

Scottish Women's Aid

**Analysis of
Single Outcome
Agreements 2009**



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women's aid

changing attitudes changing lives

About Scottish Women's Aid

Scottish Women's Aid is the lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse. We play a vital role campaigning and lobbying for effective responses to domestic abuse.

An important aspect of our work is ensuring that women and children with experience of domestic abuse get the services they need, both from local Women's Aid groups and from the agencies they are likely to contact.

Our members are local Women's Aid groups which provide specialist services to women, children and young people. These include safe refuge accommodation, information and support.

We provide advice, information, training and publications to members and non-members.

Analysis of Single Outcome Agreements 2009

It is estimated that the cost of domestic abuse to the public purse in Scotland is £2.3 billion and the cost of violence against women is estimated to be £4 billion.¹ These costs are incurred every year by health, police and local authority services such as housing, social work and education. All of these services are key members of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). In 2009 the remit of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) was widened to become a strategic plan at Community Planning Partnership level, therefore providing a real opportunity to develop joined up work to tackle domestic abuse\violence against women. Our analysis in 2009 reviewed how this has been put into practice in the 32 SOAs.

Key Findings

- 16 SOAs highlight an increase in reported incidents of domestic abuse as a trend they are concerned about within their local area; addressing this locally is stated as a priority in only 11 SOAs.
- In 7 SOAs there is no reference made to domestic abuse\violence against women in the area profile - which provides the basis for identifying priorities and outcomes in the SOA.
- In only 10 SOAs is there a specific reference within the area profile to children affected by domestic abuse. This is disappointing given the focus of the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People.
- In only 2 SOAs are there local indicators or targets which relate to forms of violence against women other than domestic abuse.
- The varied use of local outcomes and contradictory mix of indicators and targets make any monitoring of Scotland's progress in addressing domestic abuse difficult at best.
- 13 SOAs referred to specific domestic abuse or violence against women action plans, strategies or partnerships, an improvement on the previous round.
- Only 5 SOAs make any reference to violence against women in relation to gender equality, or how the CPPs will meet their legal obligations under the Gender Equality Duty.
- From our analysis it is not clear how the implementation of national policy at a local level is monitored and evaluated or how local authorities and their Community Planning Partners can be held to account.

¹Scottish Government (2009) Safer Lives: Changed Lives A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland.

Introduction

Scotland has led the way in developing a strategic approach to domestic abuse that has gained international recognition. The Scottish Executive published a National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in 2000 and established a National Group to Address Domestic Abuse to oversee the implementation of the strategy. The group's remit was broadened in 2003 to include all forms of violence against women. In 2009 The Scottish Government, with COSLA, published Safer Lives: Changed Lives: A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women.

The Concordat introduced in November 2007 established a new relationship between national and local government. This new relationship was supported by a package of measures, including the removal of ring fenced funding allowing local authorities greater control over their budgets. A central component of the package was the creation of a Single Outcome Agreement between each local authority and the Scottish Government, based on the 15 National Outcomes agreed in the Concordat and reflecting local needs and priorities.

"A SOA is the means by which Community Planning Partnerships agree their strategic priorities for their local area and express those priorities as outcomes to be delivered by the partners, either individually or jointly, while showing how those outcomes should contribute to the Scottish Government's relevant National Outcomes."²

Scottish Women's Aid carried out an analysis of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) in 2008 in response to our concern that devolving responsibility for addressing domestic abuse from national to local government, together with the removal of ring fenced funding, would result in a patchwork response and the dilution of specialist domestic abuse services. Our analysis of local authority Single Outcome Agreements in 2008 bore out this concern.

Our report documented the lack of priority given to domestic abuse and the wider violence against women agenda within the majority of SOAs. Our analysis found that only 5 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland made specific reference to addressing domestic abuse as a priority in their area, had developed local outcomes and set out how they intended to achieve these through strategic planning and partnership working. There was very limited recognition within SOAs of the link between violence against women and gender inequality and a subsequent lack of a strategic approach by local authorities as to how they would address this in terms of their legal obligations under the Gender Equality Duty.

Similar concerns were raised in the report, Map of Gaps 2: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services in Britain. This research found a crisis in the funding and provision of support services for women who have experienced violence. It stressed the importance of Government-led strategy and dedicated funding.

