



**ABERDEENSHIRE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS PARTNERSHIP  
STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN  
2023-2026**



# ABERDEENSHIRE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2023-2026

## Contents Page

<u>Introduction by Chair of Aberdeenshire VAWG Partnership</u>	3
<u>Background</u>	4
<u>Equally Safe Scotland’s Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls</u>	5
<u>Covid-19 Impact</u>	6
<u>Local Context</u>	7
<u>Our Ambition for the Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership</u>	8
<u>Membership</u>	10
<u>Governance and Reporting</u>	11
<u>Appendix 1 – AVAWGP Strategic Action Plan 2022-2026</u>	12

## INTRODUCTION

Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership (AVAWGP) was originally established as the Gender Based Abuse Partnership, becoming the Aberdeenshire VAWG Partnership in 2019, to promote a strategic multi-agency response to violence against women and girls across Aberdeenshire.

The AVAWGP recognises that violence against women and girls is a tangible indicator of gender inequality, and we must take the long-term view that tackling gender inequality will make our women and girls safer, stronger and more able to thrive. This can only be achieved through collaborative partnership working which we are committed to delivering.

As our partnership has matured, it has evolved and adapted to emerging trends and changes in our communities across Aberdeenshire. This has ranged from raising awareness of gender based domestic abuse, being aware of the ever-growing online threat of violence against women and girls and assisting our communities, including schools and the workplace, to increase their awareness and understanding of violence against women and girls and the forms that it can take as well as enhance everyone's role in prevention.

However, although we have seen successes there is still much work to be done. This is an evolving priority which we must keep a pace with and remain proactive as well as reactive.

The voice of survivors is vital to getting this right. I would like to thank the many women and children who have and continue to bravely share their stories and experiences to highlight the issue and ensure lived experience informs every aspect of planning, support and service design.

Leigh Jolly  
**Chair of AVAWGP**

## BACKGROUND



The Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership (AVAWGP) brings together a range of statutory and voluntary agencies in Aberdeenshire with the aim of improving agency responses to women, children and young people who have experienced violence from a male perpetrator.

Violence Against Women Partnerships are the multi-agency mechanism to deliver on ***Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls*** at a local strategic level. No single partner alone has the resource, skills or reach to achieve the aims of Equally Safe. It is only by working between agencies, across every area of Scottish life that we will successfully achieve the vision and aims of Equally Safe.

Violence Against Women and Girls is recognised a consequence of gender inequality by the United Nations, World Health Organisation and Scottish Government. Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership supports this definition and adopts the Scottish Government vision 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, as well as the attitudes that perpetuate it”.***

We use Violence Against Women and Girls to refer to a range of actions that harm, or cause suffering and indignity to women and children. These include but are not limited to rape, attempted rape, domestic abuse, stalking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, ‘honour’ killings and physical, sexual and psychological violence including coercive control and financial abuse.

By adopting a gendered definition, the Partnership does not deny or minimise the use of violence against men or within same sex relationships. The gendered analysis is a reflection that women and girls are disproportionately affected by particular forms of violence that they experience because they are women and girls which has its roots in gender inequality. Whilst particular forms of violence, including domestic abuse, are disproportionately experienced by women, men also experience domestic abuse and are entitled to support in the same way that women are. The AVAWGP condemns all forms of violence and abuse and also recognises the critical role men play in challenging violence and inequality.

Services provided by Police Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian will be provided to all people experiencing domestic abuse no matter the gender or sexual preference. Specific third sector support for men experiencing domestic abuse is available through FearFree.

## Equally Safe Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls:

Equally Safe is a joint Scottish Government and COSLA strategy. It aims to eradicate violence against women and girls and makes Scotland a place where all individuals are equally safe, respected and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse and the attitudes that perpetuate it. The four key Priorities of Equally Safe are:

- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, it rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically.
- Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people.
- Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.



The activities detailed in this Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan aims to achieve these priorities.

---

### Feedback from a woman in receipt of support from Children's Services Social Work

'The support I received from my domestic abuse social worker was invaluable following the separation of myself and my children from my abusive husband. I believe that without the consistency and level of support given, I would never have managed to move on safely and positively. The service was vital to our recovery as a family and I will be eternally grateful for the compassion and dedication shown to me by my social worker.'

---

## COVID-19 IMPACT

Before the pandemic it was estimated that one in three women would experience violence during their lifetimes. During the pandemic many women found themselves trapped in their homes with their abusers. Whilst it is too early for comprehensive data, the United Nations (UN) highlight there are already many deeply concerning reports of increased violence against women and girls around the world, with surges being reported in many cases upwards of 25% in countries where reporting systems are in place. In some countries reported cases have doubled.

In Scotland and as highlighted by the UN, lockdowns have enabled an increase in violence against women and girls. Evidence in Scotland suggests that the mental health impact of the pandemic is worse for women than men. Women were more likely to be essential workers in the health, care, education, and retail sectors thereby faced higher exposure to COVID-19, increased stress and difficulty reconciling work, family life and care responsibilities.

The adverse economic impacts of the pandemic interact with and exacerbate existing gender employment inequalities. Lone mothers, Black, Asian, minority ethnic women and disabled women are experiencing some of the worst social, economic and clinical impacts of the pandemic.

---

### ***Feedback from a woman supported by Rape Crisis Grampian***

*'I attend a one-to-one session & also a group session every week, this had really helped me to be more confident & it helps that the people in the group have gone through similar experiences to myself. During the lockdown period both the one-to-one sessions & group sessions were a god send as we weren't seeing friends or family. My mood dipped quite often during this time, but the sessions gave me great support & understanding of how the way I was feeling. I very much appreciate the time & dedication the counsellors do for their clients. They're a huge asset to RCG'*

---

## LOCAL CONTEXT



The AVAWGP recognises the importance of tackling all forms of violence against women and girls, this is reflected within our Action Plan. However, a key priority for Aberdeenshire is Domestic Abuse due to the prevalence of the issue across the area. That said we are acutely aware that violence is not just about physical violence it manifests itself in other forms for example Female Genital Mutilation, Rape, Sexual Assault and Coercive Control.

Aberdeenshire is a rural area which means women can feel more vulnerable and access to services can be more challenging. The social isolation can be compounded by geographical isolation and the perpetrator can be protected by the small size of the community.

It is well documented that women enduring domestic abuse in rural areas are half as likely as urban victims to report the abuse and abuse in rural communities can last on average 25% longer than in urban areas (National Rural Crime Network). This is a particular challenge for Aberdeenshire. It would be naïve to assume that the lower number of recorded incidents reflects that domestic abuse is less of an issue us.

In 2020/21, Aberdeenshire recorded 65 incidents of domestic abuse per 10,000 population as per Scottish Government Domestic Abuse publication. This is significantly lower than the Scottish average of 119 per 10,000 but slightly higher than previous years which reported 62 per 10,000. Across Scotland, 80% of incidents involved a female victim and a male accused. 16% of incidents involved a male victim and a female accused. In the remaining cases, victim and accused were the same gender. Half of incidents were between current partners, 49% between ex partners, and less than 1% were classed as 'other' relationship. People aged 31 to 35 years old had the highest rate per 10,000 population for both victims and accused.

In the same year Rape Crisis Grampian have seen a 13.5% increase in referrals to their service pertaining to women and children over 13 years of age who have experienced, rape, sexual assault, exploitation and/or coercion.

During the financial year of 21-22 Grampian Women's Aid (GWA) saw an increase of 33.5% for women's support and 20% for children and young person's support. In the same year they also saw an increase of 3.2% for support via the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Advocacy service for high risk victims. With additional short term funding, GWA have been able to increase personnel within support teams. However, they have found demand for specialist domestic abuse support continues to grow meaning they are consistently at capacity for support provision.

## **Our Ambition for the Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership:**

Our ambition is to increase support for victims and survivors, increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice. By achieving this we will ultimately reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls.

The primary function of the AVAWGP is to ensure that best use is made of all available resources in the community and that women and girls affected by violence and abuse receive integrated, relevant and effective services. These should be underpinned by the core components, values and principles of Human Rights Legislation and where children are involved, Getting it Right First Time for Every Child (GIRFEC).

### **Our Priorities for 2023-2026**

**Safe and Together** – We will identify and train appropriate staff in the Safe and Together model which will help us move towards a perpetrator pattern based approach. We will become more domestic abuse and trauma informed and thereby reduce risk and harm to the non-offending partner or parent and their children.

