



# Equally Safe

## Consultation response from Includem

### Background

Includem is a specialist Scottish charity which provides intensive, personalised support for vulnerable young people and their families. We believe that no young person is beyond help and that with a responsive, consistent service at the time of most need we can rebuild relationships and deliver positive, sustainable outcomes.

Our practice experience is in supporting young people to live safely in the community. We strive to make sure young people are safe at home and to ensure they have the opportunity to raise concerns about domestic abuse in the household and to seek other support as necessary.

### Overview of consultation response

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the ways in which individuals can be safe and protected, and where women and children and young people live free from all forms of violence and abuse.

The delivery plan gives a good overview of the strategic context in which the consultation has been developed, and in detailing both the evidence of need and the actions taken so far to address that need.

We are pleased to see the emphasis on fostering collaborative partnership working throughout the delivery plan and hope that as part of this process consideration will be given to partnerships which are already working effectively and are delivering positive outcomes for women and girls.

We particularly welcome the focus on early and effective interventions. From our experience we know that approaches rooted in prevention offer the most effective means of reducing levels of violence and ensure the safety of women and children and young people.

**PRIORITY 1: Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls**

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

We agree that the actions are suitable. We welcome the commitment to supporting the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme, as it is educational initiatives like these, as part of a wider prevention agenda, which offer the greatest long-term approach of preventing violence and improving outcomes for individuals and families.

Includem welcomes the focus on relationships as part of the actions noted under this priority, as we know that it is the quality of relationships within a family which create safe environments for young women and girls to grow up in. Supporting children and young people to develop safe, understanding relationships is at the heart of our approach, so we support any initiatives on a national scale which look to replicate this.

*Please tell us about any of the priority 1 actions that you are particularly supportive of?*

We welcome the recognition of the role of the third sector in raising awareness of violence against women and girls. Our experience is with those young people who are often excluded from mainstream services and are even more at risk as a result. The third sector has a clear role in reaching these young people – oftentimes those that other services fail to effectively engage with.

We also welcome the focus on ensuring that men and boys understand what constitutes a positive healthy respectful relationship. This focus on the positive reinforcement of messages from a strengths point of view is to be welcomed, rather than from the perspective of simply challenging negative behaviours and will, in our view, be more successful at getting through to those who need to hear that message.

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

None

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

We would like to see a greater emphasis on families in priority 1. Understandably schools and workplaces feature strongly, however particularly if we want to move to an earlier intervention approach, families will be a key opportunity to shape and change behaviours.

We think there could be a stronger emphasis on violence against girls and young women. Although this may be implicit in the delivery plan, Includem's experience is that a different approach is required with girls and young women to the population generally. A more careful study of 'what works' in this regard would be beneficial.

*Do you have any suggestions for additional actions to focus on?*

We would be keen to know whether the views of children and young people will be incorporated into the refreshed approach to addressing bullying in schools. We believe incorporating these views, and the lived experiences of children and young people, will provide an informed approach which is well placed to meet the needs of those affected by bullying.

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

We support these actions, however we would suggest a broader view be taken of the kind of activities girls and women participate in – beyond sport, politics and STEM to look at the full spectrum of activities.

We also back the call from CJVSF to look beyond women simply moving into roles traditionally held by men and look at how we can place much greater value on roles that women have traditionally taken on – e.g. in childcare.

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

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

We agree the actions are suitable. We welcome any moves to improving experiences for both children and young people and their families, and reducing levels of stress for all involved.

We welcome the proposal to build on the 'Safe and Together' model of child protection but would like to see this move beyond simply sharing the lessons to look at an evaluation of implementation so far, and greater support to roll it out across the country.

We would agree with the goal of improving the provision of services for victims of sexual assault who require examination. We would further agree that professionals involved are informed by ACE's and hold an understanding of trauma, so these services take a sensitive and respectful approach.

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

We particularly welcome the goal of improving the experience of vulnerable witnesses. We believe this should be included as part of a wider effort to increase the awareness of children's rights within justice settings. Ensuring the rights of children are acknowledged and respected in courts would go a long way to meeting the goal of improving experiences.

*Please tell us about any priority 3 actions that you don't agree with*

None

*Are there any actions that you think are missing under priority 3?*

We welcome the intention of training NHS staff and non-health care professionals to identify and document signs of potential abuse. However we believe there is a potential role for the third sector, and organisations working with families, in participating in this training and providing an additional means of highlighting instances of abuse.

*Do you have any suggestions for additional actions to focus on?*

Although this section has a number of welcome actions around the justice system, we think a much stronger emphasis on a gender-informed approach to women in the criminal justice system is required. Our experience working across the justice system shows that where gender-informed approaches are taken – e.g. to police powers or through the court system, there are better and more sustainable outcomes for girls and young women. We would support an evaluation of these practices to see how they could be expanded beyond the current training which is provided to those working in the justice system.

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

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

We agree the actions incorporate some of the right actions to help meet the objectives.

*Please tell us about any of the priority 4 actions that you are particularly supportive of.*

We welcome the goal of encouraging victims to report violence to the police. We would like to know what engagement, if any, would take place with partners working in communities and in local health services which may offer alternative means of supporting victims to disclose their experiences in a safe environment. A public health approach, with a focus on prevention, in collaboration with victim support and crime reduction, could offer a new means of identifying perpetrators of violence.

We welcome the intention to work with the Scottish Civic Justice Council on case management in family action. It is noted that careful consideration is required to ensure victims are protected from further abuse, and as part of this we would strongly suggest that all children and young people who are involved are aware of their rights and that their rights are respected throughout such cases as part of this protection.

*Please tell us about any priority 4 actions that you don't agree with*

None

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

We would suggest a greater emphasis on children and young people is required in this section, for example considering whether young men would benefit more from specific, targeted programmes rather than those more generally available. This echoes our earlier comment about the need to find out 'what works' and then expand the provision of that service. A 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to succeed here, which is why many third sector services are able to meet the individual needs more effectively.

We would want to know what specific partner engagement, if any, would be incorporated into future initiatives, that would potentially enable victims to violence to come forward in confidence.

*Do you have any suggestions for additional actions to focus on?*

None

### **Cross cutting themes**

We would like to see the inclusion of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child referenced and contained within the Delivery Plan to emphasise the importance of children's rights to this topic.

The majority of the actions are to be undertaken by the Scottish Government. In light of the experience of organisations across the country, in particular in reaching those 'hard to reach' groups, it would be helpful to know what further engagement is proposed, and whether there is the possibility of a working group of external stakeholders supporting the Government as this work is taken forward.

We support in full the separate consultation response from the Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum.