

EQUALLY SAFE AT
WORK



Equally Safe at Work:
Case studies from 2019-2023

North Lanarkshire Council

Providing specialist support officers to support victim-survivors of VAW.

North Lanarkshire Council established a voluntary role of Gender Based Violence (GBV) support officer, undertaken by existing staff members, who can be contacted by individual employees who are experiencing, or have experienced, VAW. Currently, the council has eight GBV support officers.

The GBV support officers receive training on the gendered dynamics of VAW and the impact of trauma on victim-survivors. They have a dedicated email address and a rota to ensure the email is regularly monitored. They signpost to support mechanisms within the workplace, as well as to external specialist support organisations such as the local Women's Aid or Rape Crisis Centre. The team also provides support to line managers on best practice when supporting victim-survivors.

As part of the pilot, the GBV support officers have implemented a system to collect intersectional data on employee experiences of VAW. This will be used to inform the council's approach and ensure that different groups of victim-survivors feel supported by the council.

The council also delivered an awareness-raising campaign where stickers were posted on the back of toilet doors and posters were distributed throughout the council to increase awareness of the GBV support officers and the support that is available to employees.

Aberdeen City Council

Building women's leadership capacity.

Prior to the pilot, Aberdeen City Council had encouraged employees to participate in a Leadership Exchange programme which is a cross-sector initiative which pairs leaders at middle, senior and executive levels to learn from each other, and improve leadership skills.

As part of the pilot, the council identified tackling the under-representation of women among senior leaders as a priority. The council examined the barriers women face in progressing into senior roles, and as a result developed a plan to encourage more women to participate in the Leadership Exchange programme. To enable participation, Chief Officers have been asked to nominate women in their teams for the programme.

Shetland Islands Council

Building capacity on VAW and work through e-learning modules and guidance for new managers.

To accompany the development of the VAW policy, Shetland Islands Council produced resources for employees to build understanding and awareness of the role of employers in supporting victim-survivors and preventing VAW. They developed an e-learning module on VAW and work which provides information on what VAW is and how to recognise it in the workplace. It also links to external support agencies including the local Rape Crisis Centre and Women's Aid group.

Shetland Islands Council also developed council-specific guidance on VAW which includes information on Equally Safe at Work and is included in inductions for new line managers.

Perth and Kinross Council

Positive action in recruitment to challenge occupational segregation.

In Perth and Kinross Council, to ensure all job advertisements included the availability of flexible working, standardised text was developed which all managers must include in the recruitment information when advertising for a new role. To make sure that recruitment practice was free from gender bias, standardised equality statements were also developed to be included in all job advertisements. This includes a statement for advertising roles characterised by occupational segregation, which challenges the notion of gender norms and stereotypes.

Shetland Islands Council

Improving communication with women catering workers.

In Shetland Islands Council women working in the catering department highlighted that they were often unaware of what was happening in the council, such as staff events or changes in employment policies, because they didn't have access to a computer at work.

This issue emerged through the Equally Safe at Work employee experience panels. In response, the council provided the catering staff with a computer so they can access the staff intranet, and a council email address so they can stay connected with what's going on in the council.

The catering staff now also have time during their shift to check the intranet for updates from the council.

Midlothian Council

Supporting women to participate in women's professional networks.

In Midlothian Council, the HR team undertook a scoping exercise to collect data on women's professional networks within Midlothian and in nearby areas with the view to support more women into job- and/or industry-specific networking opportunities.

The council then published a list of available professional women's networks for employees. Employees register their interest with HR to ensure their participation is recorded by the council. They can also receive paid time off to participate in the network.

This initiative in the council links with their Making Performance Matter process which enables employees to explore their development needs with their line managers. Guidance for Making Performance Matter is provided to both employees and managers to ensure they're able to effectively use the process. Supporting women to participate in networks enables access to external expertise is one evidenced action to tackle women's under-representation in senior roles.

Midlothian Council

Engaging with elected members to increase understanding and awareness of VAW at work.

Midlothian Council organised an awareness-raising event with elected members as part of their 16 Days of Action campaign to end VAW. The session had speakers from the local Women's Aid Group, Close the Gap, Midlothian's VAW Co-ordinator, the Head of Adult and Social Care in the council and the HR Manager.

The event focused on the role of the council in supporting victim-survivors and preventing VAW, and built understanding and awareness of how VAW impacts women at work and the wider Council.

The important role of elected members was highlighted and elected members discussed what could be done in the local community to raise awareness of VAW. One elected member agreed to work with local football clubs to raise awareness among men and boys about VAW.

Aberdeen City Council

Developing tailored approaches to addressing occupational segregation.

