

# Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence: A Whole School Framework



Fairness

Equality

Respect

Inclusion



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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# Ministerial Foreword



The Scottish Government's aim is to end all forms of gender-based violence across our society – and I am determined to see our schools leading the way.

As Cabinet Secretary, the wellbeing and safety of children and young people in our schools is of the utmost importance. Ensuring that every child is treated with respect and feels safe at school is a task I do not take lightly.

There is no place for harassment or abuse in any form in our schools, and while many of us would have hoped that gender-based violence among young people was a thing of the past, the facts unfortunately do not bear this out.

When the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning was established in 2020, following a recommendation of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, one of its early pieces of work was to commission reports from the Children's and Scottish Youth Parliaments. These reports both confirmed the gender-based violence which girls and young women continue to experience in Scotland's classrooms. In addition, the [Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2023](#) highlights an increase in misogynistic views and language as an emerging concern.

We know that the prevalence of some dangerously misogynistic social media personalities is having a toxic influence on some boys, with a growth in disrespect towards female teachers and classmates alike. It is vital that we counter this discrimination and act to stamp out 'toxic masculinity' in favour of positive masculinity.

Gender-based violence can take many forms and it is essential that everyone within a school community is supported to recognise gender-based violence when it occurs, and be equipped to respond appropriately.

However, I am clear that our aspiration should not simply be to support schools to respond to incidents of gender-based violence. Prevention and early intervention are key elements of our approach – meaning that we want to address the underlying causes of gender-based violence, particularly gender inequality.

This framework is designed to support a whole-school approach to the prevention of gender-based violence. This can be achieved through actions around school culture and ethos, school policies and systems, professional learning and development for school staff, and the curriculum. The guidance includes information on how school leadership, all school staff, families and carers, children and young people, and community partners, all have a role in preventing gender-based violence. Through this whole-school approach, everyone within a school community will be supported to take steps to prevent gender-based violence, to recognise it when it occurs, and to be confident in knowing how to report and respond when incidents happen.

Through this work, we want to see schools create cultures in which all members of the school community know that gender-based violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

It is important to recognise that school staff can also personally experience gender-based violence during the course of their work. This is particularly prescient given that women are far more likely to work in educational settings than men. This guidance therefore includes information on schools' and local authorities' responsibilities to their staff - and to the support available for school staff who experience gender-based violence.

This framework forms part of our broader action to address the issue of gender equality within education, including the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme and the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning. The ambitions both complement the aims of our cross-cutting Equally Safe Strategy and our broad commitment to eradicate gender-based violence in every part of our society.

This framework was developed in collaboration with the Gender-Based Violence in Schools Working Group. I am grateful to the working group for the time and commitment shown in developing this framework, and to Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance for co-chairing the group alongside the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to eliminating all forms of gender-based violence. I am confident that this guidance will support schools in the work they are already doing to deliver a learning environment where all children and young people are protected, cared for, and in which their rights and needs are respected.

Our goal is to eliminate gender-based violence entirely. This will all require much hard work across government, across our schools and across society to support women and girls, shift attitudes and make clear that gender-based violence will simply not be tolerated.

But it is vital that our schools are at the forefront of our approach. It is this generation of young people who can be the ones to end gender-based violence and misogyny once and for all - and it up to us to show the leadership necessary to empower them to do so.

**Jenny Gilruth MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

# Introduction

## Purpose of the framework

This national framework seeks to support those working with and in all schools to develop and strengthen universal and targeted approaches to gender based violence (hereafter GBV) within the context of the [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#) approach, which puts the rights of all children and young people at the heart of good practice.

It is intended to support those in education authorities and schools, including primary, secondary, public, independent and grant-aided schools, by:

- building an understanding of the range of behaviours GBV can encompass
- demonstrating the ways that GBV may affect all children in a school community and intersect with various [protected characteristics](#)
- highlighting how schools can challenge the underlying gender inequality which causes GBV
- providing guidance to support schools' responses to GBV experienced, or carried out by, children and young people or other members of the school community, including staff
- outlining the approach schools should take to recording GBV behaviours
- signposting to further support and learning.

## Why the framework has been developed

Children's rights and wellbeing are intrinsically linked and are mutually reinforcing. When a child's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled, their health and wellbeing can improve; this positively impacts on their learning and achievement. Children's rights include the right to protection from [all forms of violence](#) including [sexual exploitation](#), and to an [education](#) which develops respect for human rights and prepares children for responsible life in a free society with gender equality (as enshrined in the [United National Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (hereafter "UNCRC".))

GBV encapsulates a range of different behaviours (see [What are the forms of GBV?](#)), which may affect anyone but of which violence against women and girls is the most common. The [United Nations notes](#) that violence against women and girls is 'one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today.'

Tackling violence against women and girls and its effects is an established Scottish Government priority. In 2016 the Scottish Government and COSLA published [Equally Safe](#), the national strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The [Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research](#), published in November 2023, explored headteachers', teachers' and support staff members' experiences of relationships and behaviour in publicly-funded mainstream schools, as well as the views of key local authority representatives across Scotland. The research found that 18% of all school staff had encountered sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils in the classroom in the last week (10% of staff in primary schools, and 27% in secondary schools.), whilst 5% had encountered it themselves or towards another member of staff. Misogyny as identified

an emerging theme of the research, with school staff participants reporting “sexist, misogynistic and explicitly sexualised language among male pupils, particularly related to the popularity of influencers.” Participants gave examples of “male pupils directing abusive and sexist language and more disruptive behaviour towards female teachers in a way that they did not towards male teachers.”

In response to the growing awareness of the need to consider the extent and impact of GBV in schools, and the support that schools and school staff may need to prevent and respond to such harmful behaviour, the Scottish Government established the [Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group](#) to develop a national framework to prevent and respond to GBV in schools (see [Appendix E: Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group](#)). The working group is jointly chaired by Rape Crisis Scotland, Zero Tolerance, and Scottish Government.

## Legal status of the framework

This framework is non-statutory and is designed to assist public, grant-aided and independent schools in making decisions relating to GBV. This framework is not prescriptive and each situation involving GBV should be assessed on a case by case basis.

Public, grant-aided and independent schools are responsible for ensuring that their policies, practices, and information take full account of the relevant legal requirements as set out in [Appendix C: Legal and Policy Framework](#). It is for education authorities, the managers of grant-aided schools and the proprietors of independent schools to take their own legal advice on such matters, as appropriate.

## Note on language used in the framework

The framework and its wording reflects the real-life experiences of some children and young people and therefore sets out examples of actions and language which may otherwise be unacceptable.



# Understanding Gender Based Violence (GBV) and its impacts

## What does GBV mean?

[Equally Safe](#) is Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls (VAWG). Our shared understanding defines VAWG as a form of GBV. GBV is defined as "any form of violence used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders".<sup>1</sup> This means that, in addition to VAWG, other specific forms of violence and abuse can be understood as gender-based, such as homophobic and transphobic bullying.

While the terms VAWG and GBV are sometimes used interchangeably, VAWG is a subset of GBV specifically targeting women and girls due to their unequal status in society. Equally Safe has [a strategic focus](#) on violence against women and girls, while recognising that persons of all genders experience violence and abuse: "VAWG harms everyone in society, including men and boys. While men and boys may benefit from some of the gendered norms and inequalities that give rise to VAWG, they are also harmed by them."

This framework uses the term 'gender-based violence' to reflect that children and young people of all genders can experience the behaviours described below and attempts to acknowledge the ways in which these behaviours may present in schools. It is also used because, in addition to VAWG, we recognised that homophobic and transphobic bullying (also forms of GBV) can occur in schools.

## What are the forms of GBV?

GBV can take many forms, encompassing, but not limited to:

- physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse and violence, including domestic abuse or relationship abuse (including coercive control), rape, incest, unwanted touching, the non-consensual sharing of sexual images, and the threat of any of these acts. This abuse and violence can occur within intimate relationships, in the family, within the general community, or in institutions.<sup>2</sup>
- sexual harassment, and intimidation in any public or private space (including online, work, schools, colleges and universities, and at home). This may include 'joking' or 'banter' which can be seen by children and young people as acceptable but can have a detrimental impact on the child or young person involved.
- commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking.
- child sexual abuse, including familial and sibling sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and online abuse.

1 Lang, J. (2002) Keynote address to The International Conference on Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls – Strengthening Human Rights. (Berlin, 2002).

2 See 'A continuum of children and young peoples' sexual behaviours' by Professor Simon Hackett in [The Expert Group on Preventing Sexual Offending Involving Children and Young People: Prevention of and Responses to Harmful Sexual Behaviour by Children and Young People \(www.gov.scot\)](#), page 11.

- so-called ‘honour-based’ violence, including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and ‘honour’ crimes.
- transphobic, homophobic or biphobic bullying, as it reinforces and polices gendered societal norms.

The section [Is GBV always men’s violence against women and girls?](#) and [Appendix B: Glossary](#) provide further information on types of GBV.

This framework aims to support addressing these matters within schools as a preventative measure. Where there are any concerns that a child or young person is experiencing GBV, these should be appropriately addressed using [already established child protection procedures and processes](#). This is discussed further in [Targeted approaches to responding to GBV](#).

## What causes GBV?

As recognised within the definition outlined above, GBV is rooted in gender inequality. [Equally Safe](#) places its definition of GBV within the gendered reality of men’s and women’s lives, what it means to be a man and a woman in our society and the status and privileges which are afforded to us depending on whether we are born a man or a woman.

Girls and young women [are at higher risk of violence](#) than the rest of the population. In a [NSPCC study](#), girls experienced more frequent and more severe emotional, physical and sexual partner violence than boys – one in three 13 to 17 year old girls reported some form of sexual violence. Girls reported high levels of coercive control including surveillance through the use of online technologies and, unlike the boys in the study, reported that their welfare was severely detrimentally affected.

## How does GBV intersect with protected characteristics?

Along with their protected characteristic of sex, women and girls can have various protected characteristics that increase their level of risk in experiencing violence and abuse. Other systems of power, such as racism, classism, religious discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism work with gender inequality to cause the specific types of violence experienced by girls and women who are the furthest from power. The violence they face often combines multiple forms of discrimination, for example GBV experienced by Black or minority ethnic young women and girls often combines racism and misogyny. Violence targeted at disabled girls may include [abuse targeted at their disability](#) as well as misogyny, and they may also encounter [additional barriers](#) to accessing support.

It is therefore important to note that girls, young women and transgender young people who are affected by more than one form of inequality or discrimination face increased risks of GBV. Approaches to tackling GBV should take this combination of factors into account in the ways they seek to prevent violence and discrimination, as well as in the ways they recognise and respond when it occurs.

“I feel really ashamed and embarrassed. I don’t know what it’s called but yesterday a boy in my class was touching my leg and slapping it constantly. And before that, he was messaging me online about having sex, but I don’t even know him that well. I haven’t told my school yet as there obviously isn’t any evidence of the touching. As for the messages, people are just saying he is joking about, but it really doesn’t feel like that to me. I don’t know whether he’s just trying to get a reaction out of me cos I’m autistic and I fall into seizures regularly – but I really want him to stop!”

Girl, 17, Childline

## Is GBV always men’s violence against women and girls?

Sexual harassment, assault and abuse are overwhelmingly carried out by boys and young men against girls and young women in school environments. The experience in schools mirrors the experiences of women and girls in wider society where GBV is most often carried out by men, reflecting societal trends which limit girls and young women’s opportunities and power. [37% of girls and young women report](#) experiencing sexual harassment in school, compared with 6% of boys and young men. While violence against women and girls is the most common form of GBV, the two terms are not synonymous, and boys and men can also experience GBV. GBV is unacceptable no matter who is experiencing it. Every person who experiences GBV should receive support and care based on their individual needs and circumstances.

GBV experienced by boys and men is also more likely to be perpetrated by other boys and men. In some cases, this can reflect norms associated with hypermasculinity and the expression of power. For example, sexual harassment is [most likely](#) to be perpetrated against boys or men who are perceived as not conforming to the ‘rules’ of masculinity, including those who are or are perceived as gay, bisexual or transgender. It might be treated as ‘banter’ or ‘just a joke’ but can have serious impacts, especially over time. It is important boys and men know that their experiences are recognised, and that support is available to them.

When I was sexually assaulted, I couldn’t access services because of my gender. The nearest support service I could go to was 80 miles away. A school guidance teacher asked why I needed support because men don’t get raped. MAKE SURE THAT NEVER HAPPENS TO ANOTHER YOUNG PERSON

[Everyday Heroes: Service Responses Report, page 8](#)

## What is the relationship with LGBTQI+ inclusion?

As is set out in Appendix C, it is necessary to ensure that the rights of all children and young people are recognised and respected in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#). In the context of this framework, [this requires schools to prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation](#) on the basis of gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

It is important to recognise that GBV can be experienced by people of all genders, and in all relationships, regardless of sexual orientation. [Research](#) shows that people in their first same-sex relationship are often at higher risk of GBV. This may include threats of outing, internalised homophobia, lack of support, and any violence experienced being considered as less serious than heterosexual GBV. [Research](#) into transgender people's experiences of domestic abuse has found that the most common type of abuse was jealous and controlling behaviour, and two thirds of those included in the study had experienced physical abuse. It is therefore necessary that in considering their approach to GBV, education authorities, schools and school staff should recognise that GBV can also be experienced by LGBTQI+ people.

For further information, please see the Scottish Government's [guidance](#) on supporting transgender young people in schools.

