

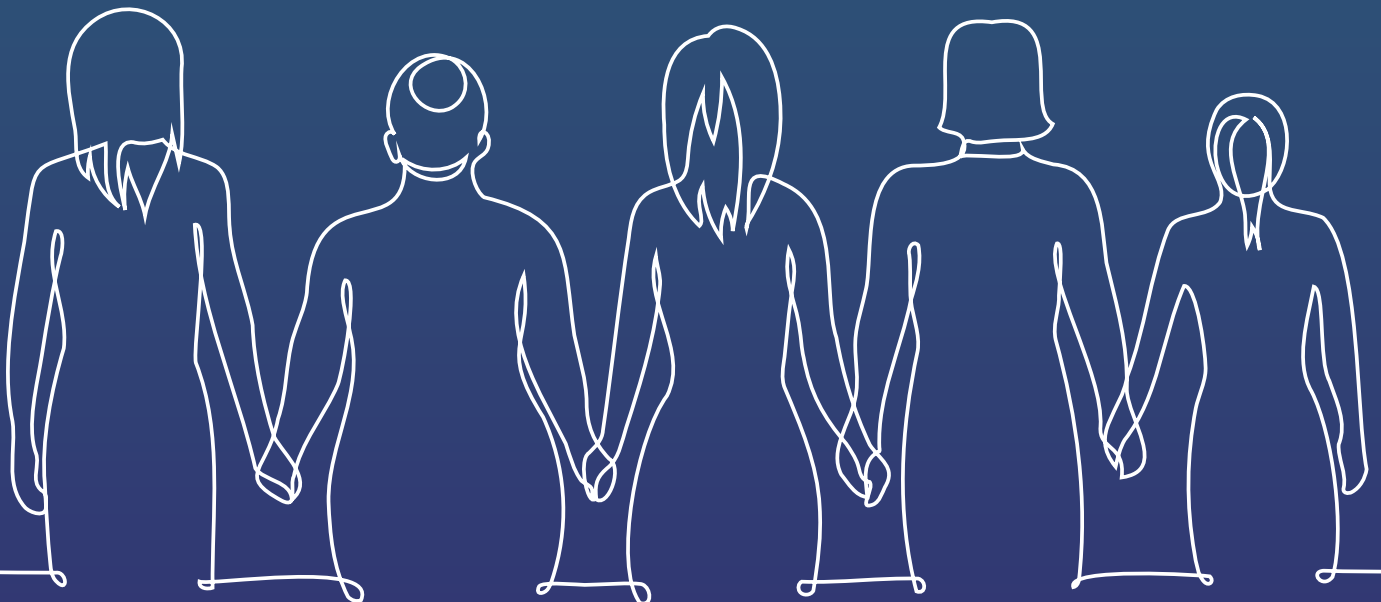


Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



# Equally Safe Delivery Plan

Summer 2024 – Spring 2026



# Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Deliverables	5
1. We will work with the Addressing Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women and Girls Network to ensure our work reflects the needs of minority ethnic women.	5
2. We will deliver the Scottish Government Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group Action Plan.	7
3. We will develop a collaborative programme of support to enable local and national partners to adopt a public health approach to preventing VAWG.	9
4. We will develop a robust understanding of VAWG data collection, availability and disaggregation practices across different sectors.	12
5. We will develop a public engagement approach to raise awareness of the scale and impact of VAWG.	14
6. We will build a robust and joined up approach to the prevention of VAWG across all education settings.	16
7. We will develop a flexible and stable funding model which reflects the ambitions of Equally Safe.	18
8. We will develop a streamlined approach to trauma-informed workplace practices that promote and enhance VAWG knowledge, skills and expertise.	20
9. We will improve our response to the many forms of technology facilitated VAWG and its harms.	22
10. We will support the health sector to identify and respond to victims and survivors of VAWG.	24
11. We will strengthen links between VAWG and other areas of Public Protection to both prioritise actions to prevent and reduce harm and to improve outcomes for adult and child victim-survivors of VAWG.	27
12. We will ensure that the considerations of the Justice Board and the delivery of the Vision for Justice reflect the key themes of Equally Safe and the Report from the Women in Justice Leadership Panel.	29
13. We will develop an action plan to implement the Istanbul Convention recommendations.	31
14. We will establish a clear governance structure for Equally Safe delivery, streamlining processes where possible.	33
Glossary of Terms	35

# Foreword

**Violence against women and girls, in any form, has no place in our vision for a safe, strong, successful Scotland. Previous versions of the Equally Safe strategy and its delivery plans have stated this. It bears stating again.**

This new delivery plan sits below our refreshed Equally Safe strategy and outlines the tangible actions we will take to realise our ambitions. It sets out that the Scottish Government, COSLA and all partners intend to continue to drive progress by implementing action individually and collectively in a truly cross-cutting and inclusive way.

As co-Chairs of the Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board, we are committed to delivering real change for the women and children survivors of violence against women and girls in Scotland. We look forward to working together to build a strong, flourishing Scotland where everyone is equally safe and respected.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Stewart".

**Kaukab Stewart MSP**  
Minister for Equalities

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen Chalmers".

**Cllr Maureen Chalmers**  
COSLA Community  
Wellbeing Spokesperson

# Introduction

Equally Safe, our country's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, was refreshed in 2023. It sets out a vision of a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and protected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate them.

The aim of the strategy is to foster collaborative working between key partners to achieve this vision. The strategy recognises that a collaborative approach is vital; violence against women and girls is everyone's concern, and all sectors of society have a role to play in tackling it. As a result, the 14 'deliverables' and associated actions within the plan represent a commitment to act from partners across the public and third sector at a local and national level. Through these deliverables all partners commit to maintaining our momentum in addressing violence against women and girls, and realising our ambitions under the Strategy.

Extensive engagement was carried out to understand what would make a difference and what needs to be achieved as Scotland works to be a place where violence against women and girls is a thing of the past. The deliverables all relate to the seven priority actions identified within the Equally Safe delivery plan. In turn, these relate to the four priority outcomes within the [logic model](#):

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 maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people; and
4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

This plan develops the many achievements of its predecessors, but also confirms and builds upon our existing priorities and commitments. As such, current activity to progress relevant previously agreed commitments, including specialist helpline funding, and taking forward work on the review of sexual offences, will continue. These new deliverables represent the next steps on our collective journey to stop violence against women and girls occurring in the first place, build the capability and capacity of support services, and strengthen the justice response to victims and perpetrators.

