

EQUALLY SAFE AT
WORK



Equally Safe at Work:
Why be involved

About Equally Safe at Work

Equally Safe at Work is an innovative and world-leading employer accreditation programme developed by Close the Gap, Scotland's expert policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market equality. It was developed to support the local implementation of Equally Safe, Scotland's national strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The strategy recognises that violence against women (VAW), also known as gender-based violence, is a cause and consequence of wider gender inequality. Addressing gender inequality in the workplace is therefore a fundamental step in preventing VAW.

Equally Safe at Work supports employers to understand how VAW and gender inequality affect women in the workforce. It provides a framework to drive change and enables employers to address the causes of gender inequality in their organisation. It also supports employers to better understand their role in supporting women who have experienced gender-based violence.

The programme was piloted between 2019 and 2020 with a group of early adopter councils, resulting in four achieving bronze accreditation. Between 2022 and 2023, an expansion to a new cohort of councils, and pilots in the NHS and third sector resulted in 14 new employers gaining accreditation, taking the total to 18 in Scotland.



Why be involved

Equally Safe at Work supports employers to improve their policies and employment practice which are key to addressing the barriers women face at work. It enables organisations to better support employees and create a culture of zero tolerance towards VAW.

You'll receive tailored support from Close the Gap in developing gender- and VAW- sensitive employment practice. Accreditation will also signal external validation from experts in gender equality in the workplace and VAW.

You'll benefit from:

- Receiving guidance and advice on key topics, including how line managers can support victim-survivors of VAW at work; preventing and addressing sexual harassment; supporting victim-survivors of rape and sexual assault; and reducing occupational segregation.
- Access to e-learning modules to build capacity in line managers on sexual harassment; flexible working; and VAW and work.
- Training on developing gender-sensitive employment policies and practices through the applying a gender lens workshop.
- Access to awareness-raising material and resources on gender equality and VAW at work for use within your organisation.
- Access to the Community of Practice peer learning network which brings together employers across sectors to share best practice, collaborate, and build collective knowledge on gender equality at work.

The business benefits of engaging with Equally Safe at Work

Participating in Equally Safe at Work will enable you to improve your practice on gender equality and VAW. In turn, your organisation will benefit from:

- A wider range of skills, experiences and perspectives in problem solving, boosting productivity and driving excellence in service provision.
- Recruiting from a wider talent pool which better reflects the communities that your organisation serves.
- Increased employee morale, productivity, and employee retention rates.

'Not just an impactful accreditation programme... but an approach which makes good business sense to unlock the potential of women in the workforce who are safe and achieving their potential.'

Aberdeen City Council

What's involved

Equally Safe at Work is a tiered programme which enables employers to progress from building a foundation for change to embedding a strong culture of gender equality within the organisation. The bronze, silver and gold tiers are cumulative, and organisations progress to the next level once the required criteria at each stage are achieved and maintained. Employers can either work towards development or bronze when beginning their Equally Safe at Work journey.

To meet the standards and receive accreditation, you will need to work towards criteria categorised into six key themes which align with women's experiences of the workplace.



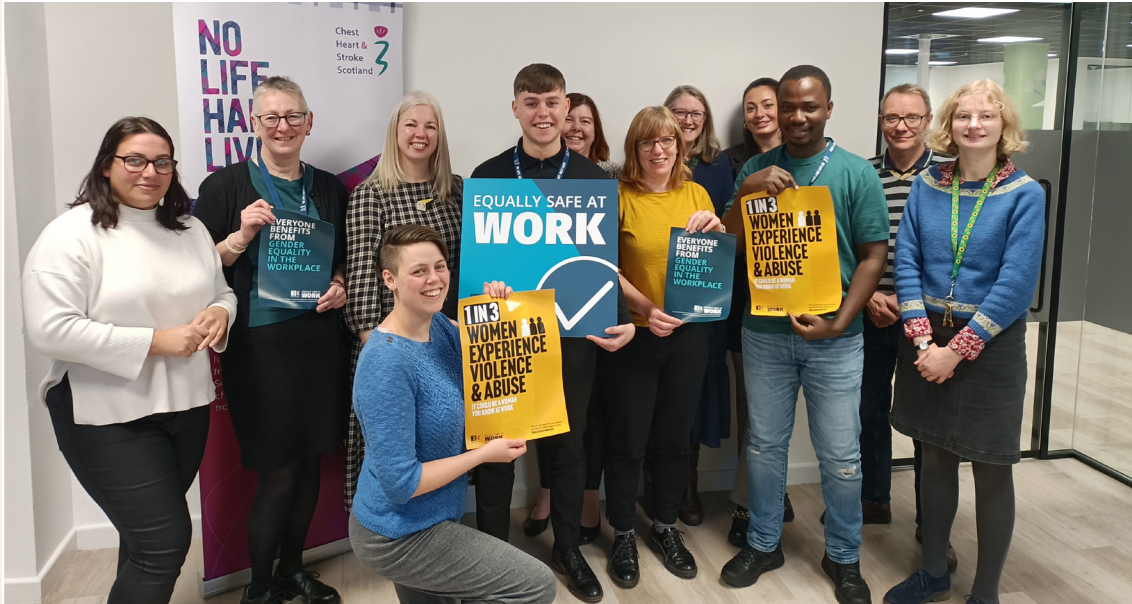
You will be undertaking a number of activities and initiatives which includes:

- Policy review and development.
- Training for line managers and key staff.
- Participation in the applying a gender lens workshops.
- Delivering awareness-raising campaigns.
- Analysis of employee data.
- Developing and/or reviewing your equal pay statement.
- Addressing barriers to recruitment, development, and progression.
- Developing initiatives to reduce occupational segregation.

