



Equally Safe Draft Delivery Plan

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Children in Scotland

Phone number

0131 313 2322

Address

Level 1, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace Edinburgh.

Postcode

EH12 5EZ

Email

awoodhouse@childreninScotland.org.uk

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
 No

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

Children in Scotland is the collective voice for children, young people and families in Scotland as well as the organisations and businesses that have a significant impact on children's lives throughout the country. It is a membership organisation, comprised of 500 representatives from the voluntary, public and private sectors.

We aim to identify and promote the interests of children and their families, influencing the development of policy and services in order to ensure that they are of the best possible quality, capable of meeting the needs of children and young people living in Scotland.

Children in Scotland's work is underpinned by our adherence to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 19 of the UNCRC sets out that the state must:

'take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse... while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.'

We support the introduction of the Equally Safe Draft Delivery Plan, as an important step towards supporting children and young people's right to be protected from the harm caused by domestic violence under the UNCRC.

Our response to the consultation on the Equally Safe Draft Delivery Plan will focus on the appropriateness of the four priority areas and the objectives that have been laid out to achieve these. It is informed by responses to a survey of our members asking for their views on these priority areas and objectives. Twenty-three responses were received to the survey, giving a mix of qualitative and quantitative data that is utilised throughout this response. All direct quotes are referenced anonymously.

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

- Positive gender roles are promoted
- People enjoy healthy, positive relationships
- Children and young people develop an understanding of safe, healthy and positive relationships from an early age
- Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour

A small majority of our respondents agreed that the objectives in the draft delivery plan were appropriate to achieve priority 1.

“Think the objectives suit as the points talk about relationships which is key.”
(Children in Scotland Member, anon)

Children in Scotland supports this position and recognises the vital importance of promoting positive gender roles, identities and relationships from the earliest age. Our work with children and young people has identified the value that they place upon supportive relationships, particularly when they are dealing with issues or problems in life;

“I feel safe when I’m with my mum and dad and play with friends.” (Child, School 1)¹

“Someone who is able to listen, someone who you are able to trust.” (High School participant)²

Education and early years settings clearly have an important role to play here, and we support Zero Tolerance’s guide for childcare professionals on respecting gender equality in the early years, *Just like a child*³. We recommend the role out of approaches like this within all early years settings.

We also recognise the vital role parents and wider families play in promoting positive gender roles, identities and relationships and would encourage the Equally Safe Delivery Plan to include action to support parents around this agenda. As has previously been noted this is also something that we know children and young people see as vitally important.

One key area where survey respondents felt that the Priority 1 objectives were lacking was in terms of how media perpetuation of everyday sexism feeds into gender violence. It was recommended that the objectives should include explicit reference to the role of the media and social media in this area.

“Needs to include something about challenging everyday sexism e.g. in the media/advertising.” (Children in Scotland Member, anon)

Children in Scotland also fully supports the recommendation, by one of our members, that the objectives should include reference to digital relationships. Our work on a recent report for the Equalities and Human Rights Committee for their Bullying and Harassment Inquiry identified that while the digital world can open

¹ Children in Scotland (2016) *Mental Health in Scotland – a 10 year vision, Report on Consultation with Children aged 12 and under*

² Children in Scotland, (2016) School Nurse Review, Consultation with Children and Young People

³ www.zerotolerance.org.uk/download/623

children and young people up to bullying and harassment, it can also provide a vital support mechanism⁴. We believe the Equally Safe Delivery Plan should supporting the uptake and roll out of the 5Rights framework⁵ across Scotland, to support children and young people's rights to access digital technology creatively, knowledgably and fearlessly.

"Whilst I appreciate that the objectives above are sufficiently broad to encompass digital relationships, I feel that our young people in particular are so steeped in the digital world and the sense of relationship there is so significantly different, I feel there should be a particular focus on that." (Children in Scotland Member, anon)

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

- Women and girls are safe, respected and equal in our communities
- Women and men have equal access to power and resources

The objectives laid out to achieve priority area 2 received strong support from 83.36% of the Children in Scotland members who responded. Again Children in Scotland would agree with our members that these objectives are of central importance.

Achieving these objectives will require clear and informed policy decisions taken across government at Scottish and UK levels, incorporating the use of social security powers, enhancing maternity and paternity leave rights and entitlements, and widespread culture change within organisations and institutions.

"Equal pay. Pension rights. Acknowledging 'hidden work' (childcare, domestic work, etc) with some kind of pay scale for stay at home mothers. Educating equality from the earliest years in children. No difference in educational opportunities." (Children in Scotland member, anon)

"Professionals treat citizens as equals in the main however cultural differences exist and the general public do not treat each person as an equal citizen at all times." (Children in Scotland member, anon)

Within a Scottish context, it is particularly important that the Equally Safe Delivery Plan recognises the role that poverty plays in preventing women and children from thriving as equal citizens. More than one in four children in Scotland are recognised

⁴http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Equal_Opps/General%20Documents/Children_in_Scotland_-_commissioned_by_EHRiC.pdf

⁵<http://5rightsframework.com>

as living in poverty⁶. Further, 92% of single parents are mothers, and about 1/3 of lone parents are living in poverty⁷. Living in poverty has been shown to have negative impacts on educational attainment, physical and mental health, all of which seriously impede individuals' opportunity to thrive⁸. There is also long-standing evidence to link domestic violence and poverty in both the international and Scottish contexts^{9,10}.

Action to lift families out of poverty will have a positive effect on women and children, giving them opportunities to reach their potential. It is for this reason we, along with many partners, are calling for a £5 top up per week per child on child benefit, which alone would lift approximately 30,000 children out of poverty. Such policy moves could, if coupled with other effective measures, have a profound effect on the success of the Delivery Plan in the short- and long-term as they will tackle some of the conditions that perpetuate gender-based violence.

With this in mind we also feel that the draft Delivery Plan should further emphasise links with the Child Poverty Bill; we believe this goes beyond understanding the experience of domestic abuse by children in poverty. We therefore recommend that recognition is given to the fact that an overall reduction in child poverty will support the Delivery Plan's ambitions around equality. We would also recommend reference to the Social Security Bill and promote the use of social security powers (similar to those identified above) to address gender-based income inequalities.

Respondents to our survey also supported this call, emphasising the need for co-ordinated national action, in addition to local action to achieve change;

"The objectives above would appear to drive people down a localised approach to this and yet it is necessary that a strategic and national perspective is also prioritised to enable much of these two objectives to be delivered. There needs to be an objective which outlines the national strategic responsibilities in relation to this." (Children in Scotland Member, anon)

As the UK goes through the process of Brexit, it is also essential that all the rights and entitlements that benefit women and children, which were gained through membership of the EU are protected and maintained. We strongly encourage the Equally Safe Delivery Plan to recognise the importance of supporting and enhancing legal frameworks relating to poverty, employment, maternity / paternity leave for the benefits it will have in creating a positive equal society.

⁶ Latest 2015/16 Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland figures, Table A1: Relative Poverty in Scottish Households 1994/5 to 2014/15, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00515392.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Gender/GenPov>

⁸ http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/In_plain_sight_the_evidence_from_children_exposed_to_domestic_abuse.pdf

⁹ Williams, S.L. and Mickelson, K.D., 2004. The nexus of domestic violence and poverty: Resilience in women's anxiety. *Violence Against Women*, 10(3), pp.283-293.

¹⁰ Engender, <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/080621-Discussion-Paper-on-Tackling-Poverty-Final-Response.pdf>

To further support girls and young women to have equal access to political, social and cultural resources the delivery plan should make reference to their participation in decision-making processes. To ensure that the voices of young women are heard and that services reflect their needs we need to ensure that they are meaningfully listened to at both national and local level on all issues.

Such a move would reflect a cultural shift in itself, it would place young women as more equal citizens in society and in the long-term should support the creation a society that listens to them, upholds their rights and limits their exposure to all forms of gender-based violence.

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

- Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated
- Women, children and young people access relevant, effective and integrated services
- Service providers competently identify violence against women and girls, and respond effectively to women, children and young people affected

The objectives to tackle priority 3 were supported by 78.26% of Children in Scotland members who responded to our survey. Key to accessing relevant and effective services is adequate resourcing. Respondents to our survey highlighted concerns about funding shortages and the short-term nature of many interventions to support women, children and young people. Protecting and enhancing local service provision will be crucial if the ambitions of Equally Safe are to be realised.