# Deliverables

1. **We will work with the Addressing Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women and Girls Network to ensure our work reflects the needs of minority ethnic women.**

**Priority 6** - Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors' that are holistic, and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

**Priority 7** - Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

During the development of our delivery plan, we heard about challenges arising from the absence of a clear definition of honour-based abuse (HBA). Some understandings distinguish HBA from domestic abuse on the basis of the perpetrator (which in the case of HBA can include members of the family and community) and the motive (punishment for bringing shame to a family or community). Some approaches conflate the two. This can lead to a lack of consistent risk assessment and effective intervention to support victim-survivors.

Evidence also demonstrates that some minority ethnic women (particularly South Asian women) living in extended family households can experience abuse perpetrated by both their partner and/or other family members in the household, typically the husband's family. We heard that extended family abuse does not fit neatly within mainstream understanding of domestic abuse, which focuses on abuse from partners and ex-partners. Understanding the relationship between HBA, extended family abuse and domestic abuse and how it manifests within different ethnic groups and household arrangements can help inform more effective policy making and service delivery.

We also heard from stakeholders about the complex barriers that migrant women experiencing VAWG



face, such as the weaponisation of immigration status by perpetrators, or the lack of accessible information explaining their legal entitlements and rights. We will work with the network to mitigate these challenges, within devolved competence, whilst we continue to raise concerns around reserved asylum, immigration and No Recourse to Public Funds policy with the UK Government.

The **Addressing Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women and Girls Network** brings together a range of partners from the third, statutory and academic sectors to consider and inform the Scottish Government's approach to violence against minority ethnic women and girls. Drawing on the valuable lived experience and expertise of the network, we will expand our understanding of these forms of VAWG in order to tackle the unique challenges around them.

	Actions	Leads	Timescales
1.1	<b>We will implement the FGM (Protection and Guidance) act.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AVAMEWAG</li> <li>○ Police Scotland</li> <li>○ COPFS</li> <li>○ NHS</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 onwards
1.2	<b>We will develop an approach to address honour based abuse, including consideration of a statutory definition.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AVAMEWAG</li> <li>○ Police Scotland</li> <li>○ COPFS</li> <li>○ NHS</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 onwards
1.3	<b>We will develop an approach to address extended family abuse, including the consideration of legislation.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AVAMEWAG</li> <li>○ Police Scotland</li> <li>○ COPFS</li> <li>○ NHS</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 onwards
1.4	<b>We will mitigate the challenges associated with No Recourse for Public Funds conditions and the Illegal Migration Act within devolved competence.</b>	Scottish Government Asylum & Refugee Integration in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AVAMEWAG</li> <li>○ Police Scotland</li> <li>○ NHS</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 onwards

## 2. We will deliver the Scottish Government Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group Action Plan.

**Priority 6** - Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors' that are holistic, and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

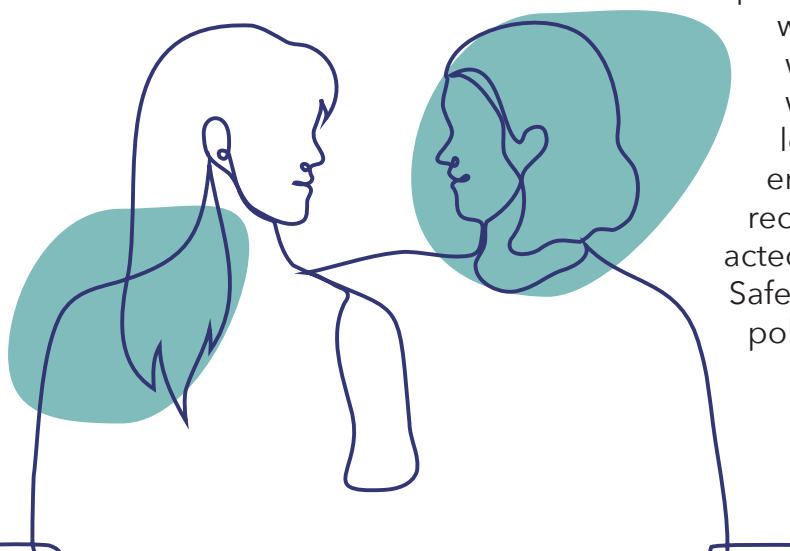
**Priority 7** - Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

Research and engagement demonstrates that women and girls with learning disabilities have a higher risk of experiencing VAWG than other disabled and non-disabled women and girls. During the engagement process, we heard from practitioners and women with learning disabilities about the importance of preventing VAWG before it happens, and the importance of ensuring that education settings have the necessary tools and resources to strengthen pupil understanding of healthy relationships and VAWG.

We also heard from stakeholders about the pervasive barriers that women and girls with learning disabilities who have experienced VAWG face when seeking support. They emphasised the need for accessible support services and routes to justice, which will be progressed by the development of an accessibility audit tool for VAWG services from March 2025.

The **Scottish Government Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group** is co-chaired by People First (Scotland) and the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) and aims to protect women and girls with learning disabilities from VAWG. Recognising the

importance of listening to those with lived experience, we will continue to engage with women and girls with learning disabilities to ensure that their needs are recognised, included and acted upon throughout Equally Safe delivery, and within wider policy and practice.



	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
2.1	<b>We will ensure all education settings, mainstream and Special Educational Needs, are equipped to strengthen pupil understanding of relationships and VAWG.</b>	Scottish Government Education and Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group	Ongoing
2.2	<b>We will improve access to justice services for women and girls with learning disabilities.</b>	Police Scotland, COPFS and Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group	Ongoing
2.3	<b>We will improve access to support services for women and girls with learning disabilities.</b>	Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group	Summer 2024 onwards
2.4	<b>We will continue to work with women and girls with learning disabilities to shape VAWG policy and practice.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality, Learning Disabilities and Education, SCLD, PHS and Police Scotland	Summer 2024 onwards



### 3. We will develop a collaborative programme of support to enable local and national partners to adopt a public health approach to preventing VAWG.

