

Breaking The Pattern: The Report

A report about how we evaluate preventative activities that aim to stop violence against women and girls before it occurs



"Violence against women and girls is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, and I am clear that we cannot achieve full gender equality until we prevent and eradicate it from society in Scotland. It is a fundamental abuse of human rights and is completely unacceptable."

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister

Contents

3	_____	Who is this report for?
3	_____	Background
3	_____	Key learning points
4	_____	What did the learning set want to achieve?
4	_____	How do we define prevention?
5	_____	Prevention activities or early intervention – what’s the difference?
6	_____	Outcomes in practitioner’s language
7	_____	How will we measure our outcomes?
9	_____	Contributing to wider Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) policy – a logic model
11	_____	Is our model effective - assumptions and external factors
12	_____	Recommendations
13	_____	Jargon buster

Who is this report for?

This report will be of interest to practitioners, planners, funders and policy-makers alike or anyone with a role to play in eradicating violence against women and girls (VAWG). The focus is on the prevention of VAWG – what we mean by it, how we evaluate prevention activities, and what we have learnt along the way.

A second document, [a practitioners' guide](#), will mainly be of interest to VAWG practitioners and anyone who is interested in learning about and demonstrating the impact of their activities that prevent VAWG.

Background

The Voluntary Action Fund (VAF) has been managing the VAWG Fund on behalf of Scottish Government since April 2013. Since 2015, the outcomes for the Fund have been to:

- Minimise the harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls due to an increased focus on prevention.
- Reduce the harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls due to the provision of early interventions and appropriate high quality services.
- Reduce the harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls due to services working together to maximise their effectiveness.
- Reduce the harm to women and children with protected characteristics and other vulnerabilities through increased inclusive service provision.
- Improve service design and delivery as a result of the participation of women and children affected by violence and abuse.

In response to the Scottish Government's increased emphasis on prevention, VAF co-facilitated a learning set with Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) to explore approaches and methods for evaluating activities that prevent VAWG.

A combination of campaigners, strategists and those giving direct support to women and girls were involved in the learning set and the development of this resource. They represented a good geographical and thematic spectrum including: women's aid organisations, rape crisis centres and children's services, Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland, Zero Tolerance, White Ribbon Scotland and the Improvement Service.

The learning set explored the underlying harmful attitudes, behaviours and structures that cause VAWG. The activities undertaken to address these issues, and the desired outcomes, are illustrated in the logic model (on page 9).

Key learning points

- There has been widespread confusion about what is meant by 'prevention' in relation to VAWG and whether we really mean 'early intervention'.
- Local VAWG services recognise the value of, and want to do, preventative work but lack the resources and capacity to do so.
- There is a disconnect between the preventative work that is happening at national and local level. More could be done to build capacity at community level.
- Having national VAWG partner leads like Scottish Government, the Improvement Service, and Scottish Women's Aid participating in the learning set helped with developing a shared understanding and vision for change.

What did the Learning Set want to achieve?

The learning set met four times and worked to the following outcomes:

- 1) VAWG stakeholders have a shared understanding of prevention and are better able to communicate it.
- 2) The VAWG sector improves their evaluation of prevention work.
- 3) VAWG practitioners and other key stakeholders make a greater contribution to wider VAWG policy and strategies around prevention.

A key task for the learning set was to better understand the spectrum of work being undertaken across the VAWG sector. Through this they could identify common outcomes and areas for potential partnership working as well as gaps between local and national activities.

Outcome 1: VAWG stakeholders have a shared understanding of prevention and are better able to communicate it

How do we define prevention?

The first task was to explore the meaning of 'prevention' in relation to VAWG and agree a definition that everyone felt happy with. There has been widespread confusion with different terms being used across the sector such as 'upstream and downstream', 'primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention'.



Discussions revealed that there wasn't a clear enough distinction between preventative activities and activities that qualified as early intervention.

Rather than agreeing definitions for all the terms that were causing confusion, the group felt it would be clearer and more helpful to agree two simple definitions of prevention and early intervention in the context of their activities:

Prevention:

Aims to eradicate violence against women and girls by challenging gender inequality and the attitudes, values, and structures that cause this violence.

Early intervention:

Aims to address the harmful effects of violence against women and girls at the earliest point that the person is ready.

These definitions also link specifically to the VAWG Fund outcomes:

1. The harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls are minimised due to an increased focus on **prevention**
2. The harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls are reduced due to the provision of **early interventions**

Prevention activities are aimed at individuals, communities, employers, planners, decision-makers and anyone else who can adopt the positive attitudes and behaviours that contribute to VAWG-free environments.