"Whilst not seeking to argue against local decision making in a general sense, there is extensive evidence within the UK, and internationally, that without a strong steer from the centre, VAW and gender equality more broadly will be designated priority in only a minority of areas."³

² Scottish Government, COSLA (2008) Single Outcome Agreements Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships

³ EVAW and EHRC (2008) Map of Gaps2: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services in Britain

Methodology

Our approach was similar to that taken in our previous report. Our analysis consisted of a document review in which we systematically analysed the content of each SOA in relation to information on domestic abuse\violence against women and the priority and coverage given to addressing it within each SOA. Our analysis reviewed the different components of the SOA:

- The area profiles provided within each SOA
- The national outcomes to which domestic abuse or violence against women were aligned
- Local outcomes
- National and Local indicators
- Links made to relevant strategic operational plans

Defining terms

Domestic abuse and violence against women are used throughout this report in accordance with the definitions adopted by the Scottish Government – see below. In the report we refer to domestic abuse\violence against women to reflect these definitions and the terminology used in the SOAs. Domestic abuse is defined as follows:

“Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threat, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends).”

In June 2009 the Scottish Government and COSLA published Safer Lives: Changed Lives, A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland. The approach is informed by the definition developed by the National Group to Address Violence Against Women based on the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993).

*“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 girl’s subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women’s vulnerability to violence.”**

*The full definition can be found on Page 7 of Safer Lives: Changed Lives

Area Profile

The SOA guidance states that the Area Profile is *“An integrated profile of the social, economic and environmental conditions of the area is the basis of the SOA. On the basis of the evidence the Area Profile should identify past trends and future challenges and opportunities and then the strategic local priorities, both for improved and maintained conditions. The strategic local priorities should be expressed as a meaningful and manageable number of local outcomes.”*

The main focus of information in this descriptive section of the SOA in relation to domestic abuse\violence against women is on the incidence of domestic abuse, the increased levels of reporting and concerns about underreporting. Sixteen of the SOAs (50%) report an increase in incidents of domestic abuse, using statements such as *“upward trend”, “continuing to rise”, “a significant problem”*. Most of the contextual information was largely limited to descriptive statistics of the recorded incidents of domestic abuse. This information ranged from reporting a steady year on year increase in line with national trends and increased confidence in reporting to highlighting increases in recorded incidents of between 16 – 40% since 2005/06 (5 SOAs).

Although 16 SOAs highlight the increase in reported incidents of domestic abuse as a trend they are concerned about within their local area, addressing this locally is stated as a priority in only 11 SOAs. It is within these 11 that there is more of a description of a strategic approach being taken; within 4 SOAs it is mentioned as a Community Safety priority, in 1 as a Community Planning Partnership priority, in 1 as a police priority; the others referring to it as a partnership priority, a strategic priority or key challenge.

In 7 SOAs there is no reference made to domestic abuse\violence against women in the Area Profile contextual information. SOA guidance states that, *“Overall, the Area Profile should present a picture of your area that clearly establishes its key challenges and opportunities. This should form the basis and the rationale for the priorities and outcomes set out in the SOA.”*⁴ We can reasonably assume, therefore, that if domestic abuse\violence against women is not identified within the Area Profile as a key challenge - it will not be identified as a priority in 7 (22%) local authority areas in Scotland.

In only 10 SOAs is there a specific reference within the Area Profile to children affected by domestic abuse. This is disappointing given the national strategic focus introduced in June 2008 by the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People, which *“signals our intention to drive forward the agenda for change, in the context of the new partnership environment between Government and local government, and improve outcomes for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, their families and communities.”*⁵

The references within the 10 SOAs are broadly mentioned as; a child protection issue (4 SOAs), the impact of domestic abuse on the health and wellbeing of children (4 SOAs) and the provision of services (2 SOAs).

⁴ Improvements Service (2009) Elected Member Briefing Note No. 1 Single Outcome Agreements

⁵ Scottish Government (2008) National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People

National Outcomes

Tackling the causes and consequences of domestic abuse\violence against women is essential to achieve the following 6 national outcomes agreed in the Concordat:

- NO 5 Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
- NO 6 We live longer, healthier lives
- NO 7 We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society
- NO 8 We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk
- NO 9 We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
- NO 11 We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others

The SOA guidance states that all of the 15 national outcomes should be considered in preparing the SOA, but whether and how they will be addressed will depend on their demonstrated relevance to the evidence and strategic priorities identified in the integrated Area Profile which is the basis of the SOA. The table below illustrates the National Outcomes referred to in the SOAs which contained references to domestic abuse\violence against women.