## What are the impacts of GBV?

GBV can have wide-ranging impacts on children and young people's health and wellbeing. These impacts may include, but are not limited to, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, mental ill health, trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), unintended pregnancy, or sexually transmitted infection. As a result of children and young people's mental wellbeing being affected, their absence from school may increase, they may have difficulty focussing, and may disengage from learning.

Research from the 2023 Girlguiding annual [Girls' Attitudes Survey](#) showed that 69% of girls aged 11-16 reported that boys at their school had made comments about girls and women that they regarded as toxic, with the same percentage of 17-21 year olds reporting comments that made them uncomfortable. 44% of young women aged 17-24 reported these comments made by boys at their school made them fear for their safety. This could have a material impact on their wellbeing, and their learning outcomes.

GBV is often traumatic. It is important that when any member of school staff becomes aware of any concerns about GBV, that appropriate trauma-informed, nurture and relationship-based support is provided for all those involved, in line with GIRFEC (see [Applying trauma-informed practice](#)). The assessment of needs under the GIRFEC approach applies equally to any child or young person displaying harmful or inappropriate behaviour.

Ethos and cultures in schools that do not challenge GBV also impact boys and young men. Harmful gender stereotypes and norms focused on masculinity, along with an absence of support for emotional expression can result in poor mental health for boys and young men, and can impact learning outcomes, for example where it is perceived that "doing well" in school is "uncool."

"We need to be educating boys on 'lad culture' and the connotations it has to abuse... we have never talked about systemic problems, or toxic masculinity..."

[The Rise Report: supporting young women facing abuse in their intimate relationships](#), page 26.

## What are the barriers to disclosing GBV?

Education authorities and schools should be mindful that incidents are likely to have occurred which have [not been reported](#) by children and young people.

There are a range of barriers or reasons why children and young people may not raise concerns about GBV. These can include:

- Feeling that they won't be believed or that no action will be taken
- Feeling that the issue they are concerned about is commonplace so 'there's no point' in raising it
- Poor previous experiences of seeking help
- Fear of how peers will react if it becomes known that they have reported an incident; concern about 'telling on' others
- Fear of being subject to more violence or repercussions from the person carrying out the GBV
- Worrying that there will be damage to their reputation, for example through sexual rumours being circulated about them
- Worrying that what happens next will be out of their control
- Concerns about disclosing personal information such as sexual orientation or gender identity which may be relevant to the abuse/violence
- Concern that intersectional experiences may not be fully recognised or responded to, for example, racism and sexual orientation
- Feeling that they might be blamed
- Feeling embarrassment and shame when talking to someone about sex; fear of being embarrassed if school staff respond in front of other pupils
- Concern that police will become involved or will come to school
- Concern about how their parents/carers will respond if the school shares information
- If the person carrying out GBV is a family member, or a sibling or family member attends the same school, children or young people may be fearful of what will happen if they disclose information.

“Victim-blaming happens a lot in schools.”

Quote from young people's group in Stirling

“I was sexually harassed by a boy at my school. It makes me cry every time I talk about it. I've had meetings with the school and they told me they can't do anything because there is no evidence of it happening. I have to see him every single day at school and it makes me so angry. I hate feeling like this. I just want to move on but I can't.”

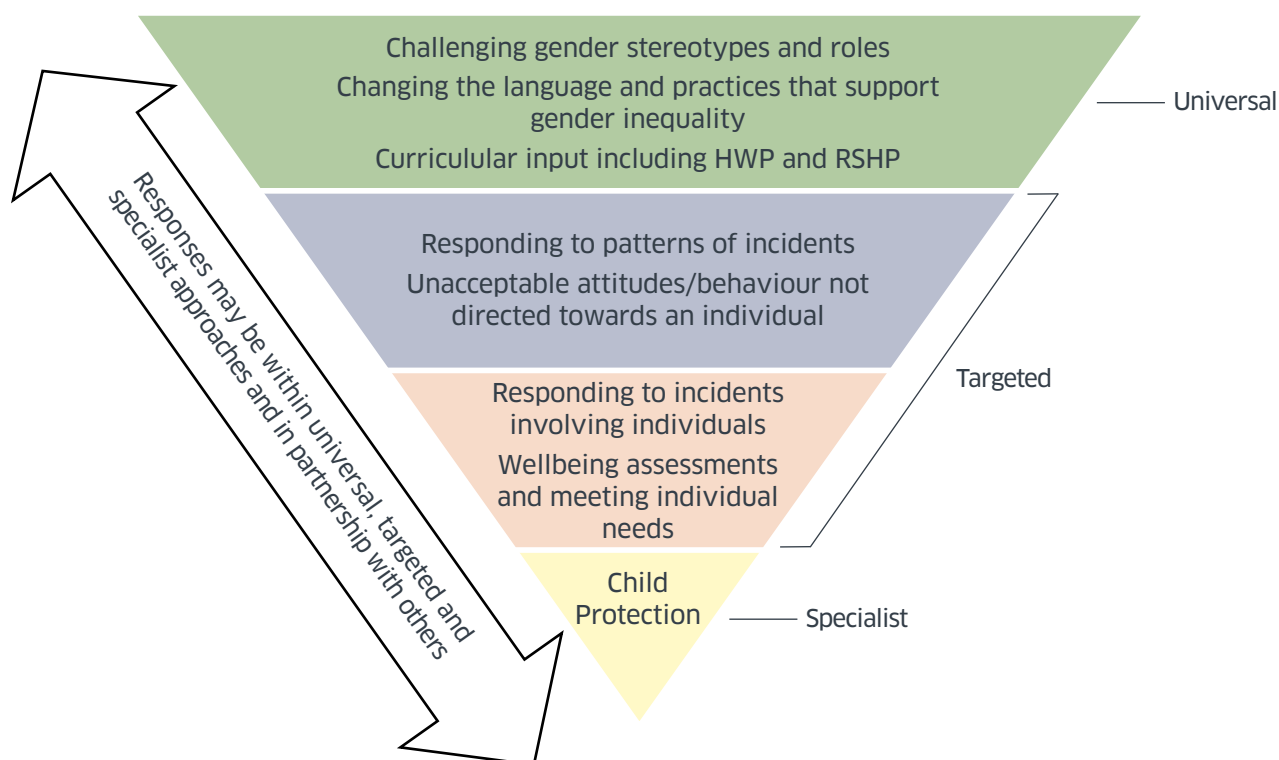
(Girl, 17, Childline)

# A Whole-School approach to addressing Gender Based Violence

All children and young people should be able to learn free from discrimination and violence. Discrimination and violence against women and girls within schools is wholly unacceptable.

Schools, as part of wider children's services, are well-placed to support learning, understanding and prevention of GBV through universal approaches. Schools also have an important role to play, with partners, in supporting children and young people who have experienced GBV. This includes gathering evidence on the nature and extent of GBV within their school and taking appropriate targeted or specialist action to address this, both in relation to individual incidents and reflecting any trends in their approach to children and young people's learning.

Within the context of the GIRFEC approach, it is important to recognise the full spectrum of GBV (see [Understanding Gender Based Violence and its impacts](#)). Schools and school staff may also be asked to respond to circumstances and incidents which occur both within and [outwith](#) school. A school's response to different situations may sit in different, or multiple, places in the structure illustrated below, depending on the particular circumstances. This is explored further in [Scenarios](#).



Description: the diagram illustrates Universal, Targeted and Specialist approaches to GBV. Under Universal, it includes challenging gender stereotypes and roles. Under Targeted, it includes responding to patterns of incidents and responding to incidents involving individuals. Under Specialist, it includes Child Protection. The diagram notes that responses may be within universal, targeted and specialist approaches, and in partnership with others.

## Applying a whole-school approach

This framework adopts a whole-school approach to tackling GBV, recognising the important contribution to be made by all members of a school community, including children and young people, teachers, school nurses and other staff, parents, carers and the wider community. A whole-school approach aims to positively influence the school culture by fostering a shared, consistent approach tackling the underlying gender inequalities that underpin GBV. Everyone in a school community should promote a healthy and constructive understanding around gender and gender roles and challenge views held by people both in schools and across society which normalise GBV. This proactive whole-school approach applied consistently will provide a strong foundation to address any specific incidents of GBV. Please see [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#) for information on responding to incidents of GBV.

Similarly, the school culture and ethos should set clear expectations and acceptance amongst all members of the school community of the need to challenge and address GBV where it occurs. Responding to GBV involves taking action when there are early signs of GBV occurring and when incidents of violence or abusive behaviours have occurred. This includes supporting people experiencing GBV, responding effectively to the person responsible, and aiming to prevent any recurrence or normalisation of this behaviour or attitudes amongst the whole school community.

“Ultimately this is an issue of culture – no point saying it comes down to delivering 5 lessons – it has to be embedded within the school and everyone challenge the behaviour when it occurs. It is not the responsibility of one but instead is of all.”

Quote from South Lanarkshire primary teacher

### The role of leadership

Senior leaders in education authorities and schools have a key role in leading the development and implementation of systems, structures and approaches, as well as by modelling equality as a core school value and culture.

### Engaging with partners

Engaging with appropriate partners may form an element of both universal and targeted approaches. School staff can call on a range of support from within education, health and local authority services (as well as other organisations and services) in prevention and early intervention of GBV.

In particular, schools and youth services can seek engagement with and support from their local area multi-agency violence against women and girls [partnership](#). This partnership leads local strategic action to prevent and tackle violence against women and girls.

Where there is a risk of significant harm to the child or young person, school staff should always invoke child protection procedures, rather than seeking multi-agency voluntary support. Please see [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#).

## **The role of children and young people**

Where schools have [embedded](#) an ethos of meeting children and young people's needs, recognising their rights, listening to their voices, and enabling their full participation in the life of the school, children and young people will be more likely to feel safe, confident in sharing their views and willing to be involved in creating positive change in their environment. Children and young people should be confident that they know what to do if they experience or witness GBV at school, or if they want to talk to a staff member about something that is worrying them.

## **The role of school staff**

All school staff are highly influential in building the ethos, culture and values of the school and can demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours associated with gender equality. Local authorities should support and encourage school staff to utilise their influence in developing a culture of gender equality in schools.

Equality lies at the heart of the [GTCS Professional Standards](#) for teachers.

## **The role of school nursing**

School nurses are well positioned within education settings to support children and young people with their health and wellbeing.

[Domestic abuse](#) and child protection are 2 of the 10 priority areas of focus for a school nurse. If a child or young person has witnessed or experiences domestic abuse, or other forms of GBV, at home or within their own relationships, they can request assistance from the school nurse. The school nurse will complete a holistic assessment of the young person's health and wellbeing needs through a GIRFEC health and wellbeing assessment and provide the necessary support. Where more specialised input is required, school nurses can make referrals into other services ensuring young people receive the correct care and support at the right time.

## **The role of families**

It is important to fully include parents and carers at all stages of enhancing school culture and policy on GBV as part of a whole-school approach. This may include: sharing the vision for change; building the case for change; and learning parents and carers' perspectives on the impact of gender and GBV in the lives of their children and what needs to change.

Engaging with parents and carers enables the school to be clear with all members of the community about its approach to GBV and what parents/carers may expect if an incident occurs.

In any engagement around GBV, whether this be with children, young people, school staff, school leaders, parents, carers or families, a sensitive approach should be prioritised.

See [Applying trauma-informed practice, Responding to GBV experienced by a member of staff](#), and [Appendix A: Professional learning and resources](#)



# Universal approaches to preventing GBV in schools

## What are the key features of a universal approach to preventing GBV?

Education is key to prevention. Education on GBV should aim to:

- Keep children and young people safe
- Challenge views held by people across society which normalise GBV
- Enable children and young people to identify GBV if it occurs in their own relationships, both for those experiencing and those carrying out.

This can be achieved through:

1. A pro-active approach to embedding gender equality in school communities, which provides a strong foundation for targeted approaches.
2. All school policies should actively promote gender equality. The prevention of GBV will intersect with all areas of school life, such as uniform policy or subject choices.
3. Engagement and collaboration with children and young people, which can help school staff and leaders, and parents/carers, understand how children and young people experience GBV and how it affects them.
4. Everyone within each learning community, whatever their role may be, should contribute to creating a positive ethos and climate of equality, respect and trust.
5. School staff are supported through professional development, training and resources, to model gender equal practices and challenge problematic behaviours. This can include training on identifying GBV as well as specific supports for the mental health and wellbeing of education staff such as supervision.
6. A consideration of the likelihood that many children and young people and school staff will have had personal experience of GBV. Schools require to consider safety and be aware of relevant support for children and young people or staff where engagement with these issues causes distress or leads to disclosure.
7. School staff are informed and supported to access additional support available from within education, local authority services, and other organisations within the local community.
8. GBV policies and procedures should accord with legislation and the [National Guidance for Child Protection](#), and be set within the framework of national education policy and GIRFEC, and be underpinned by the principles of the UNCRC.

## What can prevent GBV?

If we are to prevent GBV, we need to change attitudes around gender, gender roles, and challenge those views held by people across society which normalise GBV. This requires a sustained approach. [Research](#) into what best supports this tells us that one-off, knowledge-building interventions (such as bystander trainings and myth busting) do not work on their own.

Such an approach includes challenging harmful ideas about masculinity when these are expressed by boys and young men. [Equally Safe At School \(ESAS\) has information about engaging with boys and young men](#), and there are further resources in the [Masculinities](#) section of Appendix A.

