

Equally Safe Bulletin

Issue 75: March 2016

VAWG team update

See the Scottish Government [Equally Safe Blog](#) and follow us on twitter @ScotGovEquality. In our latest blog, SWA's Nel Whiting reflects on the ruby-red 40 years of Scottish Women's Aid.

Joint strategic board

The Equally Safe joint strategic board recently met for the second time. It received updates from the four workstreams and discussed the participation of women and children in policy making and the importance of the VAW partnerships. It agreed to hold an event in the summer for the workstreams.

Criminal offence of domestic abuse: Scottish Government consultation

A consultation paper seeking views on a draft specific offence of domestic abuse (published with the consultation) which is intended to deal with those who commit psychological abuse and engage in coercive and controlling behaviour. [Consultation](#) open until 1 April.

National VAW network update

VAW performance framework workshops

Glasgow, 17 March; Edinburgh, 21 March; Inverness, 24 March

Equally Safe commits to developing a performance framework to measure, demonstrate and improve the progress being made to tackle violence against women and girls at local and national levels. A series of consultation workshops is being held to discuss what should be included in this framework; how to ensure it is of practical benefit to VAW partnerships and national bodies; and how it can be used to identify good practice and make improvements. The workshops are for anyone working to tackle gender inequality and improve outcomes for people affected by violence against women and girls. This includes representatives from VAW partnerships, community planning partnerships, alcohol and drug partnerships, NHS, Police, Scottish Prison Service, education and specialist third sector agencies.

More information and booking: [Glasgow](#) or [Edinburgh](#) or [Inverness](#)

VAW network meetings and more information

The next meeting of the network will take place on Wednesday 20 April in Glasgow.

Future dates:

- Wednesday 15 June
- Wednesday 31 August
- Wednesday 19 October
- Wednesday 14 December

VAW partnership coordinators are invited to hold the dates. Joanna will send more information in due course. Other VAW organisations interested in the work of the network are invited to join its [KHub Group](#) to share and discuss best practice, learning and resources for tackling VAW. For more information about network meetings or the KHub group contact Joanna McLaughlin: Joanna.McLaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk

News

Scottish Women's Rights Centre: extended (evening) hours

SWRC Helpline is now running an evening service: weekly on Tuesdays from 6pm to 9pm on 08088 010 789. It also runs on Wednesdays from 1.30 to 4.30pm. More information (new website going live shortly): www.swrc.co.uk

Vote for Amina

AMINA MWRC's theatre (see item below) and women's storytelling project has been shortlisted for £50,000 from the National Lottery People's Projects fund. It needs to get the most votes out of five projects to win so it is looking for your help. [Watch the video for more information](#) and [vote here](#).

If I had a girl...

Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, Wednesday 13 to Saturday 16 April

Brought to you by Amina–MWRC, this play is about how the choices we make, the families we are born into and the expectations of others shape our lives. Told through the words of survivors, this story speaks for those whose voices are silenced or stolen. *If I had a girl...* shows the experience of honour-based violence in ethnic minority communities around Scotland. Written by Mariem Omari and directed by Umar Ahmed. [Book tickets](#).

Review into child protection procedures

The Scottish Government has commissioned a comprehensive review of the child protection system. Education secretary, Angela Constance, says the review will strengthen the steps taken when children have experienced, or are at risk from, harm. It will consider child protection committees; initial case reviews; significant case reviews and the child protection register; and its recommendations are due at the end of the year. [Full news release](#).

Human trafficking

A new law allowing life sentences for traffickers comes into effect on 31 May. The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 strengthens efforts to stop trafficking and guarantees support for victims. From 31 May, police and the courts will have new powers to confiscate and seize property used for human trafficking. The Act also allows the courts to impose longer sentences in certain circumstances. [More information about the new law.](#)

More convictions for domestic abuse and sexual offences

Latest statistics for criminal proceedings show a marked increase in the number of convictions for 'breach of the peace', up by 13% in 2014-15 to 15,580 convictions. This is associated with offences with a domestic abuse aggravator within the breach of the peace category, particularly for offences such as stalking or threatening and abusive behaviour. There has also been an 8% increase in the number of convictions for sexual offences, up to 1,145 convictions. This partly reflects a 13% increase in the number of people proceeded against for such offences and includes a 40% rise in the number of convictions for 'rape and attempted rape' and a 16% increase in convictions for sexual assault.

Potential factors behind the rise include more victims coming forward and a more consistent investigation and prosecution approach to sexual offences. [More information about the statistics.](#)

Women in custody to receive better treatment

Women in Cornton Vale prison are to move to HMP Polmont and better facilities as the first phase of improving the treatment of women in custody. Construction on the new national prison in Cornton Vale is expected to begin mid-2018. [More information about the plans.](#)

Looking again at childhood sexual abuse: 25 years on

Sarah Nelson discusses, [in an article for The National](#), how childhood sexual abuse was dealt with in Orkney and Ayrshire 25 years ago; what has been learned since then; and the relevance to the current response.