National Outcome		No of SOAs
NO 5	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed	5
NO 6	We live longer healthier lives	6
NO 7	We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society	5
NO 8	We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk	11
NO 9	We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger	25
NO 10	We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need	1
NO 11	We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	5

The majority of SOAs (25) aligned domestic abuse\violence against women to national outcome NO 9 (We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger). This may be due to the fact that the only national indicator available relating to domestic abuse is statistical information collected by the police on recorded incidents of domestic abuse.

In a change from the previous year half of the SOAs align domestic abuse\violence against women with achieving more than one national outcome: in 9 SOAs it is referred to within 2 national outcomes, in 5 within 3 and in 1 case in 5.

Whilst it is encouraging that there appears to be a greater integration of domestic abuse \violence against women within several of the national outcomes, only 5 SOAs relate domestic abuse\violence against women to gender inequality, NO7 (We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society). In only 6 SOAs is there reference to domestic abuse\violence against women in relation to achieving NO 6 (We live longer healthier lives).

In 2 SOAs there is no reference to domestic abuse\violence against women within the National Outcomes section of the SOA.

Local Outcomes

The guidance in relation to local outcomes states that, *“The number of local outcomes should be meaningful and manageable, reflecting the strategic priorities drawn from the evidence in the Area Profile. They should be actual outcomes, focusing on people’s quality of life and opportunities, and on the supporting social, economic or environmental conditions. They should not be just plans or actions which are hoped to have the intended effects.”*

A range of local outcomes are used within SOAs which refer to domestic abuse\violence against women. They fall into 4 broad themes:

- Reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour\safer communities (17 SOAs)
- Child protection\safety of vulnerable adults (6 SOAs)
- Domestic abuse\gender based violence specific (6 SOAs)
- Health and well being (3 SOAs)

The domestic abuse\violence against women specific local outcomes, in all but one case, relate to the reduction of domestic abuse or violence against women, for example “reduce violence and its impact including gender based violence.” The other specific outcome used in 1 SOA is, “Women and families benefit from joint approaches to tackling gender based violence.”

2 SOAs contain no local outcome or indicator in relation to domestic abuse or violence against women.

Local indicators

As with the previous year the majority of SOAs (22) used as an indicator the rates of domestic abuse incidents per 100,000 of the population. This information is collected by the eight Scottish police forces which record the incidents of domestic abuse coming to the attention of the police.

A small number of SOAs included additional variations to police statistical information of recorded incidents. These additional indicators were:

- Number of first time victims
- Number of repeat incidents\previous victims
- Number of repeat offenders
- Number of women reporting domestic abuse
- Number of women repeat domestic abuse victims
- Number of children present during domestic abuse incidents
- Detection rates
- Alcohol related domestic abuse – crime recorded

A few (5 SOAs) contained indicators other than police statistics. These largely relate to the number of women and children accessing support or a specialist service.

In only 2 SOAs are there local indicators or targets which relate to forms of violence against women other than domestic abuse. One SOA contains new indicators on the number of reported crimes of rape, attempted rape and indecent assault. It also includes an indicator on “How safe do you feel walking alone at night (% very unsafe/ a bit unsafe).” In 1 SOA there is a target to “Increase support to women engaged in street prostitution.”

As we reported in the first round of SOAs although the majority used the same indicator the targets used to measure progress varied and are contradictory. Again, in this round half of the SOAs (11) using this indicator (rates of domestic abuse incidents) set a target to increase the number of reported incidents, while the other half, (11 SOAs) set targets to reduce the rate of reporting. Two SOAs contained a mix, with an increased target for first time victims of domestic abuse and a reduced target for repeat victims. A further 3 SOAs set no specific target.

The major difficulty with using this indicator is that measuring the number of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police measures just that. It does not measure how well the strategic approach taken by the local authority and its community planning partners is working. It does not measure performance against the stated outcome.

