

Response to the Scottish Government consultation:

Equally Safe – consultation on a draft delivery plan

04 July 2017

Social Work Scotland is the national leadership body for the social work and social care professions. Our objective is to influence and advise on policy and legislation; and to support the development of the profession.

Please see below our response to the consultation on the Equally Safe Draft Delivery Plan.

Priority 1 – Scottish Society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls

Q1. Do you agree or disagree that the actions listed under priority 1 are the right actions to help meet the objectives of priority 1?

Disagree

Q2. Please tell us about any of the priority 1 actions that you are particularly supportive of.

The emphasis on prevention is welcome. The "mentors in violence prevention programme" is a particularly important project to help young people understand what is acceptable in healthy relationships and how to challenge abusive behaviour in an appropriate way. This programme could be further developed and rolled out to a wider range of settings

Q3. Please tell us about any priority 1 actions that you don't agree with.

Agree with all of the actions. However, most of the actions are allocated to the Scottish Government. The overall delivery plan would benefit from a more collaborative approach, involving Local Authorities and the Third Sector. Effectively this plan seeks to bring about societal change around attitude and how we value women and girls. It needs to be a long term partnership approach.

Q4. Are there any actions that you think are missing under priority 1?

Objective: "Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour". It is important that the message about personal and collective responsibility is understood- perhaps getting assistance from community planning partnerships, education establishments, young people's organisations in order to communicate and disseminate this information would be useful.

More specific actions in relation to the different forms of violence against women and girls would be helpful.

The delivery plan would benefit from actions which seek to improve community responses to challenging child protection issues, such as female genital mutilation and adult support and protection issues. Engagement with harder to reach vulnerable women who do not usually access services would be beneficial also, such as those involved in forced marriage and honour based violence. Community capacity building and awareness could be developed in order to help individuals in certain communities.

Specific actions for specific forms of violence are necessary to ensure that the delivery plan is bespoke, effective and meaningful.

PRIORITY 2 – Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically

Q5. Do you agree or disagree that the actions listed under priority 2 are the right actions to help meet the objectives of priority 2

Disagree

Q6. Please tell us about any of the priority 2 actions that you are particularly supportive of

It is encouraging to see actions relating to return to work for women having a career break, developing proposals for split payments under Universal Credit arrangements and improving strategic consideration of equality implications of spend for gender and other protected characteristics within the Equality Budgeting process

Q7. Please tell us about any priority 2 actions that you don't agree with

None

Q8. Are there any actions that you think are missing under priority 2?

The promotion of fathers being more involved in child-care and parenting rather than placing the burden of change on women. This would also help challenge gender stereo-types that can restrict and limit opportunities for women to participate in civic society at a community level. Some of the parenting and child-care actions should also link to pregnancy and parenthood - for example allowing young mothers to remain in school where possible. In addition with regard to actions around universal credit, it would be beneficial to see actions associated with improving individual's economic stability perhaps through the "Living Wage".

Actions linked to improving women's civic participation should be considered, such as becoming an elected member, involvement in community councils, becoming board members in charities and volunteering. There is a need also to value the roles which women have traditionally taken on such as in child-care and primary teaching and also to encourage men to enter these types of employment in order to improve the gender balance.

PRIORITY 3 – Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people.

Q9. Do you agree or disagree that the actions listed under priority 3 are the right actions to help meet the objectives of priority 3?

Disagree

Q10. Please tell us about any of the priority 3 actions that you are particularly supportive of

- "Court waiting times are in line with targets"- any action which can be taken to reduce waiting times and the stress which this can place on family and victims is welcome
- *"Initiate an independent review of how national and local specialist services for women and children experiencing gender based violence are commissioned, and how we ensure quality and sustainability of service"* – The intention to review commissioning of services is warmly welcomed. A good quality strategic approach to commissioning can bring benefits to both service providers and service users since it ensures that people have access to the right support at the right time in the right place. This approach also presents an opportunity for collaborative working across social work and social care and the third sector
- *"Commission the development of a sustainable model of training around gender based violence for public and third sector services"* – SWS is keen to support the development of the model of training and to promote collaborative working and training across sectors in order to enhance integrated services.

- *“Ensure that commissioned training resources of local authority housing and homelessness hubs incorporate domestic abuse competence” – SWS recognises the potentially important role that other services, such as housing, can play in identifying underlying domestic abuse issues and linking women in to relevant support services.*
- *“Share lessons from the ‘Safe and Together’ model of child protection in a domestic abuse setting, encouraging a common understanding that perpetrators of abuse should be assessed and held accountable on their parenting choices which includes the perpetration of domestic abuse” - SWS is encouraged to see that lessons will be shared from this model. This action could be developed further and be considered alongside the learning from significant case reviews.*

Q11. Please tell us about any priority 3 actions that you don’t agree with

Actions agreed, however, most actions are specific to domestic abuse with other types of violence against women are not well represented here.

