



Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

Constitution

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document sets out the governance arrangements established to promote the delivery of an integrated, high-quality response to violence against women and girls, and children and young people affected by gender-based violence in Edinburgh and challenge the underlying systemic issue of gender inequality that underpins it.
- 1.2. The constitution of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee reflects both local and national policy and guidance and sets out the governance framework within which services concerned with violence against women, children and young people are delivered in Edinburgh.
- 1.3. Equally Safe's Vision is:

A strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it
- 1.4. The aim therefore of Equally Safe is:

To work collaboratively with key partners in the public, private and third sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls
- 1.5. There are four priorities outlined in the Equally Safe Strategy:
 - i. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls
 - ii. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically
 - iii. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people
 - iv. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response

- 1.6. This constitution focuses on the roles, responsibilities, membership and constitutional aspects of Edinburgh's Chief Officers' Group and Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee.
- 1.7. It also recognises links to other groups and bodies, underlining the need for the response to violence against women to be integrated effectively with adult protection and child protection services planning and other aspects of wider public protection services and Community Planning.
- 1.8. Appendix 1 outlines the Partnership's reporting structure and membership.
- 1.9. The constitution reflects the expectations of relevant publications and initiatives due to the cross-cutting nature of violence against women.
- 1.10. The Partnership adopts the following definition of violence against women which is based upon the [United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#):

“The phrase Violence Against Women and Girls is used to describe violent and abusive behaviour directed at women and girls because they are women and girls. It is behaviour which is carried out predominantly by men. It is an abuse of power and stems from systemic, deep-rooted women's inequality. VAWG limits women's and girls' freedom and potential and is a fundamental violation of human rights.

Our shared understanding defines VAWG as a form of gender-based violence (GBV). GBV is defined as ‘any form of violence used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders¹. While the terms VAWG and GBV are sometimes used interchangeably, VAWG is a subset of GBV specifically targeting women and girls due to their unequal status in society.”

(Source: The Scottish Government & COSLA, 2023. [Equally safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls](#))

- 1.11. The Equally Safe Strategy further defines VAWG as the actual and threat of:
 - 1.11.1. Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial abuse occurring in the family, within the general community, and in institutions in both physical and digital spaces and places
 - 1.11.2. Domestic abuse/coercive controlling behaviours, stalking, rape, incest, sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation

¹ Lang, J (2002): Keynote address to The International Conference on Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls – Strengthening Human Rights. (Berlin, 2002).

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- 1.11.3. Commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), including prostitution lapr dancing, stripping, pornography
 - 1.11.4. Human trafficking, including for the purposes of domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, which may include gangs and organised criminal networks
 - 1.11.5. Child abuse occurring within family settings, including domestic abuse, and sexual abuse by male family members including siblings
 - 1.11.6. Child sexual abuse and exploitation including the production and sharing of indecent images of children
 - 1.11.7. Honour-based abuse, including forced marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), dowry abuse, and 'honour based' coercive control and killings.
- 1.12. The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee seeks to eradicate behaviour that stems from systemic women's inequality. No woman or girl in Scotland should be subjected to violence or abuse of any kind and no child or young person should have to experience gender-based violence or have to live with its impacts.
- 1.13. The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee is committed to communicating the need for Edinburgh to be a place where all individuals are equally safe and where gender is not a characteristic of inequality of opportunity, power, choice nor the freedom from violence.

2. Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

- 2.1 The key functions of the Committee are: continuous improvement, strategic planning, public information and communication. The work of the Committee will be reflected in local practice and aims to meet local needs.
- 2.2 The primary roles and responsibilities of the Committee are to:
- a. deliver on the aims and priorities of Equally Safe in Edinburgh
 - b. promote a culture of joint working amongst all organisations and individuals involved in violence against women issues, equalities work, education (through the life-course), violence prevention/early intervention as well as any organisation that can support the aims and priorities of Equally Safe
 - c. prepare strategic assessments and action plans for violence against women at time intervals agreed as appropriate by the committee, an annual business plan and an annual report on the work of the Partnership for consideration and approval by the Chief Officers' Group and thereafter the constituent organisations represented on the Partnership

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- d. report to the Chief Officers Group on performance and key activities on a quarterly and annual basis
- e. contribute to the development of public protection campaigns; promote the work of agencies involved in issues regarding all aspects of violence against women; and provide advice and information on access to services
- f. develop, implement and review regularly a learning and development strategy together with the Edinburgh Adult Support and Protection Committee and the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee
- g. share best practice and learning with other violence against women inter-agency groups and partnerships and manage any cross-boundary issues; and
- h. promote continuous improvement of work in respect of gender equality and violence against women through the use of:
 - development, publication and dissemination of policies, procedures and protocols (within and across agencies)
 - development of management information systems
 - development, implementation and review of inter-agency quality assurance mechanisms (including preparation for integrated inspections); and
 - the promotion of good practice.

3. Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Membership and structure

Membership of the Committee should consist of: Police Scotland, NHS Lothian, The City of Edinburgh Council, Primary and Secondary Education establishments, Justice Services, Higher Education and the voluntary sector.

3.1. The group meets every 8 weeks and provides strategic direction and quality assurance. It has oversight of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Improvement Plan and receives scheduled updates from leads. It will identify representatives to link with other work streams and create and dissolve subgroups and short life working groups as required.

3.2. The Committee membership structure, attached as Appendix 1, will ensure representation from constituent agencies and services within Edinburgh. Each of the main agencies with direct responsibility for services relating to violence against women, girls and young people across Edinburgh should be represented.

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- 3.3. Members should ensure that their representative is accorded sufficient delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of their agency in the course of the work of the Committee, including achieving the objectives of the agreed business plan.
- 3.4. In the event of a member being unable to attend a Committee meeting, a substitute may attend, provided that they have the authority of the member they are representing.
- 3.5. The role of chair / vice chair will be reviewed by members of the Partnership on a biennial basis. This will take place no later than May 2024 and every 2 years thereafter.
- 3.6. All proposals for additional members will be decided on by the Committee on consideration of a business case. The decision of the meeting will be communicated to the individual/organisation by the Chair, Vice Chair or Lead Officer of the Committee.
- 3.7. Members will put arrangements in place within their agency to ensure matters considered and decisions taken by the Committee are communicated to all relevant services to ensure appropriate dissemination of information.

4. Quorum

- 4.1 The Quorum will be the Chair, Vice Chair and Lead Officer.

5. Chair

- 5.1 The chair will be appointed by the Committee. The Committee's decision will be ratified by the Chief Officers' Group to serve for a period of 2 years and will be drawn from Partnership members.
- 5.2 The chair will:
 - a. ensure that meetings operate effectively and that the Partnership fulfils its functions
 - b. ensure the terms of the constitution are adhered to, and that appropriate monitoring, reporting and communication mechanisms are in place
 - c. ensure that representatives of all agencies participate fully in discussions and decision-making
 - d. agree the agenda for the meetings
 - e. ensure relevant matters are discussed and appropriate decisions made and implemented

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- f. ensure the development of the strategic assessment and improvement plan, annual business plan and annual report
- g. respond to press enquiries and issue press releases on behalf of the Committee, in accordance with the established multi-agency protocol
- h. consider the resource requirements for the work of the Committee
- i. function as part-signatory (together with the Chairs for the Adult Protection Committee and Child Protection Committee) for expense requests raised against the Public Protection Budget
- j. ensure the Partnership collaborates appropriately with other agencies involved in issues relating to violence against women, the Scottish Government and other national bodies; and
- k. report to each meeting of the Chief Officers' Group.

6. Vice Chair

- 6.1 The Vice Chair will be appointed by the Committee and ratified by the Chief Officers' Group. The Vice Chair will not be drawn from the same organisation as the Chair. The position of vice chair will rotate in line with that of chair.
- 6.2 The vice chair will have the option of becoming chair after serving for a period of 2 years, following discussion within the Committee and ratification by the Chief Officer's Group.
- 6.3 The role and responsibilities of the vice chair are to act as chair of the Committee and take urgent action on behalf of the chair when required, including to deputise in the event of the Chair's absence.

7. Lead Officer

- 7.1. The ESEC Lead Officer will support the implementation and delivery of the core functions of the Committee.
- 7.2. The Lead Officer will support the Chair and Vice Chair in discharging their functions and those of the Committee. The day-to-day management of the Lead Officer rests with the City of Edinburgh Council.
- 7.3. The Lead Officer will be responsible for ongoing communications within ESEC as well as between ESEC and external partners and stakeholders as per the communications strategy.
- 7.4. The Lead Officer will also be responsible for representing the ESEC in any national events, networks and meetings to convey updates and information

relating to any work preventing and responding to VAWG in Edinburgh on behalf of all ESEC partners.

