



Aberdeen Violence Against Women Partnership Strategy 2018-2021

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Foreword

The Aberdeen Violence Against Women Partnership aims to tackle violence and abuse against women and girls in all of its forms. Equally Safe shapes our thinking and planning to tackle gender inequality and promote work in making women and girls safer, stronger and more able to strive.

The aims of the Violence Against Women Partnership will contribute towards the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan in raising aspirations, building a better future for children and young people, empowering and connecting communities as well as addressing the behaviours of perpetrators.

Kevin Walker
Detective Chief Inspector
Chair of the Violence Against Women Partnership

Defining violence against women

“There is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, countries and communities, violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable” Ban Ki-moon (Secretary General of the United Nations 2007-2016)

Violence against women and girls is not confined to any particular political or economic system, but it is prevalent in every society in the world. It cuts across boundaries of wealth, race and culture. It is an expression of historically and culturally specific values and standards which are today still executed through many social and political institutions that foster women’s subservience and discrimination against women and girls.

The Aberdeen Violence Against Women Partnership (AVAWP) has adopted the Scottish Government definition which identifies violence against women as follows:

“Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of their liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as ‘gender based’ this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women’s and girls’ subordinate status in society. Such violence

cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence"

It is recognised that the abuse perpetrated against women is much wider than physical violence so the word "violence" in this document encompasses, but is not limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological abuse occurring in the family, within the general community or institutions, including: domestic violence, coercive and controlling behaviours, rape, incest and child sexual abuse.
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography and trafficking
- Dowry related violence
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced and child marriages
- Honour crimes
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Other sexual crime including cyber enabled crime¹

This does not deny that women use violence and coercive control against a male or female partner. It also does not deny that men use violence and control against other men, including male partners. It simply recognises that women are disadvantaged disproportionately because of the abuse they experience.

The terms 'women' and 'girls' will be used throughout this strategy. It is acknowledged that a person's internal sense of gender may differ from the sex assigned at birth. The terms therefore refer not only to cisgender women and girls (whose gender identity reflects the sex assigned at birth) but also includes sexual/gender minorities – terms that refer to individuals whose sexual orientation is outside the heterosexual mainstream and whose gender identity/expression does not fit into the distinct categories of male or female, or cisgender. This encompasses transgender identities, as well as those exhibiting a non-conforming expression of gender.

We are developing our intersectional approach by increasing recognition of the particular experience of different groups of women and girls, better understanding the

¹ There has been a significant increase in the proportion of 'Other sexual crimes' that were cyber enabled (i.e. the internet was used as a means to commit the crime) increasing from 38% in 2013-14 to 51% in 2016-17. For both cyber enabled crimes and non-cyber enabled crimes of 'Communicating indecently', 'Cause to view sexual activity or images', more than 80% of victims were female and around 95% of perpetrators were male in 2016-17. Almost three-quarters of the victims of cyber enabled crimes of this type in 2016-17 were under 16.

additional vulnerabilities and barriers that exist for those with intersectional identities, and through engagement with different groups and stakeholders to understand these issues better.

Governance and Reporting

A Chairperson and Vice Chairperson (or joint chair) shall be elected from the AVAWP membership. The appointment of the Chairperson(s) and Vice Chairperson shall be limited to a maximum of 2 years, with the option of being re-elected beyond this time period.

Meetings will be chaired by the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson. In the event that the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson stands down, all members of the AVAWP will be invited to nominate existing members for appointment to either of the posts. All nominations must have a proposer and a seconder and in the event that more than one nomination is received for either of the posts then a vote will be taken at the next scheduled AVAWP meeting. Only full members present will be entitled to cast a single vote. The nomination with the highest number of votes will be elected to the vacant post.

The AVAWP shall meet at least once every three months with additional meetings called as necessary.

The activities of the AVAWP shall be promoted by a Co-Ordinator/ Lead Officer.

As part of the wider strategic vision, it is hoped that links will be forged with other strategic partnerships such as Child Protection Committee, Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Adult Protection Committee and Community Justice Group. A strong multi-group strategic vision will help promote joint-working between the differing groups.

Role and Remit

This Strategy aims to establish the issues related to violence and abuse against women, or gender based abuse, in Aberdeen and identify the priorities to be

addressed by the AVAWP. This partnership aims to respond and be actively involved in consultations at both a local and national level.

Violence Against Women is a major societal and public health issue which is recognised at both national and international level. The AVAWP recognises that partnership working is essential for providing a comprehensive response to violence against women.

By working together agencies can intervene more effectively with the men who perpetrate abuse, with women, children and young people harmed, and with the wider community in order to promote prevention and earlier intervention.