Activities that work to create a culture which is preventative are those which:

- emphasise empathy and relationship building
- focus on role modelling behaviours
- are tailored to the context and community they are being delivered in
- are accessible, relatable, and positive
- are inclusive and share power
- [embrace](#) complexity, failure, and risk
- use a gendered lens
- are [participatory](#)
- are consistent in approach.

## What action can schools take to prevent GBV?

There are several ways through which schools can work to address gender inequality and therefore GBV, including:

- School culture and ethos.
- Policies and systems.
- Professional learning and development.
- Curriculum.

## School culture and ethos

Everyone within each learning community, whatever their role may be, should contribute towards creating a positive ethos and climate of equality, respect and trust – one in which children and young people feel that they are listened to, and are safe and secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives. The creation of such a culture may help to address barriers to the disclosure of GBV.

For gender equality to be fully embedded within a school's culture and ethos, it's important that messaging and practice across the school community is consistent. Messages, assemblies, and lessons promoting gender equality become ineffective, undermined and less trusted when children and young people continue to experience inequality in practice as they move through the school environment. It is therefore important for staff to model, and be supported to model, gender-equal practices and

challenge inappropriate behaviour where and when it occurs. This will help foster a culture in which children and young people feel able to talk to staff about their concerns, giving them the confidence that views will be listened to, and any concerns raised will be acted upon in a timely manner.

Resources to support schools with universal approaches to GBV are included within [Appendix A: Professional learning and resources](#).

## Policies and Systems

A school's policies and procedures should be regularly reviewed by senior leadership in accordance with the relevant local authority policy framework, to ensure they are designed, evaluated, and implemented in a way that actively promotes a gender equal culture.

“There’s a lot of double standards. Girls will be told off for wearing certain things but the boys aren’t told off for saying things about us.”

Quote from young people’s group in Stirling

Care should be taken to communicate school values and relevant policies to all children and young people, staff, and the wider school community, and ensure they are implemented consistently and equally. Consideration should be given to the role that all policies play in enhancing or undermining a gender equal culture. For example, whether the rules on school uniform reinforce gender stereotypes or place undue restrictions on girls and young women, and whether girls and young women have equal access to sports activities, play, and resources.

Uniform – no skin for girls, no make-up, length of skirt and amount of chest shown. Boys can do whatever.

[Everyday Heroes: Gender Inequality and Societal Attitudes Report](#), pg.7

The [Children’s Parliament report on Gender Equality in Education and Learning](#) noted a strong emphasis on the importance of equal access to sports and play amongst girls and young women. The report highlighted that ‘there was a consensus’ among girls they spoke to ‘that girls are not able to participate fully in sport in the playground or in organised teams due solely to their gender.’ Girls felt that ‘boys physically held space within playground spaces that led to them being marginalised and being forced to play games that could fit around the edges of the play spaces.’ Schools should consider how to ensure that both boys and girls have equal access to [sports](#), for example protecting time slots for girls to use equipment or spaces. Schools should be mindful of recommendations on safety in all school sports activities.<sup>3</sup> School systems for monitoring and evaluation can be used to assess the extent to which a school is achieving gender equality (see [Monitoring, recording and evaluation](#)). School data, such as attainment, achievement or absences can also be reviewed to understand their relationship to gender and other characteristics. Care should be taken to ensure that the experiences of groups in a statistical minority in the setting are not ignored.

<sup>3</sup> Association for Physical Education: *Safe Practice: in physical education, school sport and physical activity*, pg 200 item 2.13.35)

On Friday, only people playing football are allowed to go on the astroturf, so it's always the boys and that's not fair. Boys don't let the girls play on the playground.

[Everyday Heroes: Gender Inequality and Societal Attitudes Report](#) page 7

A school's relationships and behaviour policy is core to communicating the school's expectations of behaviour and how it will manage any situations which arise. A school may wish to develop a GBV section or aligned policy to provide specific information about how it will manage instances of GBV and support all those involved. This should be clear that matters such as GBV will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

### **Professional learning and development**

To build an ethos that promotes gender equality, school staff need to be supported to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes, and unconscious bias. Resources such as [Improving Gender Balance Self-Evaluation](#) can support this. Staff may also need support to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to create gender-equal learning environments, to engage children and young people in dialogue and to challenge negative attitudes and behaviour in relation to GBV. Professional learning opportunities are therefore important, and staff should be given appropriate time to engage with high quality professional learning and discussion spaces to reflect on their practice and how gender equality can be mainstreamed into their school environment and teaching.

Professional learning on GBV can include training, dedicated time at staff meetings, joint working groups with children and young people, and [self-evaluation activities](#). [Opportunities for professional learning are summarised in Professional Learning and Resources](#).

### **Curriculum**

All aspects of the curriculum hold the potential to embed gender equality in the school setting and challenge the attitudes and behaviours which cause GBV.

The [Improving Gender Balance and Equalities resources and research](#) includes tools to help staff embed equality across the curriculum. Gender equality can be promoted across curricular areas in a variety of ways, for example, by taking a non-gendered and inclusive approach to PE, discussing gender stereotypes in texts, asking whose voice has not been heard in novels, by learning about feminism and women's rights in social subjects, or by considering whether children and young people are being encouraged to learn about a diverse range of women artists/scientists as well as their often more famous white men counterparts. School leadership should ensure that all staff are given time and resources to appropriately consider teaching and learning approaches that promote gender equality.

Some ideas from children and young people which would help to create a positive school culture and ethos:

- School sports activities should be accessible to both boys and girls whenever possible, including more opportunities for girls to play football and boys to play netball
- All children should be able to learn any subject
- All members of a school community should not make stereotypical remarks or statements about gender
- Maths questions shouldn't say girls do skipping and boys kick a ball
- P.E. should be equal
- Uniforms should be gender equal and equally enforced
- Make sure children are listened to about gender equality
- Teachers should treat all children the same
- Children should treat each other the same

Ideas suggested by East Renfrewshire primary school pupils

Staff can also challenge cultural perceptions of what are traditionally considered to be 'girls' or boys' subjects,' and where barriers might lie to subject choice and learner pathways for children and young people of different genders. This does not always mean treating children and young people of all genders the same all the time. The [Children's Parliament report](#) on Gender Equality in Education noted that "while the secondary school girls reported that schools and teachers do not restrict their choices, they said that they feel unable to take subjects such as Engineering as they are intimidated by boys in these classes," but that "if this behaviour was called out, then the girls would love to take these subjects." Staff can develop awareness of how their classroom interactions might reinforce gender roles and behaviours.

Opportunities for personal achievement, clubs and activities, and school trips can also be examined to see if these are fully inclusive. Fuller exemplification of gender equality approaches are available for [early years](#), [primary](#) and [secondary](#) settings (see [Appendix A: Professional Learning and Resources](#)).

The Health and Wellbeing organiser of the Curriculum for Excellence offers particular opportunities to support the prevention of GBV. The Experiences and Outcomes within Responsibility of All and Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education offer opportunities to support children and young peoples' learning and understanding of issues around GBV that are age and stage appropriate, through topics such as healthy relationships, power in relationships and consent. This includes [understanding](#) what to do if children and young people need support or have experienced abuse. The Scottish Government has published [guidance](#) on key messages on healthy relationships and consent for young people.

School staff can embed education on healthy relationships and consent using a [range of resources](#) and programmes.

“Children and young people need to be taught about the emotional side of sex. If you don’t feel safe or whatever, you need to know that’s not OK.”

[Everyday Heroes: Service Responses Report](#), page 9

## Applying trauma-informed practice

**Applying trauma-informed practice** Being ‘trauma-informed’ means being able to recognise when someone may be affected by trauma, collaboratively adjusting ways of working to take this into account and responding in a way that supports recovery, does no harm, and recognises and supports people’s resilience.

Five key principles underlie trauma-informed practice. These are: safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.

It is important to be [aware](#) that many children and young people (see [What causes GBV?](#)) as well as staff (see [Responding to GBV experienced by a member of staff](#)) may have experience of GBV, often combined with other forms of inequality or discrimination. In discussing such topics, schools need to consider safety and be aware of relevant support services should children and young people, or staff, disclose personal experiences or where engagement with these issues has brought up difficult feelings or memories for them. This may include:

- letting children and young people know in advance that GBV will be discussed;
- make sure that children and young people know what will happen if they make a disclosure relating to GBV;
- establish an expectation at the beginning of any group activity that the purpose is to discuss issues, rather than personal experiences or anecdotes about others;
- agreeing strategies for what they can do if they feel upset;
- creating a space for discussion that makes clear how inappropriate or hurtful comments will be dealt with from the start;
- ensuring they have a safe alternative space where they can speak about their experiences;
- signposting to services and helplines where they can seek support independently after the discussion. If there is a child protection referral in place, this should only be done following discussion with the core agency taking forward.

Some behaviours which can appear challenging may in fact be survival or coping mechanisms that are triggered in the face of a perceived threat (including discussing the topic of GBV). This could include disinterest, lack of motivation, lack of trust, hostility, aggression, or resistance to receiving support. Through the consistent communication of empathy, warmth, respect and hope, school staff can provide powerful, corrective, relational experiences.

To help facilitate conversations in a way which feels safe for everyone involved, the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) has produced [guidance](#) on discussing GBV within a school context.

It is imperative that children and young people are made aware of child protection information sharing procedures so that they know they have a safe space with a trusted adult to whom they can bring their concerns. If a member of school staff has concerns that a child is at risk of significant harm, they should follow the school's child protection protocols, regardless of whether disclosure of a GBV incident has been made. Children and young people should be aware that staff may have an obligation to share this information with professionals to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

School leadership should also consider how best to support the wellbeing of staff who are responding to traumatic incidents. This could include considering what support might be available through the local authority for employees. All local authorities have health and wellbeing policies and offer a wide range of support for staff. Grant-aided and independent school employers may also have support available to employees.

# Targeted and specialist approaches to responding to GBV

## What are the key features of a targeted approach to GBV?

1. Targeted approaches to GBV involve intervention when there are signs of GBV occurring, or when violence or abuse has occurred.
2. A school's response to GBV should accord with legislation and the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#), be set within the framework of national education policy and GIRFEC, and be underpinned by the principles of the UNCRC.
3. Disclosure of GBV should be treated with sensitivity and in line with the school's child protection procedures, and relationships and behaviour policy/GBV policy. Particular consideration should be given to sensitivities around potential re-traumatisation and impacts of feeling a loss of control for the person affected.
4. A targeted approach will include consideration of the wide variety of behaviours and circumstances in which GBV may present. Staff may also need to respond to incidents that have occurred outwith school.
5. GBV may be directed at an individual, a group, or be aimed at community of people. Behaviours should be addressed whether they are directed at a particular individual or not.
6. It is important that the gravity of incidents of GBV are fully recognised, and that school staff are supported to gain appropriate knowledge about GBV and the impact that it can have upon those who experience it.

**Responses at a targeted level will support the universal approach outlined above regarding school ethos.**

## Introduction to targeted and specialist approaches to responding to GBV

Targeted approaches to preventing and tackling GBV should [align](#) with the GIRFEC approach and the [National Child Protection Guidance](#). A school's relationships and behaviour policy should provide clarity on how it will respond to GBV behaviours experienced by or displayed by children or young people.

As outlined in [What are the forms of GBV?](#), the types of behaviours staff may be required to respond to can vary significantly in nature. School staff will become aware of behaviours by:

- witnessing them in school;
- having matters disclosed to them by the pupil affected or those that are aware of the incident;
- having matters formally reported to them by families or via a multi-agency response;
- becoming aware of changes in behaviour that may indicate underlying concerns about a child or young person.



## Responding to a report of GBV: the person who experienced GBV

### Responding sensitively to disclosure

Children or young people who have experienced GBV face significant barriers to disclosure, as outlined in [What are the barriers to disclosing GBV?](#) It is therefore important that when a child or young person chooses to disclose concerns to a member of school staff, that they feel that their concerns are being taken seriously. If a child or young person chooses to speak to a staff member, the staff member should take some time to listen to the young person and find out what support they need. Their concerns [should be carefully listened to and responded to sensitively](#), using a nurturing and trauma-informed approach in line with the school's pastoral and/or child protection procedures, and [information sharing and recording procedures](#) (see [Recording incidents of GBV](#)). When considering next steps, where it is not possible to meet the wishes of the child or young person due to child protection concerns, this should be explained and the child or young person supported to understand the options available.

“There’s a boy in my class group chat who keeps spamming us with pornographic photos, and he sends really inappropriate messages, like ‘eat my d\*\*\*’. I feel so disgusted and kind of scared, but I don’t know what to do about it. I’ve tried talking to my other friends but they don’t seem bothered about it. It makes me feel like I’m all alone.”

(Girl, 10, Childline)

It might be helpful to ask if the person experiencing GBV would like a friend to accompany them while they speak with school staff, if staff members consider this appropriate and in light of the need to protect the wellbeing of all young people.

Suggested by children and young people’s groups in Stirling and Angus

Even within a supportive environment, children and young people may find it very difficult to report behaviours. Staff should be vigilant to signs of distress or changes in behaviour which may be linked to the impact of trauma (see [Applying trauma-informed practice](#)). Children and young people should be encouraged to discuss any concerns with their teacher, pastoral care team, or trusted adult within school.