Key factors for success

Learning from the evaluation of the programme has highlighted a number of key factors to be successful in the programme. These include:

- Securing commitment from senior leadership in the organisation, including the Chief Executive. Leadership commitment is integral for driving organisational change.
- Allocating sufficient time and resource to completing the programme.
- Understanding the barriers facing women in your organisation and taking action to address these. Looking deeper at the experiences of women in your organisation is essential for creating sustainable change.



'The enablers in the organisation were the senior management - they bought in from the start and ensured that the changes that had to be made were made and made timeously.'

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland

'I would definitely recommend the programme. It's well run. Goals are tough but achievable. Would recommend it to organisations of all size and even if they can't complete everything, there is so much useful learning.'

Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire

Ways to engage with Equally Safe at Work

There are different ways to engage with the Equally Safe at Work programme:

- Applying to participate in the accreditation programme and start working with Close the Gap to complete the criteria.
- Participating in our Equally Safe at Work Community of Practice which provides an opportunity to network with like-minded employers, share in learning on gender equality at work, and to get ready to join the programme in the future.

'The Community of Practice is great, because people are working towards completing the programme or have already completed it, so you can learn from them. Very useful.'

West Dunbartonshire Council

Think Business, Think Equality

Close the Gap's *Think Business, Think Equality* is a free self-assessment tool designed to support small- and medium-sized businesses improve their employment practice. It provides tailored advice and an action plan which sets out the simple steps you can take so that your business can realise the benefits of gender equality and diversity.

Think Business, Think Equality is a helpful tool for all employers looking to start their journey towards greater gender equality in the workplace and links closely with the work required as part of Equally Safe at Work. If you're waiting to join the Equally Safe at Work programme, *Think Business, Think Equality* is a useful first step towards changing your practice. To find out more about how your business can benefit from improved gender equality, visit www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk

think business think equality

Why is VAW a workplace issue?

Women's labour market inequality

The gender pay gap is a persistent feature of Scotland's labour market. Gender norms and stereotyping about women's capabilities and interests results in a stark segregation in the types of work that men and women do. In the workplace, this means that women are more likely to work in catering, nursing, admin, and care and support roles, while men tend to work as porters, in IT, refuse collection, and more technical or senior roles. A lack of quality part-time and flexible jobs, coupled with women's disproportionate responsibility for caring, contributes towards women's underrepresentation in management and senior roles. While pay modernisation programmes in the public sector have addressed some of the historical gendered pay inequalities, some women are still paid less than men for doing equal work.

Women's economic inequality reduces their financial independence, restricts their choices in employment, and in life, and creates a conducive context for VAW. Financial dependence and poverty are both primary risk factors that diminish women's resilience and options in the face of violence.

The impact of VAW

One in three women globally experience some form of VAW in their lifetime¹. It's a violation of women's human rights and an enduring social problem that undermines workplaces and communities. Employers play a critical role in supporting victim-survivors and preventing VAW.

VAW affects women from all backgrounds irrespective of age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, education level, culture and socioeconomic background.

¹ World Health Organisation (2021) *Violence against women: Key facts*.

Women's multiple, intersecting identities affects their experiences of VAW. This means that different groups of women experience increased risk of violence and abuse due to the prejudice and structural barriers in society that cause inequality. For example, disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and sexual violence than non-disabled women². As well, racism and discrimination create significant barriers for racially-minoritised women to report their experience or access support. These can include language barriers, immigration status, institutional racism, and cultural insensitivity.

The prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace is now a high-profile issue and there is increasing pressure on employers to take action. Over 70% of women reported having experienced or witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace in Scotland³, with this figure rising to two-thirds of women aged 18-24. Most women (80%) who experience sexual harassment in the workplace will never report it.



One in four women in Scotland experience domestic abuse in her lifetime⁴, and three-quarters of women are targeted at work⁵, with perpetrators commonly using workplace resources such as and email to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partner. VAW has a profound impact on women's capacity to do their job. Women report experiencing trauma, stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of VAW and can struggle to find appropriate support in the workplace.

² SafeLives (2017) *Disabled survivors too: Disabled people and domestic abuse*.

³ Zero Tolerance (2017) *'Sexism is a waste...': the need to tackle violence and misogyny in Scotland's workplaces*.

⁴ Engender (2017) *Gender Matter Roadmap: Towards women's equality in Scotland*.

⁵ CAADV (2012) *Why is CAADV important?* London: CAADV.

VAW costs the UK



The economic cost of VAW is estimated to be at £66 billion⁶. This includes the cost to public services and the lost economic output of affected women. Domestic abuse is estimated to cost the UK £16 billion⁷, which includes an estimated £1.9 billion lost due to decreased productivity, administrative difficulties from unplanned time off, lost wages and sick pay. It therefore makes good business sense for employers to support employees who have experienced gender-based violence, and to

take steps to address gender inequality at work and prevent VAW.

How to participate

For more information on Equally Safe at Work, and how you can participate in the programme or the Community of Practice, please contact **Leonie McConnell, Programme Officer** at lmcconnell@closethegap.org.uk or visit our website at www.EquallySafeatWork.scot

⁶ Oliver, R., Alexander, B., Roe, S. & Wlasny, M. (2019) *The economic and social cost of domestic abuse: Research Report 107*.

⁷ Walby, S. (2009) *The Cost of Domestic Violence: Up-date 2009*.


Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.

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Close the Gap (SCIO) (known as Close the Gap) is a Scottish charity, no SC046842.

Published February 2024