

Zero Tolerance briefing for
Social Justice and Social
Security Committee,
February 2022

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TOLERANCE

Zero Tolerance is a national campaigning organisation working to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). We do this through raising public and political awareness of the causes of VAWG and promoting action on prevention.

We also work directly with key sectors, organisations and individuals to develop their skills, capacity, and understanding regarding the prevention of VAWG.

We welcome this opportunity to brief the committee about our work and to offer our thoughts about what is needed to address primary prevention of violence against women in Scotland.

ABOUT ZERO TOLERANCE

The first Zero Tolerance campaign launched in Edinburgh in late 1992. Those early poster campaigns aimed to raise awareness about the prevalence of violence against women, challenge and change public attitudes towards women who experienced gender based violence, and focus attention on the men who perpetrated violence and abuse against women and girls.

In the three decades since then, Zero Tolerance has continued to focus on primary prevention of violence against women and our reach is now national and beyond. Evidence shows that levels of violence against women are significantly and consistently higher in societies, communities and relationships where there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women (UN Partners for Prevention, 2013). We are clear that we can only end violence against women by tackling gender inequality at all levels.

Our work aims to raise awareness, build capacity, influence decision makers, and contribute to the evidence base about violence against women and girls as both a function of, and a contributor to, gender inequality.

ABOUT ZERO TOLERANCE

Currently, we have 4 strategic priorities:

- Strengthen understanding of emerging and neglected forms of VAWG to enable more inclusive and impactful prevention activity.
- Drive improvements in media reporting on VAWG.
- Embed gender equality and VAWG prevention in children and young people's environments.
- Make Zero Tolerance a place where feminist leadership happens.

Over the next 3 years we will be working towards these priorities, with current plans including research on disabled women's experiences of violence against women; working with journalists to improve media reporting on violence and abuse experienced by ethnic minority women and girls, and promoting the inclusion of gender equality and knowledge of violence against women and girls within the training of all professionals working with children and young people.

We often work in partnership with others to target our efforts. This might involve the development of specific, time-limited campaigns, such as **Any Woman, Anywhere** [1] - an International Women's Day campaign which we developed with Amina and the Church of Scotland.

In recent years, we have worked with the Care Inspectorate and early years staff to address gender stereotyping in early years work, and with the Improvement Service to develop Primary Prevention Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships.[2] With Rape Crisis Scotland, we piloted a 'whole school' approach to preventing gender-based violence in schools, Equally Safe at School[3].

[1] <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/any-woman-anywhere/>

[2] https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/9668/primary-prevention-guidance.pdf

[3] <https://www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk/>

ABOUT ZERO TOLERANCE

Media reports are where most people get information about violence against women, whether this is coverage of specific cases or more general articles about the nature and prevalence of violence against women. We undertake regular monitoring exercises to highlight both positive and negative reporting on violence against women. Recent reports have included reviewing media coverage of violence against women during the pandemic, and how cases involving celebrities are covered.

In discussion with experienced journalists, we developed guidelines for journalists and editors reporting on violence against women. We also developed the **1000 words** [4] campaign with Scottish Women's Aid, providing a bank of free to use, ethical, diverse and impactful stock images, that illustrate domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women without resorting to harmful stereotypes of women.

In 2019, the Scottish Government commissioned us to take forward a key recommendation from the first (2018) report of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) – to examine what kind of organisation should be established to support robust, evidence-led and inclusive approaches to changing public attitudes towards the equality and rights of women and girls.

We worked with researchers from The Collective to produce '**We need this to do things differently**' [5], published in March 2021. The report provides groundbreaking insight into what is most needed to tackle the harmful social, cultural and gendered norms that fuel the root cause of violence against women - gender inequality.

[4] <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/gallery/one-thousand-words/84/>

[5] <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/gender-institute/>

WHY WE NEED PRIMARY PREVENTION/

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

VAWG includes (but is not limited to) domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, stalking and harassment, online abuse, commercial sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution), harmful traditional practices (including forced marriage and FGM) and femicide.

- In 2021, 13131 sexual crimes were reported to Police Scotland. Recorded sexual crimes have increased by 78% over the last 10 years.
- At least 39% of the sexual crimes recorded in 2020-21 related to a victim under the age of 18.[6]
- 65,251 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by Police Scotland in 2020-21, an increase of 4% on the previous year.

Furthermore, gender inequality intersects with other inequalities including sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, immigration status, and disability. A black woman who experiences gender-based violence is experiencing it in the context of a lifetime of experiencing racism.