**Priority 1** - Preventing VAWG before it occurs.

**Priority 3** - Build a broad and shared understanding across our society and communities of what VAWG is, how it affects those who have experience it, its impact on society more generally, the scale of the problem, and what cause it – so that we can reduce the harm together.

**Priority 4** - Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community and personal commitment, and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG.

Equally Safe prioritises taking a public health approach to ending VAWG and challenges the notion that VAWG is inevitable or acceptable. This includes focusing on primary prevention. Whilst stakeholders have expressed appreciation for this approach, many have acknowledged that there is an implementation gap between policy and practice.

In order to provide clarity around the practical application of primary prevention, we will develop a primary prevention framework to VAWG to embed a gender competent approach within policy and planning across sectors. To further support this, we will establish a collaborative programme to support local and national partners to develop an understanding of a public health approach. This will enable organisations to identify and implement actions within their organisation to embed a public health approach, and encourage collaborative working across sectors.

Elsewhere, we will continue to focus on preventing VAWG through work to develop to gender equality by progressing the recommendation made by the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls to design a new 'What Works?' institute to develop evidence-based and inclusive approaches to changing public attitudes in Scotland to girls' and women's equality and rights.



	Actions	Leads	Timescales
3.1	<b>We will develop a primary prevention framework and testing of an evidence-based implementation approach to prevention to enable a gender competent approach to addressing VAWG.</b>	Zero Tolerance, Engender, Scottish Women's Budget Group, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Government, COSLA, PHS, Improvement Service and Dundee Violence against Women Partnership	2024-2026
3.2	<b>We will establish an implementation forum to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>Promote awareness of a public health approach to preventing VAWG;</b></li> <li>ii. <b>Develop an understanding of local areas' capacity across the four steps of a public health approach; and</b></li> <li>iii. <b>Support partners to identify and implement actions within their organisation/ policy area to embed this approach.</b></li> </ul>	Public Health Scotland and the Improvement Service in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Scottish Government &amp; COSLA</li> <li>○ Engender</li> <li>○ Zero Tolerance</li> <li>○ Scottish Women's Budget Group</li> </ul>	Implementation forum to be established and meet 8 times between 2024-2026
3.3	<b>We will commission a grant scheme to progress the recommendation to develop and test robust, evidence-led, inclusive and representative approaches to changing public attitudes in Scotland to girls' and women's equality and rights outlined in the <a href="#">We Need to do Things Differently</a> research report.</b>	Scottish Government Gender Equality Team, Inspiring Scotland and Host Organisations	2024-2026

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
3.4	<p><b>We will implement a two-year programme aimed at supporting the development and integration of COSLA initiatives focused on enhancing women’s access to power and resources.</b></p> <p>This will prioritise advancing gender equality and mitigating associated harms by addressing gender inequality through COSLA’s policy scrutiny, development, and decision-making processes.</p>	COSLA	2024-2026
3.5	<p><b>We will continue to support the social housing sector to embed gender equality, in preparation for the introduction of a new legal duty to develop and implement a domestic abuse policy outlining how they will support their tenants experiencing domestic abuse.</b></p>	Scottish Government Housing	Ongoing

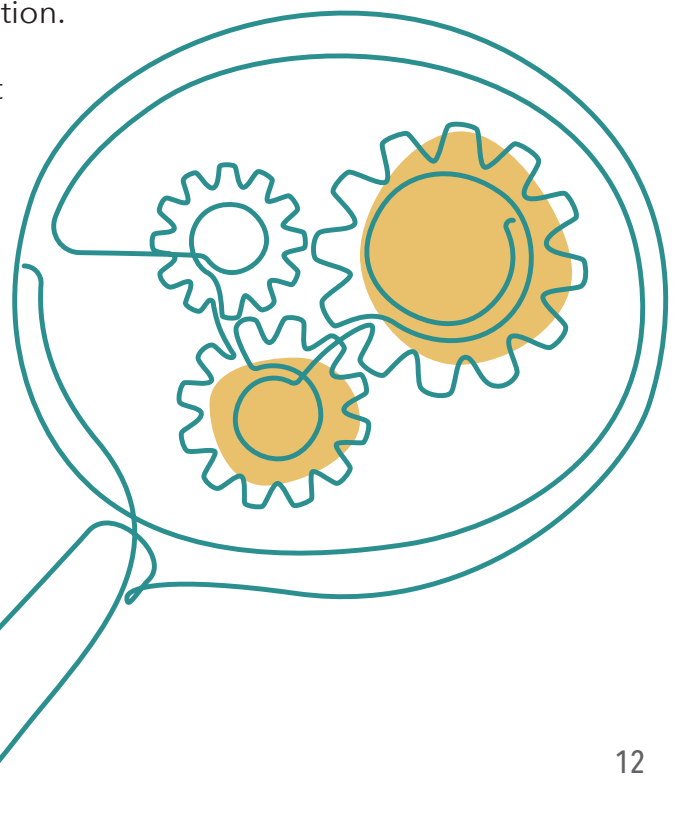
#### 4. We will develop a robust understanding of VAWG data collection, availability and disaggregation practices across different sectors.

**Priority 3** – Build a broad and shared understanding across our society and communities of what VAWG is, how it affects those who have experience it, its impact on society more generally, the scale of the problem, and what cause it – so that we can reduce the harm together.

**Priority 7** – Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

VAWG is a cross-sector issue and consequently various relevant datasets sit in different systems and sectors. Throughout the engagement process, stakeholders from a range of areas highlighted the challenges around measuring the extent of VAWG in Scotland due to issues around data collection, availability and disaggregation practices. Furthermore, we know that there is a lack of meaningful data available to assess the prevalence and impact of VAWG for minority ethnic women and girls and women and girls with learning disabilities. Similarly there is a lack of meaningful data available on the scale of commercial sexual exploitation.

In line with our public health approach, it is vital that we use data and evidence to inform policy and practice, monitor our progress and identify areas for future improvement. We will therefore examine existing local and national data to identify opportunities to share insights, and to identify potential gaps. Furthermore, we will develop a measurement framework that can be used to monitor our progress against the activities and outcomes in the [Equally Safe Logic Model](#).



