

Equally Safe – Refreshment of Delivery Plan

Summary and Recommendations

The refreshed Equally Safe Strategy, co-owned by the Scottish Government and COSLA, was published in December 2023. This paper outlines the areas of priority that are guiding the development of the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan that will, when approved, drive progress until the end of the current Parliamentary Session.

It also informs Members of the process and approach being employed by the Scottish Government and COSLA to ensure stakeholders from across the system are engaged in informing the refreshed Delivery Plan. In addition, it outlines a potential area of activity that Members may wish to approve as COSLA's contribution to the ongoing implementation of the Equally Safe Strategy within the Delivery Plan.

This paper invites Members:

- i. to consider and advise officers on any improvements they wish made to the outlined approach described to the refreshment of the Equally Safe Delivery Plan
- ii. to approve the proposed COSLA position outlined at paragraphs 10 and 11 to the development, agreement and governance of a COSLA deliverable to be included in the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan that will “drive progress towards better prevention of VAWG before it occurs by tackling women’s inequality in its approach to policy scrutiny, development and decision making across Boards”.
- iii. to approve the next steps as outlined at paragraph 12 -15

References

Previous reports on the Equally Safe Refreshed Strategy, pending refreshment of the Equally Safe Delivery Plan 2023-2026:

- CWB Board 231208 Items 4.1 & 4.1A
- LD230147 Equally Safe Refreshed Strategy Final Version 1
- LD230147A appendix – Equally Safe Strategy Refresh Document Final Draft Version 1

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Purpose

1. The refreshed Equally Safe Strategy, co-owned by the Scottish Government and COSLA, was published in December 2023. This paper outlines the areas of priority that are guiding the development of the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan that will, when approved, drive progress up until the end of the current Parliamentary Session. It describes the process and approach being employed by the Scottish Government and COSLA to ensure stakeholders from across the system are engaged in informing the refreshed Delivery Plan. In addition, it outlines potential areas of activity that Member's may wish to identify as an appropriate COSLA specific contribution to the ongoing implementation of the Equally Safe Strategy within the Delivery Plan.

Current COSLA Position

2. Equally Safe, originally published in 2014, is the Scottish Government and COSLA's jointly owned Strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. The Strategy was refreshed in 2023, with the final version published in December 2023 at Verity House. This was launched by COSLA's Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing and the Minister for Victims and Community Safety. It has been robustly informed through a wide programme of engagement across spheres of government and with input from stakeholders from across the public sector.
3. The vision and aims of the strategy have not changed, and its analysis of deeply entrenched gender inequalities as both the cause and consequence of all forms of violence against women and girls remain in place as the foundation of our approach.
4. It's framework continues to be informed by International Human Rights standards on tackling inequality including gender inequality as the linked consequence of the enduring prevalence of violence against women and girls. It seeks to speak to the UK and devolved Government's duties and responsibilities in line with the Istanbul Convention, ratified by UK Government in 2023.

What is changing?

5. The refreshed strategy recognises VAWG as a major public health issue and sets out a commitment to adopting a public health approach to tackling VAWG, focussing on preventing VAWG before it occurs by tackling women's inequality. It spotlights the importance of all sectors, organisations, services, and individuals understanding and actively playing their role in challenging the every-day sexism, and the patriarchal systems, cultures, and norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls.
6. The strategy continues to drive the building of capability and capacity of mainstream and specialist services, and to ensuring a robust justice response to supporting survivors and holding perpetrators to account.

7. It seeks to widen accessibility and be meaningful to cross-sectoral policy makers & practitioners across the public sector environment and to respond to the shifts in the social landscape and policy environment since the strategy's original development.
8. Through an engagement process with stakeholder groups The Scottish Government and COSLA are preparing and publishing a refreshed Delivery Plan to have 10 – 15 SMART and clearly owned actions establishing accountability of organisations or sectors. A transparent governance structure will be required against each action to monitoring and progress with the Joint Strategic Board providing effective oversight. Each action will fit across the Equally Safe strategy themes and mirror [the logic model themes](#). The new plan will be published in the Spring 2024.


Proposed COSLA Position

9. If Members are satisfied with the process described underpinning the design of the refreshed Delivery Plan it is proposed that they approve that COSLA, as well as fulfilling its governance role in our ongoing capacity as co-owners of the strategy, also identifies a key deliverable and action/s for inclusion in the Plan. This would outline how COSLA will work to drive progress towards prevention of VAWG by tackling women's inequality in its approach to policy scrutiny, development and decision making across COSLA Boards, where Boards agree to participate in exploring this approach.
10. This would enable the development of COSLA's relationship with the [work and recommendations of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls \(NACWG\)](#), where relevant to Local Governments' commitment to drive forward action to tackle intersectional gender inequality. It could also draw on and to link to work being undertaken through a similar approach taken by the Scottish Government in establishing a cross policy forum tasked with consideration of the primary and tertiary prevention and tackling of violence against women and children.
11. Pending approval, is proposed that this activity will feature in the revised Community Wellbeing Board's workplan, following publication of the Delivery Plan in Spring 24. Monitoring reports on planning, cross organisational engagement, activity, progress, and impact will be submitted for Community Wellbeing Board Members oversight scrutiny up until Spring 2026.

Next Steps

12. Officers will work with Scottish Government officials to deliver, and, where advised by Members, enhance approaches planned for broad engagement activity with Local Government advisory bodies, local authorities, and relevant local strategic partnerships engagement (e.g. VAWG, Community Safety, ADP's) to inform the design of the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan.
13. If approved, officers will work to develop a COSLA deliverable in line with the focus identified for inclusion in the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan, to be progressed between Spring 2024 and Spring 2026. The draft deliverable will be developed through engagement across COSLA, considered for approval by the Community Wellbeing Board, or if required by Leaders prior to inclusion in the refreshed Delivery Plan.

Contribution to COSLA Priory Areas and the Verity House Agreement:

COSLA Plan 22-27	Priority Area's	
	Strengthen Local Democracy	✓
	Secure Sustainable Funding	✓
	Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals, Families and Communities	✓
	Enhance Education and Support for our Children and Young People	✓
	Deliver a Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy	
	Support the Most Vulnerable in our Communities	✓
Verity House Agreement	Shared Priorities	
	Tackling Poverty	✓
	Just transition to net zero	
	Sustainable Public Services	✓