An ONS report [7] identifies that

- In the year ending March 2019, disabled women were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse (17.3%) than non-disabled women (7.0%).
- In the three years ending March 2018, disabled women were almost twice as likely to have experienced any sexual assault in the last year (5.7%) than non-disabled women (3.0%).

However, the evidence and data for different forms of VAWG, as well as for different groups of women, is highly variable and in many cases completely lacking.

[6] <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2020-2021/pages/3/>

[7] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/bulletins/disabilityandcrimeuk/2019>

WHY WE NEED PRIMARY PREVENTION/

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Mariam Ahmed, CEO of Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre, noted at a recent Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children that there is a dearth of data in Scotland about the experiences of BAME women who experience violence.

Women who experience violence or abuse must be able to access specialist support, safety and access to justice. The men who perpetrate violence must be held to account by our justice system. Services must be adequately and sustainably resourced to ensure this can happen.

But we also need to look 'further upstream' to prevent those incidents from occurring in the first place.

Only 58% of people in Scotland believe that a woman who wears revealing clothing on a night out is 'not at all to blame' for being raped, with 60% saying the same of a woman who is very drunk. Around a quarter think that 'women often lie about being raped' and nearly 2 in 5 believe that 'rape results from men being unable to control their need for sex'[8].

Challenging and changing those attitudes is a necessary part of what we must do to end violence against women.

Zero Tolerance believes in a world without violence against women. We believe it can be prevented from happening in the first place. To realise this, appropriately targeted resource is required not only for services, but also for prevention.

[8] <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-attitudes-survey-2014-attitudes-violence-against-women-scotland/pages/4/>

WHAT MEASURES WOULD BEST UNDERPIN, OR HELP IN, THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND CONTROL?

We need a multi-faceted approach that tackles the drivers of violence against women.

This must include:

- embedding work to challenge out-dated gender stereotypes in all levels of education, from nursery to higher education, at work and in public and political life
- tackling the systemic and structural causes of gender inequality, including discrimination in the labour market, discrimination in our laws and legal systems, and the under-representation of women in public life
- applying a gender/inequalities lens to all government policies
- engaging with men and boys as a core part of primary prevention work, not a separate issue.

Education in the widest sense is crucial - not just for children and young people, but also adults in the community, policy makers and politicians, professionals working in health, social care, and justice.

As outlined previously, gender inequality intersects with other inequalities, and therefore one size does not fit all. Strategies and programmes of work to tackle gender inequality and prevent violence against women must be informed by the experiences of diverse groups in our society, and there must be more robust evidence gathering about the experiences and needs of those groups.

PRIORITIES FOR THE £100 MILLION

PROMISED TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST

WOMEN AND GIRLS

The commitment of funding is welcome, and we note that £38 million has already been committed via the Delivering Equally Safe Fund.

We also welcome the proposal to conduct an independent review focused on gender-based violence and sexual abuse in educational settings.

With other organisations in the VAWG/equalities sector, we have consistently called for the application of a gender/equalities lens to all government strategies/policies. It is concerning, therefore, to note that the Programme for Government 2021-22 continues to address 'equalities' as a separate issue from the rest of the policy landscape, rather than an underpinning requirement for all strategic policy work.

The work we do to address violence against women will only be effective if it is underpinned by work to tackle inequality. The recent failure to address equality and human rights in the terms of reference for the Covid Inquiry indicates that we have some way to go in the mainstreaming of equality and human rights.

Equally Safe is an ambitious strategy to end violence against women in Scotland. The strategy is explicit about the need to see violence against women as a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. If it is to be realised, it will need significant investment and ambition.

Increasing investment in primary prevention must not be achieved by reducing investment in services for survivors; services **must** be sustainable, and sufficient to meet the needs of all survivors including survivors from marginalised communities.

PRIORITIES FOR THE £100 MILLION

PROMISED TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST

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What is needed is a long-term investment in primary prevention. It needs a truly visionary approach; a 10-year strategy, not a 3 year work-plan.

At the centre of that strategy must be the work to tackle gender inequality.

The National Advisory Council for Women and Girls worked for 3 years to identify what is needed to address gender inequality in Scotland. The work is now moving into the implementation stage. Implementing the recommendations of the NACWG would represent a significant step forward in tackling gender inequality in Scotland, and we recommend the committee give this serious consideration.

Further information

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Working to end men's violence against women

