

## Encompass Network Briefing

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Scotland's Equally Safe Strategy

March 2015

### What is the aim of this briefing?

This briefing by the Encompass Network aims to put forward a range of actions to combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation aligning these with the key gender equality priorities in Equally Safe, the new national strategy in Scotland on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG).

It further aims to:

- strengthen the links between commercial sexual exploitation and the wider spectrum of Gender-based Violence (GBV)
- contribute to the implementation of Equally Safe

### Who is it intended for?

The briefing is intended for those who have a role in delivering Equally Safe i.e. national and local politicians in Scotland, COSLA, Chief Executives, Policy Directors, Community Planning Partnerships, Violence Against Women Partnerships and key third sector Women's and Children's organisations.

### What is Encompass?

The Encompass Network, established in 2012, is made up of agencies across Scotland with a remit to work with women, girls and vulnerable men who are currently involved, have exited or who are at risk of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.

We aim to develop and share good practice around prevention, effective interventions for people involved and provision of long term support to those who have exited. Our work is founded on the belief

that gender inequality is the root cause of violence against women and children.

The network is co-ordinated by the Women's Support Project in Glasgow, which has a national remit to address commercial sexual exploitation.

## **What is Commercial Sexual Exploitation?**

Commercial sexual exploitation is part of a wider spectrum of violence against women and is inextricably linked with many other forms of violence such as domestic abuse, rape, childhood sexual abuse, stalking and sexual harassment.

It serves to objectify and harm women and evidence shows that it includes a range of sexual activities that in the main, men profit from or buy from women e.g. prostitution, pornography, trafficking, phone sex, internet sex, stripping, pole/lap dancing and sex tourism.

This type of exploitation is a particularly contentious form of gender-based violence and one of the most difficult to challenge because it is ingrained in mainstream culture and ever evolving. This in turn makes it deeply insidious and masks the visibility of harm to those involved.

Commercial sexual exploitation is normalised and legitimised through liberal views that it is 'freedom of expression, a celebration of sexuality, a valid choice, art, work, sexual empowerment for women, harmless and a positive form of sex education'.

These messages serve to misrepresent, distort, dilute and desensitise people to the reality i.e. a systematic practice of exploitation and subordination based on sex, which is profoundly harmful to women and girls.

## **What's gender got to do with it?**

As with all forms of gender-based violence, commercial sexual exploitation stems fundamentally from gender inequality and is created and maintained by the demand from men to objectify and buy sexual access to women.

Some facts:

- Being female is the key risk factor for gender-based violence<sup>1</sup>
- Men also experience GBV, most notably childhood sexual abuse and young men's involvement in prostitution<sup>2</sup>

- Evidence confirms that perpetrators of abuse against both sexes are overwhelmingly male<sup>34</sup>
- Although the majority of abusers are men, the majority of men are not abusers.

[http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/em\\_briefing\\_notes/EM-Briefing-CSE.pdf](http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/em_briefing_notes/EM-Briefing-CSE.pdf)

## **Equally Safe – Scotland’s Strategy on Violence against Women & Girls**

In 2009, the Scottish Government (SG) and COSLA published a joint strategy on violence against women called ‘Safer Lives: Changed Lives. In 2014, an updated version ‘Equally Safe’ was produced. This new strategy:

- includes girls
- covers all forms of violence, including commercial sexual exploitation
- aims to enable public bodies to challenge Violence Against Women and Girls
- includes an explicit focus on prevention as well as the provision of support services

Equally Safe will be delivered through the following 4 key working groups:

*Prevention*  
*Capability & Capacity*  
*Public Accountability*  
*Justice*

Each working group will establish an action plan, which will be monitored by a joint strategic board, co-chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/06/7483](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/06/7483)

## **Delivery of Equally Safe**

It would be helpful to have a clear structure to support the delivery of Equally Safe i.e. agreed outcomes, baseline position and monitoring

and evaluation systems alongside sustainable resources. It would also make sense to draw on the work of existing cross sector gender-based violence partnerships and networks and involve these at an early planning stage if possible.

**Encompass – proposed actions for consideration by SG and COSLA**

- Clarify the rationale for membership of each working group
- Identify a clear process at the outset to develop explicit and achievable outcomes
- Draw on existing local, national and international evidence as a baseline against which to monitor progress
- Provide long term, sustainable funding to mainstream the VAWG agenda into structures and functions across all sectors
- Recognise the potential for key multi agency partnerships and networks to support the implementation of the strategy.

<p><b>Equally Safe – Priorities</b></p> <p><b>Equally Safe – Priority 1</b></p> <p>Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.</p>	<p><b>We want to ensure that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Positive gender roles are promoted</li> <li>● People enjoy healthy, positive relationships</li> <li>● Individuals and communities recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour.</li> </ul>
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Gender-based violence, including commercial sexual exploitation is fundamentally an equality and human rights issue. Given this, we recognise equality and human rights legislation as a lever to promote positive gender roles and challenge gender inequality in relation to abuse.