	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
4.1	<b>We will undertake a scoping exercise of the qualitative and quantitative data that exists locally and nationally to identify gaps and areas for future improvement.</b>	Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services, Equality Analysis, Health and Social Care and Children and Families analysis, PHS, Improvement Service and Scottish Women's Aid	6 months
4.2	<b>We will develop an Equally Safe Measurement Framework.</b>	Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services and Equality Analysis, PHS and Improvement Service	18 months
4.3	<b>We will consider how we connect and share data with other public protection areas, and use data and evidence to support conversations to prevent and reduce harm and to improve outcomes for adult and child victim-survivors of VAWG.</b>	Scottish Government Cross-Government Public Protection Team	Summer 2024 onwards

## 5. We will develop a public engagement approach to raise awareness of the scale and impact of VAWG.

**Priority 1** - Preventing VAWG before it occurs.

**Priority 3** - Build a broad and shared understanding across our society and communities of what VAWG is, how it affects those who have experience it, its impact on society more generally, the scale of the problem, and what cause it – so that we can reduce the harm together.

Equally Safe emphasises that by challenging misogyny, harmful assumptions and stereotypes, we pave the way for effective dismantling of the gender-based structures and attitudes which enable and support violence against women and girls.

We have been told of the need for communications and campaigns to raise awareness of VAWG and support attitudinal and culture change. In particular, stakeholders highlighted the importance of engaging with men and boys to bring about change. We were told that in order to truly end violence and discrimination against women and girls, men and boys must be seen as more than part of the problem; they have to be seen as integral to the solution.

Many noted the success of campaigns around reducing misogyny aimed at men and boys within Scotland, such as Police Scotland's 'That Guy' media campaign, and outside of Scotland, such as the Welsh Government campaign to challenge misogynistic behaviour. The work undertaken by third sector specialist organisations will inform our approach.

	Actions	Leads	Timescales
5.1	<b>We will develop a public facing engagement campaign to work with men and boys to challenge misogyny.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality, VAWG Justice and Marketing in consultation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Specialist VAWG organisations</li> </ul>	2024-2026
5.2	<b>We will host a Media Summit to challenge the nature of existing media coverage of VAWG.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality and Justice and COSLA in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Specialist VAWG organisations</li> <li>○ Media partners</li> </ul>	12 months
5.3	<b>We will launch a targeted sextortion awareness campaign aimed at young people and the adults that work with and look after them.</b>	Fearless (part of Crimestoppers), Police Scotland and Scottish Government VAWG Equality and Justice in consultation with specialist VAWG organisations	November 2024

## 6. We will build a robust and joined up approach to the prevention of VAWG across all education settings.

**Priority 2** - Support early intervention.

**Priority 7** - Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

That education settings are key to supporting early intervention and prevention of violence against women and girls was a message we heard frequently. Furthermore, evidence shows that schools are reporting rising numbers of incidents involving misogyny and abuse on social media platforms, and citing the harm of pornography.

We heard that there are a number of valuable education initiatives available addressing gender-based violence in education settings. These include the Rape Crisis Scotland's Sexual Violence Prevention Programme, the Rape Crisis Scotland Equally Safe at School intervention, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme and Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities. We also heard that implementation can be patchy and there are concerns about the capacity to deliver programmes in a cluttered landscape.

The Gender-Based Violence in Schools Framework was flagged as a real lever to ensure wide-spread and consistent approaches to tackle gender-based violence in schools.





	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
6.1	<b>We will ensure that all secondary schools are registered with Equally Safe at School.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.2	<b>We will ensure that all key secondary school staff undertake the Equally Safe at School e-learning module.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.3	<b>We will ensure that all schools record incidences of gender-based violence and that local authorities review this data.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.4	<b>We will ensure that all school staff complete trauma awareness training.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.5	<b>We will ensure that all local authorities review their relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) curriculum to ensure that it includes learning about equalities and gender-based violence.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.6	<b>We will ensure that learning about online safety in all local authorities includes reference to technology facilitated VAWG.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.7	<b>We will ensure that all local authorities encourage the development of peer learning and activity around gender based violence in secondary schools, dependant on the availability of training.</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	2024-2026
6.8	<b>We will strengthen the provision of, and the relationship between, existing education programmes.</b>	Scottish Government Education & Lifelong Learning, Education Scotland, Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities Core Leadership Group and Rape Crisis Scotland	2024-2026
6.9	<b>We will identify specific barriers preventing girls feeling safe in public 'play spaces' and develop guidance for public bodies to address them.</b>	Scottish Government Children & Families	2026

## 7. We will develop a flexible and stable funding model which reflects the ambitions of Equally Safe.

**Priority 1** - Preventing VAWG before it occurs.

**Priority 6** - deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors that are holistic and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

**Priority 7** - Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

Now, more than ever, it is vital that we make the best use of our collective resources. During engagement with stakeholders including our Delivering Equally Safe (DES) funded organisations, we heard about the need for a sustainable long-term funding model with a focus on prevention and high-quality specialist services that provide critical support to victim and survivors.

Informed by the Independent Review of Funding and Commissioning of VAWG Services, we will develop a new sustainable funding model to succeed the current arrangements under the DES Fund. This will provide stability for specialist services while supporting universal mainstream transformation.

As part of this process, we will work with the VAWG Sustainable Funding Project Board to produce an accurate assessment of the current cost and spend of violence against women and children and young people, to the public purse nationally and locally, to inform the development of a future funding model.



	Actions	Leads	Timescales
7.1	<b>We will assess the current cost and spend of VAWG to inform the development of a sustainable long term funding model.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality, COSLA and VAWG Sustainable Funding Project Board	Ongoing
7.2	<b>We will work with the VAWG Sustainable Funding Project Board to develop a new sustainable funding model.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality, COSLA and VAWG Sustainable Funding Project Board	Ongoing

## 8. We will develop a streamlined approach to trauma-informed workplace practices that promote and enhance VAWG knowledge, skills and expertise.

