

# Policy & Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 23 May 2023

## 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

Executive/routine                      Routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Councillors are requested to note the content of the report which sets out the context for the recommended activities, and the ways in which those align with a multitude of Council priorities, such as Equally Safe and Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme.
- 1.2 Councillors are requested to approve the action plan proposed within this report, which involves both direct development activities as well as written communications and information posters being distributed which raise awareness of inappropriate conduct, gender-based violence, reporting mechanisms and sources of support both with Elected Members as well as staff members working directly with them.

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# Report

## 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report proposes a range of interventions and communication methods to raise awareness of power imbalances and gender-based violence (GBV) within the political settings of the City Chambers and Waverley Court, how to report GBV, as well as how to access support. It also includes an update on actions to be undertaken by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee (ESEC) in order to improve communications with the public on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and other forms of Gendered violence. The report is in response to the Green Group Addendum to the '16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence' motion report on 9 February 2023.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 On 9 February 2023, the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee (ESEC) presented a report to Full Council on the motion titled 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, tabled by Cllr. Mumford during a City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 27 October 2023.
- 3.2 The [report](#) outlined actions the Council is taking throughout the calendar year beyond the 16 Days campaign to combat Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and it included a separate report on the work specifically carried out by the ESEC to implement the Equally Safe strategy across Edinburgh.
- 3.3 Following the report's presentation, an [addendum](#) was proposed to the motion by Cllr. Mumford as follows:
- 3.3.1 [Council] notes that any work undertaken on adult protection, child protection or violence against women and girls directly supports the safety of everyone in Edinburgh including anyone working for the City of Edinburgh Council in any capacity (as set out in 7.1 of the [report](#))
- 3.3.2 However, further notes that the power dynamics within politics – in party groups, among elected members, and between Councillors and employees - mean that particular, targeted interventions may be appropriate within the political settings of the City Chambers and Waverley Court

3.3.3 Therefore requests that all elected members and staff working closely with elected members are sent guidance on how to report inappropriate behaviour or violence, and internal communication channels including the orb and posters within these two buildings are utilised to further raise awareness of reporting processes, and to reinforce the message that gender based violence is intrinsically linked with power structures.

Additionally:

3.3.4 Notes with concern the 'red' status of the first two quality standards under priority one which state that "proactive engagement is very limited and there are single or no awareness raising campaigns" and that the partnership "did not collect or analyse data in order to understand attitudes towards VAWG."

3.3.5 Therefore request a briefing note to the Policy and Sustainability Committee within 2 cycles outlining any plans on how these quality standards will be met, with particular focus on awareness raising campaigns which target groups with particular needs and experiences relating to gender based violence including younger and older women, the LGBT community, BAME women, carers and cared-for people, refugees, disabled people and men and boys.

3.4 Following personal communication with Cllr. Mumford, it was decided that item 3.3.3 would be responded to in the current report, while 3.3.5 would be included in a briefing note to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in May 2023.

## 4. Main report

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### Power Dynamics in politics:

4.1 Power dynamics, particularly the deep-rooted inequality between men and women in society, is a cause and consequence of Violence Against Women and girls (VAWG) and all forms of Gender-Based Violence. According to Equally Safe:

*Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as 'gender based' this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girls' subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structures and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence.*

4.2 Gender power dynamics are present in everyday life, with inequality giving rise to abuse, harassment and violence in the private and public sphere. It is expected that similar dynamics are likely to play out in the political sphere between elected

members, and between elected members and employees, given inherent power imbalances in seniority levels, popularity, financial, social and educational standing.

- 4.3 In Scotland, women represent [45% of MSPs](#), and in Edinburgh, women councillors comprise [43% of the Council](#). Although these statistics certainly represent progress over time, they are still not proportionate to the gender breakdown of Edinburgh or Scotland (51% women, 49% men).
- 4.4 Unfortunately, this unequal sharing of power gives rise to behaviours that demonstrate and reinforce the inequality between men and women in the political sphere. [20% of Scottish Parliament workers](#) report experiencing sexism or sexual harassment; [Westminster has been dubbed an 'unsafe place to work'](#) for women, while a councillor who chose to remain anonymous spoke of both [individual sexual harassment and institutional sexism](#) in her early career in politics.