There will be circumstances in which GBV is reported to the school by the child or young person’s family – this could be related to incidents and circumstances within the school, at home or in the community. If staff have concerns that an incident which has taken place outside of school is serious or there is a child protection issue, they should refer to social work for next steps.

Similarly, school staff may become aware that a child or young person has experienced GBV via a multi-agency response, which may be led by another agency, while the pupil is attending school. In these situations, school staff should follow the advice of social work and/or Police Scotland.

## Specialist Approaches to responding to a person affected by GBV

In the circumstances that a referral for a pupil affected by GBV is required, it should be identified as a child protection matter and all relevant details shared for further assessment. In such cases, it is likely that an inter-agency referral discussion (IRD) will be held to discuss the concerns, any relevant information and the appropriate next steps to ensure safety. It is important to note the essential contribution from education staff within these discussions, and attendance by the appropriate education representative is best practice. Where education staff have not been invited to attend the formal discussion, feedback should be provided and an understanding of next steps is essential. Where applicable, any actions agreed should be recorded within a [Child's Plan](#) for the pupil if one is in place. School staff may decide to open a child's plan if one does not already exist.

### Privacy considerations

If a young person discloses to a member of staff who is not responsible for pastoral care the staff member should be clear with the young person that they will share the information with the Designated Member of Staff (usually a member of school leadership or a named practitioner) to provide further support and advice. School staff should follow agreed local processes and procedures regarding confidentiality and sharing of information, respecting the child and young person's right to privacy, and in line with [GIRFEC information sharing guidance](#), relevant data protection legislation and [National Guidance for Child Protection](#). The Data Protection Act 2018 states [relevant personal information can be shared lawfully](#) if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

“I would like someone to listen to me and ask how I want be supported rather than someone deciding for me what support I need.”

[The Rise Report: supporting young women facing abuse in their intimate relationships](#),  
pg 18

Where child protection procedures are underway, a multi-agency decision will be taken as to who is best placed to provide the child and the family with an update. School staff will be aware of the need to ensure that sharing of information does not compromise safety. If a child or young person has identified a family member, parent, or carer as the person who is carrying out GBV, care should be taken to avoid sharing sensitive information with that person. School staff responsible for responding to an incident of GBV should refer to social services for advice in these scenarios.

Where there is not a child protection concern, staff should gain consent from children before contacting families where possible and inform them before this happens. Where a [child is over the age of 12, has sufficient maturity and understanding](#) and there is not a child protection concern and no criminal offence has been committed, they may decide that they do not wish their parents/families/carers to be informed.

There may also be instances where privacy concerns relating to the other child or young person involved means information cannot be shared with the person affected, for example, if an incident has been referred to the [Children's Hearing System](#). This lack of information may make the child or young person affected feel that nothing has been done in response to their disclosure. In such instances it should be emphasised to the child or young person that what happened to them matters and reassurance given that action is being taken.

School staff should also be mindful of disclosing personal information relating to [sexual orientation or gender identity](#). Information relating to a person's health, sex life and sexual orientation is recognised as [special category personal data under data protection legislation](#). This personal data requires more protection due to its sensitive nature.

### **Taking action to meet the needs of the person who has experienced GBV**

The needs of the child or young person who experienced GBV should be central in determining a response to support them. School staff should ensure that the child or young person fully understands what will happen following disclosure (see [Responding sensitively to disclosure](#)) and is able to retain a sense of control. It is important for staff to understand what they would like to happen and why, and communicate this to other agencies if involved (for example social work), so that the child or young person's views can be taken into consideration in next steps and planning. This is particularly important for children and young people who have experienced GBV, because violence and abuse involve taking away agency and choice, and feeling further disempowered can lead to re-traumatisation.

Of particular concern may be their safety. If the child or young person does not feel safe, they may be at risk of further harm as they may seek to protect themselves by withdrawing or disengaging from situations which they deem to still be unsafe. In these circumstances, a clear plan to secure the safety of all children and young people involved should be established, including appropriate actions.

Even if what the child or young person asks for is not possible, their request can help school staff to understand what the underlying need is. For example, they may express a wish for the person responsible to be locked away, but the underlying need is for safety, justice, protection and closure. Schools should consider how to demonstrate that they take these concerns and wishes seriously, and wherever possible take action to meet the needs of the person affected.

School staff may also consider if it would be helpful for signpost to other agencies for additional support, such as Rape Crisis or Women's Aid for young people aged 13 and over, and Childline for younger children. Children and young people aged 5-19 can be referred to the school nurse who can provide emotional health and wellbeing support. For children and young people aged 10 and above, school staff may consider if a referral to school counselling services would be helpful for the child or young person. Each of these examples should be considered on an individual basis and should not supersede school protocol and policies. If there is a child protection referral in place, additional referrals should only be carried out following discussion with the core agency taking the child protection referral forward.

## Responding to an individual or group who has carried out GBV

In line with the UNCRC, local authorities and other public bodies should ensure that the rights of children under [Article 19 of the UNCRC](#) to be protected from violence extends to protection from violence committed by other children. The UN has [confirmed](#) that, in respect of children who are subject to violence on the part of other children, “the role of adults responsible for these children is critical in all attempts to appropriately react and prevent such violence.”

Responses to incidents of GBV in schools should therefore be underpinned by the principle that all children and young people in a school community have the right to education, safety and justice, and that all children, young people, and staff have the right to learn and work in an environment free from violence and abuse. Staff should follow [school information sharing protocol](#), as outlined above under [Privacy considerations](#), when sharing information about a child or young person who has carried out GBV.

## Challenging and addressing behaviours

Embedding a school culture that addresses GBV means it is important to identify when behaviour constitutes GBV and that the school names it as such. Schools should ensure this behaviour is not minimised as ‘banter,’ ‘just having a laugh,’ ‘part of growing up’ or ‘boys being boys’. Indeed, more commonplace forms of GBV (often seen as ‘less serious’) can be precursors to other forms of GBV, and form part of a culture which normalises GBV and allows it to thrive.

A school’s relationships and behaviour policy should set clear expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and the associated responses which school staff can utilise. This should include circumstances where behaviours are repeated, and should consider the health and wellbeing of staff. When staff become aware GBV has occurred, appropriate action should be taken in line with the school’s established relationships and behaviour policy and child protection procedures. Given the particular sensitivities around the impact of GBV, schools may wish to consider developing a standalone GBV policy or specific section on GBV within the relationships and behaviour policy, outlining its approach to responding to such behaviours.

Schools may utilise a range of strategies and programmes to improve behaviour, as set out in [Scottish Government guidance](#). At the root of these approaches is building an understanding of why the behaviour is wrong, and working with the child or young person to prevent any reoccurrence. When deciding what strategies or programmes would be appropriate in response to instances of GBV, staff should have regard to the specific circumstances, and in particular the need not to use approaches that may lead to any person affected feeling unsafe or retraumatised. For example, utilising restorative approaches to incidents of GBV has the potential to be unsafe or retraumatising for the person who has experienced GBV. School staff should be aware that reconciliation may not be possible or advisable in cases of GBV and should not employ strategies that may cause additional distress to any person affected.

Education Scotland’s [guidance on promoting positive relationships and behaviour in educational settings](#) brings together resources to assist school staff in understanding approaches to promoting positive relationships and behaviour. The guidance states that ‘behaviour which causes disruption to others should never be ignored or dismissed.’

Practitioners have a responsibility to help children and young people understand the impact of their behaviours. Being nurturing means being ‘both supportive and challenging.’

Behaviours should be addressed whether or not they are directed at a particular individual. For example, general misogynistic comments or attitudes within the whole school community should be challenged. It should be noted that even very young children can display behaviours that would be considered GBV. This should be taken seriously at all stages, with appropriate supportive interventions tailored to age and capacity.

Responses will vary depending on the children or young people and the nature of the incident. For older children and young people, this may include understanding that their actions are taken very seriously, that GBV will not be tolerated in school, raising awareness that there can be [legal consequences for actions of GBV](#). For younger children, school staff may need to provide support to enable them to understand that their behaviour was very serious, unacceptable, and that it hurt someone. While individual responses will vary, there should be consistency in all approaches by focussing on repairing the harm caused where possible and preventing it from happening again.

This should be provided within the context of a child’s plan. The identification of any need for support, and the associated actions required, in order to address behaviours should be drawn into the individual child’s plan. School staff will also wish to consider whether the actions which have occurred as part of an incident of GBV may be considered criminal and should take the necessary steps in line with child protection guidance. This is considered further in the section below.

### **Specialist Approaches to responding to a person carrying out GBV**

Depending on the circumstances of each particular case, schools may require to implement specialist approaches in their response to the person carrying out GBV.

In line with the GIRFEC approach, schools should consider whether children or young people who have carried out GBV require wellbeing or child protection support, and take action accordingly. School staff may decide to open a [child’s plan](#), or review this plan if one already exists, with a view to identifying causes and appropriate interventions including additional resources to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

GBV behaviours in younger children may raise particular welfare concerns. Staff should follow their school child protection procedures in these cases. With any incidents of GBV, staff can be mindful that those who carry out GBV may have their own experiences of GBV and should allow children and young people a safe space to disclose this if needed. Given the nature of GBV behaviours, some incidents may be potentially criminal in nature (please see [Age of Criminal Responsibility](#) and [Hate Crime](#) sections of this guidance). School staff should report incidents of GBV where they are aware of, or have reason to believe, that a crime may have occurred or that a child or young person has been seriously harmed. School staff should follow agreed child protection procedures in these cases, and schools should work closely with their local authority and colleagues in core agencies (social work, health and Police Scotland) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and staff. In these situations, the school will receive advice and support from Police Scotland or social work in order to manage the situation within school.

## Responding to a report of GBV: School community

Alongside responding to the child or young person directly affected by an incident of GBV, it is important to consider if the incident has impacted a wider group of children or young people, rather than only the child or young person(s) directly affected, for example their close friends. If other children or young people witnessed or were affected by an event, designated staff may speak to those children or young people separately to check wellbeing, and to emphasise that GBV is not tolerated in school and action will be taken. The processes outlined in the sections above on universal and targeted approaches should also be utilised when responding to matters relating to the wider school community.

School leaders may wish to reflect on learning from incidents of GBV in the wider school community in order to consider any steps to prevent recurrence (See [Evaluating Progress](#)).

## Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV

A response to an incident of GBV should consider

- The person(s) affected
- The person(s) who carried out GBV
- The wider school community.

In all scenarios, if school staff have concerns that a child or young person has been seriously harmed or there is a possibility that a criminal offence has been committed, they should follow school child protection procedures for onward reporting to Police Scotland and social work services.

The circumstances of an incident of GBV and the response should always be recorded in line with school protocol.

## Things to consider: Information about the incident

- Offer the child or young person the opportunity to speak privately in a quiet space with an appropriate member of staff. Take some time to listen to the child or young person and find out what support they need.
- Was the incident directed towards one individual, or was it generalised? (e.g. children and young people using misogynistic language in the corridor)
- Where did the incident take place? In school, the community, online?
- Is this part of a series of incidents, and is there evidence of escalation?
- Ensure that incident details are recorded in line with school protocols.
- Does the nature of the incident indicate the need to implement child protection procedures (for any party) or potential police involvement?

## Things to consider: The person who experienced GBV

- Is there a child protection or wellbeing consideration? If so, follow the school's child protection policy.
- The needs of the person who experienced GBV sit at the centre of responses to GBV. The [Equally Safe At School](#) guidance sets out advice on this.
- Do any immediate actions need to be taken to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the person who has experienced GBV?
- What is the age and developmental stage of the person who experienced GBV?
- Have other forms of intersectional discrimination or harassment taken place in combination with GBV?
  - There are support services which specialise in supporting Black and minority ethnic and/or LGBTQI+ young people who have experienced GBV (see [Resources](#))
  - Where there is a child protection referral in place, school staff should discuss with the core agency taking forward, before making other referrals.
- What are the child or young person's views as to next steps?
- Is the person who experienced GBV aware that information will need to be shared with specific people, such as pastoral care or Senior Leadership Team?
- Does there need to be onward referral to other agencies, such as police and/or social work or school nursing?

## Things to consider: The person who carried out GBV

- In line with a GIRFEC approach, consider whether the person who has carried out GBV requires wellbeing or child protection support (see [Specialist Approaches to responding to a person carrying out GBV](#)).
- A response to GBV should aim to communicate to all involved that the behaviour was unacceptable, and to promote learning so as to prevent further incidents of GBV (see [Challenging and addressing behaviours](#)).
  - This discussion should make clear to the person(s) responsible that their behaviour is unacceptable and harmful to those experiencing it, including naming the behaviour, for example language which was sexist or discriminatory or behaviour which constituted sexual harassment, pointing to the relevant school values.
  - The response should be tailored to age of the person who has carried out the GBV (see [Challenging and addressing behaviours](#)).
- School staff may decide to open a [child's plan](#) for the person who carried out the GBV, or review this plan if one already exists, with a view to identifying causes and appropriate interventions including additional resources to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

## Things to consider: School community

- Have other children and young people been affected by this incident, and does this require actions to ensure the wellbeing of these children and young people? If others have witnessed the incident, they may require support to understand that it was GBV, and that it is unacceptable.
- Assess the likelihood of continued or repeated incidents, which may affect other children and young people, and/or school staff.
- Consider whether there is a pattern of behaviour being carried out by multiple people or a group within the school, indicating a cultural problem within the school community which requires a wider community response.
- Consideration may be given to partnership working with expert organisations on addressing the issue of GBV within the whole school community. This should be done sensitively, with particular consideration of the persons directly affected by an incident.
- Take the opportunity to review the proactive [prevention](#) activity being carried out.
- Where relevant, consider the health and safety of staff in terms of their working environment.



# Monitoring, recording and evaluation

## Purpose of collecting data

It is important that schools and local authorities have clear policies and procedures in place to record, monitor and address any incidents of GBV no matter how minor they may appear. Effective recording and monitoring help to establish the scale and nature of GBV within the school, and is a key part of evaluating the impact of efforts to prevent and respond to GBV.

[Evidence](#) shows staff can have concerns about recording behaviours on children and young people's school records for fear of labels being attached to them. However, accurate recording of GBV behaviours helps to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address these behaviours, provide appropriate support, and prevent further incidents. It enables the school to track whether there are patterns of abuse or harassment which may have a cumulative impact on the person(s) experiencing GBV, or which require more targeted interventions for the individual(s) carrying out GBV, or as part of a whole-school approach. Furthermore, recording protected characteristics relevant to a GBV incident enables the identification of trends related to intersectional inequalities, and helps to develop actions to address them, through disaggregated data.

In line with self-evaluation this approach will provide evidence to support consideration of quality indicators within [How Good is Our School 4](#), in particular, QI 3.1 and 2.1

## Recording incidents of GBV

Schools will have their own reporting and recording systems connected to their local authority system or as a grant-aided or independent school. When a staff member receives a disclosure about GBV, their primary focus will be to follow their school's protocols, including making sure the child or young person making the disclosure is safe, arranging appropriate support for them, and following local and [National Child Protection guidance](#) without delay.

In many cases, the recording of GBV incidents is the responsibility of school leadership or a named practitioner, usually referred to as a 'Designated Member of Staff'. It is essential, therefore, that school staff, children, and young people are informed about the process and feel empowered to take any incidents through the appropriate channels. School staff should be adequately [informed](#) of the details they are expected to provide to the person responsible for recording, which will be related to the content of the schools' recording system. All [personal data and special category personal data](#) should be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. The [Data Protection Act 2018](#) states relevant personal information can be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

## What incidents should be recorded and how?

If a behaviour is covered by the [definition of GBV](#) provided in this framework, it should be recorded in the Bullying and Equalities module of SEEMiS, or under an equivalent section of a schools' recording system. If there is a child protection concern, the incident should be recorded in accordance with child protection procedures. If the person recording the incident is unsure how to access or use the Bullying and Equalities module, they can contact their local authority who will provide assistance.

All incidents of GBV should be recorded. This includes incidents where:

- The behaviour is not directed at anyone specifically, e.g. children and young people may 'banter' about sexual assault.
- The behaviour is witnessed or overheard by staff rather than being disclosed.
- The behaviour is carried out by a visitor to the school, e.g. someone paints sexually explicit graffiti on the school building.

The Bullying and Equalities Module should not be interpreted as being focused solely on bullying; it is designed to capture a range of behaviours related to equalities, and includes 'GBV' as a category. GBV behaviours should be captured in this section regardless of the type of behaviour and whether a disclosure has been made directly.

Information included in the record can include:

- Who reported the incident
- Date/time/place of incident
- Details of both the person experiencing and the person displaying GBV behaviour
- Nature of Incident, for example GBV
- Any relevant protected characteristics
- If there is not a child protection concern, more detailed information about the disclosure can be included in the Pastoral Notes section of the record, if this would be helpful to understand the particular circumstances.

Where possible, the content of this record should be agreed with the child or young person. In cases where the recording system does not allow for this level of detail, and monitoring, schools may want to review their systems.

Where GBV has an element of discrimination or abuse based on another protected characteristic, this should be recorded as part of the incident report. SEEMiS enables the person entering the data to identify and record multiple types of incidents within the one record. There is also the option to record whether there is a belief that this incident is motivated by racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, etc and whether any protected characteristic has been targeted. Similarly, GBV can be recorded as part of the report for other types of incidents, for example racist incidents.

This enables schools and local authorities to analyse data to identify intersectionality, such as racism or transphobia which may be linked to the behaviour.

Incidents of bullying or harassment not covered by the definition in this guidance should continue to be recorded within the Bullying section of SEEMiS or a school's equivalent recording system, in line with the national anti-bullying guidance, [Respect for All](#).

Schools will have separate recording systems for incidents where a staff member is affected by a GBV incident, connected to their Health and Safety at Work or Dignity at Work policies. It is important that such incidents are part of the same monitoring and evaluation systems to capture a whole school picture of prevalence.

## Evaluating Progress

Establishing prevalence will be the first step in evaluating progress. Quantitative evidence of decreasing prevalence may not be seen in the shorter term as improved understanding and identification of behaviours may increase the number of incidents recorded.

[Equally Safe at School](#) includes surveys which secondary schools can use to monitor prevalence of GBV incidents.

It is important, however, that progress monitoring includes both quantitative indicators and qualitative methods such as focus groups with children and young people, parents/carers, and staff. Staff should be given proper time for collegiate discussion in relation to identifying and reporting GBV, ensuring that they are familiar with the recording process and expectations.

## Evaluating universal approaches

The following suggested reflective questions may help schools evaluate the action they are taking to prevent GBV.

Education Scotland's [Improving Gender Balance and Self-Evaluation Framework](#) is for all primary, secondary and ASN settings and is designed to support reflection, discussion and planning for an ongoing and sustainable approach to improving gender balance and equalities for all learners.

## School culture and ethos

- What opportunities are currently utilised, and yet to be utilised, to communicate the establishment's values in this area?
- How are children and young people provided with the opportunity to feedback on the school culture in relation to GBV and shape inform future actions?
- How are parents/carers and the wider school community involved in the policies and plans to tackle GBV, and what initiatives exist to foster understanding of the establishment's policies and procedures for reporting?
- To what extent is there a shared commitment to gender equality across the school community? To what extent do children, young people, and staff's experiences of the school reflect this?

- Is there a good level of understanding and expertise in relation to gender and GBV in the school? Are members of the staff and leadership team able to apply a gendered lens across a range of issues?
- How does the establishment work to tackle stigma and silence surrounding GBV?
- How consistent are the school and staff team in the messages they convey about gender equality and GBV? Does the school consistently challenge all forms of GBV, and sexist or other discriminatory language?
- Do staff actively model gender equal practices and relationships? Do they regularly engage in challenging gender stereotypes and promoting non-gender-stereotypical roles, behaviours and expectations? Do they encourage children and young people to do so (see [School culture and ethos](#) and [Curriculum](#))?
- Has the school built relationships with specialist equalities and GBV organisations, including local Violence Against Women and Girls Partnerships, to increase its understanding of the issues and to better understand the interplay between different forms of inequality?

### **Policies and systems**

- How well do existing school policies consider GBV and articulate Local Authority and Child Protection Procedures?
- To what extent do school policies recognise, articulate and realise the need for everyone, both children and young people, and staff, to be safe and respected?
- Are systems for reporting and accessing support clear and communicated well so that practitioners, parents/carers and children and young people feel empowered to identify indicators and forms of GBV and to report incidents of GBV or seek help?
- Does the school collect and analyse data through an equality and gendered lens? Does it use this data to examine/address barriers for children and young people?
- Have children and young people been offered the opportunity to shape school policies, and to what extent have they engaged with this?
- How well do the school's plans in relation to health and wellbeing, specifically consider GBV in planning, and improvement frameworks?
- To what extent are current policies and procedures on GBV monitored and evaluated, and does how does this inform future planning?
- What opportunities are there for further development, including tackling GBV in future planning?

### **Professional learning and development**

- Have staff accessed professional learning on gender equality and GBV? How far has it met their needs and influenced their practice?
- Does the school provide regular opportunities for staff to self-reflect on their own attitudes, behaviours and biases? Does it help create a safe space amongst staff to deliver and receive constructive feedback around language use and interactions with children and young people?

- Are children and young people provided with regular opportunities to share their views and experiences of the school/setting culture? How is this data used to identify barriers for children and young people and staff professional learning needs?
- Are staff equipped to safely engage in this work? Is the potential impact on them recognised and support services signposted?

## Curriculum

- Is gender equality increasingly integrated across the school curriculum, through dedicated lessons and as a cross-cutting theme across all subject areas?
- Are children and young people equipped to understand and navigate sex and relationships appropriate to their age, stage and needs, and to contribute to healthy discourses within their peer groups, as a foundation for preventing and tackling GBV?
- How do staff successfully tackle the barriers that children and young people face arising from gender or other forms of inequality, to support increased gender balance and encourage uptake in all subject areas and consideration of all occupations?

## Evaluating targeted approaches

### Safeguarding children and young people affected by GBV

- Was the child or young person supported to be and to feel safe at school, and able to continue with their education and participate as fully as they wished in the life of the school?
- Were they supported to recover from harm, including through access to any specialist services?
- Did they feel supported to participate in making decisions that affected them, and in identifying their own needs?
- Did they receive and understand clear information about any information-sharing, safeguarding, or child protection procedures that were taking place?

### Responding to those carrying out GBV

- Is there a clear process in place to respond to a report of GBV carried out by a school pupil?
- Are there clear links to [National Guidance on Child Protection](#)?
- Are staff aware of where to seek support if they are concerned a crime has been committed or a child or young person has been seriously hurt?
- Was the child or young person involved in another incident following the response to incident under consideration?

# Responding to GBV experienced by a member of staff

## Context

It is good practice to assume that members of the school staff team will have experienced GBV. They may have experienced a form of GBV outside work, or they may be living with a current situation, for example in relation to domestic abuse, stalking, sexual violence or honour-based violence. They may also have experienced GBV in the workplace: they may have provided support to children and young people, or to a colleague, experiencing GBV, or they may have witnessed or experienced GBV perpetrated by other staff members, children and young people, parents/carers or other members of the community. Experiences of GBV can have long lasting impacts on individuals' mental health and wellbeing.

## Protections for school staff

All staff are entitled to the protection provided by the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), which places employers under a duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. This duty includes protecting employees from violent incidents, including GBV incidents, and reducing the risks of such incidents occurring. Under the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#), employers must assess risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review. This includes protecting employees from the risk of violence such as GBV. It is important that individual employees are consulted as part of the risk assessment process and that Trade Union Safety Representatives are consulted on risk assessment processes, procedures and findings.

## Local authority and school wide actions

Schools and local authorities should:

- Acknowledge that staff may be affected by GBV, including in the workplace, and ensure all staff have access to information about local authority wellbeing policies, and other relevant support services (for example by displaying information in staff rooms and bathroom facilities)
- Outline the different ways to report an incident of GBV, for example to line managers, trade union representatives, HR, or dedicated GBV support officer. Staff should be encouraged and supported to report any workplace issues
- Reporting should be monitored, and appropriate measures put into place to ensure dignity and safety at work, and to inform plans to address GBV as part of a whole school approach
- Ensure that the school is equipped to respond to reports of GBV affecting staff
- Ensure that sexual harassment and gender-discriminatory attitudes towards staff are always challenged
- Ensure that staff who deal with GBV in the course of their work – whether routinely or on a one-off basis – can access advice so that they are confident about how to handle such issues, as well as receive emotional support

- Recognise that staff affected by past or current experiences of GBV may require measures to support them, for example in relation to any current safety concerns or mental health and wellbeing issues. It's important to work with staff to decide what measures may be of help, as a trauma-informed, supportive, and empowering approach is most likely to promote safety and recovery
- Be familiar with and follow their local authority's GBV policy (and/or sexual harassment policy, or domestic abuse policy) for guidance on employment practices and support for those affected
- Be aware of different support mechanisms that can be offered to staff such as special leave, flexible working, employee assistance programme, or safety planning.

## Individual Measures

People experiencing or who have experienced GBV often welcome proactive measures that organisations and workplaces take to tackle the issues, as this recognises and validates their experience, and demonstrates a commitment to preventing violence and supporting those affected. However, it's important to recognise that any experience of GBV will have been or will continue to be traumatic, and that talking about GBV can bring up difficult feelings and memories for those with personal experience.

To manage this appropriately, schools should:

- Inform all staff of training sessions ahead of them taking place, acknowledging the potential impact on staff affected and reminding staff of support options;
- Allow staff to determine their own engagement with the work, for example by enabling them to take breaks whenever they require during training sessions and inviting staff to volunteer to take forward work, rather than appointing them;
- Signposting to support services when communicating with staff about GBV;
- Outlining what steps a member of staff could take if they have any concerns.

Staff can contact their trade union for support if they experience GBV at work. In the cases where a member of staff has experienced or is at risk of GBV, this should be treated as a health and safety issue and relevant local authority procedures followed: there may be separate reporting mechanisms for staff and children and young people, depending on local authority procedures.

Following an incident of GBV reported by school staff, a health and safety assessment should be conducted. Agreement should be reached with the staff member on the risk mitigation measures to be adopted, including any reasonable adjustments. Provision should be made for regular review of the risk assessment and the effectiveness of the risk mitigation measures adopted.

Staff should be empowered by being given time to report all incidents and to recover immediately after an incident. All incidents should be recorded robustly and appropriately.

For more information see [Resources for staff who experience GBV](#).

# Scenarios

This section provides an overview of what a response to a report, disclosure or suspected case of GBV may include. These scenarios are not intended to be prescriptive, but instead to demonstrate the different ways in which GBV may present in school, and assist in reflection for both individual staff and school leaders to help inform and strengthen staff discussion about school procedures in practice.

Tackling GBV is only possible through a whole-school approach, which falls under the responsibility of school leadership. While all staff may be required to initiate a response to GBV disclosed to or witnessed by them, they may not be responsible for supporting children and young people on an ongoing basis in relation to a specific incident. Where the Scenarios refer to staff responding to incidents of GBV, it is referencing the designated member of staff who has responsibility for this as part of their remit.

Previous sections of this Framework have set out the [Universal approaches to preventing GBV in schools](#) and [Targeted and specialist approaches to responding to GBV](#) Responses to which this section refers, while [Appendix A: Professional Learning and Resources](#) outlines resources available to support school staff.

For each of these scenarios, school staff should first apply the [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#) detailed above.

The 'points to consider' under each Scenario provide additional questions and considerations specifically relevant for each circumstance.

School staff should respond to circumstances and concerns in line with the [Getting it Right for Every Child Approach](#) and [National Guidance for Child Protection](#) as appropriate, following their school's reporting protocols.

In all scenarios, if school staff have concerns that a child or young person has been seriously harmed or there is a possibility that a criminal offence been committed, they should follow school child protection procedures for onward reporting to Police Scotland and social work services.



## Scenario 1: Staff hear or see [sexual harassment](#) behaviours in school, such as catcalling, or use of misogynistic language.

Sexist language or misogynistic comments may include language like: ‘you throw like a girl’; ‘bitch’; ‘slut’; ‘whore’; or language used in online groups such as ‘chads’; ‘Stacys’; ‘Beckys’; or ‘blue pills’. Sexual harassment may include language like: ‘nice arse’; ‘show me your tits’; wolf-whistling, rating girls’ bodies out of 10, labelling a girl ‘most f\*\*\*able’.

Sexual harassment may also include: attempts to shame, embarrass or humiliate someone in relation to gender roles or stereotypes; comments that hypersexualise, fetishise or exoticise people of colour, LGBTQI+ people and/or other minoritised groups; comments or behaviours intended to shame or humiliate boys in relation to masculinity such as comments about their genitalia, pulling down their shorts (referred to as “Pantsing”, which may be more prevalent against gender non-conforming children and young people), calling them ‘gay’ as an insult.

### Points to consider:

- School staff should first apply the [Key Considerations in relation to all pupils involved](#).
- Within the context of an inclusive school environment, it is essential to challenge behaviours involving discriminatory language and harassment in a visible way, as part of a whole school response to GBV. Recording of all incidents, even if they appear minor, aids effective monitoring.
- It is important that anyone who heard the language also hears the response, so that everyone knows that it is unacceptable.
- Staff may wish to speak with children and young people who are experiencing sexual harassment, to check wellbeing and to understand whether this is a repeated occurrence or linked to other incidents.
- Girls can be blamed for ‘inviting’ sexual harassment in relation to their clothing or bodies. Staff responding to this incident can help to reduce any feelings of self-blame by emphasising that the person(s) who experienced the GBV is not responsible.
- Specific guidance for schools on tackling homophobic and transphobic language is available within [Addressing Inclusion: effectively challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia](#). National advice and training in support of LGBT Inclusive Education is available from [LGBT Inclusive Education | National Platform \(lgbteducation.scot\)](#)

**Scenario 2: Staff need to respond to a report of coercive and controlling behaviour in a romantic relationship between a male and female pupil, that the girl has reported to a member of staff. This behaviour has included threats to share sexual images online. The girl explains that she had been trying to end the relationship, after the boy became increasingly controlling over her, and, as a result, he threatened to share pictures of her.**

Points to consider:

- School staff should first apply the [Key Considerations in relation to all pupils involved](#).
- Staff should consider whether any immediate actions need to be taken to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the pupil who has experienced GBV.
- Staff can establish what support may be required for the pupil who has experienced GBV in line with school policy, and establish whether they may be at risk of further harm.
- Staff should refer to child protection policies for guidance on next steps on handling allegations of potential criminality, including referral to other agencies, including Police Scotland, as appropriate.
- School staff should refer to school child protection policies for guidance on next steps to put in place appropriate interventions and supports for all young people involved.
- The girl may need some time and a supportive approach from responsible staff to be able to identify what has happened, especially if the behaviour has been ongoing for some time and/or has affected her expectations of relationships.
- Staff may wish to consider whether interactions with the friends of the male pupil may cause the girl distress, and monitor this going forwards.
- Staff can be vigilant for any signs of continued coercive behaviours on the part of the male pupil and ensure these are quickly responded to if they occur.
- If the images are being shared by other children and young people in school, staff may engage with those children and young people as part of their response.
- It should be noted that if others are now in possession of the images, this may be a criminal offence. As above, school staff should refer to their school child protection policies for guidance on next steps, including referral to social services and Police Scotland.
- See [Appendix B: Glossary](#) for more information about coercive control.

### **Scenario 3: A girl pupil has reported that they have experienced sexual assault, by being touched without consent by a male pupil in school.**

#### **Points to consider:**

- School staff should first apply the [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#) in responding to each pupil involved.
- Staff should consider whether any immediate actions need to be taken to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the pupil who has experienced GBV.
- Staff can establish what support may be required for the pupil who has experienced GBV in line with school policy, and establish whether they may be at risk of further harm.
- Staff should refer to child protection policies for guidance on next steps on handling allegations of potential criminality, including referral to other agencies, including Police Scotland, as appropriate.
- School staff should refer to school child protection policies for guidance on next steps to put in place appropriate interventions and supports for all young people involved.
- In some cases, for example busy school corridors, individuals may not be aware who carried out the GBV. In this case, responses should focus on supporting the person affected, and, at a later point, school leadership may wish to reflect on the whole-school approach to GBV.

### **Scenario 4: A member of school staff witnesses a boy pinching a Muslim girl's bra strap and trying to pull off her hijab. When pastoral staff talk to the girl later, she says that many boys do this, and make sexual comments to her which include racist and Islamophobic slurs.**

#### **Points to consider:**

- School staff should first apply the [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#) in responding to each pupil involved.
- Staff should act in line with their school's relationships and behaviour policy to challenge behaviour, encourage reflection and prevent reoccurrence (see [Challenging and addressing behaviours](#)).
- The circumstances of the incident and the response should be recorded following school protocol, noting that the incident was both GBV and racism.
- GBV behaviour linked to certain protected characteristics could constitute a hate crime (see [Hate Crime](#)). School staff should follow child protection procedures if they are concerned a crime may have taken place.

**Scenario 5: School staff become aware that young people are talking about a girl who has said she was raped by a boy at a party at the weekend. Both young people attend the school. Some young people are supporting her and others are saying that it wasn't rape it was "drunk sex". She hasn't spoken to any school staff about what happened.**

Points to consider for this scenario:

- School staff should first apply the [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#) in responding to each pupil involved. Where school staff think a crime may have been committed or a child/young person has been seriously harmed, school staff should follow child protection procedures.
- Any information or concern that a child has been raped should result in an [immediate child protection response](#). Staff should refer to child protection policies for guidance on next steps on handling allegations of potential criminality, including referral to other agencies, including Police Scotland, as appropriate.
- School staff should refer to school child protection policies for guidance on next steps to put in place appropriate interventions and supports for all young people involved.
- Where there are wellbeing concerns, rumours should not be disregarded. Staff with the relevant responsibilities can carry out a wellbeing check on the girl. It may be helpful to follow up with the girl at a later point, even if she says at first that she is okay. Any response taken should be recorded following school protocol.
- The law is clear that a person cannot [consent](#) if they are incapable due to the influence of alcohol (or other substances). The young person may feel confusion around this and so it may be helpful to signpost to external support, such as Rape Crisis. School staff should follow agreed local processes and procedures regarding child protection and sharing of information.
- This scenario has both primary GBV (the incident) and secondary GBV (negative rumours being spread by the wider school community). Both these behaviours need to be addressed in a response.
- There is an opportunity to reflect on a wider education need within the school community around alcohol and consent. This will be part of a longer-term response rather than an immediate action.

## **Scenario 6: School staff become aware that a pupil is at risk of experiencing GBV in the form of [Female Genital Mutilation](#).**

### **Points to consider for this scenario:**

- School staff should first apply the [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#) in responding to the pupil involved.
- Any information or concern that a child is at risk of, or has undergone, female genital mutilation should result in an [immediate child protection response](#), this should include referral to other agencies.
- School staff can request assistance from specialist support services for FGM. [Scottish Women's Rights Centre has a list of groups](#) who provide this support.
- Staff should be conscious that the pupil may find it very difficult to speak to school staff, because of the personal and taboo nature of the issue, or they may be concerned about repercussions for family members. They may also be conscious of stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes towards their community and fearful of exacerbating these.

## **Scenario 7: A teacher has asked management for support in managing the behaviour of two children in her class. The teacher had previously complained that two of the children had been calling her derogatory names such as “slut” and suggested sexual acts involving her, after she had told the class she was pregnant. Their behaviour has recently escalated, and the teacher has been confronted by the children this morning. The teacher has been very upset by the children’s behaviour and has grown increasingly worried about going into the classroom alone.**

### **Points to consider**

- School staff should first apply the [Key considerations for school staff upon disclosure of GBV](#).
- Experiencing GBV in the workplace is a traumatic event. The safety and wellbeing of the staff member should be a key immediate priority. Consider what support can be provided.
  - The SMT should demonstrate that this behaviour is unacceptable and the teacher should be assured that the matter will be dealt with promptly and measures put in place to protect her safety.
  - The teacher should be fully informed of her rights and be given the opportunity to seek support, for example, from her trade union representative.
  - A risk assessment should be carried out for the staff member as outlined in [Responding to GBV experienced by a member of staff](#).
- Even if the children are young, this should be identified and responded to as an incident of GBV. As noted in [Targeted approaches to responding to GBV](#), young children displaying GBV behaviours may indicate particular welfare concerns.
- Consideration should be given to the impact of the GBV behaviour on other children within the class and whether any specific interventions are required.
- School leadership may wish to review their whole-school policy for GBV, which includes staff and considers the interconnectedness of health and safety at work and access to Fair Work for women.

# Appendix A: Professional learning and resources

## Introduction

There are a wide range of resources and learning available to support staff relating to GBV, and many organisations working to address GBV. This section signposts to some resources and learning on GBV, but the list is not exhaustive.

There will also be local initiatives and learning that school leadership and staff may wish to access. When considering the suitability of available resources and learning, staff may want to be guided by the below set of principles.

## Principles for sound learning on GBV

Learning should:

- Place the voices of the person who has experienced GBV at the centre
- Be informed by an understanding of GBV as a cause and consequence of women's inequality in society, with GBV disproportionately affecting women and girls
- Be inclusive of whole-school communities and consider the experiences of children and young people, parents and carers, school staff and others
- Be evidence-led and informed by relevant research, where appropriate
- Understand that eliminating GBV is everyone's responsibility
- Be underpinned by national strategies and frameworks, in particular [Equally Safe](#)
- Apply an intersectional lens and consider the inter-relatedness of protected characteristics, for example sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, disability, and sex
- Address the underlying culture and attitudes which cause GBV.

## School-Wide Programmes

[Equally Safe at School \(ESAS\) programme](#): A free suite of tools, guidance and training for secondary schools to embed a whole school approach across policy, practice, curriculum, school ethos and culture.

[Mentors in Violence Prevention \(MVP\) programme](#): a peer education leadership programme for young people in secondary schools that gives the opportunity to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin GBV.

[Gender 10 Equality Toolkit for Primary Schools](#): guidance and practical examples designed to embed gender equality into school policy, ethos and the curriculum in order to empower children to challenge inequality and promote respect.

## Evaluation

[How Good is Our School](#) published by Education Scotland provides the framework for effective self-evaluation for schools in Scotland. The framework also provides the quality indicators which are considered as part of HMle inspection.

Education Scotland's [Improving Gender Balance and Self-Evaluation Framework](#) designed to support reflection, discussion and planning for a sustainable approach to improving gender balance and equalities for all learners.

[Equally Safe at School](#) includes surveys which secondary schools can use to monitor prevalence of GBV incidents.

## Resources

### Relationships and Behaviour Policy

**Resource:** [Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

**Who it is for:** School staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document (65 pages)

**Description:** This guidance sets out national policy on the prevention of and the management of exclusion from school in the context of national government and education authority responsibilities and desired outcomes for children and young people. The overarching aim of the guidance is to support schools, communities and their partners to keep all children and young people fully included, engaged and involved in their education; and, to improve outcomes for all Scotland's children and young people with a particular focus on those who are at risk of exclusion.

**Resource:** [Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Educational Settings | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

**Who it is for:** School staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document (20 pages)

**Description:** An overview of information, resources, and professional learning currently available on relationships and behaviour.

### Information sharing

**Resource:** [Information sharing: advice for practitioners \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

**Who it is for:** School Staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document (16 pages)

**Description:** Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

## The nature of GBV

**Resource:** [About Gender based Violence \(Equally Safe at School\)](#)

**Who it is for:** School staff

**Type of resource:** Web pages

**Description:** Information on a range of topics including what is GBV, who is affected, the evidence on GBV and young people, sexual harassment and engaging boys and men.

**Resource:** [Violence Against Women \(eis.org.uk\)](#)

**Who it is for:** School staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document; 21 pages

**Description:** Advice designed to support the understanding the issue of violence against women.

**Resource:** [Interviews with GBV experts \(EIS\)](#)

**Who it is for:** School staff

**Type of resource:** Short videos

**Description:** Interviews with experts from Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, Shakti's Women's Aid and the Scottish Trans Alliance project exploring GBV and the role of teachers.

