

Social Justice Research

Mapping of Education and Training Addressing Violence Against Women

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In March 2004 the Scottish Executive launched a national training strategy to address the issue of domestic abuse within Scotland. In 2005 the scope of the strategy was extended to include other forms of violence perpetrated against women. The primary aim of the strategy is to mainstream training on the issue of violence against women (VAW) to ensure that all public sector employees possess the skills, knowledge and understanding to deliver an efficient and effective service to those affected across Scotland. One means of achieving this is to ensure that the issue is included in all pre- and post-qualification professional education and training. This research was commissioned to assess the extent to which training and education related to violence against women are already taking place and to identify potential levers for change. This paper reports the findings of a mapping exercise across 7 public sector services: Social Work; Education; Health; Housing; Judiciary, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal; Police; and Prisons.

Violence against women was addressed within the context of a gender-based analysis of male violence¹, and the areas included in the scope of this research were: domestic abuse; impact on children; sexual assault and rape; adult survivors of child sexual abuse; prostitution and trafficking; enforced marriage; and interventions to challenge perpetrator behaviour.

Main Findings

- Across many sectors, violence against women was not regarded as a key issue to be included as a mandatory element of pre- and post- qualification professional training. Further, professional bodies do not currently regard skills and understanding in dealing with violence against women to be a pre-requisite for entry to a specific public sector profession.
- There is limited training and education on violence against women, particularly within the social work, education, housing, and health sectors. The main focus of what does exist is on domestic abuse.
- An already crowded curriculum, a lack of understanding of violence against women as being a universal problem, and a lack of trainers and material mitigate against including violence against women in the curriculum. Some respondents regarded violence against women as another 'single issue' or 'special interest group', rather than a universal problem affecting a significant proportion of the population. This misconception of the significance and reach of violence against women means it is seen as low priority.
- There is little evidence to demonstrate a gender-based approach to teaching on issues of violence against women.

¹ Violence against women has its roots in gender inequality and is an abuse of men's power and privilege. The term 'gender-based violence' interprets violence within the context of women's subordinate status in society and associated social and societal norms.

- The study identified several potential drivers for change, including: Scottish Executive influence; review of professional roles, responsibilities and competencies; enthusiasts and champions to take forward work in this area; and the Gender Duty.
- Given the differences in responses across the sectors, a tailored approach to working with each of the professional sectors would be the most effective way to raise awareness of violence against women issues.

Methods

The study commenced in August 2006 and was completed in March 2007. It was conducted in 2 stages and covered pre- and post-qualification training across seven public sector services: Social Work; Education; Health; Housing; Judiciary, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal; Police; and Prisons. A total of 70 people participated in the research. Research methods used during the study were: desk-based research; data collection and mapping (of pre-qualification education and training university and higher education course content and post qualification / Continuing Professional Development course content); interviews with professional bodies, chief officers, regulatory bodies, and standards institutions; and interviews with individual police forces.

Sector Findings

In most of the sectors investigated, violence against women is not seen as an issue of such significance that it should be a mandatory element of professional training, either at pre-qualifying or post-qualifying level.

Significantly, we found that, according to the relevant professional bodies, skills and understanding in dealing with violence against women are not regarded as a necessary prerequisite to be a recognised doctor, teacher or social worker. There was no indication from any professional body that they would wish to move to change this situation. However several organisations were willing to work in partnership to develop education and training in this area and commented that a steer from the Scottish Executive could also be influential in bringing about future change.

There is some evidence of pockets of activity and these along with a summary of findings for each professional sector are summarised as follows:

Social work

From the evidence, it is apparent that content on violence against women within pre- and post-qualification education and training is patchy. There are some examples of good practice that can be built upon within pre-qualification courses. For example, Stirling University already has good coverage of violence against women issues within its BA (Hons) and MSc Social Work programmes and Paisley University and Glasgow Caledonian University social work

courses also include some content on VAW. Within Continuing Professional Development there may be the potential to link with a course being developed through Glasgow Caledonian University.

Education

From the evidence gathered, content on violence against women is minimal in pre-qualification training and focuses on protection of children from abuse, where emphasis is placed on the child. From the limited information received it appears that in all cases, related subject areas on violence against women were integrated into other areas of courses/modules rather than being stand-alone modules. Violence against women is not included within Continuing Professional Development education and training on a mandatory basis. Given the need for all teachers to act and provide pastoral care to children, there is a requirement to be knowledgeable about the broad range of issues in relation to violence against women.