Early intervention activities are undertaken with women, girls, boys, men and families who are affected by VAWG. This may include working with both survivors and perpetrators.

Further definitions of what is meant by VAWG can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/violence-women>

There is a jargon-buster at the end of this report on **page 13**

Preventative activities or early intervention – what’s the difference?

The table below illustrates some of the different activities that would be described as preventative or early intervention.

Preventative Activities	Early Intervention Activities
<p>Challenging and changing attitudes, values and structures within public services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in schools/educational institutions • Practitioner training (anyone with access to the public) • Parenting services • Early years services • Police • Health/social work • Youth services 	<p>Direct support to women:</p> <p>One to one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy • Counselling • Confidence/wellbeing • Safety planning • Transition work • Specialist support (e.g. female genital mutilation, exiting prostitution) • Helpline • Signposting and practical support <p>Group work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy relationship awareness • Refuge • Recreational activities • Emotional and peer support <p>Information and guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Posters • Flyers • Signs • Social media
<p>Challenging and changing attitudes and values of the public and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events/campaigns • Literature • Media stories 	
<p>Creating community champions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer network • Men’s network of champions/volunteers • Organisational champions 	
<p>Creating a more equal working environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with employers • Employability services 	
<p>Research and evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building an evidence base on issues relating to VAWG • Identifying ‘what works’ in relation to reducing/eradicating VAWG 	
<p>Influencing policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying • Creating spaces for service users to share their views or get involved in campaigns • Using evidence to build a case for change • Funders, networks, partnerships and membership organisations sit at relevant tables 	<p>Staff training and support</p>
	<p>Work with perpetrators</p>

Outcomes in practitioner's language

The confusion with language used for evaluation is common to funders and funded organisations alike. VAF and ESS agreed an approach that would help those funded within the VAWG programme to embed meaningful and proportionate evaluation into their practice. One of the first steps was to support all the funded projects to write their own outcomes that:

1. Described the differences their activities were making in their own words.
2. Mapped logically to the VAWG Fund outcomes.

The learning set members reviewed all the outcomes created by local and national services that provide direct support to women and girls and grouped those that were similar. They came up with the following wording for these groupings:

- **Knowledge and awareness of the nature and impact of VAWG is increased (prevention).**
- Immediate risk to women and girls experiencing violence is reduced (early intervention).
The practical and emotional wellbeing of women and girls who have experienced violence is increased (early intervention).
- Other professionals are better able to identify and respond appropriately to the early signs of VAWG (early intervention).

The group felt that their wording:

- **Knowledge and awareness of the nature and impact of VAWG is increased**

is clearer and better defined than the VAWG Fund outcome relating to prevention:

- The harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls are minimised due to an increased focus **on prevention.**

What we found out

Some of the projects that had originally mapped a project outcome to fund outcome 1 (prevention) were in fact working towards fund outcome 2 (early intervention). This tells us that people were confused about what was meant by the outcome language. In reality only **17** out of the **56** VAWG funded projects were actually delivering some level of preventative activities.

What we concluded

The group felt it was important to make it clear that awareness-raising doesn't necessarily mean that behaviours and attitudes change. Therefore they decided to add a further short-term outcome:

People have increased skills, confidence, and motivation to

- **Change** their own behaviour
- **Challenge** others' negative behaviours and attitudes
- **Challenge** cultural and structural gender inequality

***Note:** The VAWG Fund also invests in national VAWG projects that have a role in positively influencing policy and practice in relation to VAWG and gender equality. These include national membership bodies such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, as well as campaigning and awareness-raising organisations like Zero Tolerance and White Ribbon Scotland. These organisations may be better placed to measure the impact of their activities against national medium to long term outcomes.*

Outcome 2: The VAWG sector improves their evaluation of prevention work

How will we measure our outcomes?

The outcomes in the table below include short, medium and long term outcomes that also reflect the work of national membership and campaigning organisations. The action learning set identified short to medium indicators that would help services to measure the progress they are making towards their outcomes.

Please note that further information on methods for collecting data is provided in the practitioners' guide.