Q12. Are there any actions that you think are missing under priority 3

A specific action relating to the profile of women involved in the Criminal Justice System would be helpful, given that women with histories of violence and abuse are often over represented in the system and in custody. Women are often victims as well as offenders.

The Commission on Women Offenders (2012) highlighted the importance of suitable accommodation and expressed concern over the use of hostels where the environment can be chaotic with high levels of drug use and violence. Making suitable accommodation more readily available to women on release from custody would be advantageous, rather than being released to an appointment with the homeless service. Access to bail supervision as an alternative to remand in custody for women would be positive but this service also depends on the availability of a stable address.

There is a need also to promote and develop a gender informed approach to working with women in the criminal justice system.

More specific actions around commercial sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and human trafficking is required. Training on honour-based violence should be an area for the training of health professionals and social workers.

Development of internet related offending programmes should be considered in order to reduce the harm caused to women and children through this medium.

PRIORITY 4 – Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

Q13. Do you agree or disagree that the actions listed under priority 4 are the right actions to help meet the objectives of priority 4?

Disagree

Q14. Please tell us about any of the priority 4 actions that you are particularly supportive of.
SWS is particularly supportive of the following actions:

- *“Review training provided for all professionals within the Justice System to ensure that there is an understanding of the new offence for those investigating domestic abuse cases including trauma informed practice for all people who work with women and children.”*
- *Review of perpetrator programmes*

Q15. Please tell us about any priority 4 actions that you don’t agree with.

None, however, all of the actions relate to perpetrators of domestic abuse. Those involved with other forms of violence against women and girls should also be held accountable and address their behaviour through appropriate interventions.

Q16. Are there any actions that you think are missing under priority 4?

- Inclusion of other forms of violence against women as noted above.
- Inclusion of women who perpetrate violence against other women, males and children
- Evaluate current programmes to ensure that women are not slotted into programmes which were designed with men in mind
- Development of internet related programmes

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Q17. Do you agree or disagree that the actions listed as cross cutting are the right actions to help meet the overall objectives of the delivery plan?

Disagree

Q18. Please tell us about any of the cross cutting actions that you are particularly supportive of

Violence against women and girls being treated as a violation of human rights is appropriate.

Q19. Please tell us about any cross cutting actions that you don't agree with

None

Q20. Are there any cross cutting actions that you think are missing?

SWS is supportive of actions around child protection, adult support and protection, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and human trafficking- perhaps these areas should be embedded within the four key priority areas.

Account should also be taken of the needs of different women at different stages in their lives.

Explore how digital technology could be used to keep women and girls safer and the role of the internet in facilitating violence.

Q21. Do you agree or disagree that the draft performance framework is right to help ensure that we understand the progress we are making?

Agree that progress should be monitored and that there is understanding of how positive outcomes are reached.

Q22. Are there any sections of the draft performance framework that you are supportive of? Why?

The logic model is helpful in detailing how priority actions link to longer term goals.

Q23. Is there anything you think is missing?

Greater clarity on how performance indicators link to actions and outcomes would be helpful. This will aid any review and evaluation in the future of what is effective and what is not.

Q24. Do you have any suggestions for additions to the draft performance framework?

none

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Q25. What role could your organisation have in contributing to this delivery plan?

Social Work Scotland is the professional leadership body for social work and social care professions. We have a range of practice networks, sub-groups and committees which are designed to support the development of social work and social care across Scotland. With this in mind, Social Work Scotland is very well placed to contribute to the plan and has access to expertise across the organisation in areas such as criminal justice social work, child protection and children and families issues, health and social care issues.

Direct service provision comes from local authorities and the third sector, however, SWS is able to provide professional advice and support, assist training and workforce issues, contribute to reviews and influence policy and practice.

Q26. In responding to this consultation, how are you drawing on the experiences and views of the women, children and young people who access your organisation?

SWS draws on the expertise and experience of a wide range of its members who are responsible for the delivery of services to women and their children. Regular discussion focuses on some of the complex issues addressed within this consultation. Case studies which outline the "lived experience" of service users is also readily available.

Q27. Do you have any further comments on the delivery plan?

The plan is for the period 2017-2020. It is hoped that the intention will be to work towards positive outcomes in this area in the longer term. Many of the actions relate to ongoing work or work that will be completed in the next 6 months. It would be good to have longer term outcomes which will be needed to affect societal change.

A large number of the actions are tasked to the Scottish Government. To bring about societal change to reduce violence against women and girls, we need a long term partnership approach. This should involve women and girls as part of society that can affect this change as well as women and girls who are survivors of gender based violence.

Many of the actions would benefit from being more focused and clear. The outcomes should be upfront of the delivery plan and the action to achieve them should be more definitive.

SWS would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the plan and the successful achievement of outcome and would be keen to support the delivery of Equally Safe.