



## **AGENDA ITEM NO: 6**

**Report To:** Alliance Board **Date:** 19 June 2023

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**Subject:** Community Safety Strategy 2023-26 & Violence Against Women and  
Girls Strategy 2023-2026

### **1.0 PURPOSE**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline a proposal to the Inverclyde Alliance Board in respect of the separation of the Community Safety Strategy 2023-26 and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2023-2026, and to seek the approval of the Alliance Board for both strategy documents.

### **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 In 2019 the Alliance Board approved a single community safety strategy encompassing both community safety and VAWG issues. This strategy document was approved in 2020 and acted as a bridging strategy as at that point the VAW strategy period extended to 2022.
- 2.2 In preparation for development of a new strategy a strategic needs assessment was undertaken during 2022 to identify the community safety priorities within Inverclyde.
- 2.3 After evaluation of the strategic needs assessment and consideration of the current community safety landscape, it was considered that merging the two strategies could weaken their individual focus and objectives. Furthermore, there were concerns that gender-based violence, an important issue, might not receive the required priority attention.
- 2.4 The Community Safety Strategy 2023-26 and VAWG Strategy 2023-2026 have been developed as separate documents and are presented in the appendices to this report.
- 2.5 Subject to approval of the strategies, the documents will be remitted to the CSP Coordinating Group and VAWG Multi-Agency Partnership to create an improvement action plan. The improvement action plan will be subject of an annual report and will be reported to the Inverclyde Alliance Board at a future meeting.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Alliance Board approves the separation of the Community Safety Strategy and VAWG strategy documents; and
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Alliance Board approves the Community Safety Strategy 2023-26 and the VAWG Strategy 2023-2026.

**Ruth Binks**

**Corporate Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At its meeting on 9 December 2019, the Inverclyde Alliance Board endorsed changes to the governance structure of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in Inverclyde, leading to the preparation and future publication of a single community safety strategy for Inverclyde.
- 4.2 The strategy was presented to the Inverclyde Alliance Board on 5 October 2020 and acted as a bridging strategy as at that point the Violence Against Women (VAW) Strategy period extended into 2022.
- 4.3 The period of the Inverclyde Community Safety Partnership Strategy and Violence Against Women Strategy ended in 2022, and a strategic needs assessment was undertaken during 2022 to inform the development of a Community Safety Strategy and Violence Against Women Strategy for Inverclyde. The results of the assessment were presented to the Community Safety Partnership in October 2022 and formed the basis for an Alliance Board workshop on 5 December 2022.
- 4.4 The aim of this assessment was to:
- review partnership achievements over the previous strategic plans period;
  - review current needs assessment within context of the current policy landscape;
  - emerging themes and issues as well as local data analysis; and
  - identify and agree future priorities for the Community Safety Partnership

## **5.0 STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The strategic needs assessment considered a range of data across six key community safety themes:
- Crime and antisocial behaviour;
  - Violence against women;
  - Home safety;
  - Fire safety; and
  - Water safety
- 5.2 The results of the analysis identified several issues that should be considered within the development of strategic priority outcomes including violent crime, weapons possession, deliberate fire-raising, sexual crimes, online safety, public safety perceptions, young drivers, driving under the influence, falls at home, accidental dwelling fires, protecting vulnerable people, and gender-based violence.
- 5.3 The results of the assessment were presented to the Community Safety Partnership in October 2022.
- 5.4 An Inverclyde Alliance online workshop was held in December 2022 to seek members' views on the vision, proposed priority strategic outcomes and potential partnership actions that would follow the strategy development.

The workshop provided some insights to be considered in the development of the strategy including:

- the vision should make it clear that Inverclyde is already a safe place to live, work, and visit
- the vision should make it clear that community safety is everyone within the community's responsibility;
- the strategy should consider people's perceptions of safety;
- the strategy and vision should refer to people who are at-risk rather than those who are vulnerable; and

- there should be ongoing dialogue with communities in relation to the community safety issues that matter to them.

5.5 After evaluation of the strategic needs assessment and consideration of the current community safety landscape, it was considered that merging the two strategies could weaken their individual focus and objectives. Furthermore, there were concerns that the critical issue of gender-based violence, might not receive the required priority attention.

5.6 The results of the strategic needs assessment and feedback from the workshop were used in the development of separate Community Safety Strategy 2023-26 and VAWG Strategy 2023-2026.

## **6.0 INVERCLYDE COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2023-26**

6.1 The strategy document presents the national and local context around community safety, summarise the results of the strategic needs analysis, outlines the underpinning themes which set out the fundamental aspects of our approach in sustaining safe communities in Inverclyde, and puts forward the vision and priority strategic outcomes for the Community Safety Partnership

6.2 The vision for Inverclyde's Community Safety Partnership is that 'Inverclyde continues to be a safe place to live, work and visit, where everyone works together to support our people, particularly those who are more at risk'.

6.3 The strategic outcomes for the Community Safety Partnership are:

- there is a reduction in the level of violence and antisocial behaviour within our communities;
- there is a reduction in the number of serious accidents at home and on our roads;
- communities in Inverclyde feel safe and are protected, particularly those most at risk; and
- strong and effective joint working arrangements across the community planning partnership are developed to promote a holistic approach to community safety

6.4 An annual action plan will be produced by the CSP to sit alongside the strategy. The actions will be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

6.5 A copy of the draft strategy document is contained within appendix 1 of this report.

## **7.0 INVERCLYDE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STRATEGY 2023-26**

7.1 The strategy has been updated to incorporate 'Girls' in line with the Equally Safe Scotland's Strategy to prevent and eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls.

7.2 The strategy sets out our strategic vision to make this local authority area safe for anyone who is living, working, visiting, and travelling in Inverclyde. It builds on the nationally recognised best practice work that has been happening across Inverclyde since the launch of our first VAWG strategy in 2012, and it will be accompanied by a robust annual action plan which will outline the steps the VAWG Multi Agency Partnership will take to achieve its objectives. The approach will use this strong foundation to continue our priority to end VAWG.

- 7.3 The VAWG Strategy mirrors the priorities of the national strategy Equally Safe, to work collaboratively with key partners in the public, private and third sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. The priorities are:
- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls;
  - women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically, and politically;
  - interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children, and young people; and
  - men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

7.4 A copy of the draft strategy document is contained within appendix 2 of this report.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Legal: none at present  
Finance: none at present  
Human Resources: none at present  
Equality and Diversity: An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and is available to view at <https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2023>  
Population: The Community Safety and Violence Against Women Strategy 2023-2026 will contribute to the achievement of the population priority.  
Inequalities: The Community Safety and Violence Against Women Strategy 2023-2026 will contribute to the achievement of the inequalities priority.

## **9.0 CONSULTATIONS**

- 9.1 n/a

## **10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Community Safety Strategic Needs Assessment 2022



Inverclyde Alliance

APPENDIX 1

Keeping Inverclyde Safe Together  
Inverclyde Community Safety  
Strategy  
2023 – 2026



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## INTRODUCTION

Over time, the definition of community safety has evolved to encompass a wider range of concerns. While originally centred on preventing and reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, it now includes all factors that contribute to people feeling safe and secure, whether at home, work, or in public spaces. This expanded definition includes issues such as gender-based violence, community justice, public perception of safety, and home and fire safety, among others.

It is widely acknowledged that community safety is intertwined with broader efforts to empower and strengthen communities, and that social, economic, and physical factors all impact safety.

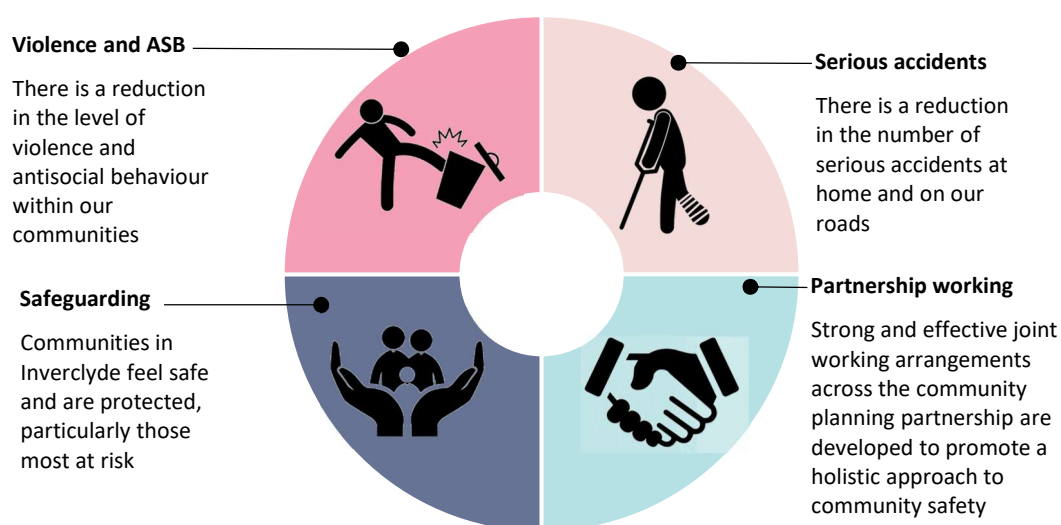
The Community Safety Partnership's current strategic approach focuses on collaboration between relevant agencies to address shared priorities and take targeted action. This plan emphasises the importance of working closely with communities to achieve shared safety goals at the local level in Inverclyde.

This strategy will be accompanied by a robust action plan which will outline the steps we will take as a partnership to achieve our objectives. Our approach will use this strong foundation to continue our priority to keep Inverclyde a safe place.

## Our Shared Vision

“Inverclyde continues to be a safe place to live, work and visit, where everyone works together to support our people, particularly those who are more at risk

## Strategic Priorities





## NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

### National Outcomes

The National Performance Framework sets out:

**11 National Outcomes and 81 National Indicators**

Publicly available on the [National Performance Website](#)



The Community Safety outcome is outcome 11: “We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe” This incorporates the previous Safer and Stronger outcome, while acknowledging that to deliver Community Safety services effectively we need to consider what makes a safer community, which includes elements such as community engagement and cohesion, social relationships, and community empowerment as well as issues of poverty, health, and education. This approach is evident nationally in other drivers such as: -

#### Community Empowerment Act

Promoting community empowerment and participation by focussing on empowering communities via involvement in decision making at a local level.

#### The Vision for Justice in Scotland

The focus has shifted towards community justice, aiming for “A just, safe, and resilient Scotland”. The objective is to create safe, cohesive, and resilient communities, with a focus on prevention, early intervention, improved wellbeing, and life opportunities. The justice system and interventions should be fair, proportionate, and effective, with services that are person-centred

#### The Place Standard / Principle

All those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to

improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.

#### Public health priorities

A foundation for the whole system, for public services, third sector, community organisations and others, to work better together to improve Scotland’s health, and to empower people and communities.

#### Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023-33

The vision for the partnership plan is ‘Success For All – Getting It Right for Every Child, Citizen and Community’ and the plan focuses on the following themes:

**Theme 1: Empowered people**

**Theme 2: Working people**

**Theme 3: Healthy people and places**

**Theme 4: A supportive place**

**Theme 5: A thriving place**

Theme 4 focuses on these high-level outcomes:

- Vulnerable adults and children are protected and supported, ensuring they can live safely and independently
- We recognise where people are affected by trauma, and respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery
- Public protection and community safety are improved through targeting our resources to reduce the risk of offending and harm

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### CSP Overview



Inverclyde Alliance

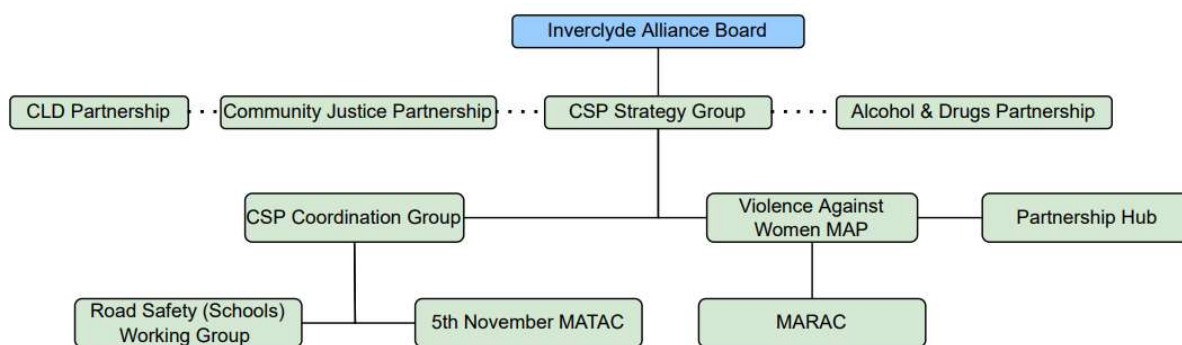
Inverclyde Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a strategic delivery partnership of the Community Planning Partnership, Inverclyde Alliance. The CSP also has strategic oversight of the Violence Against Women Multi-Agency Partnership (MAP). The CSP involves a wide range of partners including, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue, Inverclyde HSCP, HMCG, Inverclyde Council, local housing associations, and the voluntary sector.

The partnership hub is a daily multi-agency meeting that has proven to be an effective mechanism for partnership working, combining swift sharing of relevant information around emerging concerns and encouraging a joint early intervention approach, which is contributing to achieving positive outcomes within Inverclyde.

The Inverclyde CSP Strategy Group has the overall responsibility for the delivery of community safety activities in Inverclyde. The Strategy group sets the outcomes and themes on behalf of the overall community safety partnership and monitors the progress of the work carried out by the Inverclyde CSP Coordinating Group and Inverclyde VAW MAP.

Strong partnership arrangements have been in place in Inverclyde for several years, providing a vehicle for partners to collectively meet the needs of local people especially for those people in most need. These robust partnership arrangements will provide the foundations to build stronger links across partners and areas to improve how we work together as a community planning partnership to improve community safety in Inverclyde.

### CSP Current Structure



There are several local strategies and plans that community safety plays a key role in, which reinforces the far-reaching impact of community safety and its inter-connectedness across different policy areas, including but not limited to:

- Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan
- Community Learning & Development Strategy
- Local Housing Strategy
- Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
- Antisocial Behaviour Strategy
- Local Development Plan
- HSCP Strategic Plan
- Local Police Plan and Local Fire & Rescue Plan



## Strategic needs assessment

A strategic needs analysis was undertaken to support the development of this plan. assessment has involved analysis of a detailed evidence base across a broad range of areas and includes information and feedback from a public survey. The aim of this exercise was to:

- Review partnership achievements over the previous strategic plan period;
- Review current needs assessment within context of the current policy landscape, emerging themes and issues as well as local data analysis; and
- Identify and agree future priorities for the CSP;

### Population

- The population of Inverclyde is 76,700 in 2021 and is projected to decrease 14.6% by 2043
- 16% of the population are under 16 compared with 17% nationally
- 62% of the population are working age (16-64) compared with 64% nationally
- 22% of residents are 65+ compared with 19% nationally
- 10% of residents are 75+ compared with 8% nationally
- By 2043 it's estimated the number of people 75+ years will have risen by 55%.



### Deprivation

- 21 datazones (15% of the population) are in 5% of the most deprived areas in Scotland
- 51 datazones (43% of the population) are in 20% most deprived areas in Scotland
- According to the 2019 Scottish House Condition Survey 28% of people in Inverclyde are living in fuel poverty compared to 24% nationally
- 13.6% children (aged under 16) living in relative low-income families 2020/21 (21st highest nationally)



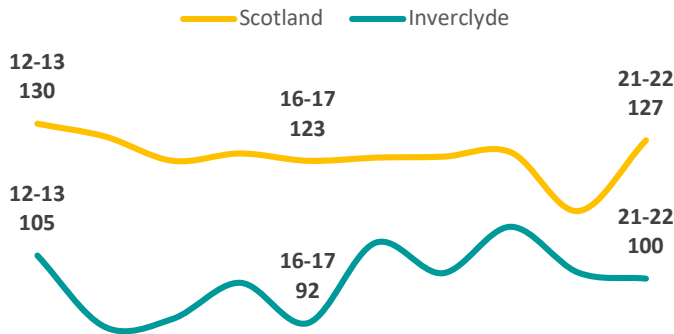
### Health & Wellbeing

- Life expectancy – male is 75.2 compared with 77.1 nationally (2016-2018)
- Life expectancy – female is 79.6 compared with 81.1 nationally (2016-2018)
- Between 2017 and 2021, there were on average 11.4 suicides per year in Inverclyde, with 39% being female compared to 26% female in Scotland
- In Scotland suicide deaths were more than three times more likely among those living in the most deprived areas than among those in the least deprived areas.
- The Inverclyde rate of alcohol related hospital stays (EASR per 100K population) fell from 1154 in 2015/16 to 804 in 2020/21 compared with a reduction across Scotland of 674 to 614
- The Inverclyde rate of drug related hospital stays (EASR per 100K population) fell from 409 in 2015/16 to 341 in 2020/21 compared with an increase across Scotland of 196 to 235
- The rate per 100K population of drug deaths per year in Inverclyde was 21 in 2021 compared to 24 in Scotland