**Encompass – proposed actions for consideration by SG and COSLA:**

- Ensure that Equally Safe has a mandate to direct and deliver the gender-based violence agenda

- Identify actions to establish a mainstream understanding of gender, including gender constructs of masculinity and the inextricable link with GBV
- Produce guidance to ensure that this understanding is implemented through all relevant national and local policies
- Promote gender equality by reinforcing positive aspirations for women and girls and men and boys
- Create and fund a national prevention programme on educational work with young people and the wider community
- Develop national public awareness campaigns, which can be adapted locally
- Promote the inclusion of GBV in existing gender and other equality outcomes for all public bodies.

<p><b>Equally Safe – Priority 2</b></p> <p>Women and girls thrive as equal citizens; socially, culturally, economically and politically.</p>	<p><b>We want to ensure that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Women and girls feel safe, respected and equal in our communities</li> <li>● Women and men have equality of opportunity, particularly with regard to access to power and resources.</li> </ul>
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Encompass welcomes the inclusion of commercial sexual exploitation in the spectrum of VAWG and the recognition in the strategy that ‘different forms of violence against women and girls will demand specific interventions’. Given the mainstream normalisation of sexualising gender inequality, we think it would be helpful to be explicit about the nature of commercial sexual exploitation and embed this firmly within the wider spectrum of gender-based violence.

**Encompass – proposed actions for consideration by SG and COSLA:**

- Include a clear definition of commercial sexual exploitation as a core strand of Equally Safe and reflect the links between this and other forms of gender-based violence

- Support the development of inclusive awareness/media campaigns to proactively raise the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and challenging demand
- Identify constructive ways to involve men in the VAWG agenda, including commercial sexual exploitation
- Develop mainstream GBV policies for service delivery and supporting employees, drawing on existing precedents i.e. NHS Scotland Employee Policy
- Embed the VAWG agenda in equality outcomes, nationally and locally.

<p><b>Equally Safe – Priority 3</b></p> <p>Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety of women and girls.</p>	<p><b>We want to ensure that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Women and girls access relevant, effective and integrated services</li> <li>● Service providers competently identify violence against women and girls and respond effectively.</li> </ul>
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We would like to see a comprehensive approach towards prevention, early intervention and longer-term support for survivors who have experienced gender-based violence.

**Encompass – proposed actions for consideration by SG and COSLA:**

- Provide resource support for a national systematic prevention programme of education work with young people aimed at attitudinal and behavioural change
- Build on local work to carry out a comprehensive mapping of VAWG provision; identifying gaps, effective evaluations and scope to replicate models of good practice
- Ensure evidence-based long term support for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation e.g. trauma informed interventions
- Resource training on commercial sexual exploitation for frontline services that support women and work with perpetrators

- Draw on Single Outcome Agreements and Equality Outcomes to:
  - a) contribute to the evidence base on the nature and impact of GBV
  - b) use as a mechanism for monitoring progress – nationally and locally.

<p><b>Equally Safe – Priority 4</b></p> <p>Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.</p>	<p><b>We must ensure that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● justice responses are robust, swift and co-ordinated</li> <li>● men who carry out violence against women and girls are held to account by the criminal justice system.</li> </ul>
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We support the development of a legislative framework in Scotland that is founded on addressing gender inequality as the root cause of gender-based violence. We consider that such a framework would contribute positively to the wider prevention agenda as well as improve intervention strategies on abuse.

**Encompass – proposed actions for consideration by SG and COSLA:**

- Introduce comprehensive legislation in Scotland to:
  - decriminalise those involved in prostitution
  - criminalise men’s demand for prostitution
  - provide resources to enable long term support and exiting services
- Draw on existing legislation and evidence (European, UK and Scottish) to challenge demand and support women
- Review licensing laws and regulation of all types of commercial sexual exploitation
- Review legislative and justice responses to all forms of commercial sexual exploitation, including pornography and ‘sexual entertainment’

- Review the model of Domestic Abuse Courts and consider the scope to adapt this to cover other forms of VAWG, including commercial sexual exploitation
- Use the proceeds of crime to support services and survivors.

## References

1. *General Recommendation No. 19, (1992) 11th Session, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, United Nations.*
2. *Cawson, P., Wattam, C., Brooker, S. & Kelly, G. (2000) 'Child maltreatment in the UK: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect'. NSPCC, London.*
3. *Finkelhor, D. (1994) 'Current information on the scope and nature of child sexual abuse'. The Future of Children (1994) 4:31-53.*
4. *Kelly, L. Regan, L. & Burton, S. (1991) 'An exploratory study of the prevalence of sexual abuse in a sample of 16-21 year olds'. London: Child Abuse Studies Unit, University of North London.*



**WOMEN'S  
SUPPORT  
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