Health

The study found that content on violence against women is patchy across the health sector. It is mentioned most frequently in nursing courses. Of the courses that supplied information, the DIP HE Nursing at Stirling University is the only course containing a stand-alone module on violence against women. Paisley, Robert Gordon and Stirling Universities indicated they use external parties to deliver course content on domestic abuse and the impact of child sexual abuse in their nursing courses. Respondents commented that to bring about change and to include violence against women in curricula, clinical evidence of need must be demonstrated. Developments through NHS Education for Scotland's work around developing health inequalities may encourage gender sensitive practice at pre-, post- and Continuing Professional Development levels.

Judiciary

We contacted the main universities in Scotland that offer legal programmes and received information on 11 individual courses. All aspects of violence against women relevant to this study (domestic abuse; impact on children; sexual assault and rape; adult survivors of child sexual abuse; prostitution and trafficking; enforced marriage; and interventions to challenge perpetrator behaviour) were covered by one or more of the eleven courses. The optional 'Domestic Violence and the Law' course within the Glasgow

University LLB is the only stand-alone course on any element of violence against women we identified. The LLB, University of Dundee contains an elective module entitled 'Gender and the Law' and the LLB, University of Edinburgh has an optional module called 'Gender and Justice'. Violence against women is mostly set within the context of criminal law, criminal justice and the legal response. Rape and sexual assault has the most coverage.

The Law Society and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration do not recommend or offer any accredited Continuing Professional Development on violence against women. The recent Law Society review of training and education offers an opportunity for future inclusion of violence against women pre- and post-qualification.

Housing

We did not identify any pre-qualification education and training courses in the housing sector that contain training on violence against women. The Chartered Institute of Housing is not inclined to make this a mandatory element of pre-qualification training but thought it should be a recommended element given the broader remit of housing officers. The Chartered Institute of Housing provides remedial training in response to the needs of employers and is willing to work in partnership to develop core modules and elements on violence against women in the future.

Police

We contacted the Scottish Police College and local police forces. From the information gathered, it is apparent that the focus at college is on domestic abuse and this emphasis is replicated at force level. There is no probationer training on rape and sexual assault. Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland confirms that this emphasis on domestic abuse and child protection is the case, but anticipates that this will change through its new structured work groups. The study indicates that after probation, there is considerable disparity across local forces in who receives training, the level, volume and in the issues covered. However, all interviewees were open to the idea of more and broader training for police officers. One interviewee suggested that a strategy could be developed through the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland Training and Development Group.

Prisons

We gathered information on internal training provided at Cornton Vale women's prison. Within the scope of this study, we were unable to follow through the prison sector as a whole. The study indicates that the focus of training at Cornton Vale has been on 'relationships' and this has included a range of content on violence against women. Given the profile of women in custody, it is likely that a high percentage of women have experienced some kind of abuse.

Training for prison officers in violence against women related issues is therefore vital, both pre- and post-qualifying, to equip them with the skills they need to deal with these issues on a day to day basis.

Overall Findings

Overall, the findings show that at pre-qualification and post-qualification level, there is patchy and scant training and education on violence against women, particularly within the social work, education, housing and health sectors. What does exist is overwhelmingly about domestic abuse.

Across most sectors, those responsible for course content and curriculum development stated that, while in many cases they were sympathetic to the issue, the curriculum was already crowded and that to add training on violence against women issues would variously mean "*something else would have to come out*" or that it would have to be in response to legislation or regulatory pressure to include this "*topic*". Several respondents seemed to regard violence against women as another "*single issue*" or "*special interest group*". This implies a lack of awareness that violence against women is a universal and endemic issue affecting a significant proportion of the population. A few respondents suggested that there is a shortage of individuals in Scotland who could support the teaching of related violence against women issues, and a corresponding lack of materials.

Gaps in Responses

Some educational institutions and organisations did not respond to requests for information, did not wish to participate in the research or were unable to provide information within the timescale of the study. Information received was self-reported and in many cases incomplete. This may be due to the fact that a number of respondents found the issue of violence against women hard to discuss. It is difficult to interpret if this reluctance was due to inactivity (and therefore limited information available on the subject) or because of discomfort in discussing violence against women. It is therefore possible that there is additional activity on violence against women that is not included within the findings of this study.

