



# **Equally Safe Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy**

## Document Information

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## Version History

Version Number	Date	Author	Rationale
1.0	May 2019	Rose Harkness	Review and update.
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3.0	July 2024	Mandy Murray	Review and update.

## Quick Links

We are inclusive and diverse, and this is one of our values.

We are committed to the FREDIE principles of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Context</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Key Facts</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Strategic Priorities</b>	<b>5</b>

# 1. Introduction

Equally Safe is Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls.<sup>1</sup> It was developed by the Scottish Government and COSLA in association with a wide range of partners from public and third sector organisations.

As part of the Scottish Government's Strategy for preventing and eradicating gender-based violence in education, an Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit has been produced by Strathclyde University with funding from the Scottish Funding Council. This toolkit provides guidance for implementing a strategic approach to gender-based violence prevention in Scottish Higher Education Institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Given the importance of this key issue, South Lanarkshire College is fully committed to the implementation of the Equally Safe Strategy and to make full use of the toolkit to achieve this.

## 2. Context

In line with the Scottish Government's definition, gender-based violence describes a range of behaviours that includes: intimidation, harassment, online abuse, intimate image sharing, domestic abuse, physical and emotional abuse, stalking, sexual assault and murder. The term also includes commercial sexual exploitation and so-called 'honour based' violence, including, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and 'honour' crimes.<sup>3</sup> Although gender-based violence affects more women and girls, it is important to note it also impacts men and those in the LGBTQ+ community.

Gender-based violence occurs across all levels of society. The fundamental cause of violence against women and girls is gender inequality. Women and girls may also have other protected characteristics that increases their risk level of experiencing violence and abuse. For example, those from ethnic communities, with disabilities or a status which is particularly vulnerable such as refugee/asylum seeker, lone parent or homelessness can greatly increase the risk factor, particularly where an imbalance of power exists.

The two factors related to gender inequality and linked to gender-based violence are:

- Social norms supporting violence as a means of conflict resolution
- The unequal position of women in relationships and society – violence occurs in societies in which men are viewed as superior and possess the economic and decision-making power.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Key Facts

- The police recorded 61,934 incidents of domestic abuse in 2022-23, showing a 4% decrease compared to the previous year.<sup>5</sup>
- There were 2,522 recorded rapes and attempted rapes in Scotland during 2022-23. 95% of the incidents reported had a female victim.<sup>6</sup>
- An estimated 800,000 children are affected by domestic abuse within the UK.<sup>7</sup>
- According to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, women are almost twice as likely as men to have experienced partner abuse and young women (aged 16-24) more likely than any other age group of women to have experienced partner abuse.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-prevent-eradicate-violence-against-women-girls/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/socialworksocialpolicy/equallysafeinhighereducation/eshetoolkit/#:~:text=The%20ESHE%20Toolkit%20provides%20a,adapted%20to%20suit%20individual%20institutions.>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-prevent-eradicate-violence-against-women-girls/pages/3/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://publichealthscotland.scot/our-areas-of-work/equity-and-justice/gender-based-violence/gender-based-violence-overview/overview-of-gender-based-violence/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/domestic-abuse-statistics-recorded-police-scotland-2022-23/pages/2/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2023-24/pages/6/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/our-influencing-work-domestic-abuse>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-crime-justice-survey-2019-20-main-findings/pages/20/>

- On forced marriage, the most recent Scottish Government statistics found that 91% involved female victims.<sup>9</sup>

## 4. Strategic Priorities

The College's Gender-based Violence Prevention Strategy is based on three strategic priorities:

1. Prevention
2. Support & Wellbeing Framework
3. Awareness Raising & Changing Attitudes

### 1. Prevention

#### 1.1 Policy Development

The College acknowledges the importance of having a whole campus approach to the prevention of gender-based violence. This will involve having robust policies in place to ensure the College is a safe, secure learning environment. Policy development around gender-based violence, safeguarding and security will involve collaboration with specialised agencies and should incorporate good practice from the wider FE/HE sector. This will ensure a strong infrastructure is in place so that there is greater awareness of the process and procedures to dealing with prevention and safety on campus, responses to disclosures, interventions with perpetrators and supported pathways for those affected.

#### 1.2 Strategic Leadership

Taking a whole campus approach requires strong leadership from senior management in the College. This commitment will be reflected in identification of a strategic lead who will have responsibility for safeguarding and drive forward the strategic priorities of the College's Gender-based Violence Prevention Vision. Senior management will also act as champions for this work to ensure cross-campus, and cross-department commitment to supporting implementation of gender-based violence prevention into the College's overall vision, values and forward planning.

Gender-based violence prevention rests firmly on a recognition that gender-based violence can affect staff and students of the College community as victims, survivors and perpetrators. Having clear response pathways for those reporting or disclosing incidents or experiences of gender-based violence will ensure any instances are dealt with promptly in line with the College's strategic priorities, and other relevant college policies.