The varied use of local outcomes and contradictory mix of indicators and targets make any national monitoring of Scotland’s progress in addressing domestic abuse difficult at best.

As we recommended in our previous analysis there is an urgent need to develop national indicators that can be used locally to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women **and** the impact of policy initiatives on its reduction and prevention.

Links to relevant plans

The guidance makes clear that the SOA is a high level document, focussing on a limited and manageable number of priorities. *“A ‘golden thread’ needs to run from the high level outcomes in the SOA through to the underlying planning, delivery and performance systems of all partners.”*

SOAs should therefore contain a brief but clear line of sight to relevant plans and activities that clearly support the delivery of local outcomes.

As part of our analysis we looked for references to relevant plans showing how community planning partnerships were supporting the delivery of local outcomes in relation to domestic abuse or violence against women. In 13 SOAs reference was made to community safety strategies or action plans. Thirteen SOAs referred to specific domestic abuse or violence against women action plans, strategies or partnerships. In 6 SOAs there was no obvious link to any relevant strategies.

In the 2008 round of SOAs only 5 made reference to strategic plans and partnerships to address domestic abuse or violence against women; it is encouraging that in this round the number has increased to 13. (Community Safety plans may also contain actions to tackle domestic abuse and violence against women).

Gender Equality Duty

All the SOAs make some reference to equalities, most commonly by broadly stating that all the partners to the agreement are committed to equality or have schemes in place to comply with their duties in relation to legislation. Further content beyond broad commitment varies enormously, with some focus on equality strands, some on deprivation and inequality – and in other SOAs no further information.

As with the previous round of SOAs very few (5 SOAs) make any reference to violence against women in relation to gender equality, or how the CPPs will meet their legal obligations under the Gender Equality Duty – despite the Scottish Government and EHRC stating that violence against women is a key indicator of women’s inequality.

“The Scottish Government is clear that violence against women is a consequence of continuing inequality between men and women, and it is also a barrier to achieving equality. Our approach is set firmly within the context of the Gender Equality Duty, which expects all public bodies to have due regard to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality between men and women. Tackling violence against women is therefore essential in meeting the Gender Equality Duty.”⁶

It is not clear from our analysis whether the majority of SOAs have been subject to an equality impact assessment in compliance with their legal obligations in relation to the Gender Equality Duty.

⁶ www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/violence-women (accessed October 2009)

Conclusion

In our 2008 analysis we made a number of recommendations for both national and local government. During 2009 the Scottish Government implemented two of these:

- The publication of Safer Lives: Changed Lives: A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland.
- Establishing violence against women as one of the Scottish Government's Ministerial Priorities under the Gender Equality Duty.

These are important policy developments at a national level to continue the work in Scotland to address both the cause and consequences of violence against women.

A recommendation for local government was that they fully recognise their legal obligations under the Gender Equality Duty and identify violence against women as a key indicator of women's inequality. In our analysis of SOAs it is encouraging that there is a greater reference to domestic abuse\violence against women strategies. However, it is also evident that many CPPs do not fully share an understanding of, or commitment to, the need to tackle violence against women in order to achieve national outcomes and to meet their obligations under the Gender Equality Duty.

Safer Lives: Changed Lives states, "Through the Concordat, local and national Government in Scotland have a new relationship, based on the mutual pursuit of shared outcomes. The approach to violence against women exemplifies that relationship."

Our analysis of SOAs continues to raise the question - what happens in this new relationship when the commitment to pursue an outcome does not appear to be shared - as it is unclear how the implementation of national policy at a local level is monitored and evaluated or how local authorities and their Community Planning Partners are held to account.

References

- Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers Network (forthcoming) Single Outcome Agreements 2009-10: A thematic analysis. Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Community Care Providers Scotland (2008) Single Outcome Agreements 2008-2009: An analysis by Community Care Providers Scotland
- ERAW and EHRC (2008) Map of Gaps2: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services in Britain
- Improvements Service (2009) Elected Member Briefing Note No. 1 Single Outcome Agreements
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- Scottish Government and COSLA (2008) Single Outcome Agreements Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships
- Scottish Government (2009) Safer Lives: Changed Lives A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland.
- Scottish Women's Aid (2008) Analysis of local authority single outcome agreements



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