Outcome The difference we want to make in the short term	Indicators How we will know we've made that difference	
	Levels and reach	Behaviour/attitude changes
1. Public knowledge and awareness of the causes, nature and impact of VAWG is increased	Level of attendance Number of events/ activities Reach of website/ social media Levels of reports of VAWG	People have an understanding of how gender impacts on the lives of women/girls and boys/men People recognise VAWG happens and the forms it takes People have knowledge and understanding of the impact of VAWG People have an understanding of the role society plays (societal structures) in contributing to VAWG People understand what counts as VAWG and what the law says People recognise and understand sexism and gender stereotypes People have an awareness of the problematic gender representations in the media
2. People have increased skills, confidence, and motivation to Change their own behaviour Challenge others negative behaviours and attitudes Challenge cultural and structural gender inequality	Level of attendance Number of events/ activities Reach of website/ social media	Levels of confidence Levels of skills (ability) Levels of challenge (people intervene) <i>Noted that this may be difficult to measure</i> Levels of changes in behaviour Levels of reports of VAWG * Levels of people accessing services * Increased awareness often leads to increased levels of reporting. We would expect to see reports decreasing in the longer term as indicated in Outcome 5: Reduction in levels of VAWG

Outcome The difference we want to make medium to long term	Indicators
3. Harmful attitudes, behaviours and values relating to VAWG are diminished (Medium term)	Levels of gender stereotypes that objectify and de-value women Changes in media representation of gender and VAWG Prevalence of victim blaming Incidents of positive behaviours People/orgs/decision-makers challenge rather than re-inforce inequality People have an active commitment to challenging VAWG
4. Situational and structural factors that underpin or exacerbate violence against women are reduced (Long term)	Levels of engagement Levels of influence Numbers of practitioners with plans in place to address all forms of VAWG (and its underlying causes) Levels of gender equality (power structures, economics) Incidents of people/orgs/structures being challenged Public spaces are safer for women and girls
5. Reduction in levels of VAWG (Long term)	Level of reports of VAWG Levels of incidences of VAWG Levels of harassment in streets and public places Levels of victim blaming

Linking our outcomes to the national VAWG framework

In order to evaluate preventative or longer term outcomes, creating a theory of change or **logic model** can help services to identify where changes are occurring as a direct result of their work, and when their work is contributing with others' activities to achieve common outcomes. This helps services to identify what evidence they can reasonably collect, what logical assumptions can be made about change beyond their intervention, and who else is involved in creating an evidence base for prevention work beyond the scope of their own activities.

Outcome 3: VAWG practitioners and other key stakeholders make a greater contribution to wider VAWG policy and strategies around prevention

The logic model below sets out the theory of change for activities designed to prevent VAWG:

Definition	Situation/need	Resources	Participants	Partners	Activities	Outcomes		
						Short	Medium	Long
<p>Prevention</p> <p><i>Aims to eradicate violence against women and girls by challenging gender inequality and the attitudes, values, and structures that cause this violence</i></p>	<p>There is gender inequality embedded in Scotland leading to attitudes, values and structures that cause VAWG</p> <p>General public lacks awareness and understanding of the nature and impact of VAWG</p>	<p>Strategic Intervention teams</p> <p>VAWG services</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>Training/campaign materials</p> <p>Legislation/law</p> <p>Policy frameworks</p> <p>Funding</p>	<p>Society as a whole</p> <p>Public services</p> <p>Employers</p> <p>Women</p> <p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Men</p> <p>The state</p>	<p>VAWG services</p> <p>Other national campaigners</p> <p>Other professionals</p> <p>Scottish Govt</p> <p>Local authorities</p> <p>Youth services</p> <p>Third Sector Organisations</p> <p>Funders</p>	<p>Events/campaigns</p> <p>Research</p> <p>Awareness-raising training</p> <p>Work in schools/Higher Ed (to challenge attitudes to VAWG)</p> <p>Working with men</p> <p>Creating, developing and supporting champions</p> <p>16 days of action campaign</p> <p>Influencing policy</p>	<p>Knowledge and awareness of the nature and impact of VAWG is increased</p> <p>People have increased skills, confidence, and motivation to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change own behaviour • Change others negative behaviours and attitudes • Challenge cultural and structural gender inequality 	<p>Harmful attitudes, behaviours and values relating to VAWG are diminished</p> <p>Structures that facilitate or maintain VAWG change</p>	<p>The harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls are minimised due to an increased focus on prevention (VAWG Fund Outcome 1)</p> <p>Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls (Priority 1: Equally Safe)</p> <p>Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically (Priority 2: Equally Safe)</p>

The Learning Set members felt it was important that the attitudes, values and structures that cause VAWG are acknowledged and challenged across all areas of policy in order to affect real change.

The Learning Set members recommended that all interventions should work towards: **VAWG is eradicated** and **Scotland has achieved gender equality** as overarching aims. They also acknowledged the need for work with perpetrators as a vital contribution to achieving the outcomes on the logic model. Currently most of this work is being delivered through the Scottish Government’s Caledonian system which is being evaluated independently.