**Resource:** [Chayn – Supporting survivors of abuse across borders](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Digital resource

**Description:** A trauma-informed resource developed by people who have experienced GBV for supporting recovery including different cultures and experiences and multi-lingual resources in formats such as words, audio and video.

**Resource:** [Solidarity Circle: a feminist facilitator's guide](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document

**Description:** To help facilitate conversations in a way which feels safe for everyone involved, the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) has produced guidance on discussing GBV within a school context.



## Intersectionality

**Resource:** [Voices Unheard \(LGBT Youth Scotland and LGBT Domestic Violence Project\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Educational resources; website

**Description:** An range of resources with a focus on LGBT young people's experiences of domestic abuse and other forms of GBV including research, guidance on healthy relationships for young people and support for staff.

**Resource:** [Unlocking sexual abuse and learning disabilities \(Rape Crisis Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Guidebook; 52 pages

**Description:** A guidebook for family carers and support staff on supporting adults with learning disabilities who have been sexually abused; gives clear indicators of why those with learning disabilities are at higher risk of being abused.

**Resource:** [OUR BODIES, OUR RIGHTS: Identifying and removing barriers to disabled women's reproductive rights in Scotland \(Engender\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document; 40 pages

**Description:** Insights gained through a project looking at barriers for disabled women.

**Resource:** [Reclaiming Voice: Minoritised Women and Sexual Violence Key Findings \(Dr. Ravi Thiara, University of Warwick and Sumanta Roy, Imkaan\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Research paper; 72 pages

**Description:** Research gives a more in-depth understanding of minoritised women's experiences of sexual violence.

**Resource:** [Safe and Healthy Relationships: Empowering and Supporting People with Learning Disabilities through Education](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document; 26 pages

**Description:** Examples of good practice around Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHP) for children and young people with learning disabilities, linked to relevant evidence in the literature and some primary research carried out by The Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD).

**Resource:** [RSHP for learners with additional support needs.](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Web pages

**Description:** A partnership of health boards and local authorities resources to help practitioners deliver learning activities on safe and healthy relationships that can be tailored to the needs of the individual.

**Resource:** [LGBT Inclusive Education | National Platform \(lgbteducation.scot\)](#)

**Who it is for:** school staff

**Type of resource:** Web pages

**Description:** One-stop platform for teachers to access quality approved materials, resources, and professional learning linked to Scotland's Curriculum to support the implementation of LGBT Inclusive Education.

**Resource:** [Addressing Inclusion: effectively challenging homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia](#)

**Who it is for:** School staff

**Type of resource:** PDF document (20 pages)

**Description:** This resource provides information and guidance to school staff on addressing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in Scottish schools and has been written to complement Respect for All: The National Approach to AntiBullying for Scotland's Children and Young People.

## **Rape and Sexual Violence**

**Resource:** [Resources section \(Rape Crisis Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, parents/carers, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Web pages

**Description:** Resources for people who have experienced GBV, young people, friends and family as well as a section on statistics and key information.

**Resource:** [Rape Crisis Prevention Programme](#)

**Who is it for:** Young people

**Type of resource:** Preventative programme

**Description:** A programme delivered in schools by local rape crisis centres, that educates young people on consent and healthy sexual relationships.

## Domestic Abuse

**Resource:** [Domestic abuse- and trauma-informed practice: companion document \(improvementservice.org.uk\)](https://improvementservice.org.uk)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** 27 page PDF

**Description:** Document designed to support all professionals working with women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse and/ or perpetrators and aims to strengthen awareness and understanding about trauma-informed and domestic abuse-informed practice.

**Resource:** [Safeguarding: Domestic Abuse Information for Educators \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Web pages

**Description:** Information on the nature of domestic abuse, the indicators and impact on children and young people, and how to respond to potential cases of domestic abuse. A guide, a summary page and a professional learning presentation are available.

**Resource:** [The Rise Report](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** PDF report

**Description:** The findings of a national research project that investigates young women's experiences and understanding of unhealthy relationships, domestic abuse and access to support.

## Child Sexual Abuse

**Resource:** [Safeguarding: Child Sexual Abuse-a summary of resources \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, parents/carers, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Web pages

**Description:** Information on what is meant by the term child sexual abuse (CSA); guidance and support for senior leaders and practitioner; and links to a range of resources.

## Child Sexual Exploitation

**Resource:** [Safeguarding: Child Sexual Exploitation \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, parents/carers, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Web page

**Description:** Information on what is meant by the term child sexual exploitation, guidance and support for senior leaders and practitioners, and links to a range of resources.

## Female Genital Mutilation

**Resource:** [Safeguarding: Female Genital Mutilation \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Web page

**Description:** Information on what is meant by the term female genital mutilation, guidance and support for senior leaders and practitioners, and links to resources.

## Sexual Behaviours

**Resource:** [Safeguarding: Identify Understand and Respond appropriately to Sexual Behaviours in young people \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff and parents/carers

**Type of resource:** web page

**Description:** Information to help staff in education and training settings, from early years to senior level and including Additional Support Needs / Extended Additional Support Needs provision, to identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in young people.

## Misogyny and sexual harassment

**Resource:** [Get it right for girls \(EIS\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Guidance and PowerPoint; 11 pages

**Description:** Guidance for teachers on challenging misogynistic attitudes among children and young people.

**Resource:** [Oor Fierce Girls \(Youth Led Project by NSPCC Scotland, YWCA Scotland and Dundee City Council\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, parents/carers, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Website

**Description:** Conversation starter toolkits created by young people to encourage discussion on peer sexual abuse and healthy relationships.

## Relationships, sexual health and parenthood

**Resource:** [A summary of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\) resources \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Web page

**Description:** Links to key information, resources and policies in relation to the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) organiser of Curriculum for Excellence, including resources for practitioners working with children and young people with autism.

## Improving gender balance and equalities

**Resource:** [Improving gender balance and equalities 3-18 \(Education Scotland\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Web page

**Description:** A range of resources and research for practitioners to help challenge gender stereotypes; address unconscious bias; improve gender balance in subject uptake and learner pathways and promote whole-establishment approaches to equality.

## Advice for children and young people affected by domestic abuse

**Resource:** [If Home Is Not Safe – Support For Children \(Yello Women’s Aid Young Expert Group\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Children and young people

**Type of resource:** Animation (1 minute)

**Description:** A short film for children experiencing domestic abuse.

**Resource:** [If Home Is Not Safe – Support For Young People \(Yello Women’s Aid Young Expert Group\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Children and young people

**Type of resource:** Animation (58 seconds)

**Description:** A short film for young people experiencing domestic abuse in their relationships.

**Resource:** [The Little Things \(Border Women’s Aid\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Children and young people

**Type of resource:** Short film (6 minutes 52 seconds)

**Description:** A short film depicting what domestic abuse can be like for young women.

## Masculinities

**Resource:** [White Ribbon Scotland](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Website

**Description:** Information and training for men, organisations, colleges and schools to stand up to violence against women.

**Resource:** [Beyond Equality](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff, children and young people

**Type of resource:** Website

**Description:** Information on men and boys on working towards gender equality, inclusive communities, and healthier relationships.

## Trauma-informed approaches

**Resource:** [Nurture and trauma-informed approaches: A summary of supports and resources | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** website

**Description:** A summary of supports and resources available to school staff covering professional learning, whole school nurture and trauma informed approaches, interesting practice exemplars, and learning and teaching resources.

**Resource:** [Care experience and trauma-informed practice: companion document \(improvementservice.org.uk\)](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** 36 page PDF

**Description:** Guidance for everyone who supports children and young people with experience of trauma, with particular advice and guidance for those supporting children and young people with care experience – who may both need and benefit from trauma-informed practice.

**Resource:** [National Trauma Training Programme](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Website

**Description:** A range of training and other resources to support everyone in Scotland's workforce to have the knowledge and skills needed to be trauma informed and responsive

**Resource:** [The Compassionate and Connected Classroom: A health and wellbeing curricular resource for upper primary](#)

**Who it is for:** Staff

**Type of resource:** Online resource

**Description:** This curricular resource is designed to specifically build teacher confidence and support the emotional and mental wellbeing of children in upper primary.

## Resources for staff who experience GBV

[Close the Gap](#) has developed an Employer Accreditation to support employers to improve their employment practice to advance gender equality at work, and prevent violence against women ([Equally Safe at Work](#)), which includes a range of useful resources including [Guidance for Line Managers on violence against women and work](#).

The EIS has produced advice for members on [gender equality](#), [bullying and harassment](#), and [dealing with violent and disruptive behaviours](#).

The NASUWT has a [toolkit on violence against women and girls](#).

Further support resources are available from [Rape Crisis Scotland](#) and [Scottish Women's Aid](#)

Scottish Government's [Safer Scotland website](#) includes information on support services available for anyone who has been subject to abuse of any kind.

## Appendix B: Glossary

Equally Safe at School contains an [explanation](#) of different types of GBV which staff may encounter in schools, which have informed this glossary.

**Bystander:** in the context of GBV, a bystander is someone who witnesses or observes an act of violence but does not participate in it and is not directly involved. Bystanders have an opportunity to intervene through words or actions to halt or disrupt the violence.

**Child sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse of children involves most sexual activity with a child under 16 years of age, usually be an adult or young person. Older children are able to consent to limited types of sexual activity with each other, provided that they are both aged between 13 and 15. Further information can be found on [Education Scotland National Improvement Hub](#).

**Child sexual exploitation:** Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which someone takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into sexual activity in return for something received by the child, and/or received by those perpetrating the abuse. This could include money, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, protection from violence or a sense of belonging. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not mean it isn't sexual abuse. Further information can be found on [Education Scotland National Improvement Hub](#).

**Coercive control:** Coercive control can take place in any relationship, including within young people's relationships. It is a pattern of controlling behaviours such as assault, threats, intimidation or humiliation that create an unequal power dynamic in a relationship and leaves one person frightened. The frightened partner will find it difficult to leave due to the other person having a lot of control over them. It is a criminal offence and a form of abuse.

Signs of [coercive control](#) can be difficult to identify. It may include isolating someone from friends, controlling how they spend their time and attempts to humiliate someone. The person may feel intimidation, fear or discomfort around friends of their partner, and not just the partner themselves. It is important to understand the impact coercive control can have on those affected. Coercive control can damage self-esteem, strip someone of their agency and they may blame themselves for what has happened. A supportive approach from responsible school staff is important to reinforce that they are not to blame and encourage them to think about what they need. Supporting the pupil to gain back some of the control lost through their experience. In some cases, attempts to end an abusive relationship may lead to [escalation](#) in controlling behaviours. With the pupil's consent, signposting to services such as Women's Aid should be considered. If there is a child protection referral in place, this should only be done following discussion with the core agency taking forward.

**Commercial Sexual Exploitation:** can include: prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography, human trafficking and sex for rent. It is included within Equally Safe's definition of Violence Against Women and Girls, and related policy principles to inform relevant policy and practice across government and the wider public sector can be found [here](#).



**Consent:** [Consent](#) is defined as ‘free agreement’. Where some form of coercion, violence or threat is used, this means there has been no consent given. [The Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) provides a list of situations where consent could not be given, including where the victim is incapable of consenting because of the effect of alcohol or any other substance. It is important to remember that the age of consent in Scotland is 16. This is the case whether the child or young person is straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. [Scottish Government’s Healthy Relationships and Consent: key messages for young people](#) notes that consent is not a case of one person seeking and the other providing. Consent should be a mutual process which doesn’t only mean asking for and relying upon verbally obtained consent, but being aware of body language and non-verbal responses, as an ongoing process. Consent can be withdrawn at any time. Consent is required every time sexual activity takes place, even if a person has consented before.

**Culture:** in the context of this framework, we use ‘culture’ to refer to the ethos and values of the school. A positive school culture of safety, inclusion, listening to children and young people, and awareness of GBV within school communities helps to both prevent GBV and to create the environment in which it can be effectively addressed when incidents occur.

**Disclosure:** sharing sensitive personal information. In the case of GBV, there may not be a clear disclosure event, or the child or young person may not be aware that what they are describing is GBV, or they may be unsure what to make of their experience.

**Discrimination:** there are two main types of discrimination

- **Direct discrimination** happens when a person is treated differently because of the way they are, for example because of their sex.
- **Indirect discrimination** happens when something applies to everyone in the same way but affects some people unfairly, for example policies which [unequally impact](#) a specific group in a community.

**Diversity:** the inclusion of many different people from different backgrounds.

**Domestic abuse:** refers to any type of abuse between partners or ex-partners, including verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse, stalking, harassment, and image-based abuse.

**Equality:** [Equality](#) is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

**Female genital mutilation:** Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a non-medical procedure where the external female genitals are completely or partially removed and any other injury to the organ. There are many reasons stated for FGM to be performed and the most common reasons are: for a girl to become a woman; to prevent what is considered unacceptable sexual behaviour; a cultural tradition; association with cleanliness and femininity. However, FGM is a violation of girls’ and women’s human rights. It is illegal in the UK and it is illegal for a UK citizen to be taken overseas for have FGM performed.