**Priority 5** - Hold perpetrators of VAWG to account, supporting change where possible

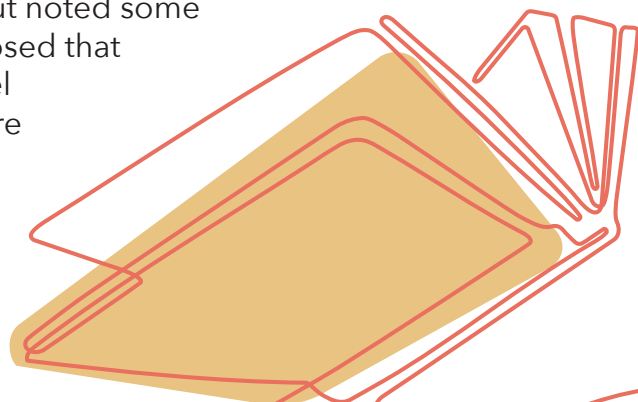
**Priority 6** - deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors that are holistic and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

**Priority 7** - Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

Stakeholders across various sectors highlighted organisations' limited capacity and resources to develop and deliver VAWG training. Consequently, they cited a lack of consistency around VAWG knowledge across different teams and organisations. Developing a joined-up, streamlined approach to workforce development could ease pressures on stakeholders and practitioners to identify and complete various training, resulting in better outcomes for the victim survivors they support.

We were also told about the importance of applying learning from the [National Trauma Transformation Programme](#) to develop a trauma informed and responsive workforce to support victims of VAWG.

We also heard about the positive impact that the Safe & Together model was having in Scotland, but noted some barriers to its implementation. It was proposed that different options for Safe & Together Model delivery and implementation in Scotland are explored.



	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
8.2	<b>We will develop and implement a national framework that will inform an approach to trauma-informed VAWG training and workforce development across the public and the third sectors.</b>	Scottish Government Equality and Fair Work, COSLA, PHS, Improvement Service, NES, Justice Partners, Violence Against Women Partnerships, Close the Gap, Scottish Woman's Aid (Equally Safe in Practice)	2024-2026
8.2	<b>We will support and promote initiatives that exemplify and promote workplace policies and practices that take a gendered analysis of VAWG and embed the principles of Equally Safe, particularly in the public and third sectors.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality, Fair Work and Close the Gap	2024-2026
8.3	<b>We will raise awareness of how a trauma-informed approach can support a reduction in health inequalities for women, children and young people.</b>	Scottish Government Mental Health and Improvement Service	2024-2026
8.4	<b>We will explore and implement options for a Safe &amp; Together Model for Scotland.</b>	Scottish Government, Safe & Together Institute, Social Work Scotland, Improvement Service and COSLA	2024-2026

## 9. We will improve our response to the many forms of technology facilitated VAWG and its harms.

**Priority 2** – Support early intervention.

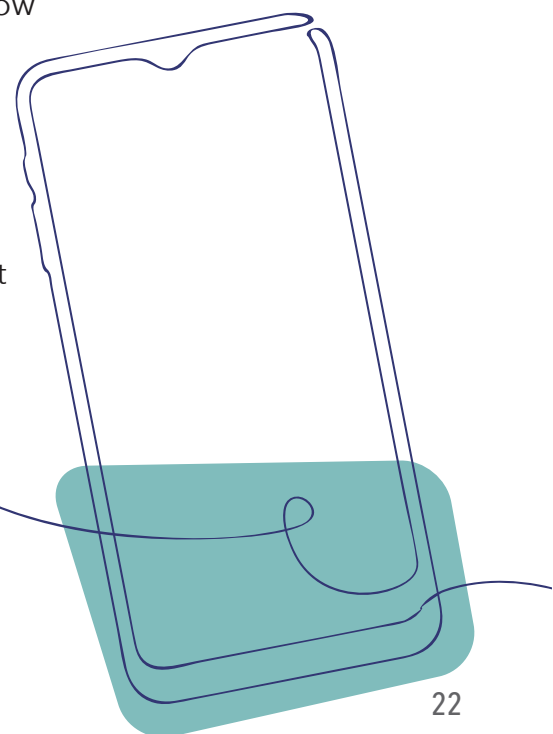
**Priority 3** – Build a broad and shared understanding across our society and communities of what VAWG is, how it affects those who have experience it, its impact on society more generally, the scale of the problem, and what cause it – so that we can reduce the harm together.

**Priority 6** – Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors' that are holistic, and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

We heard many concerns around the prevalence of technology facilitated VAWG, the relationship between technology and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), and the need to better support women and girls affected by it. We were told that technology facilitated VAWG can take many forms such as trolling, threats, abuse (including child sexual abuse and grooming), unwanted sexual remarks, non-consensual sharing of intimate photos, cyberflashing and messages. Furthermore, the online CSE industry is growing and normalising demand for sexualised imagery.

The technology to directly abuse, track, monitor covertly, or propagate abusive content, including with advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and AI generated images and videos (often known as 'deep fakes'), is now widely accessible and available, often with anonymity. VAWG is therefore experienced offline and online, and the two merge. What starts online often moves offline, and vice versa. Furthermore, rapid advances in technology mean the nature of the threat is constantly evolving.

The importance of digital inclusion training for organisations that support victims is key to improving our response to technology facilitated VAWG. Recognising the need to hold social media companies accountable for the harmful conditions that cause VAWG, and recognising that the regulation of internet online service providers is reserved to the UK Government, we will continue to engage with the UK Government and Ofcom on the commencement of the UK Online Safety Act.