The logic model below sets out the theory of change for early intervention activities designed to prevent or minimise VAWG:

Definition	Situation/need	Resources	Participants	Partners	Activities	Outcomes		
Early Intervention <i>Aims to address the harmful effects of violence against women and girls at the earliest point that the person is ready</i>	Women and children’s lives and health and wellbeing are adversely affected by VAWG Professionals don’t have the skills / knowledge to identify and support Women and Children affected by VAWG	Staff Volunteers Training materials Centre/refuge Funding	Women Children and Young People Families Men Practitioners Other professionals Communities Public purse Scottish Govt	Women and children (peer support/ awareness raising) Other professionals Local Authority Funders Scottish Govt	1:1 support Group work Refuge Counselling Therapy Information services Referral/advocacy Practitioner training Work in schools/Higher Ed (to respond to disclosures of VAWG)	Short Immediate risk to women and girls experiencing violence is reduced Other professionals are better able to identify and respond appropriately to the signs of VAWG	Medium Women and girls who have experienced violence have improved practical and emotional wellbeing	Long The harmful effects of violence and abuse against women and girls are reduced due to the provision of early intervention (VAWG Fund outcome 2) Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people. (Priority 3: Equally Safe)

Is our logic model effective?

In order to review the feasibility (and the logic) of the logic model, the Learning Set identified what assumptions could be made about the approach and activities identified to achieve the outcomes in the short, medium and long term. They also explored the external factors that could either help or hinder the effectiveness of the model.

Assumptions

- Knowledge doesn't necessarily lead to change. Attitudes and values on an individual, community and national level need to be tackled to effect lasting change.
- VAWG organisations can't achieve or deliver everything that will address VAWG issues; other structures and leaders need to take on responsibility.
- VAWG doesn't exist in a vacuum, it is an equality issue that cuts across other areas of life and policy.
- VAWG prevention must target all sections of society, and not be limited to work with children and young people.

External factors

- There is still a gap between national priorities/campaigns and local delivery.
- There is some duplication of resources and, therefore effort, at local level that could be available from national projects.
- Local projects are often restricted with what preventative work they can deliver due to funding restrictions.
- There is not a single point of access for information relating to VAWG.
- Short-term funding cycles create issues with staff retention, capacity and planning. In turn, this can have an adverse effect on organisations providing support to women and girls and on long term primary prevention work.

Recommendations

Throughout the process, the Learning Set members highlighted a number of key issues and recommendations that could be explored beyond the remit of their group. It was agreed that these would be helpful to capture as possible areas for other stakeholders to consider and take forward.

1. There is a need for a one stop website for accessing VAWG resources and networks.
2. It would be useful to develop a model of life stages and where appropriate interventions would fit in e.g. training, approaches to working with people and communities.
3. Having a map of what work is currently being delivered across Scotland would be helpful.
4. The Learning Set's work shouldn't be seen as a separate project and the definitions and outcomes should be adopted across the sector for consistency.
5. Those Learning Set members who also sit on the Equally Safe group and other relevant forums should make sure that consistent messages are communicated across all groups.
6. More opportunities should be created to enable local projects and national projects to connect to one another to make best use of learning and resources.

“I think this Learning Set really just highlighted that more work is needed in this area. I'd like to see a further Learning Set (or perhaps a research sub-group) be set up to take it further.”

Feedback from a Learning Set member



“I am impressed with what this group achieved in four sessions. We have come a long way, even with all our different discussions and ideas.”

Laura Tomson, Zero Tolerance

Jargon buster

Cultural - The values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours shared by a community, society or other group of people.

Structural – Systems by which power and decision making operate.

Community - A group of people who share a common interest, identity or geography.

‘Violence against women’ is a term used by the Scottish Government to define a range of actions which harm or cause suffering and indignity to women and children. They include but are not limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), within the general community or in institutions, including domestic abuse, rape, and incest.
- Sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space, including work.
- Commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking; including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and ‘honour’ crimes.
- Child sexual abuse, including familial sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and online abuse; so called ‘honour based’ violence.

Scottish Government’s definition of gender-based violence (Equally Safe)

Gender-based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Evidence also shows that the tactics of coercive control - behaviour that seeks to strip away the victim's freedom and sense of self - are rooted in gender inequality, roles and assumptions.

A **gendered analysis** takes cognisance of actions which harm or cause suffering or indignity to women and children, where those carrying out the actions are mainly men and where women and children are predominantly the victims. The different forms of violence against women - including emotional, psychological, sexual and physical abuse, coercion and constraints - are interlinked. They have their roots in gender inequality and are therefore understood as gender-based violence

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