**Forced marriage:** A forced marriage is where one or both people do not consent (or cannot consent) to a marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them in to the marriage. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. It is a form of domestic abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. Forcing someone to marry isn't always physical, it can also include being coerced or blackmailed or being put under emotional pressure (e.g. Being made to feel they are bringing shame on the family, being denied freedom or money, being pressured into marrying as it would make the elders in the family happy). In some cases, people may be taken abroad without knowing that they are to be married.

**Gender based violence:** The Scottish Government's [Equally Safe strategy](#) defines GBV as "any form of violence used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders".

**Gender identity:** a person's deeply-felt internal and individual [experience of gender](#). This may or may not correspond with their sex at birth.

**Gender reassignment:** see 'transgender/trans' below.

**Gender stereotypes:** Despite some recent progress, in society, boys are generally expected to be unemotional, strong, attracted to girls, sporty and to conform to ideals of masculine physical attractiveness. Girls are generally expected to be nurturing, emotional, helpful, attracted to boys, and to conform to ideals of feminine physical attractiveness. These are called [gender 'stereotypes'](#), 'gender norms' or 'gender rules'. Many young people find these 'stereotypes' too restrictive; they can experience peer pressure to conform to them or may experience bullying if they are seen to break the 'rules'.

**Harassment:** The [Equality Act 2010 defines harassment](#) as when one person engages in unwanted conduct, including of a sexual nature, towards another person related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose of violating their dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The full definition can be found [here](#).

**Honour-based violence:** Honour-based abuse is abuse or violence towards somebody who is seen to have broken the "honour code" of a family or community. A victim may be accused of having shamed the family or destroyed their reputation within their community and be subjected to a range of violent acts and behaviours. The abuse could be physical, emotional or sexual. There is no specific law on honour-based abuse. All cases will be prosecuted under criminal law according to each specific offence that has been committed, for example assault, kidnap, rape or murder.

**Hypermasculinity:** a term used to describe emphasis on displaying harmful masculine behaviour, including aggression, physical strength, and male sexuality.

**Intersectional / intersectionality:** is the recognition that social inequalities, and consequently people's experiences and identities, are shaped by [several factors](#) at once, including race, sexuality, gender identity, age, class, disability, and faith.

**LGBTQI+:** The acronym LGBTQI+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer/ Questioning and Intersex and refers collectively to two distinctive equality areas of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Minoritised:** a verb used to describe making a person or group subordinate in status to the dominant social group, through social processes of power and domination.

**Misogyny:** describes belief or feelings that women are inferior to men; contempt or prejudice against women.

**Objectification:** to treat a person as an object or thing.

**Perpetrate/perpetrator:** refers to the person who has carried out the GBV. As this framework focuses on children and young people within schools, we have not used this terminology, however children and young people may utilise this term to describe their experiences.

**Prevention:** within the context of this framework, this refers to actions taken by a school to work towards gender equality and create an ethos in which GBV is not tolerated, where all members of a school community know what GBV is, how to recognise it, and know that that these behaviours are not acceptable within the school community.

**Protected characteristics:** it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. These are called protected characteristics and are protected under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

**Rape:** Rape is defined by the law as when someone puts their penis into a person's vagina, anus or mouth without their consent. This means that the person did not give permission for this to happen. Rape does not have to involve physical restraint or force. No consent can sometimes mean that one person coerces another person to have sex when they don't want or don't feel ready to. See definition of 'Consent', above.

**Rights-based approach:** an approach which is guided by the principles and furthers the realisation of the rights of all children as outlined in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

**Sexism:** discrimination, prejudice or stereotyping, typically against women, on the basis of sex.

**Sexual assault:** Sexual assault includes a range of sexual acts that a person does not consent to. It can involve any kind of sexual touching with a part of the body or an object without consent, including over clothing. It can also involve putting a part of the body or an object into a person's vagina, anus or mouth without their consent. It does not have to involve physical restraint or physical violence, sometimes it can be one person making another person to do something sexual that they don't want to do or don't feel ready for.

**Sexual harassment:** can include: attempts to shame, embarrass or humiliate someone in relation to gender roles or stereotypes; comments that hypersexualise, fetishise or exoticise people of colour, LGBTQI+ people and/or other minoritised groups; comments or behaviours intended to shame or humiliate boys in relation to masculinity such as comments about their genitalia, pulling down their shorts (referred to as "Pantsing", which may be more prevalent against gender non-conforming children and young people), calling them 'gay' as an insult.

**Sexual images:** this term is used to refer to sexual or explicit images, which may be taken or stored on smartphones, cameras or video recording devices. The sharing of sexual images without consent is a criminal offense.

**Sexual orientation:** sexual orientation describes who an individual is physically and/or emotionally attracted to.

**Stalking:** Stalking is a course of conduct – this means an incident that takes place two or more times – that places another person in a state of fear or alarm. Stalking can involve a range of behaviours and tactics to make a person afraid. This can include unwanted calls, texts, emails or messages and comments on social media. It can mean turning up unexpectedly, following, loitering and giving verbal abuse. It can even include leaving unwanted gifts or cards, that other people may perceive as a kind gesture, where the perpetrator knew, or ought to have known in all the circumstances, that it would likely cause the person to suffer fear or alarm.

**Survivor and victim:** refers to the person who has experienced GBV. As this framework focuses on children and young people within schools, we have not used this terminology, however children and young people may utilise this term to describe their experiences and/or themselves.

**Transgender/trans:** The guidance uses the terms ‘transgender’ and ‘trans’ as umbrella terms for those whose gender identity differs in some way from the sex assigned at birth. Young people and their families may prefer to use other terms.

The term ‘**gender reassignment**’ is the [protected characteristic](#) under the Equality Act 2010 which relates to transgender people. Under the Act, a young person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone any part of a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex. This is a personal process, rather than a medical process, for example the young person may propose to change their name and pronouns.

**Trauma:** Traumatic events have been [defined](#) as ‘an event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening.’ In schools the term nurture or nurturing approaches may be used as a response to traumatic events instead of trauma informed.

**Violence against women and girls:** While the terms VAWG and GBV are sometimes used interchangeably, VAWG is a subset of GBV specifically targeting women and girls due to their unequal status in society. Please see the Scottish Government’s [Equally Safe strategy](#).

# Appendix C: Legal and Policy Framework

## Scottish law and policy

There are a number of legal obligations on education authorities/local authorities, health boards and schools that must be considered as part of their approach to GBV.

### Law

The Equality Act 2010 places [specific requirements](#) upon education authorities, managers of grant-aided schools and proprietors of independent schools, to prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in their schools. The protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation apply in relation to schools.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places duties on certain public authorities, including local authorities and health boards, to report every three years on the steps they have taken in that period to secure better or further effect of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requirements within their areas of responsibility. The Scottish Government remains committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC to the maximum extent of the Parliament's powers and to commencement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill as soon as possible.

Local authorities, as any public authority, have a duty not to act in a way which is incompatible with human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This applies to all young people. They all have rights and protections and strengths and vulnerabilities. All young people should experience privacy, safety, dignity, and respect.

The [Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000](#) provides that every child of school age has the right to be provided with school education by an education authority (or by virtue of arrangements made or entered into by an education authority). The Act requires that, in meeting their duty to provide education, education authorities must secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential. The Act also requires that in meeting their duties, education authorities must seek and take account of the view of children and young people in decisions that significantly affect them.

The [Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974](#) places employers under a duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. This duty includes protecting employees from violent incidents, including GBV incidents, and reducing the risks of such incidents occurring.

Under the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#), employers must assess risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review. This includes protecting employees from the risk of violence such as GBV.

The [Data Protection Act 2018](#) states that relevant personal information can be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

## Age of Criminal Responsibility

GBV displayed by a child or young person may constitute [a criminal offence](#). School staff should have a general awareness of the [Age of Criminal Responsibility \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) which increased the age at which a child is considered to have the capacity to commit a crime from age 8 to 12. This means that children younger than 12 cannot accrue convictions or criminal records.

The Act removes the ability to refer a child to a children's hearing on offence grounds, and makes it possible to only refer a child under 12 to a children's hearing on welfare and protection grounds. It provides specific investigatory powers for the police, to enable incidents of seriously harmful behaviour by under 12s to be investigated.

## Hate Crime

Hate crime is the term used to describe behaviour which is both criminal and rooted in prejudice or which is intended (or can be considered) to stir up hatred. In Scotland, the law currently recognises hate crime based on prejudice towards the following groups:

- disability
- race
- religion
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity.

The [Hate Crime and Public Order \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) will extend protection to include prejudice against age and variations in sex characteristics once commenced in April 2024. Where GBV occurs that is also linked to prejudice towards one of the above groups, this could also constitute a hate crime.

At present, although it is acknowledged that women's experiences of hate crime in society can be amplified by misogyny, the intention is not to extend the hate crime provisions to apply to the characteristic of sex. It is thought that the impact of misogyny requires a different approach in criminal law, and separate legislation is expected to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament in 2024.

## Policy

This framework sits within the context of GIRFEC and the [National Child Protection Guidance for Scotland](#). This document takes account of a range of policy approaches, throughout.

# Appendix D: Research used to inform this Framework

## Introduction

- [Sexual harassment in secondary school: Prevalence and ambiguities. A mixed methods study in Scottish schools | PLOS ONE](#);
- [Girlguiding: Girls' Attitudes Survey 2015](#);
- [Interventions Alliance: Domestic Abuse in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups](#);
- [Children's Parliament Gender Equality in Education and Learning \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- The Young Women Lead Committee 2018 report on [Sexual Harassment in Schools](#)
- [Everyone's Invited](#) information on experiences of sexual harassment in schools across the UK, including in Scotland.
- Girlguiding Scotland's 2021 report to Scottish Parliament, which [evidenced concerns](#) about the issue of sexual harassment in schools.
- The [Everyday Heroes consultation](#) for the Equally Safe delivery plan.

## Understanding Gender Based Violence and its impacts

- Recommendations from the [Working Group on Misogyny and Criminal Justice in Scotland](#)
- Recommendations from the [Expert Group on Preventing Sexual Offending Involving Children and Young People](#)
- [Crooks, C. V., Jaffe, P., Dunlop, C., Kerry, A., & Exner-Cortens, D. \(2019\). Preventing Gender Based Violence Among Adolescents and Young Adults: Lessons From 25 Years of Program Development and Evaluation' in Violence Against Women, 25\(1\), pp 29-55](#)
- [Vanner, C., Holloway, A., and Almanssori, S. \(2022\), 'Teaching and learning with power and privilege: student and teacher identity in education about gender based violence', in Teaching and Teacher Education 116\(4\)](#)
- [Harris, J.C., & Linder, C. \(Eds.\), Intersections of Identity and Sexual Violence on Campus: Centering Minoritized Students' Experiences \(2017\)](#)
- [Harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people: Expert Group report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\): Chapter 3: The nature of Harmful Sexual Behaviours \(HSB\)](#)
- [Domestic Abuse in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups](#)
- [It is not Cool to be Cruel: Prejudice-based bullying and harassment of children and young people in schools \(azureedge.net\)](#)
- [Hidden Figures: LGBT Health Inequalities in the UK](#)
- [Spotlight #6: LGBT+ people and domestic abuse | SafelivesIntimate Partner Violence in Same-Sex Relationships: Are We Aware of the Implications? - Anindya Kar, Nabagata Das, Matt Broadway-Horner, Praveen Kumar, 2023 \(sagepub.com\)](#)
- [Domestic Violence and Abuse in Same-Sex Relationships | SpringerLink](#);
- [Researching domestic violence in same-sex relationships-a feminist epistemological approach to survey development - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#);

- [LGBT Youth Scotland: LGBT Young Women and Girls in Scotland 2020 Consultation - Briefing](#)
- [Matt Pinkett and Mark Roberts, \*Boys don't try? Rethinking masculinity in Schools\* \(2019\)](#)

### **Universal approaches to preventing gender based violence**

- [Vanner, C. and Almanssori, S. \(2021\) 'The whole truth': student perspectives on how Canadian teachers should teach about gender based violence', \*Pedagogy, Culture & Society\*, pp. 1-20. Accessed 8 September 2022.](#)
- [Crooks, C. V., Jaffe, P., Dunlop, C., Kerr, A., Exner-Cortens, D. \(2019\) 'Preventing Gender Based Violence Among Adolescents and Young Adults: Lessons From 25 Years of Program Development and Evaluation', \*Violence Against Women\*, Vol 25\(1\), pp. 29-55](#)

### **Targeted approaches to responding to GBV**

- [Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach | Improvement Service;](#)
- [How can adopting a trauma-informed approach help drive forward improved outcomes as part of Scotland's roadmap for COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation? Learning Report: Violence Against Women and Girls](#)
- [NES Education for Scotland: Transforming Psychological Trauma: National Trauma Training Programme Online Resources](#)



## Appendix E:

# Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group

The working Group is jointly chaired by the Scottish Government, Zero Tolerance and Rape Crisis Scotland.

Membership includes representation from:

- Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- COSLA
- Education Scotland
- Educational Institute Scotland (EIS)
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- National Associations of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- Rape Crisis Scotland
- Scottish Council of Independent Schools
- Scottish Women's Aid
- Stop It Now Scotland
- Time for Inclusive Education (TIE)
- UNISON
- VOICE
- Zero Tolerance
- Scottish Government – Child protection
- Scottish Government – Community Safety Unit (Mentors in Violence Prevention)
- Scottish Government – Equality in Education (Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning)
- Scottish Government – Support and Wellbeing Unit
- Scottish Government – Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)



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