	Actions	Leads	Timescales
9.1	<b>We will identify the digital inclusion needs of women and girls who have experienced technology facilitated VAWG and improve support available to them.</b>	Scottish Government Digital in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mhor Collective</li> <li>○ Stakeholders supporting women and girls affected by VAWG</li> </ul>	Ongoing
9.2	<b>We will work with the Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) Strategy Group to understand technology facilitated CSAE.</b>	Scottish Government Child Protection in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Police Scotland</li> <li>○ Partners across social work, health, education and the third sector involved in child protection</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 – December 2024
9.3	<b>We will continue to engage with Ofcom as it carries out its duties under the UK Online Safety Act.</b>	Scottish Government We will continue to engage with the UK Government on reserved matters relating to the regulation of internet online service providers.	Ongoing

## 10. We will support the health sector to identify and respond to victims and survivors of VAWG.

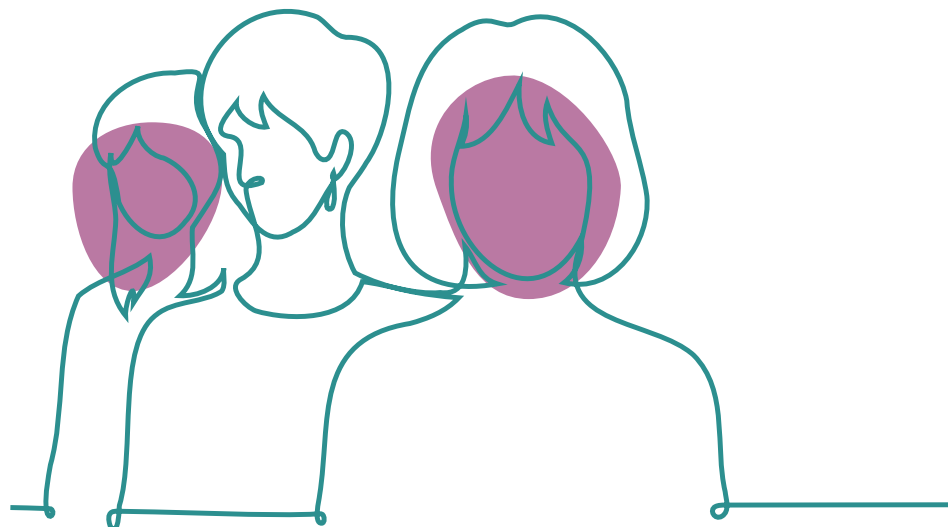
**Priority 4** – Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community and personal commitment, and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG.

**Priority 6** – Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors' that are holistic, and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

Equally Safe recognises the critical role that health and social care professionals play in the early identification of those at risk of VAWG, and in providing care that is trauma-informed and person-centred.

During the engagement process we heard from stakeholders about the need to build stronger links between Equally Safe and the NHS. The need for VAWG leadership, planning and accountability across the health sector was emphasised, along with the need to build gender and cultural competence into health policy and healthcare services.

We also heard about the wider challenges that the health and social care system is currently facing, which can lead to inconsistency in the service responses across health boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships, as well as wider capacity and capability issues affecting our response to victim survivors of VAWG. As such, the need to support the professional development of the health workforce was also made clear.





	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
10.1	<b>We will continue to raise public awareness of NHS Sexual Assault Response Coordination Services (SARCS).</b>	Scottish Government SARCS Policy Unit in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SARCS Network (NSS)</li> <li>○ Territorial Health Boards</li> </ul>	Ongoing
10.2	<b>We will support health board efforts to promote updated guidance for healthcare professionals on how to respond to a disclosure of rape or sexual assault.</b>	Scottish Government SARCS Policy Unit in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SARCS Network (NSS)</li> <li>○ Territorial Health Boards</li> </ul>	Ongoing
10.3	<b>We will improve the collation of equalities monitoring data to support the delivery of person-centred care within SARCS.</b>	Scottish Government SARCS Policy Unit in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SARCS Network</li> <li>○ SARCS Patient Advocate</li> <li>○ Territorial Health Boards</li> <li>○ HIS</li> <li>○ PHS</li> </ul>	From 2025/26
10.4	<b>We will deliver a range of national training and learning opportunities to develop the role of nurse sexual offence examiners in Scotland.</b>	Scottish Government SARCS Policy Unit in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SARCS Network</li> <li>○ Territorial Health Boards</li> <li>○ NHS Education Scotland</li> <li>○ Queen Margaret University</li> <li>○ COPFS</li> </ul>	Ongoing
10.5	<b>We will work with organisations supporting those in suicidal crisis to ensure that the needs of women and girls experiencing VAWG are recognised.</b>	Scottish Government Mental Health	Ongoing

	Actions	Leads	Timescales
10.6	<b>We will consider the inclusion of VAWG in the NHS Public Protection Accountability and Governance Framework.</b>	Scottish Government Public Protection in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, MAPPA and VAWG Equality, NHS Boards and other relevant partners</li> </ul>	From 2025/26
10.7	<b>We will refresh the VAWG e-learning module for healthcare professionals, establishing links to Public Protection resources.</b>	PHS in collaboration with NES	Ongoing
10.8	<b>We will explore options to improve the pathway between Emergency Departments and Police Scotland for people who present where spiking is suspected.</b>	Scottish Government led Roundtable on Spiking	Ongoing

## 11. We will strengthen links between VAWG and other areas of Public Protection to both prioritise actions to prevent and reduce harm and to improve outcomes for adult and child victim-survivors of VAWG.

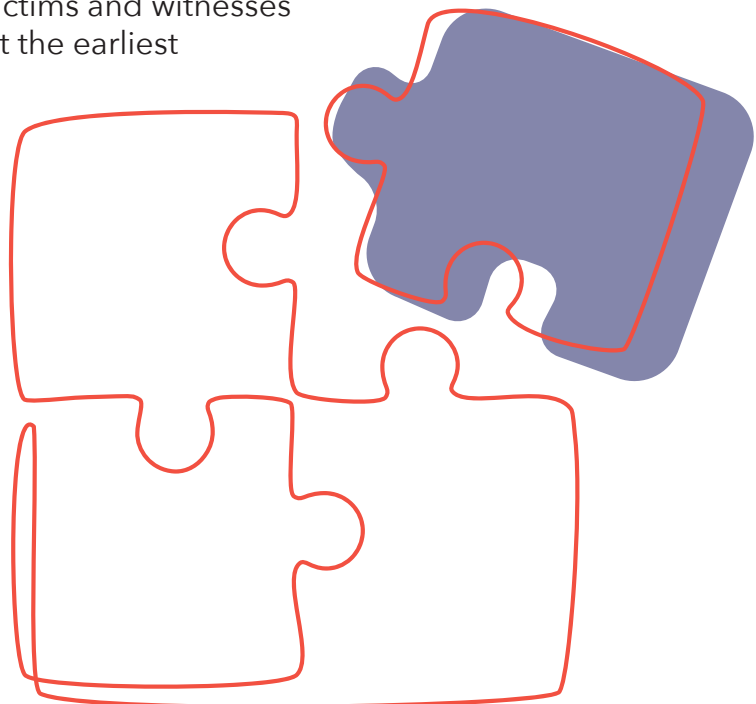
**Priority 3** – Build a broad and shared understanding across our society and communities of what VAWG is, how it affects those who have experience it, its impact on society more generally, the scale of the problem, and what cause it – so that we can reduce the harm together.