#### Reporting Inappropriate Behaviour or Violence

- 4.5 The Standards Commission for Scotland has published the [Councillors' Code of Conduct](#), while a range of additional materials [to support the conduct of elected members](#) and to provide [thematic briefings](#) is available through the [Improvement Service](#).
- 4.6 The City of Edinburgh Council has a number of policies and procedures, some of which are currently under development, to protect employees from abuse and harassment regardless of where in the council their work takes place.
- 4.7 Additional policies are currently being developed on preventing any type of misconduct, while the Code of Conduct is currently being reviewed and will be re-launched before summer 2023.
- 4.8 The Council currently has an internal mechanism for reporting misconduct and prejudice-based incidents which can be completed by any staff member to whom any type of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour has been disclosed, or who has experienced it directly.
- 4.9 There are additional mechanisms for reporting inappropriate conduct, including how to raise a grievance, and how to make a complaint about another employee's behaviour. These mechanisms are located within the Council's internal Orb intranet.
- 4.10 Following the recommendations by Pinsent Masons LLP led by Suzanne Tanner QC, a team of Speak Up Supporters is also being organised. It is expected that the Speak Up Supporters will be operating in the later months of 2023.
- 4.11 Lastly, the Council also has a [dedicated webpage](#) listing a number of organisations and services who can provide support to people who have been affected by any kind of gendered violence.

#### Targeted Interventions

- 4.12 To ensure that Elected Members and employees working closely with them have access to all the information they need in order to recognise and understand gender-based violence, power imbalances and the impact of inappropriate conduct, the following course of action is proposed:

- 4.12.1 Partnership work with the [Improvement Service](#) and [COSLA](#): The Improvement Service and COSLA have committed to supporting a working group of elected members to explore and address how the council conducts its business, including making recommendations for ongoing changes in Council structures, systems and culture to improve inclusion and wellbeing. As the Improvement Service, together with [COSLA](#), play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the Equally Safe strategy across Scotland, gender equality, power dynamics and elected member conduct will form part of the discussion within these thematic workshops.
- 4.12.2 [Equally Safe in Practice \(ESiP\)](#): ESiP is a programme of work led by [Scottish Women's Aid](#) which “*focuses on developing a framework to support workforce development in a way that will work towards sustained attitudinal, behaviour and practice change*”. The ESiP programme has started developing training on gender-based violence addressed at different professional tiers, as outlined in their workforce development framework (please see Figure 1 below):



Figure 1: The Equally Safe in Practice Workforce Development Framework. Source: <https://womensaid.scot/equally-safe-in-practice/workforce-development-framework/>

The training modules developed by ESiP are currently being piloted throughout Scotland and are expected to be available by the end of 2023 for local implementation. These modules can be adopted by the Council and made available to all employees and Elected Members, and they can become part of essential training for staff at all levels.

- 4.12.3 [Equally Safe at Work \(ESAW\)](#): The ESAW programme aims to support employers to advance gender equality and prevent violence against women (VAW) in the workplace. This accreditation programme has been

successfully piloted in [four Local Authorities](#) and it is currently being piloted within the NHS and the Third Sector. Although there is currently no plan for additional Local Authorities to undertake ESAW accreditation, the City of Edinburgh Council can commence workstreams to develop across the areas required for accreditation, namely: Leadership, Data, Flexible Working, Occupational Segregation, Workplace Culture and Violence Against Women. Once the programme is open for applications by local authorities again, we would strongly recommend that the Council applies for Equally Safe at Work accreditation. The Council currently has an informal Equally Safe At Work employee group, which is a subgroup of the Women's Network. This group would be happy to contribute to and support the development of this work, provided there is strong commitment and engagement from all senior levels of management within the Council.

- 4.12.4 Information on sources of support and reporting structures on the Orb: The Orb is the Council's intranet system which contains a wealth of information for employees on a range of topics, including Communications, Human Resources and Council news and updates. A workstream is currently underway to include the Council's reviewed Code of Conduct, which is being re-launched, within the Human Resources pages on the Orb. This content will include information on appropriate conduct, as well as how to report and record instances of inappropriate conduct and sources of information and support for anyone affected. This will also include a 'quick exit' button, to ensure that anyone using the page can quickly and easily move away from it if they need to.
- 4.12.5 In late spring/early summer of 2023, the Orb Gateway project is due to commence, which will allow all employees who currently do not have access to the Orb to be able to access Orb content, including information on conduct.
- 4.12.6 Written Guidance and Information Posters: To take advantage of all possible opportunities to raise awareness of inappropriate conduct and sources of support, the following action plan will be completed by Autumn of 2023:
- 4.12.6.1 Posters to be displayed throughout those areas used by party groups and employees in the City Chambers and Waverley Court with information on inappropriate conduct, and short URLs to relevant web pages with information on reporting structures and sources of support;
  - 4.12.6.2 Specific content to be sent out via email to all council employees incl over 4,000 frontline colleagues who have given us their personal email addresses on gender-based violence and inappropriate conduct, reporting mechanisms and sources of support.