**Equally Safe at School (ESAS)** – We will work with each other to take a whole school approach, working with staff and students to prevent gender-based violence and to increase confidence and skills in responding to incidents and disclosures of such violence. We will aim to positively influence the school culture by fostering a shared, consistent approach to gender-based violence. ESAS is underpinned by principles of equality, safety and accessibility, with student voices at the forefront.

**Equally Safe at Work (ESAW)** – Equally Safe at Work is an innovative employer accreditation programme developed by Close the Gap, Scotland's expert policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market equality. We will work together to participate in the accreditation and demonstrate leadership on advancing gender equality and preventing violence against women and girls.

**The Voice of the Victim and the Survivors** – We will continue to be guided by the voice of the victims and survivors of domestic abuse through regular engagement by our partners, we will take direction and focus from this.

**Working Cohesively** – We will work cohesively as a partnership within Aberdeenshire and with other Local Authorities throughout Scotland, sharing and adopting good practices and procedures. Each agency will provide appropriate statistics when required to allow us to stay informed of emerging trends and direct resources collaboratively and appropriately. We will prioritise joint training and awareness raising through the use of social media and other communication methods as appropriate and develop robust training and self-evaluation processes.

In delivering the above priorities, the Aberdeenshire AVAWGP is committed to:

### Prevention

- reducing gender inequality
- working to prevent, diminish or remove the risk of violence against women and girls and its impact on children and young people.
- increase the numbers of perpetrators brought to justice and rehabilitated to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

### Protection

- ensuring there is appropriate protection from perpetrators in place for women, children and young people affected by violence and abuse.

### Provision

- ensuring that there are adequate services in place for women and children which are appropriate and relevant.

### Participation

- ensuring survivors of abuse have a role in developing policy and practice along with service providers.



---

#### Feedback from Own My Life programme, Grampian Women's Aid:

*A very helpful course. Helped gain back some confidence and recognition of the effects of abuse on me. Reflective and emotionally difficult at times but definitely worth it to help move on my way to recovery."*

*"The course has given me more personal skills and knowledge to help me deal with previous abuse and move forward with my recovery. The power threat meaning framework was powerful and the work on the stress cycle and assertiveness has proved extremely useful. The peer support has been great."*

---

## MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Partnership includes public and voluntary sector agencies. Current membership includes:

- Grampian Women's Aid
- Police Scotland
- Rape Crisis Grampian
- NHS Grampian
- Aberdeenshire Council:
  - Housing Services
  - Children's Services Social Work
  - Criminal Justice
  - Adult Protection Network
  - Community Learning & Development
  - Community Safety
  - Education
  - Health and Social Care Partnership

### **Partner Responsibilities**

- To acknowledge and work to the definition of violence against women and girls outlined in the Scottish Government's Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy to eradicate and prevent violence against women and girls.
- To take overall responsibility for the delivery of their agency's actions within the set timescales.
- To take responsibility with AVAWGP for the achievement of targets developed in the Strategic Plan and ensure these are reflected in the local Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plans.
- To hold their agencies local delivery mechanisms to account for delivery of AVAWGP priorities.

## GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING

In Aberdeenshire, Violence Against Women and Girls is considered part of the public protection agenda.

The Chief Officers Public Protection Group provides strategic leadership, scrutiny and the oversight of quality assurance and improvement of public protection arrangements within Aberdeenshire. This is achieved by providing strategic direction on priorities concerning risk and clear expectations for partnership arrangements on the safe delivery of services that keep people and their communities safe. It ensures that partnership working within Aberdeenshire meets with national standards around risk management and in addition considers how effective the local planning arrangements are within services and the partnership in managing public protection risk.

Governance Structure – Public Protection Arrangements



The AVAWGP also reports directly to the Community Planning Partnership and Aberdeenshire Communities Committee.