8. Roles and Responsibilities of Member Agencies

- 8.1. Member agencies will ensure that inter-agency strategies and plans agreed by the Committee are implemented within their services, and report on such implementation to the Committee as appropriate. Agencies will also implement other relevant procedures in all parts of their services and monitor and report on progress to the Committee as required.
- 8.2. Agencies will work together to facilitate both internal and external scrutiny, and to act on agreed recommendations. They will maintain high inter-agency standards of practice and commit to information sharing to assist in the delivery of high-quality services.
- 8.3. Agencies will also work to resolve inter-agency operational issues, which may be brought to their attention
- 8.4. Agencies will actively support and commit to the Committee's Learning and Development strategy. They will ensure that staff's learning and development needs in relation to violence against women and girls are identified within their service, and that measures are put in place to provide opportunities to meet those needs.
- 8.5. Members will be required to attend a minimum of 4 meetings annually. If this does not transpire, then a discussion will be held between the Lead Officer of the Committee member to discuss how attendance can be made possible, including addressing any barriers to attending meetings
- 8.6. The role of representatives from member agencies attending the Committee and the associated sub-groups and working groups is to:
 - a. promote partnership working in the delivery of high-quality services relating to violence against women and girls, and ensure that agreed standards of practice are met and maintained
 - b. represent the commitment of their agency to promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of women, children and young people thereby preventing abuse and harm
 - c. use their delegated authority to make strategic and operational decisions on behalf of their agency in relation to violence against women
 - d. raise topics for discussion when there are calls for agenda items, based on their organisation's/service's work remit and priorities on VAWG
 - e. reflect agency accountability in inter-agency decision making

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- f. collate the views of staff and people accessing services on particular issues as necessary, and ensure these are made available to the Committee
- g. participate fully in the business of the Committee and its sub-groups and working groups between meetings, including participation in training
- h. ensure that decisions of the Committee and the implications of such decisions are communicated to, understood and implemented by employees at all levels of their agency
- i. ensure, in partnership with others, that the Equally Safe strategy is implemented in accordance with the decisions of the Committee
- j. ensure that obstacles and barriers to collaborative working are addressed and overcome
- k. be aware of current issues concerning violence against women and relevance to the work of the Committee, and raise awareness of such issues in their own agency
- l. arrange for an appropriate substitute to attend meetings of the Committee when they are unable to attend
- m. arrange for relevant papers to be circulated as appropriate to relevant staff and extended working groups in their agency
- n. ensure the relevant tasks from the work of the Committee are actioned appropriately; and
- o. ensure appropriate links with other relevant agencies and groups are maintained.

9. Meetings of the Committee

- 9.1. The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee will meet every 8 weeks
- 9.2. Committee subgroups/ (short life) working groups will meet at a time and frequency and for the length of time required to complete their objectives. This will be agreed by the subgroup/ (short life) working group members and outlined in their Terms of Reference document.
- 9.3. The chair will arrange for an action note of the Committee meetings to be taken and minutes of any subgroups/working groups

10. Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Working Groups

- 10.1. Working Groups are to be formed and dissolved as required by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Improvement Plan and agreed by the Committee.

- 10.2. Working Group Leads are accountable to the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee. The Leads will decide the relevant membership for their working group. It may include representation from any statutory or voluntary organisation member of the ESEC whose work is relevant to the theme of the Working Group.
- 10.3. Additional agency or service representation will vary according to the role and function of the working group.
- 10.4. An action note will be taken of all meetings. The Leads of the working groups will report verbally to the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee as a standing item on the agenda.
- 10.5. Where it is not possible to report to the Committee during a meeting, Working Group leads will make sure that a note of their subgroups/working group meeting is communicated to the Lead Officer for inclusion in the Lead Officer's report to the Committee.

11. Relationship to other Committees

- 11.1. Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee will have close links to the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee, the Edinburgh Adult Support and Protection Committee, the Edinburgh Offender Management Committee and the Edinburgh Drug and Alcohol Partnership.
- 11.2. Formal links will continue between partnerships and individual agencies in Edinburgh through shared leadership and membership, maintaining the formal link between services related to violence against women and other key service areas and priorities.

12. The Chief Officers' Group

- 12.1. The Edinburgh Chief Officers' Group fulfils the responsibilities of chief officers, as set out in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2010).
- 12.2. Membership of the Chief Officers' Group is:
 - City of Edinburgh Council: Chief Executive
 - Edinburgh Division, Police Scotland: Divisional Commander
 - NHS Lothian: Executive Director Nursing, Midwifery, and Allied Health Professionals
- 12.3. In attendance at meetings of the Chief Officers' Group will be:

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- Chairs of Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee, Child Protection Committee, Adult Support and Protection Committee, Offender Management Committee and the Alcohol and Drug Partnership
- Director of Children and Families
- Director of Health and Social Care

12.4. The meeting will have a quorum of three, drawn from at least two of the constituent agencies.

12.5. The Chief Officers' Group is responsible for ensuring that constituent agencies, individually and collectively, work to protect children, young people, adults at risk and the wider community as effectively as possible. It also has responsibility for maximising the involvement of those agencies not under its direct control, including the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and the third sector.

12.6. The role of chairperson rotates among the agencies involved on a biennial basis. Meetings take place quarterly. The group may establish sub-groups for particular purposes and co-opt members to such sub-groups as appropriate.

12.7. The Chief Officers' Group considers the committees' and partnerships' need for human and financial resources to fulfil their agreed business plans.

12.8. The Chief Officers' Group fulfils a dispute resolution function, should the work of the committees/partnerships be significantly impaired by failure to agree on any matter.

Appendix 1 – Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Reporting Structure:

