

Equalities

Reporting on progress towards equality of opportunity for women and men made by public authorities in Scotland - Ministerial priorities for gender equality

Tackling violence against women: A review of key evidence and national policies

The current Gender Equality Duty requires Scottish Ministers to set out priority areas that they have identified across the functions and activities relevant to Scottish public authorities and then provide an overview of progress in these priority areas by 1 July 2010. Scottish Ministers agreed two priority areas, namely: tackling violence against women and occupational segregation. This paper presents the main findings of a review of key evidence and national policies relating to tackling violence against women. Research was also carried out by Reid Howie Associates and Equality Plus between November 2009 and April 2010 to identify progress made by public authorities in tackling violence against women (see: Reid Howie Associates and Equality Plus 2010).

Main Findings

- Violence against women (VAW) includes (but is not limited to): physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, general community or in institutions; sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; sexual exploitation; dowry-related violence; female genital mutilation; forced and child marriages; and, honour crimes. These are interlinked and have their roots in gender inequality and are therefore understood as gender-based violence.
- There were 53,681 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the Scottish police in 2008-09 with 84% of incidents involving a female victim and male perpetrator; studies have shown between 78% and 86% of stalking victims are female; and, in 53% of homicide cases over 1997-2007, where a woman was the victim, the main accused was the women in question's partner.
- Evidence shows that many women experience repeat victimisation, that the impact of domestic abuse on children/young people can be profound and long-lasting and that substance abuse is often as a consequence of abuse/violence.
- Limited information exists on experiences of ethnic minority women, disabled women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women and the extent to which their specific needs are met.
- The Scottish Government has progressed a significant amount of work to tackle VAW through, for example, the *National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland (National Strategy)*, the *National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People (Delivery Plan)*, *Safer Lives* and work with the UK Government on forced marriage and human trafficking.
- Consultation on VAW documents/initiatives dates back to the *National Strategy* and continues to the present for example, *Voice Against Violence* enables meaningful participation of children/young people affected by domestic abuse in the implementation of the *Delivery Plan*.
- Key national training strategies/guidance have established training consortia across Scotland and have been targeted at specific sectors (e.g. health, housing, police, Local Authorities) and for particular groups of people or issues (e.g. children/young people, prostitution, child trafficking).

Background

The current Gender Equality Duty requires Scottish Ministers to set out priority areas they have identified across the functions and activities relevant to Scottish public authorities and then provide an overview of progress on these priority areas by 1 July 2010 (and at least every 3 years thereafter).

In June 2009, following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, Scottish Ministers agreed two priority areas for the advancement of equality of opportunity between women and men in Scotland, namely: tackling violence against women and occupational segregation.

It is important to note that the legal framework for equality is changing significantly through the Equality Act 2010 which includes a new Single Equality Duty – covering all protected characteristics. Scottish Ministers expect to publish proposals in Summer 2010 with the new duty expected to be introduced around April 2011.

The research

To enable Scottish Ministers to provide an overview of progress on violence against women, the research comprised three elements: a review of key evidence and national policies (undertaken by the Scottish Government); a review of a sample of public authority documents; and, case studies with a sample of public authorities (undertaken by Reid Howie Associates and Equality Plus).

This paper presents the main findings from the review of evidence and national policies.

Main Findings – Evidence Review

Nature and extent of the phenomenon

The research reviewed highlighted that violence against women includes (but is not limited to): physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, general community or in institutions; sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; sexual exploitation; dowry-related violence; female genital mutilation; forced and child marriages; and, honour crimes. These different forms of violence against women are interlinked and have their roots in gender inequality and are therefore understood as gender-based violence.

Published statistics showed that there were 53,681 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2008-09; 84% of reported incidents involved a female victim and male perpetrator. In addition, significant numbers of women are victims of more than one type of violence and many experience repeat victimisation.

Further, studies have shown that between 78% and 86% of stalking victims are female and in 53% of homicide cases over 1997-2007, where a woman was the victim, the main accused was the woman in question's partner.