**Priority 4** – Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community and personal commitment, and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG.

**Priority 6** – Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors' that are holistic, and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

Addressing VAWG is an essential element of public protection and adult and child victim survivors of VAWG may come into contact with multiple parts of the public protection system. Despite this, we heard that there is a lack of cohesion within the system, with some areas working in silos, unaware of their shared priorities across it. This highlighted need to strengthen links within the system.

We also heard about the need to provide child victims and witnesses of abuse with holistic trauma-informed support at the earliest opportunity. We will continue to work with statutory and third sector partners to ensure progression of the phased implementation of Bairns' Hoose to improve outcomes for child victims and witnesses and contribute to their journey of recovery by providing trauma-informed support as soon as it is needed.



	Actions	Leads	Timescales
11.1	<b>We will develop refreshed guidance for multi-agency Violence Against Women Partnerships, clarifying where they sit within wider community planning structures.</b>	National VAW Network, Improvement Service, Scottish Government, COSLA and PHS	Refreshed guidance to be developed by May 2025, with VAWPs supported to use it thereafter
11.2	<b>We will respond to the recommendations of the Deep Dive-Learning Report published in 2023 to strengthen local arrangements of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC) approach across Scotland.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality and MARAC Working Group	We will publish a government response to the Report by May 2025
11.3	<b>We will progress the phased implementation of Bairns' Hoose to provide a child-centred and joined up approach to delivering justice, care and recovery.</b>	Scottish Government Bairns' Hoose Unit in collaboration with Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder and Affiliate partnerships comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authorities</li> <li>Police Scotland</li> <li>Health Boards</li> <li>Third Sector partners</li> </ul>	The extended timeline for the Pathfinder Phase is until March 2027.
11.4	<b>We will promote <a href="#">new guidance</a> on harmful sexual behaviour to professionals who work with children and young people.</b>	Harmful Sexual Behaviour Delivery Group and Scottish Government Child Protection	Guidance published 23 April  Summer 2024 onwards
11.5	<b>We will ensure that VAWG interests are included in work to strengthen local and national leadership on public protection.</b>	Scottish Government Public Protection and VAWG in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authorities</li> <li>Police Scotland</li> <li>Health Boards</li> <li>Other partners</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 onwards

## 12. We will ensure that the considerations of the Justice Board and the delivery of the Vision for Justice reflect the key themes of Equally Safe and the Report from the Women in Justice Leadership Panel.

**Priority 1** - Preventing VAWG before it occurs.

**Priority 4** - Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community and personal commitment, and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG.

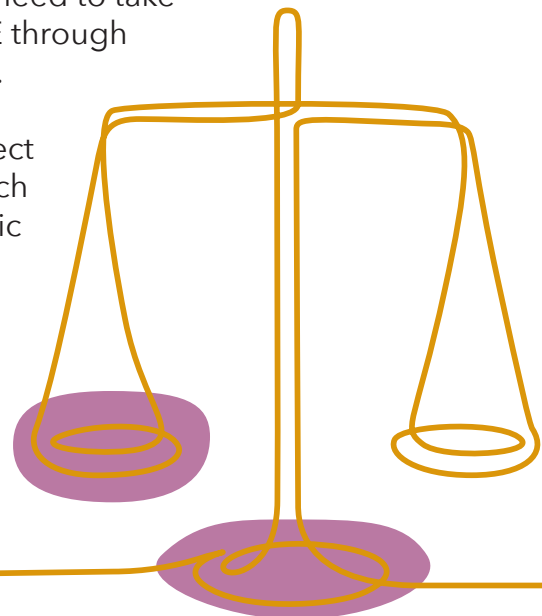
**Priority 5** - Hold perpetrators of VAWG to account, supporting change where possible.

**Priority 6** - Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors' that are holistic, and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

Both the Vision for Justice and Equally Safe have a vision for a Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and the attitudes that perpetuate it. Similarly, evidence and conclusions from the Women's Justice Leadership Panel support a collective understanding and application of a gender competent approach.

Recognising those involved in prostitution as victims of exploitation, we heard calls to better support the needs of women involved in commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), and to tackle the stigma surrounding it. The need to take a preventative approach to tackle the conditions that foster CSE through education and awareness raising activities was also highlighted.

We also heard concerns from stakeholders around the disconnect between domestic abuse criminal proceedings and civil law, such as child contact proceedings. For example, there is no systematic recording of domestic abuse in child contact proceedings. To address this, we are holding workshops with various delivery, voluntary and third sector bodies to discuss the key challenges and find potential solutions to them. These workshops will inform a general discussion paper on improvements which will be considered by the Scottish Government and delivery partners.



Another key concern from stakeholders was around access to justice for women and girls who have experienced VAWG. In particular, the need for an effective and efficient legal aid system to ensure fairer access to justice was made clear. In line with our commitment in the Vision for Justice, the Scottish Government will continue to engage with key stakeholders to inform and shape future legislative proposals in relation to the reform of legal aid. This will include consideration of civil, criminal and children’s legal assistance.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
12.1	<b>We will progress Scotland’s strategic approach to challenging and deterring men’s demand for prostitution and support the recovery and sustainable exit of those involved in prostitution.</b>	Scottish Government, Women’s Support Project and Violence Against Women Partnerships, with the strategic approach’s implementation supported by relevant stakeholders across the wider public and third sector.	2024-2026
12.2	<b>We will use improvement methodology to consider change solutions to address concerns relating to the criminal/civil interface in relation to domestic abuse.</b>	Scottish Government including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Law</li> <li>Justice Analytical Services</li> <li>Leading Improvement</li> </ul>	Ongoing A workshop with voluntary sector bodies is planned for 3 October 2024
12.3	<b>We will engage with key stakeholders to inform and shape future legislative proposals in relation to the reform of legal aid, including representatives of the legal profession, third sector, victim support organisations and the Scottish Legal Aid Board.</b>	Scottish Government Access to Justice	Ongoing

### 13. We will develop an action plan to implement the Istanbul Convention recommendations.

**Priority 4** – Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community and personal commitment, and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG.