SWA concerned about proposed cap on social housing

SWA is 'seriously concerned' about the impact that the proposed cap on social housing rents at local housing allowance rates will have on refuge accommodation, all of which is owned by social landlords. SWA is calling for refuges to be exempt from the proposals, and has written to Lord Freud, the UK Government Minister for Welfare Reform, [to raise its concerns.](#)

Online-dating-related rape

Rape Crisis England and Wales reports that the Serious Crime Analysis Section of the National Crime Agency, which supports police investigations into serious sexual assaults committed by strangers, has reported a six-fold increase in reports of online dating related rapes over a five-year period. [Read the full news item.](#)

Research and resources

Inside the sex industry

End Prostitution Now campaign has launched a series of podcasts in which 'Cassie', who started in the sex industry 15 years ago when she was 17, talks about her experience. Speaking to Linda Thompson from the Women's Support Project, she describes what it was like working in saunas and in brothels and escorting. She paints a disturbing picture of the lack of control, power and choice facing many women. She exposes the risks of physical and financial exploitation, and explains how sauna managers keep up to half the money paid by punters, and how pimps controlling prostitution in Edinburgh flats take at least a third.

Linda says 'I was struck by how very strong confident and assertive a woman she was, but still the power and control lay with the managers, the pimps and the punters. Cassie really brought it home to me how women are treated behind the closed doors of Edinburgh's sex industry and how any vulnerability is exploited for the benefit and profit of others.'

You can hear the podcasts at www.endprostitution.org and at www.facebook.com/End-Prostitution-Now-205997517648/

More information: Linda Thompson: Linda@womenssupportproject.org.uk

RCS News: special legal issue

The [latest issue of RCS News](#) is about legal matters, and appears at a pivotal moment for survivors' rights. RCS comments, 'The outcome of a judicial review published on 12 February marks a significant step forward for the right to privacy of complainers in sexual offence cases, while the Evidence and Procedure Review initiated by Lord Carloway, and published on 26 February, offers some radical and welcome proposals for change in how the justice system engages with children and vulnerable witnesses, including survivors of sexual offences.'

Research for women in prison: blog

[Research for women in prison](#) is a new blog linking research to practice to support researchers, practitioners and others who are interested in issues relating to this subject.

Forced marriage research: participants wanted

The Scottish Government has commissioned researchers led by Dr Khatidja Chantler (UCLan), Dr Melanie McCarry (Strathclyde) and Prof Mhairi Mackenzie (Glasgow), with Scottish Women's Aid, Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid and Shakti Women's Aid to research forced marriage in Scotland. The researchers are looking for participants and are mainly interested in speaking to survivors whose forced marriage took place after November 2011. They are asking services to help identify potential participants. More information:

melanie.mccarry@strath.ac.uk <<mailto:melanie.mccarry@strath.ac.uk>>

Cuttin' It

Award-winning drama about two Somali teenagers in London and their experience of FGM. Winner of `best single drama` in the BBC audio drama awards 2016, winner of the Alfred Fagon Award for `best play` and the George Devine Award for `most promising playwright` in 2015. [Available on BBC Radio 4 iPlayer](#).

Gender matters: Holyrood 2016

The Engender Manifesto sets out women's demands in the run up to the May election, including action on [violence against women](#).

Books and resources

Check out [Engender's helpful page](#) of books, resources and where to get them.

Vacancies

Vacancy at Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid

Post of outreach development worker with a closing date of 29 March. [More information about the vacancy](#).

Training and events

Scottish Parliament elections: women's voices

9 April, Glasgow

SWC is holding a women's voices hustings to give women the chance to discuss issues, concerns and priorities with other women and representatives from Scotland's main political parties.

To register your interest email info@scottishwomensconvention.org or phone 0141 339 4797

Impact of crime and effective ways of working with victims and witnesses of crime

28 April, 10am to 4.30pm

30 June, 10am to 4.30pm

Victim Support Scotland training for staff and volunteers who work with victims and/or witnesses of crime, either directly or indirectly, as part of their job or studies.

[Book for April](#) or [Book for June](#)

[More training information](#) or email vsstraining@victimssupportsco.org.uk

Unequal families and relationships: CRFR 5th international conference

13-15 June 2016, University of Edinburgh

The conference will consider questions about 'unequal families and relationships'. Conference fee: £325 early bird; some subsidised places at £160. [More information](#).

SWA training: new dates to June 2016

See [training available from Scottish Women's Aid](#).

Legal Services Agency training

More information on the [LSA seminar programme](#).

Next issue of the Equally Safe bulletin

The next issue is due out in **April**. Please send us any news or other items. Contact: Elizabeth.Sloan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk policy manager, Equally Safe and Violence Against Women and Girls, Equality Unit.

Check out [national training resources](#) on violence against women.