## Crime and antisocial behaviour

Non-sexual violent crime rate per 10K population



Since 2012-13 crime rate ↓ 17% and offence rate ↓ 55%

2021-22 ranked 12th highest local authority for crime rate and 25th for offence rate

Decreasing rate of crime in Inverclyde and nationally. Violent crime remains an issue in Inverclyde. The average rate of violent crime has been 104 per 10,000 population across the past 5 years



Weapons possession has been increasing nationally and locally.

Since 2012-13 in Inverclyde weapons possession (not used) ↑ 34% and since 2017-18 weapons possession (used) ↑ 18%

2021-22 Inverclyde ranked 3rd highest local authority for weapons possession (not used)



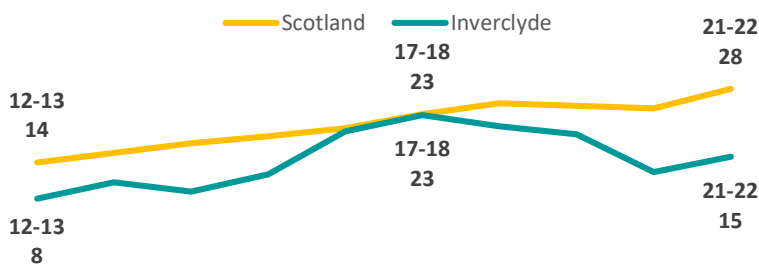
85% increase in cyber-crime in Scotland between 19-20 and 21-22

Since 2012-13 antisocial offences rate ↓ 71% and damage and reckless behaviour offence rate ↓ 46%

Public nuisance and noise comprised 57% of ASB incidents reported to Inverclyde Council in 2021-22



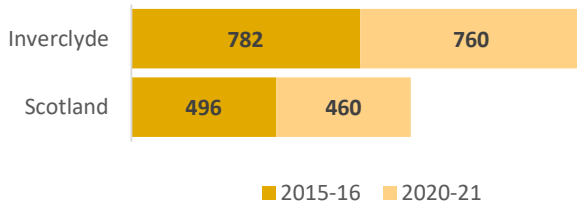

Sexual crime rate per 10K population



The rate of sexual crimes has almost doubled since 2012-13, although in Inverclyde it has decreased from a ten-year high rate in 2017-18

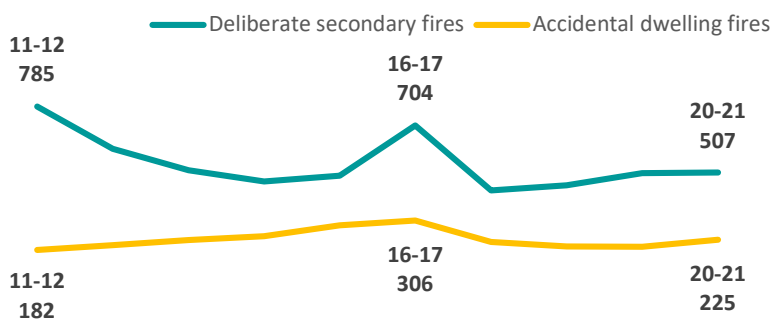
## Fire safety

Total fires per 100K population, 2015/16 – 2020/21

Inverclyde had the highest rate in Scotland per 100,000 population for fires attended in 2020-21

Deliberate secondary fires per 100K population & accidental dwelling fires per 100K dwellings



Non-fatal casualties per 1,000 primary fires 20-21

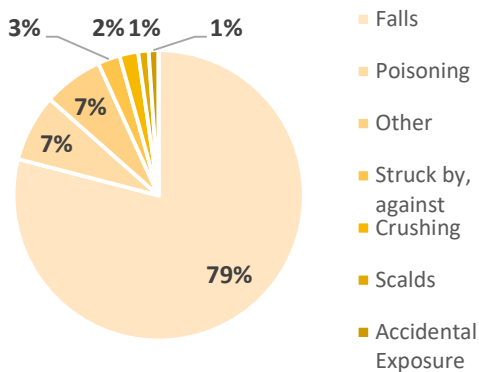
Inverclyde 205

Scotland 108

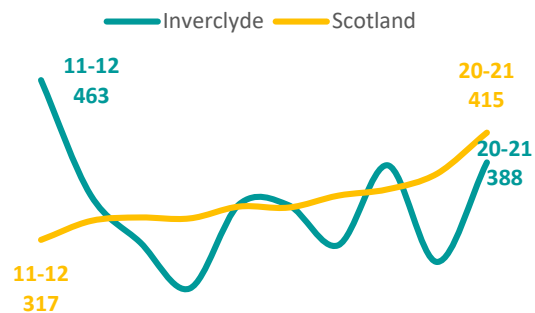

Deliberate secondary fire rates per population have increased by 17% between 2017-18 and 2020-21

## Unintentional injuries at home

Reason for admissions as result from unintentional injury at home (5-year average)



Emergency hospital admissions as a result of unintentional injury at home per 100K population

Emergency hospital admissions because of unintentional injury at home has decreased from a ten-year high in 2011-12. However, there has been a degree of fluctuation since 2014-15. On average, falls make up the majority (79%) of unintentional injuries at home, and over half are within the 75+ age bracket.

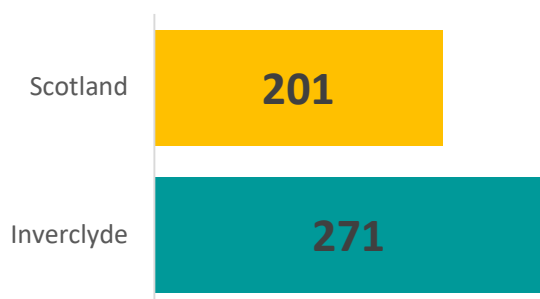
## Road safety

People killed or seriously injured on roads rate per 10K population



Rate of people killed or seriously injured on our roads is on a decreasing trend. However, there was an increasing trend of emergency hospital admissions because of a road traffic accident in the period between 2016-17 and 2019-20, before a sharp decrease in 2020-21.

Collision-involved resident young drivers per 100K population



Driving under influence offences ↑ 40% since 2012-13. Recent rises impacted by improved drug driver testing methods.

## Water safety



While there is limited data available around water safety incidents at authority level, accidental fatalities around water have increased nationally and we need to be vigilant and proactive in prevention of water-related accidents and suicide attempts due to being a coastal location which also has several inland water bodies.

## Public safety perceptions

### Scottish Household Survey 2019

71% of residents in Inverclyde feel very/fairly safe when walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. For Scotland this figure is 83%.

### Inverclyde Citizens Panel 2021

94% of people said they feel safe outside during the day, while 70% of people said they feel safe in their neighbourhood outside at night.





## UNDERPINNING THEMES

The wide range of evidence has informed the key strategic priorities that will help achieve our vision that **'Inverclyde continues to be a safe place to live, work and visit, where everyone works together to support our people, particularly those who are more at risk'**.

Acknowledging that resilient, inclusive, and tolerant communities are crucial for individuals to thrive and prosper, ensuring community safety requires a collaborative effort from all partners and community members. Our priorities are guided by key themes that outline the essential components of our approach to fostering safe communities in Inverclyde.

### **Effective community engagement and involvement**

We will support and enable communities to identify and tackle issues that are most important to them. We recognise the involvement and participation from communities and individuals within communities is pivotal to creating safer communities. We also recognise that it may be challenging for some individuals and communities to have their voice heard, and that some people may face barriers to engagement. We will endeavour to ensure a range of engagement methods that optimise involvement from all, with a particular focus on creating conditions in which communities that experience exclusion are supported to be involved and have real control and influence over decisions that are made.

### **Cost of living crisis and poverty**

Poverty and the cost-of-living crisis are closely linked to community safety issues, and the existing deprivation levels in local areas are expected to worsen. Financial vulnerability may increase crime levels, with households at greater risk of scams, theft, exploitation, violence, and other criminal acts.

Risky behaviours related to alternative energy usage, such as bypassing meters, using counterfeit or poor-quality goods, and disposal BBQs for cooking, can lead to fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. Vulnerable individuals may face the difficult decision between heating and eating, which can result in illness, falls, and hospital admissions. The use of electric blankets, hot water bottles, and flasks may also cause scalds and burns. Additionally, community safety

concerns extend to road safety if vehicle maintenance is affected.

### **Community safety and public health**

A range of factors interact to create and influence health, beginning with genetic and constitutional factors of individuals, through individual lifestyle factors, social and community networks, living and working conditions and up to wider socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions. There are obvious links between safer communities positively influencing these factors and improving health outcomes.

### **Community Safety and Community Justice**

Community safety and community justice share the goal of promoting safety and wellbeing in communities. Community safety aims to prevent crime and promote social order, while community justice addresses the root causes of crime and aims for a more equitable society. Both involve collaboration among stakeholders and a multi-disciplinary approach. They are interdependent, with community justice initiatives preventing future crime and promoting community safety, and community safety creating a stable environment for community justice initiatives. A comprehensive approach that considers both is needed for long-term success in building safer and more just communities

### **Strong partnership working, functional governance and productive decision making**

Community safety is complex and multi-faceted and to sustain safe communities we need to take a universal approach in addressing the needs of



people and communities. Interventions in one area can result in improvements in other outcomes, reinforcing the need for effective integrated partnership working across a broad range of areas. Strong leadership within a wide range of stakeholders including education, planning, health, community safety, and community justice can lead to a whole-system public health response to community safety.

### **Tackling inequalities**

Persistent inequalities continue to exist within Inverclyde's communities, despite advancements in several important areas. National evidence suggests that the gap between different groups is widening, with poverty, gender, connectivity, health, and age all contributing factors. Additionally, certain groups tend to feel less safe alone at night and worry more about crime in Scotland, highlighting the need to reflect on how different people in society use and experience the spaces within their communities, and how this affects their safety perceptions and decision-making.

As a partnership, we are dedicated to addressing these inequalities and improving outcomes for everyone. Our efforts and resources will be targeted towards the communities that need them the most. This will be achieved through collaborative working, recognizing that the communities and individuals who require the most support often come into contact with various services for different reasons. We believe that effective support is universal and should address needs across all services, taking a whole-system approach.

### **Challenging safety perceptions**

Public perceptions of safety can often be characterized by a negative viewpoint, specifically the absence of safety and a nearly exclusive focus on threats and risks. The positive sensations of safety can be frequently disregarded. We will seek to better understand people's safety experiences, both positive and negative, to help inform innovative ways to tackle our communities' insecurities and fears

about safety perceptions in public spaces and within their homes.