Awareness of Gender Duty²

Across all the sectors investigated there was an extreme lack of awareness about the impact of the Gender Duty on public sector workers. Those who were aware reported that

² The Gender Duty came into force in April 2007 and it requires public authorities to promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination instead of depending on individuals making complaints about sex discrimination, the duty places the legal responsibility on public authorities to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly.

they would wait to see guidance before considering how it might apply to them and their course or professional sector. Many respondents did not appear to appreciate that students they were training would have to comply with and therefore have a good understanding of, the Gender Duty in their daily professional lives.

Drivers for Change

Although the current provision of training and education relating to violence against women is limited and diffuse, the research has produced some positive and useful information about potential drivers for change.

Scottish Executive influence

Several organisations, including the Chartered Institute for Housing, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the Law Society and NHS Education for Scotland commented that a steer from the Scottish Executive could be influential in encouraging change.

Roles, Responsibilities and Competencies

Teaching institutions and professional bodies which took part in the research do not expressly mandate that understanding and skills relating to violence against women are essential for their specific profession. In some professional areas where standards and competency-based job roles are common, such as in areas of nursing, there may be scope to open discussions around a standard and competency-based approach to embedding knowledge and skills on violence against women into job roles and responsibilities.

Enthusiasts and Champions

Within several sectors, we spoke to individuals who were enthusiastic about the research and who might be willing to be champions for taking forward work on violence against women education and training.

Legislation

The research suggests that, if used in isolation, imposing a legislative requirement on course providers across the sectors to include teaching on violence against women in their pre- and post-professional qualification courses would be an overly blunt and, in all likelihood, ultimately unsuccessful instrument for bringing about change. There may, however, be scope through the Gender Duty to raise levels of awareness about violence against women.

Potential opportunities for change:

The study identified several current and future opportunities for influence and change:

- Law Society consultation on the future of the education and training of solicitors
- new national training team at the *Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)*
- work following on from the Social Work Review (*Changing Lives: Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review Group, Scottish Executive, 2006*)
- raising the economic cost of absenteeism, lateness, and sickness caused by violence against women for employers, as part of the Executive's Healthy Working Lives initiative
- supporting and working with NHS Education for Scotland in its work on developing gender inequalities sensitive practice
- the potential to include content on issues relating to violence against women on a new intranet resource 'GLOW' (the new name for the Scottish Schools Digital Network. It is a national schools intranet, digitally linking Scotland's 800,000 educators and pupils and is funded by the Scottish Executive) which will be available to all teachers in Scotland
- an opportunity for a representative to make a presentation to the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) Personnel Network on issues relating to violence against women.

Recommendations

Each of the professional sectors reviewed has its own level of awareness of violence against women issues, culture and training. This means that a differentiated approach to working with each sector is likely to be most appropriate.

Strategic Approach

We suggest that the strategy to bring about change is to adopt an influencing and persuasive approach, backed up by solid evidence of the need for and the benefits of change, and practical help to do so. If an influencing and persuasive approach proves to be unsuccessful, then it may be necessary to consider legislative or regulatory enforcement. Taking one or two sectors at a time is likely to be more realistic, given the level of change needed. It may take no less than 3 to 5 years and possibly longer, to implement such a strategy.

Operational Approach

We suggest taking forward work at an operational level in 3 stages as detailed below:

■ Stage 1

Raise awareness about the significance, for each sector, of violence against women. This will involve understanding what each sector would regard as relevant, for example, research evidence, and information about likely benefits both to service users and public agencies. The aim would be to encourage professionals to fully meet their responsibilities.

Each sector will also need to be convinced that introducing new course content will fit with existing curricular demands and enhance the training they provide, there will practically need to be teaching materials and teachers to deliver the course/module. Identifying a champion or champions within each sector will be essential.

The key to success at this stage is ensuring that high level influencers in each sector see understanding violence against women as relevant, important, necessary - and achievable – in order for their students or staff to operate as competent professionals.

■ Stage 2

Work with each sector to develop a plan and timetable for filling the current gaps in provision of education and training on related violence against women issues.

■ Stage 3

Monitor progress of each sector against their plan and timetable.

Resource and Capacity Issues

Inevitably there are capacity and resource implications for taking forward this work. Support for capacity building may come through identifying key experts in education and training on violence against women and inviting them to assist with the next stage of development.

The National Training Strategy is integral to work on addressing the issue of violence against women throughout Scotland. The findings of this research will inform the future work on this agenda.

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