Key to competently identifying violence against women and children are professionals that are approachable, trustworthy, who listen, believe and respond;

“We need women and children to be listened to – really listened to and believed. This is essential and can save lives and protect people.” (Children in Scotland Member, anon)

These are core communication skills and should be fostered in all professionals across the public, private and third sectors.

The importance of such practice has been backed up by work conducted by Children’s Parliament on bullying in Scotland. Children identified that for them to disclose information they need to feel like teachers will believe them and act upon it; similar rings true when considering domestic or gender-based violence¹¹.

¹¹ Children’s Parliament, 2017, Children’s Parliament Investigates Bullying, <http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CPIB2017NewspaperforWeb-1.pdf>

This also further emphasises the importance of relationships in terms of whether children feel suitably empowered within a relationship with an adult to bring forward a disclosure of information. Children have noted they particularly feel supported to talk about issues when it is someone they have actually met. Children and young people therefore need to be adequately supported within different settings to develop relationships with responsible adults to support them to talk about issues they may be facing.

“Someone you have met at least once or twice.” (high school participant, School Nurse Review)¹²

Examples of approaches, such as the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) were highlighted, but were recognised to not be appropriate in all cases. Nevertheless the principle of integrated, multi-agency approaches is one that we would recommend.

Respondents also felt that a greater focus on prevention would be appropriate within this priority area, particularly in terms of education:

“The objectives outlined above are undeniably useful, however there requires to be a greater focus on prevention in the objectives, recognising the need for education and education that is not solely targeted at women and girls but boys and young men too.” (Children in Scotland Member, anon)

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

- Justice responses are robust, swift, consistent and coordinated
- Men who carry out violence against women and girls are identified early and held to account by the criminal and civil justice system.
- Relevant links are made between the experience of women, children and young people in the criminal and civil system

Half of the respondents to our survey (50%) stated that they agreed with the objectives under priority 4. Similar to above, a greater emphasis on prevention through education for men and boys was recommended.

On a national level, the Equally Safe Delivery Plan should recognise what additional legislative powers are required to achieve this priority. Most notably, urgent action is

¹² Children in Scotland, (2016) School Nurse Review, Consultation with Children and Young People

required to remove the defence of ‘justifiable assault’ of children and young people where it is claimed that something done to a child was a physical punishment carried out in exercise of a parental right. Equal protection from assault is a right that all children and young people are entitled to, and is particularly relevant to Equally Safe with regards to evidence that indicates a link between physical punishment and adult aggression within intimate partner relationships¹³.

Given the Scottish Government’s commitment to ending violence against women and girls within this Delivery Plan we would expect there to be strong support for John Finnie MSP’s upcoming Members’ Bill in the Scottish Parliament to grant children and young people the right to equal protection from assault. Evidence clearly links experience of abuse in childhood to perpetration in adulthood and as such we feel the bill will be a vital tenant of the delivery plan in both the short- and long-term¹⁴¹⁵.

General points

Children in Scotland welcomes the priorities outlined in Equally Safe, and recognises the importance of its ambitions. We strongly support the emphasis on equality, respect and violence prevention. However, we also know how difficult it can be to achieve culture change within a short time frame unless significant resource is placed behind it. We therefore question the extent to which many of these ambitions will be realised by 2021.

Children and young people’s participation and engagement is essential to the success of Equally Safe and their right to have a voice is an important principle to uphold. It is of vital importance that children and young people’s voices and experiences inform the delivery of Equally Safe at both local and national levels both within the development of the plan but also in achieving the objectives. We believe the Delivery Plan needs to be much more explicit about how this will be achieved. We appreciate that at present there is a commitment to a pilot program that will promote participation however we would question whether this gives lived experience enough prominence in informing the Delivery Plan. It also does not appear to outline how they will be involved in the actions to meet the objectives.

Key messages from our members included the importance of education for prevention, from the early years onwards, one that Children in Scotland supports. We also support their call for adequate resourcing of interventions for both prevention activities and to support women and children experiencing domestic violence.

¹³ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/equally-protected.pdf>

¹⁴ UNICEF, Behind Closed Doors, <https://www.unicef.org/media/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>

¹⁵ http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/In_plain_sight_the_evidence_from_children_exposed_to_domestic_abuse.pdf

Finally we also call for recognition of the larger legislative levers that can help support the creation of a more equal and just society, particularly with regard to child poverty and social security powers.