### **Prevention and early intervention**

Prevention and early intervention are central to supporting people to change their behaviours, reduce risk and achieve sustainable long-term changes in communities and amongst individuals and families. We will focus on acting at an early stage working closely with partners to help build capacity and resilience in communities and amongst individuals to create healthier and safer communities.

### **Harnessing data to support those most at risk**

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that the public and health sectors store a lot of information that can be used to identify and support people who are most at risk. We are committed to building on those experiences to share and use data in innovative ways to meet the current community safety challenges facing our communities.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) / Trauma-informed practice**

The Scottish Government has committed to preventing ACE's, building resilience, and reducing the negative impact of ACEs on communities. Links have been identified between higher experience of ACE's and community safety issues such as offending, violence, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of embedding trauma-informed practice into our local services as it can be effective and benefit both trauma survivors and staff. For trauma survivors, trauma-informed services can bring hope, empowerment and support that is not re-traumatising. Moreover, such services can help close the gap between the people who use services and the people who provide them.

### **Impact of drugs and alcohol**

The links between substance misuse and community safety are evident in several areas, from alcohol related crime, injury prevention, youth issues, and domestic abuse. The CSP will continue to work in partnership with the

Inverclyde Alcohol and Drugs Partnership to explore opportunities for joint action and continue to seek preventative and early intervention approaches.

### **CSP joint action groups**

Thematic working, or action, groups are key to achieving the priorities set out within this strategy. We will regularly review the joint action groups that sit beneath the Community Safety Coordination Group to ensure that the structure is conducive to achieving the partnerships strategic aims.

### **Community Safety and VAWG**

Community safety and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) are closely connected, as VAWG encompasses various forms of violence that disproportionately affect women and girls and can impact the safety of individuals and communities. To promote community safety, support and resources must be provided to victims of VAW, and efforts must be made to raise awareness and address the social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to it. Addressing VAWG can also help prevent other forms of violence in communities, as there is often overlap between different types of violence. Thus, addressing VAWG is crucial for creating a safe and secure environment for all.

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES



### Strategic Outcome 1

**There is a reduction in the level of violence and antisocial behaviour within our communities**

We will do this by:

- Collaboratively promoting local and national campaigns which focus on crime prevention
- Develop and coordinate a programme of partnership activities to tackle violence, deliberate fire raising, carrying weapons, and antisocial behaviour through a prevention and education model
- Identify opportunities for joint engagement activities and programmes for young people
- Work with partners to prevent, reduce and solve crime and antisocial behaviour

#### **What difference will this make?**

Reducing violence in communities is essential for various reasons. To begin with, violence can result in severe physical harm, injuries, and even death, leaving lasting emotional and physical scars. Additionally, violence can harm community cohesion and trust, which are crucial for a peaceful and harmonious society. Moreover, violence can cause economic consequences, including property damage and increased law enforcement and healthcare costs. Therefore, reducing violence can lead to a safer, more secure, and prosperous community, promoting social cohesion, trust, and resilience.

Reducing antisocial behaviour can have numerous benefits for communities. It can improve the quality of life by creating a more peaceful and secure environment, promote social cohesion, and enhance physical and mental health. It can also lead to increased economic growth and better educational outcomes. Reducing antisocial behaviour can create a more harmonious, safer, and healthier community, which is beneficial for everyone



### Strategic Outcome 2

**There is a reduction in the number of serious accidents at home and on our roads**

We will do this by:

- Work with partners to deliver interventions that target those most at risk from unintentional injury and fire at home, and promote referral pathways
- Continue to educate children, young people, and adults on the risks from fire and other safety risks in the home
- Continue to deliver road safety education in school
- Improve driver behaviour and reduce injury through engagement and proportionate enforcement of legislation
- Strengthen partnership working across road safety and road crime

#### **What difference will this make?**

Reducing serious accidents at home and on roads is important for several reasons. Firstly, accidents can cause physical and emotional harm, even leading to death. By reducing accidents, we can prevent negative outcomes and improve overall community safety and wellbeing. Secondly, accidents can result in economic costs such as medical treatment, lost income, increased insurance premiums, and property damage. By reducing accidents, we can help mitigate these costs and create a more financially stable community. Lastly, reducing accidents can promote community cohesion and trust by creating a safer environment that encourages people to engage in community activities and build social connections, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Reducing serious accidents can lead to a more secure, prosperous, and connected community.



### Strategic Outcome 3

#### **Communities in Inverclyde feel safe and are protected, particularly those most at risk**

We will do this by:

- Increasing awareness of community safety and ensure it is important in the local landscape
- Increase positive community messaging and engagement to improve safety perceptions
- Sharing information to identify vulnerability and work together to reduce risk and prevent harm
- Supporting campaigns, initiatives, and projects that focus on, or increasing feelings of, safety
- Raise awareness of scams, bogus callers, online exploitation, and digital safety
- Build confidence amongst victims and the community to report their experiences

#### **What difference will this make?**

Ensuring that communities feel safe and protected is crucial for a variety of reasons. One reason is that it fosters community cohesion and trust, which enables people to participate in community activities and establish stronger social ties. Another reason is that it has a positive effect on individuals' mental and physical wellbeing, leading to a happier and healthier life. Lastly, it can provide economic advantages by attracting businesses and investors and reducing law enforcement and social services expenses. Ultimately, improving community safety and protection can create a more dynamic, healthy, and prosperous community for all.



