

## Equally Safe at School – Whole School Approach to the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

### Summary and Recommendations

This paper highlights the recent national launch of the new [Equally Safe at School](#) (ESAS) website and programme for schools. This is a deliverable agreed by co-owners and stakeholders of Equally Safe as one of the 118 actions committed to in the Equally Safe Delivery Plan (2017 – 2021).

The work has been led by Rape Crisis Scotland, working together with pilot schools in local authorities and further supported by the University of Glasgow. The paper invites the Board to recognise the positive contribution being made to the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls through this programme and its' offer in respect to Local Governments response to the gendered effects of the pandemic, outlined in the Local Government Blueprint.

Members are invited to

- i. confirm recognition of the positive contribution being made to the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls through Equally Safe at School (ESAS)
- ii. raise awareness of the ESAS whole schools approach in their own authorities along with other available programmes and approaches (i.e. [the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme](#)) as helpful and free resources available to local authorities in their response to the prevalence of violence against women and girls and the gendered impacts of the pandemic
- iii. highlight and discuss any challenges facing Local Government In the embedding of schools based or youth /place based prevention of VAWG
- iv. offer any views on the challenges facing or opportunities for Local Government to embed prevention of VAWG in schools and youth/ place based approaches in recovery and renewal planning
- v. instruct officers to reflect Members views in the upcoming refreshment of the Equally Safe Delivery Plan and the Equally Safe Funding Review – ensuring that the challenges facing or opportunities for Local Government to embed VAWG preventative action in schools and youth/place based activity informs these processes

**References:** [Equally Safe Delivery Plan – Priority Actions](#)

## **Equally Safe at School – Whole School Approach to the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

### **Purpose**

1. This paper highlights the recent national launch of the new [Equally Safe at School](#) website and programme for schools. This is a deliverable agreed by co-owners and stakeholders of Equally Safe as one of the 118 actions committed to in the Equally Safe Delivery Plan (2017 – 2021). The work has been led by Rape Crisis Scotland, working together with pilot schools in local authorities and further supported by the University of Glasgow
2. The paper invites the Board to recognise the positive contribution being made to the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls through this programme and its' offer in respect to the Local Government response to the gendered effects of the pandemic, outlined in the Local Government Blueprint.

### **Current COSLA Position**

3. COSLA and the Scottish Government are co-owners of Scotland's Equally Safe (ES) Strategy to prevent and eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Priority 1 commits Local Government, working with the Scottish Government and key Equally Safe stakeholders to strive to deliver a Scottish society that "embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls". Key to this ambition is the stated intention to 'raise awareness of VAWG and its causes and to change attitudes'.
3. The Equally Safe Delivery Plan (to 2021) outlines the priority actions agreed through which this will be achieved: These are that;
  - 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
4. Action 1.11 of the 2017 – 2021 Equally Safe Delivery Plan committed named stakeholders to 'piloting the development of a 'whole school' approach to tackling gender based violence' by 2020.

### **What is changing?**

5. A [substantial body of research](#) from Scotland and the UK highlights the prevalence of VAWG/Gender-Based violence affecting young people, in all areas of their lives - including at school. In addition to this evidence, and since its inception in 2020 over 51,000 anonymous testimonies have been submitted to the digital space '[Everyone's Invited](#)', created to enable survivors of VAWG/Gender-Based violence and rape culture in the UK to share their stories. A significant number of these highlight the experience of young people, mainly girls and young women, in schools, colleges and universities, including in Scotland.

6. Whilst there is much good practice and guidance in Scotland, many schools, young people and other Equally Safe partners and stakeholders have recognised and welcomed the development of further support to promote a comprehensive and focused approach to tackling cultural shift and preventing VAWG/Gender-Based violence.
7. Despite progress being delayed by the impact of the pandemic, the national launch of Equally Safe in Schools (ESAS) , a whole school approach to preventing Gender-Based violence, took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021. This [evidence based programme](#) has been piloted with the support of a number of Secondary Schools.
8. All secondary schools in Scotland now have access to a [free suite of online tools and resources](#) to help them understand the problem and implement a set of holistic measures, with staff and students working together to promote equality and prevent violence.
9. Equally Safe at School has been designed to integrate with other key programmes and helps schools deliver against Curriculum for Excellence and How Good is Our School

### **Proposed COSLA Position**

12. It is proposed that the Children and Young People's Board recognise the positive contribution being made to the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls through the development of the Equally Safe at School (ESAS); Whole School Approach and supporting resources accessible through the ESAS website, led by Rape Crisis Scotland, working with pilot schools in local authorities and supported by the University of Glasgow.
13. Further to this the Board agrees that the views of Local Government on the implementation of primary and tertiary prevention of violence against women and girls in schools and in youth /place based environments inform the upcoming refresh of the Equally Safe Delivery Plan and the Equally Safe Funding Review.

### **Next Steps**

14. Members are invited to
  - vi. confirm recognition of the positive contribution being made to the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls through Equally Safe at School (ESAS)
  - vii. raise awareness of the ESAS whole schools approach in their own authorities along with other available programmes and approaches (i.e. [the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme](#)) as helpful and free resources available to local authorities in their response to the prevalence of violence against women and girls and the gendered impacts of the pandemic
  - viii. highlight and discuss any challenges facing Local Government In the embedding of schools based or youth /place based prevention of VAWG
  - ix. offer any views on the challenges facing or opportunities for Local Government to embed prevention of VAWG in schools and youth/ place based approaches in recovery and renewal planning
  - x. instruct officers to reflect Members views in the upcoming refreshment of the Equally Safe Delivery Plan and the Equally Safe Funding Review – ensuring that the challenges facing or opportunities for Local Government to embed VAWG preventative action in schools and youth/place based activity informs these processes