- 4.12.6.3 Information on the re-launch of the Code of Conduct will also be displayed on the carousel of the News Beat, the council's internal news page;
- 4.12.6.4 Lastly, we will make use of Managers' News and Executive Directors' and Chief Executive's vlogs to raise awareness of the re-launched Code of Conduct, as well as the sections of the Orb where information on how to report inappropriate conduct and where to access support can be found.
- 4.12.7 The content of the relevant webpages, as well as the design of the posters will be reviewed every 6 months to ensure it remains up to date.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 As next steps, the following actions may be undertaken by the Council to support elected members and colleagues working closely with them by Autumn 2023:
  - 5.1.1 The re-launch of the reviewed Code of Conduct, with accompanying material to be included in the relevant Orb page (May/June 2023);
  - 5.1.2 The launch of the Orb Gateway, enabling Council staff without Council email addresses to fully access information and resources on conduct on the Orb (May/June 2023);
  - 5.1.3 The design, print and display of A4-sized information posters in Waverley Court and the City Chambers, particularly in areas used by Elected Members and those working closely with them (September/October 2023);
  - 5.1.4 The announcement via email to all colleagues including those in frontline roles about the re-launched Code of Conduct, and relevant pages on the Orb where information on inappropriate conduct, reporting structures and sources of support can be found (September 2023);
  - 5.1.5 The inclusion of information on the new conduct pages on the Orb on the News Beat and the Orb homepage, to ensure that all colleagues are aware of the content (September/October 2023); and
  - 5.1.6 The use of Executive Director and Chief Executive's vlogs and Managers' News to keep staff informed about the content available on the Orb on inappropriate conduct, as well as reporting structures and sources of support (September-December 2023).
- 5.2 Partnership work between COSLA, the Improvement Service and Elected Members in Edinburgh is scheduled to take place over the next 12 months, and a request will be made to facilitators of the scheduled workshop for inappropriate conduct, particularly information around power imbalances and sexual harassment.
- 5.3 The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee will continue to liaise with Equally Safe in Practice to monitor the development of courses on gender-based violence and to discuss how those can be made available to staff and Elected Members within the

Council, as well as professionals working in services across Edinburgh (from November 2023 onwards)

- 5.4 The Council to commit to work towards Equally Safe At Work accreditation once it becomes available to Local Authorities Again. Until such time, senior Leaders, Managers and Directors can work together with the support of the Women's Network's Equally Safe At Work subgroup to commence the work on implementing recommendations by the accreditation programme to facilitate the accreditation process in the longer term (from September 2023 onwards).

## 6. Financial impact

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- 6.1 Based on the actions described above, the most immediate financial impact will concern the printing of posters to be displayed throughout Waverley Court and the City Chambers.
- 6.2 The cost associated with 100 A4 sized information posters being printed is approximately £12, while updating and re-printing every six months as required will bring the cost to £24 annually. This is subject to change over time but changes in pricing are not considered to be significant.
- 6.3 The Council can cover the cost of printing through its Human Resources budget.

## 7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

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- 7.1 The actions proposed within this report are in direct response to the request made by Cllr Mumford and a number of Elected Members during the City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 9 February 2023.
- 7.2 Based on the discussion generated on this topic, the support for further work to raise awareness of gender-based violence in the political context of Waverley Court and the City Chambers was overwhelming (the discussion is available to watch on the meeting's [webcast](#))
- 7.3 Activity to raise awareness of inappropriate conduct and gender-based violence are aligned with the Council's Equally Safe priorities, as well as with the [recommendations](#) set out in the [Pinsent-Mason enquiry report](#).
- 7.4 The activities outlined in this report will support the council to promote gender equality and to embed an environment where all individuals are safe and respected, and where gender-based violence and abuse, along with other forms of discriminatory or inappropriate conduct are not tolerated.
- 7.5 The activities outlined in this report further align with the Council's recent commitment to sign up to [Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme](#), as it will strengthen support for all employees and Elected Members against gender-based violence.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [City of Edinburgh Council Meeting: 27 October 2022](#)
- 8.2 [City of Edinburgh Council Meeting: 9 February 2023](#)
- 8.3 [Scottish election 2021: Record number of women elected](#) (BBC News, May 2021)
- 8.4 [Directory of City of Edinburgh Councillors](#)
- 8.5 [A fifth of workers in Scottish Parliament have experienced sexism or sexual harassment](#) (Holyrood Magazine, March 2018)
- 8.6 [Parliament an unsafe workplace due to sexual misconduct by MPs, say unions](#) (The Guardian, July 2022)
- 8.7 ["I called out sexual harassment in local politics. I was shunned and insulted, but it worked"](#) (The Guardian, May 2022)
- 8.8 [Councillors' Code of Conduct](#) (Standards Commission for Scotland)
- 8.9 [Elected Member Induction Materials](#) (the Improvement Service)
- 8.10 [Elected Member Guidance and Briefings](#) (the Improvement Service)
- 8.11 [City of Edinburgh Council directory of support services and organisations for people being abuse or who have experienced abuse in the past](#)
- 8.12 [Equally Safe in Practice](#) (Scottish Women's Aid)
- 8.13 [Equally Safe At Work](#)
- 8.14 [Independent Inquiry Report Arising Out of Allegations Concerning the Conduct of the Late Sean Bell](#)
- 8.15 [Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Not Applicable