### Strategic Outcome 4

#### **Strong and effective joint working arrangements across the community planning partnership are developed to promote a holistic approach to community safety**

We will do this by:

- Strengthening relationships with communities and actively seeking to engage stakeholders in our work to tackle community safety
- Empower residents by providing them with tools and resources they need to protect themselves and their communities
- Implementing joint working arrangements and projects between the community safety partnership and other community planning partnerships, such as Community Justice
- Support locality partnerships across Inverclyde in responding to community safety issues that impact localities and their communities.

#### **What difference will this make?**

Effective community planning partnership joint working arrangements are important for promoting collaboration, building trust, and ensuring that community planning reflects the needs of local residents. Such arrangements bring together different stakeholders to work towards common goals, leading to a more coordinated and integrated approach to community development. This can ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently. Joint working can also help to build trust and relationships between stakeholders, leading to more effective decision-making and resource allocation. Finally, involving community groups and individuals in the planning process can lead to more responsive and tailored community services and initiatives, better meeting the community's needs. Overall, these arrangements can create a healthier, more prosperous, and vibrant community for everyone.

## MEASURING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Robust effective monitoring and evaluation systems are required in order to measure our progress as a partnership towards achieving our key strategic outcomes. To help us measure progress achieved a range of key indicators have been identified. These outcome measures will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the Community Safety Partnership.

The Community Safety Coordination Group and associated sub-groups will develop, review and update action plans. Action plans will be reviewed and agreed by the Community Safety Partnership.

### Reporting

Progress will be monitored by the Community Safety Coordination Group. Updates will be provided to the Community Safety Strategy Group on a quarterly basis. Progress will be reported formally on an annual basis by the Community Safety Partnership to the Inverclyde Alliance Board.

### Publication

Please contact us if you would like an alternative format of this document.

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Inverclyde Alliance

# Inverclyde Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023 - 2026



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in any form has no place in our vision for a safe, strong, and successful Scotland. It impacts adversely on health and wellbeing, limits freedom of potential and violates human rights.

VAWG is perpetuated at epidemic levels, affecting all areas of women's lives, and the workplace is no exception. Every year, three million women in the UK experience some form of violence, whether it be domestic abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or another form. Many more live with past experiences of abuse.

Nationally we know that on average two women are killed every week by a current or former partner and one in three women report some form of sexual violence in intimate partner relationships. There were 118 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland per 10,000 population in 2021-22. At a local authority level, Inverclyde recorded 109 per 10,000 population, placing them in the middle of the Scottish table of local authorities.

In many instances VAW remains hidden and under-reported, but it is not inevitable and collectively we can end it. This strategy sets out the role we can all play in ending VAW as part our coordinated community response.

This partnership strategy sets out our strategic vision to make this local authority area safe for anyone who is living, working, visiting, and travelling in Inverclyde.

✿ This strategy builds on the nationally recognised best practice work that has been happening across our authority since the launch of our first VAWG strategy in 2012.

✿ This strategy will be accompanied by a robust action plan which will outline the steps we will take as a partnership to achieve our objectives. Our approach will use this strong foundation to continue our priority to end VAWG.

✿ This strategy contributes to the vision of the Inverclyde Alliance partnership plan 'Success For All – Getting It Right for Every Child, Citizen and Community', that focuses on:

**Theme 1: Empowered people**

**Theme 2: Working people**

**Theme 3: Healthy people and places**

**Theme 4: A supportive place**

**Theme 5: A thriving place**

This strategy is of most relevance to theme 4, which centres on these high-level outcomes:

- Vulnerable adults and children are protected and supported, ensuring they can live safely and independently
- We recognise where people are affected by trauma, and respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery
- Public protection and community safety are improved through targeting our resources to reduce the risk of offending and harm



## 2. WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

### What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

Locally we have adopted the Scottish definition of Violence Against Women and Girls from Equally Safe<sup>1</sup> which includes (but is not limited to):

- Domestic abuse
- Sexual Violence (including harassment, sexual assault and rape, incest, and child sexual abuse)
- Commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography, and trafficking
- Child sexual exploitation
- So called “Honour” based violence, including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages and honour crimes.
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work, online, at home or in public

VAWG encompasses a wide range of abusive and violent acts that are directed towards individuals of all genders but predominantly affect women and girls. It acknowledges

that these acts have a disproportionate impact on women and girls.

The various forms of VAWG include physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. These abuses can occur in public places, like sexual harassment, or in private settings such as intimate partner violence, which can escalate to serious harm and even homicide.

VAWG can also manifest as technology-based abuse, such as internet stalking, or be motivated by economic factors such as international trafficking of women and girls. Harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage are also included under the umbrella term of VAWG.

Although the experiences of these abuses may vary, they are all rooted in the misuse of power and control. Additional definitions can be found below.

Type of abuse	What does this mean?
Domestic abuse (including coercive control)	This is when a partner or ex partner has power and control over their victims and uses abuse to maintain it. Abuse can be physical, emotional, economic, psychological and/or sexual.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government, 2018, Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls

Type of abuse	What does this mean?
Rape and sexual violence	Rape is sex without consent. This means that rape isn't just people being physically forced into a sexual act, it also includes pressure that makes someone feels like they have no choice but to have sex or a sexual act.
Female genital mutilation	This is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.
Early and Forced marriage	This is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so.
So called "honour" based violence	This is abuse and violence which is carried out to protect or defend perceived "honour" of the family and/or community.
Spiritual abuse	This is abuse which uses religion and faith systems to control and abuse a victim. It is often a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour within a religious context.
Sexual harassment	This is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which violates someone's dignity, makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or creates a hostile or offensive environment.
Stalking	This is a pattern of persistent and unwanted attention that makes someone feel pestered, scared, anxious or harassed.
Modern Slavery	This is an umbrella term for human trafficking and servitude. It is used when somebody is forced or controlled to do something, and another person gains from this.
Forced prostitution/sexual exploitation	This is where someone is being coerced or forced into selling sex or sexual acts.