Risks

Violence against women is commonly carried out by men known to them; other risk factors reported were: cohabitation, youth, experience of other crime, residence in areas of deprivation, pregnancy and the presence of children.

Service provision

Service provision in Scotland is reportedly more geographically spread than in the rest of the United Kingdom and multi-agency working has been consistently recommended as a means of addressing and supporting women experiencing domestic abuse/violence.

Of concern is the lack of services (and barriers to access) for minority ethnic women, disabled women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) women experiencing violence.

Housing, homelessness and domestic abuse

The research reviewed highlighted that domestic abuse has long been recognised as a contributory factor to homelessness and that refuges have traditionally been the main response in this context. Studies have shown that shortages in provision could be problematic for access to a refuge in a preferred location and inadequate provision to meet needs may contribute to repeat homelessness.

A Scottish Government review on domestic abuse, housing and homelessness noted a study reporting the difficulty of obtaining exclusion orders with adequate force to protect women while they remain in the family home because of limited victim-centred legal processes and professional attitudes.

Further, a study by Scottish Women's Aid found that providing for women with "no recourse to public funds" due to their immigration status may result in some women not being supported or accommodated.

Children and young people

An international review undertaken for the Scottish Government highlighted that the impacts of domestic abuse on children and young people can be profound and long-lasting therefore, children's perspectives and fear should be taken more seriously and they should be involved in major decisions which affect them. This review also suggested that primary prevention against domestic abuse through education should be considered.

Ethnic minority women

Information on violence against ethnic minority women in Scotland is limited. The evidence reviewed explained that such violence may take different forms from those experienced in the majority population and include collusion by family members and “honour based” dimensions.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

The extent to which female genital mutilation is an issue in Scotland is not known. The evidence reviewed explained that FGM is viewed as deeply entrenched in the values and norms of certain communities, and employed as a preventative measure against female infidelity and sexual independence by reducing women’s sex drive.

Disabled women

Studies reviewed suggested that disabled women may experience greater difficulty in leaving abusive partners than non-disabled women because of, for example, their perpetrator - who may also be their carer - controlling medication, playing on disablist attitudes and threatening custody of children.

LGBT

Of the 53,681 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2008-09, 1,184 were for same-sex couples; 546 for male same-sex couples and 638 for female. Stonewall Scotland found that although most issues around domestic abuse are similar in relationships regardless of sexual orientation, there are additional issues faced by same-sex couples (e.g. threats to publicise someone’s sexuality). There was a lack of evidence about experiences of transgender women.

Human trafficking

A Scottish Government report found that between April 2007 and March 2008, 79 individuals believed to be victims of human trafficking came into contact with agencies in Scotland - the majority were adult female victims who had been trafficked into sexual exploitation.

Multiple and complex needs

Studies show that women who experience domestic abuse and who misuse substances often do so as a consequence of their abuse and often turn to substances as a means of coping with the abuse from their partner. Further, women who experience domestic abuse and substance misuse often present with multiple and complex needs – for example also experiencing mental health problems and homelessness.

Men as victims

Of the 53,681 incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police in 2008-09, 15% of these were male victims – 93% of these involved a female perpetrator and 7% a male perpetrator.

Main Findings – Policy Review

Structures

The policy review firstly set out the structure and hence mode of working of the Scottish Government to set the context within which violence against women work is developed and progressed – for example, work is progressed under the structures of the Government’s *Economic Strategy*, the National Performance Framework – Strategic Objectives and National Outcomes - and the Concordat and Single Outcome Agreements.

Within the above, equalities is central to the work of the Scottish Government and Local Government as one of the National Outcomes being progressed is that *we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society*.

The Equality Unit was established in 1999 to lead on equality policy development and support Scottish Ministers in their work to advance equality. It has a particular role to promote and extend ownership of equality issues throughout the Scottish Government (mainstreaming) and works with a range of equality interests and stakeholders. The Social Inclusion and Equalities Analysis Team provides analytical support to the Unit and promotes mainstreaming of equalities across the three Government analytical groups – researchers, statisticians and economists.