## APPENDIX 1

### ABERDEENSHIRE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2023-2026

Aberdeenshire Priority	Action	Aberdeenshire Performance Indicator	Timescale	Equally Safe Priority	Equally Safe Performance Indicator
Implement the Safe and Together Model across Aberdeenshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will identify and train targeted frontline staff in the Safe and Together model which will help us move towards a perpetrator pattern-based approach.</li> <li>We will become more domestic abuse and trauma informed and thereby reduce risk and harm to the non-offending partner or parent and their children by targeting training within our workforce.</li> <li>Perpetrators will be identified early, and staff will be skilled and confident in holding perpetrators to account.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of staff trained in Overview and Core training.</li> <li>Number of staff reporting increased confidence with their skills and knowledge following training.</li> <li>Feedback from women and children on their experience of support.</li> </ul>	Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aberdeenshire embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.</li> <li>Men in Aberdeenshire desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People in Aberdeenshire have increased understanding of all forms of VAWG (causes, consequences, and appropriate responses).</li> <li>Tolerance of VAWG in Aberdeenshire is reduced and people are more likely to recognise and challenge it.</li> <li>Perpetrators of VAWG are identified at an early stage.</li> </ul>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perpetrators are sanctioned / held to account for their behaviour.</li> <li>• Perpetrators are supported to change their behaviour.</li> </ul>
<p>Deliver Equally Safe at School across Aberdeenshire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work with each other to take a whole school approach, working with staff and students to prevent gender-based violence and to increase confidence and skills in responding to incidents and disclosures of such violence.</li> <li>• We will aim to positively influence the school culture by fostering a shared, consistent approach to gender-based violence. ESAS is underpinned by principles of equality, safety and accessibility, with student voices at the forefront.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of schools actively engaged in delivering/implementing Equally Safe at School.</li> <li>• Feedback from schools and young people about impact.</li> </ul>	Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and girls in Aberdeenshire thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically, and politically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer people adhere to gender stereotypes.</li> <li>• Power, decision-making, and material resources are distributed more equally between men and women.</li> </ul>

<p>Implement Equally Safe at Work across Aberdeenshire Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work together to implement Equally Safe at Work and participate in the accreditation and demonstrate leadership on advancing gender equality and preventing violence against women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aberdeenshire Council accreditation level.</li> <li>Feedback from women on their experience of support within the workplace.</li> <li>% Of women in senior positions across the Council.</li> </ul>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women and girls in Aberdeenshire thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically, and politically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fewer people adhere to gender stereotypes.</li> <li>Power, decision-making, and material resources are distributed more equally between men and women</li> </ul>
<p>Data, Self-Evaluation &amp; Learning &amp; Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each agency will provide appropriate statistics when required to allow us to stay informed of emerging trends and direct resources collaboratively.</li> <li>We will prioritise joint training and awareness raising through the use of social media and other communication methods as appropriate and develop robust training and self-evaluation processes.</li> <li>We will continue to be guided by the voice of the victims and survivors of domestic abuse through</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data and self-evaluation will inform improvement activity which will be reported on annually within our annual report.</li> <li>The voice of lived experience will be evident and central to training and service provision.</li> <li>The VAWG Partnership will be visible in Aberdeenshire.</li> </ul>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aberdeenshire embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People in Aberdeenshire have increased understanding of all forms of VAWG (causes, consequences and appropriate responses).</li> <li>Tolerance of VAWG in Aberdeenshire is reduced and people are more likely to recognise and challenge it.</li> </ul>

	regular engagement by our partners, and we will learn from this.				
--	--	--	--	--	--

If you need information from this document in an alternative language or in a Large Print, Easy Read, Braille or BSL, please telephone 01224 472840.

Jeigu pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba arba atspausdinto stambiu šriftu, supaprastinta kalba, parašyta Brailio raštu arba britų gestų kalba, prašome skambinti 01224 472840.

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații din acest document într-o altă limbă sau într-un format cu scrisul mare, ușor de citit, tipar pentru nevăzători sau în limbajul semnelor, vă rugăm să telefonați la 01224 472840.

Jeśli potrzebowali będą Państwo informacji z niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, pisanych dużą czcionką, w wersji łatwej do czytania, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w brytyjskim języku migowym, proszę o telefoniczny kontakt na numer 01224 472840.

Ja jums nepieciešama šai dokumentā sniegtā informācija kādā citā valodā vai lielā drukā, viegli lasāmā tekstā, Braila rakstā vai BSL (britu zīmju valodā), lūdzu, zvaniet uz 01224 472840.