Working collaboratively with key partners across all sectors, the AVAWP aims to eradicate violence against women in Aberdeen and make it a place where women and children can, with support when necessary, live free from the inequalities and harm associated with gender based violence in accordance with: the Human Rights Act 1998; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989; the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention); and the Scottish Government Equally Safe Strategy.

The AVAWP aims to:

- Ensure that gender inequality is integrated into the planning processes of partner agencies.
- Raise public awareness of violence/ abuse against women and ensure that its related harms are better understood.
- Work with children and young people to challenge attitudes towards violence/ abuse against women.
- Influence public attitudes so that people are no longer prepared to tolerate violence/abuse against women
- Encourage and support all partner agencies to take into account the views of women and children in families affected by violence/ abuse against women when developing services.
- Strive to achieve a policy of co-operation and co-ordination of services between agencies.
- Identify gaps in service provision and make recommendations for the development of future services in Aberdeen.

- Ensure that identified appropriate training is provided to staff from all agencies so that they can recognise violence/ abuse against women and give appropriate support to those affected.
- Reduce the extent and impact of violence/ abuse against women and on those affected in the family and wider community.
- Identify mechanisms whereby perpetrators can be held accountable for their behaviour.
- Develop and monitor the delivery of an Action Plan and Strategy in line with the Scottish Government Equally Safe Strategy

Policy and Strategy Context

Work to prevent and eradicate violence/abuse against women and girls is interwoven into a range of Scottish Government strategies, programmes and frameworks. But the principle one is 'Equally Safe' which specifically seeks to address violence/abuse against women.

Equally Safe

The Scottish Government, in partnership with COSLA published 'Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls'. The vision is of 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 and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.

The strategy highlights the need for every area of Government and wider society to play a role in tackling this issue. It calls on the engagement of Police Scotland, NHS, community planning partnerships as well as the civil and criminal justice systems, social work, housing, media, businesses, employers, trade unions and third sector organisations to play their part in creating a society where all women and girls can feel safe, respected and equal in our communities.

To achieve the aims of the strategy, work will be shaped around the equally safe four key priorities:

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

2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and promoting women's safety and wellbeing
4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence received a robust and effective response

The framework provides a shared understanding of the causes, risk factors and scale of violence and abuse against women and girls, and highlights the need to prioritise prevention. It recognises the need to work collaboratively with partners by making best use of available resources and with clear governance and process. It has therefore been used as the basis for developing local outcomes.

Outcomes will be further developed and delivered through dedicated work streams and overseen by the AVAWP.

Local Context

Profile of Aberdeen

In 2014, it was estimated that there were 228,990 people living in Aberdeen. This number is expected to increase. The city has a diverse population, with 15.9 % of people not born in the UK. In addition, children (aged 0-15) make up 15% of its population.

With the traditional success of the oil and gas sector, unemployment in the city is low. Although, as a consequence of the industry, the city contains some of the most affluent areas of Scotland, some of the country's most deprived areas are in Aberdeen.

In 2017-18, there were 59,541 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland an increase of 1% from 2016-17. Where gender information was recorded, around four out of every five incidents of domestic abuse in 2017-18 had a female victim and a male accused.

Locally, there were 2773 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Aberdeen in 2017/18. This was an increase of 251 from the previous financial year (*Scottish Government publication, 'Domestic Abuse in Scotland 2017-18'*).

Moreover, the incidents involving sexual crimes has steadily increased in recent years. Sexual crimes can include rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, crimes relating to prostitution, sexually coercive conduct and taking and distributing indecent images. Changes in legislation and a greater reporting of incidents to police following exposure of national enquiries have undoubtedly contributed to this. In 2017/18, out of the 12,487 sexual crimes recorded by police nationally, 623 relate to Aberdeen (*Scottish Government publication, 'Recorded Crime in Scotland 2017-18'*).

Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)

The vision and strategic priorities set out within the LOIP provide a clear focus for Community Planning Aberdeen. To create ‘a place where all people can prosper’, there are four priority areas for strategic working in the LOIP :

1. Aberdeen prospers
2. Children are our future
3. People are resilient, included and supported when in need
4. Empowered, resilient and sustainable communities

The activities of the AVAWP will promote the strategic objectives of the LOIP.

Our Strategic Priorities

Priority 1

Aberdeen embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls

Our Objectives

- Positive gender roles are promoted
- People enjoy healthy, positive relationships
- Children and young people develop an understanding of safe, healthy and positive relationships from an early age
- Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour
- Raised public awareness of violence/ abuse against women and its related harms are better understood.

This priority is fundamental in tackling the problem of violence against women and girls, recognising ingrained and entrenched social beliefs must be challenged if we are to effect societal change.