In addition, International frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provide frameworks for driving forward rights and remedies against discrimination at a national level.

Policies/strategies

The Scottish Government has progressed a significant amount of initiatives to tackle violence against women through the *National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland (National Strategy)*, the *National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People (Delivery Plan)* and *Safer Lives*. Further, the Scottish Government works with the United Kingdom Government to progress work on specific issues such as forced marriage and human trafficking.

Information gathering, monitoring and reporting

As part of the Crime and Justice Series, the Scottish Government publishes Statistical Bulletins on, for example *Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland*, *Homicide in Scotland and Recorded Crime in Scotland*. In addition, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey provides evidence on “Partner Abuse” and “Sexual Victimization and Stalking”.

Government analysts are supporting the *Delivery Plan* by: assisting with the Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery (CEDAR) evaluation; developing a monitoring framework to support the roll-out of the court-mandated Caledonian System (this System includes a programme for adult male offenders who have been convicted of offences involving domestic abuse); and, undertaking an evidence review to explore the relationships between domestic abuse, housing and homelessness.

Further, data collection was identified as a key priority for action in *Safer Lives* and a Data Collection Working Group is to develop a logic model for *Safer Lives* with close involvement from CoSLA.

Consultation

Consultation is an essential and important aspect of Scottish Government working methods and consultation on violence against women documents and initiatives dates back to the *National Strategy* and continues to the present with for example, *Voice Against Violence* which enables meaningful participation of children and young people affected by domestic abuse in the implementation of the *Delivery Plan*.

The Scottish Government has also consulted on specific issues which are receiving more attention in recent years such as forced marriage and human trafficking.

Initiatives and specific work

The Scottish Government has committed funding to violence against women through, for example: the Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund; the Children’s Services Women’s Aid Fund; the Rape Crisis Specific Fund 2008-2011; and, the Violence Against Women Funding Stream.

Impact evaluations of initiatives funded have been positive. For example, the Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund was found to be essential to the promotion of the *National Strategy* and, the Children’s Services Women’s Aid Fund has enhanced support to children in refuges and to children leaving refuges and receiving follow-on support.

In addition, evaluations of the Scottish Government’s annual Domestic Abuse Campaign have shown that the main aims of the campaign year on year are achieved with high percentages of respondents spontaneously recalling they had seen or heard the advertising or publicity.

There are a number of initiatives being developed and progressed under the *Delivery Plan*. These include: the introduction of routine enquiry of domestic abuse in NHS settings; building on the accreditation of the court-mandated Caledonian System; using a toolkit to support and encourage Criminal Justice Agencies across Scotland to review their practice on domestic abuse; and, piloting CEDAR, a community-based model of groupwork intervention for children and their mothers affected by domestic abuse.

Training and awareness raising

Since the launch of the *National Strategy*, the Scottish Government has developed and published a number of key national training strategies and specific guidance documents targeted at key sectors (e.g. health, housing, police, voluntary sector, Local Authorities) and for particular groups and issues (e.g. children and young people, street prostitution and child trafficking).

Training strategies have focused on identifying training and development activity (e.g. multi-agency approaches) required to support improvement in services to women and children who are experiencing abuse/violence, and men who use violence.

Training strategies have also led to the establishment of training consortia across Scotland made-up of representatives of key public agencies relevant to the violence against women agenda: police, health, Local Authorities, and voluntary sector partners.

Conclusions

The review has shown that evidence and statistics present a disturbing picture of the extent and gender-based nature of violence against women in all its forms. With this in mind the Scottish Government, working closely with its partners and stakeholders, continues to progress initiatives to tackle violence against women in the context of its key policies/strategies such as for example, the *National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People* and *Safer Lives*.

Reference:

Reid Howie Associates and Equality Plus (2010) *Reporting on Progress Towards Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men made by Public Authorities in Scotland: Ministerial Priorities for Gender Equality. Tackling Violence Against Women*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, or would like further copies of this research findings summary document or the full research report, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131-244 7560.



Social Science in Government

ISBN: 978-0-7559-9439-7