**Priority 7** – Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

In July 2022 the UK ratified the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe’s human rights treaty tackling violence against women and girls. We will reaffirm our commitment to realising human rights for all by reviewing and responding to GREVIO’s recommendations. Building on feedback gained during the engagement process, we will work together with our national and local partners to ensure we develop an effective whole-system response to support us on our journey to realise the human rights of women and children in Scotland.



	Actions	Leads	Timescales
13.1	<b>We will review and respond to the recommendations from the Istanbul Convention's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.</b>	<p>Scottish Government VAWG Equality in collaboration with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Scottish Government Justice, Education, Health, Housing and Public Protection</li> <li>○ Justice partners</li> <li>○ UK Government and other devolved administrations</li> </ul>	Early 2025 onwards
13.2	<b>We will develop an action plan to implement the Istanbul Convention's recommendations.</b>	<p>Scottish Government VAWG Equality in collaboration with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Scottish Government Justice, Education, Health, Housing and Public Protection</li> <li>○ Justice partners</li> <li>○ Local partners</li> <li>○ UK Government and other devolved administrations</li> </ul>	Early 2025 onwards



## 14. We will establish a clear governance structure for Equally Safe delivery, streamlining processes where possible.

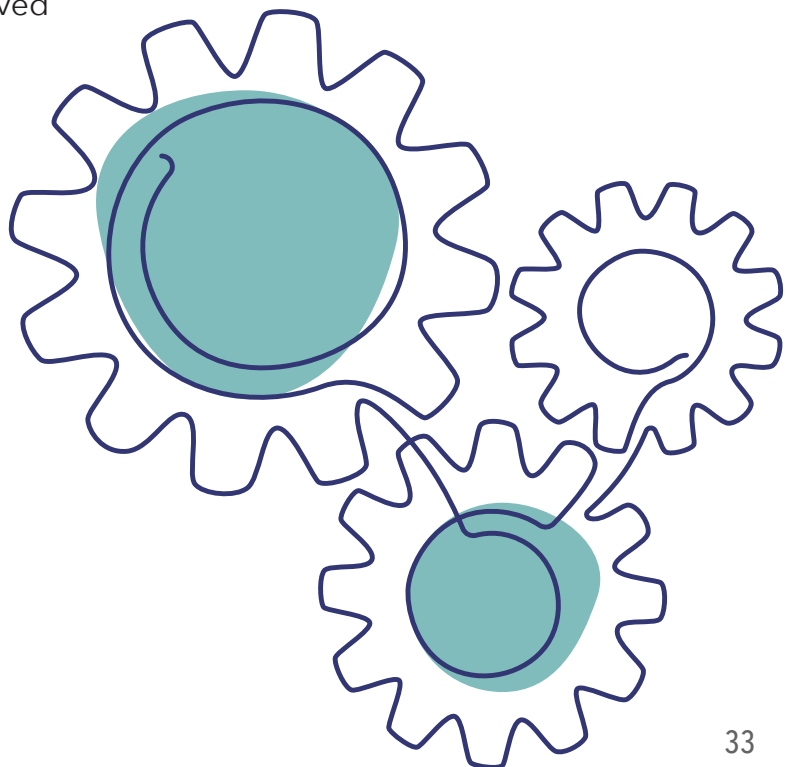
**Priority 4** – Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community and personal commitment, and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG.

**Priority 7** – Promote an intersectional approach to preventing, reorganising and responding to the compounding inequalities and risks that some women, children and young people may experience as a result of their ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or immigration status.

During the engagement process, we heard about the importance of collective leadership and collaboration across sectors to achieve the aims of Equally Safe. We also heard about the need for clear reporting systems in order to ensure accountability and progress with regards to Equally Safe delivery.

Building on our existing Equally Safe structures, we will strengthen and clarify governance arrangements to ensure that all of our delivery partners have a clear understanding of their role in relation to ending VAWG. These structures will strengthen our response to VAWG across Scotland and enable us to monitor and evaluate our progress, addressing any challenges as required.

Recognising the wealth of knowledge and lived experience in our networks, we will also formalise the roles of the **Addressing Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women and Girls Network** and the **Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group** in our governance structure. This will ensure that delivery of Equally Safe reflects the unique needs of minority ethnic women, and women and girls with learning disabilities.



	Actions	Leads	Timescales
14.1	<b>We will strengthen existing governance arrangements, outlining reporting systems and accountability.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality and COSLA	Summer 2024 onwards
14.2	<b>We will formalise the roles of the Addressing Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women and Girls Network and the Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disabilities Steering Group.</b>	Scottish Government VAWG Equality and COSLA in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AVAMEWAG</li> <li>○ Gender Based Violence &amp; Learning Disability Steering Group</li> </ul>	Summer 2024 onwards

# Glossary of Terms

<b>ADES</b>	Association of Directors of Education
<b>AVAMEWAG</b>	Addressing Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women and Girls
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>COPFS</b>	Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
<b>COSLA</b>	Convention of Scotland's Local Authorities
<b>CSAE</b>	Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
<b>CSE</b>	Commercial Sexual Exploitation
<b>DES</b>	Delivering Equally Safe
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GREVIO</b>	Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action Against Women and Domestic Violence
<b>HBA</b>	Honour Based Abuse
<b>HIS</b>	Healthcare Improvement Scotland
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement
<b>MARAC</b>	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences
<b>MVP</b>	Mentors in Violence Prevention
<b>NES</b>	NHS Education for Scotland
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NSS</b>	National Services Scotland
<b>PHS</b>	Public Health Scotland
<b>SARCS</b>	Sexual Assault Response Coordination Services
<b>SCLD</b>	Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>VAWP</b>	Violence Against Women Partnerships



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

© Crown copyright 2024



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83601-601-4

Published by The Scottish Government, August 2024

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA  
PPDAS1415734 (08/24)