One of the key roles for partners is to increase awareness of the issue of gender based abuse and the appropriate responses, both in the form of criminal justice measures and in the provision of high quality support for women and children harmed.. Education is also key to engendering an attitudinal shift and it is imperative that work is done with young people in order to educate the next generation on what constitutes abuse and why this is unacceptable in any form.

A culture shift must take place across all sectors of society if we are to create a climate where: women feel their voices have been heard; they can thrive as equals; communities have a better understanding of the issue of gender based abuse; appropriate interventions are available for perpetrators; and victims feel safer.

Local Outcomes

- A greater proportion of people of all ages are aware of issues regarding violence against women and gender based abuse, and believe it is unacceptable.
- Wider society is empowered to challenge abusive and violent behaviour.

Priority 2

Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically

Our Objectives

- Women and girls are safe, respected and equal in our communities
- Women and men have equal access to power and resources
- Ensure that gender inequality is integrated into the planning processes of partner agencies.

A modern society should see equality and fairness as a given. Our aspiration is for our society to be less patriarchal through; promoting equality in the workplace by bridging the gender pay-gap; tackling the causes of poverty and inequality which disproportionately affect women; giving women a voice and supporting them to have the

confidence to use it. A wide attitudinal shift from top down to bottom up is required if we are to effect the change needed to see women treated equally across society.

Local Outcomes

- Local employers have robust policies and procedures in place, relating to gender equality, diversity, flexible working and sexual harassment.
- Women and girls feel safer in their communities, schools and at work

Priority 3

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

Our Objectives

- Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated
- Women, children and young people access relevant, effective and integrated services
- Service providers competently identify violence against women and girls, and respond effectively to women, children and young people affected

All partners involved with the Aberdeen Violence Against Women partnership play a vital role in delivering services to promote the safety and wellbeing of those harmed by violence, abuse and controlling behaviours.

The third sector has offered pioneering services including advocacy, refuge provision, advice and counselling and it is clear that there are some support networks in place for women and children who have been affected by violence.

As has been previously stated, early identification and intervention is crucial in addressing the issues and local and statutory agencies must be supported to ensure that there is adequate provision of support services in their areas. Increased information sharing and a data based analytical response must be embedded in the work of the partnership and this has to be a priority going forward. Early intervention

leads to better outcomes and less of a strain on the public purse and will also lead to a decrease in repeat offences.

Local Outcomes

- Increased awareness of early signs of abuse across all sector, with service providers able to intervene sensitively and effectively.
- More people in the wider community, of all ages, are confident in identifying early signs of abuse.

Priority 4

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

Our Objectives

- Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated
- Men who carry out violence against women and girls are identified early and held to account by the criminal and civil justice system.
- Relevant links are made between the experience of women, children and young people in the criminal and civil system.

It is clear that domestic and sexual abuse cannot be tolerated and for many women a swift and proportionate criminal justice response can help victims feel validated, safe and aid their recovery.

The role of Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) cannot be downplayed in tackling this issue and a zero-tolerance approach must be taken in bringing perpetrators to justice.

In order for the justice system to play its full role though we need to ensure that support is available from 'report to court' for victims, that women are encouraged and supported to report abuse and that a renewed faith and confidence is felt in the judicial system. It is crucial that the incidents of violence and abuse are identified at the earliest point, that women are listened to, fully informed and supported in making decisions

about their (and their children's) safety, and that a swift, robust and fair judicial process takes place.

A range of interventions should be in place to both work with perpetrators and to provide support to those harmed by domestic and sexual abuse. Such interventions should be proportionate to the risk posed by perpetrators and meet the needs of victims. The Caledonian System is one such intervention which provides a programme (usually 2 years) to higher risk male perpetrators of domestic abuse in tandem with support and safety planning for women and children harmed. The Moving Forward Making Changes programme works with sex offenders for a period of 3 years. Both programmes are aimed at changing perpetrators' thinking and behavior in order to reduce their risk of reoffending.

Local Outcomes

- Women, children and young people have increased confidence in the judicial system
- There is an increased range of mandatory and non-mandatory interventions that challenge and support perpetrators of violence against women

Engagement

Ongoing consultation and engagement with stakeholders is important to the success of the AVAWP. We recognize the importance of listening to women who have used services. This allows us to further develop services in the city to ensure the needs of women, children and young people are being met appropriately and effectively.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress towards this strategy will be reviewed regularly by the AVAWP through its annual action plan. Annual reviews will ensure the strategy is in line with changing local and national policies and priorities.

A performance framework has been developed to support the AVAWP's priorities and objectives. Data from this will also be fed into the national framework.