To address occupational segregation Aberdeen City Council undertook a detailed data analysis to identify which areas in the council required specific focus. Teams in the council have been divided into seven categories depending on the proportion of male or female employees. For example, category 1 includes areas where 90% or more of employees are either exclusively male or female. This includes Early Years, Building Services, Environmental Services, and Waste Services. Category 1 is designated a priority area for tackling occupational segregation.

The council have developed an action plan for each category which includes increasing women participating in an existing mentoring programme, offering part-time and flexible working, providing shadowing opportunities and offering individual development plans for male and female staff who are interested in a sideways move. The council is also exploring delivering a targeted recruitment campaign to attract women and men into non-traditional roles. The council will be monitoring the implementation of the action plan on a quarterly basis to monitor progress.

Early adopter councils

Convening working groups with expertise and authority to progress work Equally Safe at Work.

As part of the pilot, each council convened a cross-departmental working group to oversee the delivery of the Equally Safe at Work pilot. All working groups were required to have a senior member of staff who had authority to progress the work and in one council the Chief Executive was the chair of the working group.

Working groups comprised a wide range of expertise from across councils including trade union representatives, elected members, and representatives from HR, health and wellbeing, social work, IT, organisational development, community justice, media and campaigns, housing, and employee relations. By bringing together different expertise, councils were better able to identify solutions to challenging criteria and progress through the programme.

Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland and North Lanarkshire Council

The benefits of peer learning.

In the first meeting of the Community of Practice, staff from North Lanarkshire Council and the HR projects officer from Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland were in the same discussion group. Through the discussion, the HR projects officer mentioned the challenges in developing a policy on VAW. Since North Lanarkshire Council was bronze accredited and had already developed a VAW policy and complementary guidance for line managers, they offered to share this to provide a template for Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland's policy. As a result of sharing resources, Chest Heart & Stroke developed both a policy and detailed guidance for line managers on VAW that was influenced by the work at North Lanarkshire Council.

East Ayrshire Council

Awareness-raising in the community.

In the council's working group, one of the members suggested developing posters for the side of bin lorries to share critical support information on VAW with community members. The working group received funding from one of the trade unions and developed two posters, one on sexual harassment and one on domestic abuse. The posters included statistics and phone numbers for specialist support services.

The aim of the campaign was to increase awareness of the high levels at which domestic abuse and sexual harassment occur. As well, since many council staff work from home, the working group hoped that the campaign would reach both staff and community members to enable those who needed support to see where to access it.

Fife Council

Using videos to communicate with staff.

During Covid-19, Fife Council created a video series, 'Direct from the Chief Exec', where the Chief Executive shared key messages with staff. Using videos for updates was seen as more engaging and, due to the positive feedback from employees, the Chief Executive continued to use this format to provide updates on the work going on around the council.

As part of Equally Safe at Work, the Chief Executive shared a video outlining the council's commitment to gender equality and tackling VAW. He also recorded a video explaining what occupational segregation is, and how it impacts the workplace. This video was shared as part of the council's 'Women in the Workplace' month and also included interviews with a number of female joiners in the council.

ACOSVO

Proactive team learning and reflection.

ACOSVO was the smallest organisation participating in Equally Safe at Work, with only seven staff. As part of the programme, their working group attended the applying a gender lens workshop. As many of their staff members were in the office on the day of the training, once it was completed, the staff got together to discuss what they had learned in more detail. This was a unique opportunity to further reflect and also share examples from their own life. Being a smaller organisation, with almost half of the workforce completing the training, meant that learning could more easily be mainstreamed and shared more broadly.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Developing a quick guide for staff on supporting victim-survivors.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland developed a guidance document for staff and managers on supporting colleagues affected by gender-based violence. The guidance was developed to support their gender-based violence policy and provide staff with further information on creating a trauma information environment in which employees feel safe to disclose their experience.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland wanted to ensure that staff had all the information they needed on what support was available; the different policies that could help including the flexible working policy and special leave; and external specialist support services. In addition to the guidance, a new mandatory training for managers and staff was created on gender-based violence.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran

The benefits of flexible working leaflet.

In NHS Ayrshire and Arran, to improve understanding of the benefits of flexible working and how it support victim-survivors, they developed a leaflet for staff. The leaflet includes details on what flexible working is, the different types of flexible working, and how it improves employment practice.

The leaflet also include key details on how flexible working supports women returning from maternity leave, and those with caring responsibilities. It also highlights how flexible working can be an important support mechanism for victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and other forms of VAW.

The leaflet has been shared with staff across the organisation and has been uploaded to the vacancies page on the board's website.


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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