is a key gap, with children and young people of different ages requiring tailored support.

Looking Ahead – What resources are required to effectively implement Equally Safe at a local level?

- ***What resources do local multi-agency VAW Partnerships anticipate will be needed to effectively implement Equally Safe at a local level over the next 3 years?***
- ***What would an effective model of funding look like to help improve outcomes for women and children affected by VAWG in local communities?***

Key messages:

While it was highlighted that it is challenging to calculate exactly how much funding is needed to implement Equally Safe at a local level due to increasing levels of demand on services, at a minimum it was noted there needs to be:

- A dedicated full-time post in place in all local authority areas to coordinate the work of the VAW Partnership and ensure a joined-up, strategic approach is taken to tackling VAWG at a local level;
- Adequate levels of funding for specialist VAWG services to ensure a minimum level of core services are available in all local authority areas and reduce the waiting lists that currently exist locally for women and children trying to access support;
- Dedicated funding to support MARACs and IDAAs across the country;
- Targeted resources to deliver effective workforce development based on local need, including a dedicated resource with attached funding to roll-out routine enquiry in all relevant health settings;
- Resources to support the development of high quality, interventions for perpetrators.

To support this, there is an urgent need to adopt a more strategic VAWG funding model in Scotland, with ring-fenced VAWG funding allocated at a local level based on demand for services and strategic assessment of specific needs and priorities within local communities.

Inadequate investment in tackling VAWG

- There is significant disparity between the funding that is invested in VAWG services at both a local and national level, compared to the funding that is invested in areas such as justice, substance misuse and adult protection and child protection. In contrast to the rhetoric set out in Equally Safe, this gives a clear message that tackling VAWG is not a priority in Scotland.
- At a local level, all VAWG services are facing funding cuts at a time when demand for support is increasing. This is made more challenging by the fact that because of cuts to local government budgets, Councils and other local public sector partners are increasingly reliant on third sector VAWG organisations to provide support to women and children, but this is putting a huge strain on specialist services and is not sustainable in the long term.
- A disproportionate amount of Scottish Government funding is invested in national projects, some of which have no direct impact on, or connection to, work happening within local communities to improve outcomes for women and children affected by VAWG. There is concern that there is a growing disconnect between the local and

national landscape, with local services being significantly under-resourced and national projects not responding to the needs of women and children on the ground.

Adopting a partnership-approach to funding

- The responsibility for funding VAWG services should not only sit with local and national government. All public sector budgets are impacted by VAWG so a wide range of partners including NHS and Police should be encouraged to dedicate resources towards this area of work.
- With the current focus on public health, there are opportunities to ensure that tackling VAWG is seen as a public health issue and that local VAWPs work in collaboration with IJBs to ensure there is adequate resourcing of services that aim to prevent and eradicate VAWG.

Need for sustainable funding

- Multi-year funding cycles are needed wherever possible. 1-year funding cycles/ budgets act as a barrier to strategic planning and are a particular challenge for undertaking preventative work where outcomes may not be seen for a number of years;
- Having a skilled workforce is critical in ensuring women and children affected by VAWG receive high-quality, joined-up support. However, inadequate or time-limited funding increases the risks of organisations losing experienced/ knowledgeable staff.

Equally Safe VAWG Fund

- Funding in Scotland is currently a postcode lottery. Some local authority areas currently receive no funding through the Scottish Government's Equally Safe Fund and there is no equity/ consistency in funding amongst the organisations that do receive funding.
- Current funding arrangements through the Equally Safe Fund are not fit for purpose. Key challenges include:
 - The fund outcomes do not align with the Equally Safe outcomes and performance indicators;
 - There has been little change in the portfolio of projects that have received funding over the last 10 years, despite a new strategy having been developed in that time and different priorities being identified at both a local and national level;
 - Those organisations who do receive funding through the fund, have seen the level of funding they have been awarded stay the same for a number of years. In real terms, this amounts to a funding cut when increased cost of living and other expenses are taken into account. Budgets also often don't meet the overhead costs an organisation must pay or only partly meet these costs;
 - Organisations are prevented from building cost of living increases into 3-year project budgets. This limits their ability to meet commitments around the living wage and means they need to source additional funding to cover increases in staffing costs from other sources.
 - There is little flexibility on how funding is used once it has been awarded, meaning organisations are unable to respond to the changing support needs amongst the women and children they support. In some cases, the lack of flexibility over how funding is used has led to demands for projects to give back funding to the Scottish Government where certain projects costs have been lower than originally budgeted for,

despite the overall cost of delivering the project being higher than the total funding awarded. This puts organisations at significant financial risk.

- In the current round of funding, local third sector projects have found themselves subjected to a high level of monitoring and financial scrutiny, including financial audits/ spot checks. These requirements are disproportionate to the relatively small levels of funding these organisations receive through the fund. National projects, who receive significantly higher levels of funding, are not subjected to the same pressures.
- The fund requires VAWG organisations to compete against each other for funding which encourages siloed working. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to move away from bidding/ funding processes which are time-intensive, create a competitive funding environment and promote service-focussed, rather than person-focussed, working.

Adopting a strategic approach to funding

- A more strategic, consistent approach is needed to making funding decisions at both a national and local level to help ensuring funding is transparent and responds to needs within local communities.
- Rather than requiring local VAWG organisations across Scotland to submit funding applications to the Scottish Government demonstrating how they meet national outcomes, it would be fairer and more impactful if VAWG funding could be devolved to local authority areas and funding decisions made based on the needs and priorities that partners have agreed locally. This would help to ensure that there is more equity in how funding is distributed across areas and services in Scotland.
- To ensure future arrangements are fair and transparent, a framework/ formula could be developed to identify how much funding each local authority area should be awarded based on factors including population-size, VAWG prevalence rates and availability of specialist services. Specific challenges that rural communities face should also be taken into account in determining funding allocations.
- Funding should be ring-fenced to ensure it is used for the purposes intended and local third sector and public sector partners should be required to develop and submit a plan outlining how the funding will be used and then report back collectively on the impact of this investment. There is a need to ensure that specialist services have a clear role in shaping funding decisions, as well as - wherever possible – women and children with lived experience of VAWG. This will support a person-centred approach to funding to be adopted, reduce duplication and support joined-up working.
- The current model of funding for ADPs was highlighted as an example of good practice, where the level of local investment is based on identified need within communities and a partnership approach is taken to agreeing how the allocated budget is then utilised in accordance with the strategy and improvement plan that has been agreed locally.

Reporting and Accountability Arrangements

- Strong accountability arrangements need to be put in place to ensure relevant stakeholders are held to account for what is spent locally and that progress and impact can be measured.
- While the publication of the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework (ESQS&PF) has improved reporting arrangements in recent years, there is currently no requirement for third sector organisations or public sector organisations to provide data

on them and no additional resources have been provided to local organisations to support them to undertake this work. Looking ahead there are opportunities to use the ESQS&PF as a planning tool to help allocate and monitor the use of resources at a local level.

- Having statutory guidelines in place for VAW Partnerships would help strengthen accountability arrangements locally and ensure tackling VAWG was recognised as a strategic priority. These guidelines include a requirement for relevant strategic partners within the local CPP to have this issue on their agenda, and to report on progress annually.

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