#### 1.3 Safeguarding Group

Implementation will require several college departments, staff and student representation to work together to implement the College's strategic priorities and take proactive action to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence. This will be subsumed within the remit of the College Safeguarding Group. This group has cross-college representation with both staff and student membership. The group also consists of representatives at senior level who have decision-making capacity. By having this form part of the work of the Safeguarding Group, this visible commitment conveys a strong message that the issue of gender-based violence is important and that progress will be monitored to ensure the strategic priorities are implemented and embedded into the ongoing activity of the College.

### 2. Support & Wellbeing Framework

#### 2.1 Trauma-informed Support

Having a trauma-informed perspective to support those impacted by gender-based violence enables a more effective intervention to take place which addresses the consequences of the trauma to help facilitate healing. The underpinning principles of being trauma-informed include: understanding the

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-forced-marriage-scotland/pages/5/>

widespread impact of the trauma and potential paths for recovery; being able to identify the signs and symptoms of the trauma; and fully integrate the knowledge about the trauma into college policies, procedures, and practice.

Guidance and support staff should recognise the following:

- Those impacted by gender-based violence need to be respected, informed, connected, and hopeful regarding their own recovery.
- The interrelation between trauma and symptoms of trauma such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide ideation.
- The need to work in a collaborative way with those impacted, and other support services and agencies in a manner that empowers those affected.

It is also important to recognise the additional and intersectional barriers to disclosure and accessing support which may be faced by those who are disabled, lone parents, who are LGBTQ + or non-binary, or from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic communities, and take proactive steps to ensure these are removed. It is vital, therefore, that whoever is approached by a victim or survivor wishing to make a report or a disclosure ensures that the focus of their response is on the person's immediate safety and health and wellbeing.

## **2.2 Holistic Wellbeing Support**

The College recognises that it takes courage to disclose experiences of gender-based violence and those impacted may be fearful and anxious about making that first disclosure. It is important to listen to what they have to say without rushing to judgement, solutions or taking control away from them. Being fully empathetic and present with them during this process, and to then work collaboratively to provide intermediate and/or therapeutic solutions, will ensure those impacted feel empowered and in control of their situation. To enable a fully holistic model, which removes barriers to disclosure or reporting, the College will prioritise:

- Clear and accessible support through face to face or email reporting and/or disclosure pathways
- Safety
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Non-judgemental approach
- Health and wellbeing
- Survivor-led approach to decision making
- Informed consent about next steps, recording and information sharing

Effective interventions will also include making links with both internal and external support agencies and organisations including for example College Student Counselling Service and other internal support provision, Police Scotland, NHS Accident and Emergency, GP or GP Out of Hours services, local Rape Crisis Centres or Women's Aid Refuge, Galop, Men's Advice Line, Scotland domestic abuse and forced marriage helpline, Amina and local Health and Social Care Partnerships.

Throughout the intervention process, and beyond, college staff will continue to provide emotional support, guidance and advice to help facilitate healing.

## **2.3 Staff Training**

It is essential that staff have the necessary trauma-informed training and guidance to equip them with the knowledge, skills and expertise to feel confident in supporting those either impacted by gender-based violence or have been the perpetrator. As part of the ongoing programme of CPD, the College is committed to providing gender-based violence prevention training and guidance to help staff effectively respond to reports/disclosures and responses to perpetrators in a trauma-informed way. This will also include providing staff with a greater understanding of the wider context of gender-based violence and gender inequality across our society. Training opportunities should also be given to those members of staff who have responsibility for investigating reports of gender-based violence on campus.

The training provided will highlight the underpinning understanding that society should embrace equality and mutual respect and reject all forms of violence against women and girls, men and those in the LGBTQ+ community.

### **3. Awareness Raising & Changing Attitudes**

#### **3.1 Gender-based Violence Prevention Raising Campaigns**

Opportunities exist for educators to take the lead to incorporate strong messages and learning which promote gender equality and address the issues of gender-based violence. Delivering awareness raising campaigns across campus, using a range of platforms, will enable the message to be shared widely to both students and staff. The College will continue to work collaboratively with our key partner agencies including for example Police Scotland, Rape Crisis, (AMIS) Abused Men in Scotland and Women's Aid to promote local and national gender-based violence prevention campaigns. All this activity helps towards embedding a culture that recognises that there is no place in our society for gender-based violence.

#### **3.2 Events and Activities**

Delivery of a range of gender-based violence prevention, educational and support events and activities throughout the academic year will ensure that this issue continues to be given key importance within the College. All events and activities will be handled in a sensitive manner to minimise the potential for causing distress and anxiety for those who may be going through or have experienced gender-based violence. In all such cases, immediate support will be made available.

Events will be planned, organised and co-ordinated in conjunction with the Students' Association for maximum student engagement.

Where possible, the College will collaborate with national events and activities and work in partnership with local support agencies and organisations.