## What about violence against men and boys?

The particular approach we are taking through Equally Safe brings a strategic focus to the issue of men's Violence and abuse . A gendered analysis does not exclude men, but rather recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected by particular forms of violence that they experience because they are women and girls.

Many men and boys are victims of violence and abuse. Some boys experience the forms of abuse outlined already in relation to children and young people, whilst some men are victims of domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and forced marriage.

The prevailing societal view of what constitutes masculinity can make it difficult for men to identify themselves as experiencing violence or abuse and can prevent them from seeking help. More fundamentally, masculinity and femininity are part of the underlying social construct of gender that contributes to the continuing prevalence of VAWG in society.

We condemn all forms of violence and abuse, whilst recognising that particular forms are disproportionately experienced by one gender and require a strong strategic focus. Men have a critical role in challenging violence and abuse, breaking down gender norms and in helping to ensure greater gender equality in society – they are also entitled to support when they experience violence and abuse.

## What causes Violence Against Women and Girls?

Numerous explanations have been proposed for the occurrence of VAWG, such as substance abuse, mental illness, anger problems, exposure to abuse during childhood, cultural customs, and stress. However, while these factors may play a

role, none of them can be pinpointed as the direct cause of violence or abuse. Research has demonstrated that gender inequality is a significant driver of VAWG<sup>2</sup>. The Council of Europe identifies three fundamental factors that underlie this issue:

Cultural Factors	Legal Factors	Political Factors
<p>Sexist views and the idea that men can have more power over women and children, results in abuse being used to maintain this power. Gender stereotypes reinforce this inequality and creates an acceptance of violence and abuse.</p>	<p>Although abuse is illegal, sadly we see many victims/survivors blamed for the abuse and low sentences for perpetrators . This results in low reporting and abuse being allowed to continue.</p>	<p>The under-representation of women and minority groups in power and politics means they have fewer opportunities to shape the discussion and to affect changes in policy, or to adopt measures to end VAWG.</p>
<p>For example: the belief that men must be tough, strong, and always in control can result in them exerting control over a partner. These attitudes are harmful to all genders.</p>	<p>For example: In Scotland only 51% of rape and attempted rape trials result in a conviction, compared to a 91% overall conviction rate. In 2020-21 there were 2,176 rapes and attempted rapes reported to the police, but only 152 prosecutions and just 78 convictions.<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>For example: In 1989 the Scottish Criminal Appeal Court held that a man could be guilty under Scottish Law of raping his wife while they were still cohabiting and Domestic Abuse was recognised as an offence under the Domestic Abuse Act 2018.</p>

VAWG transcends boundaries of race, social class, age, sexual orientation, and disability. However, it is acknowledged that encounters with racism, class discrimination, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism can render individuals more susceptible to abuse due to the additional obstacles they encounter in obtaining assistance<sup>4</sup>. Our approach acknowledges the significance of comprehending the challenges people confront and how they intertwine with one another and with their experiences of violence and abuse.

<sup>2</sup> UN, 1992: General Recommendation 19, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2021) *Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2019-20*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/criminal-proceedings-scotland-2019-20/documents/>

<sup>4</sup> McCarry, M., & Kervin, A. (2017). A national scoping study on the intersection of violence against women and abuse of children with complex needs: Final Report. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

# What are some of the common myths about VAWG?

## Myth

To stay safe, women should not go out late at night.

## Fact

Women should not have to restrict their lives to be safe. We need to tell abusers to stop the abuse, not tell women to restrict their freedoms. Telling this to women is victim blaming. It is important to note that staying at home doesn't necessarily mean women will be safe either. Statistically, women are more likely to be harmed in the home than on the street. Telling women to change behaviour does not address the root cause of violence/abuse and will not result in change.

## Myth

Violence against women and girls only affects certain groups of women.

## Fact

Research has repeatedly shown violence and abuse can affect women from all social, economic, cultural, and family backgrounds.

There is no evidence to suggest that violence and abuse is more prevalent in some communities more than others. Instead, barriers to accessing support can increase vulnerability. Experiencing racism, ableism, or homophobia can influence someone reaching for support. This is why an intersectional approach is important.

## Myth

Abuse is the result of an anger problem, use of substances or mental ill-health.

## Fact

There is no research to support this. Abuse and violence are about power and control. Perpetrators choose when they abuse, often where there are no witnesses. We know that substance misuse or mental health issues do not cause abuse as many people who use substances or have a mental health conditions do not abuse. However, they can make existing abuse worse. It's important to offer perpetrators wider support, but there is no excuse for abuse.

**Myth**

Women involved in prostitution cannot be raped or sexually assaulted.

**Fact**

Women involved in prostitution can and do experience rape and sexual assault. Women involved in prostitution face discrimination and are often blamed for the abuse. This is not acceptable, and everyone should be supported.

**Myth**

Forced marriage only happens in South Asian communities.

**Fact**

Forced marriage affects a wide range of communities from different cultural backgrounds. It affects men and women all over the world, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. Stereotyping it as a problem for 'certain' communities risks the reduction of support being accessible to all.

**Myth**

Leaving an abusive relationship sees an automatic end to the abuse.

**Fact**

There are many barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, and access to support and resources plays a significant role. Even after leaving, victims/survivors are still at serious risk of perpetrators of abuse continuing to stalk and harass them, breaching bail conditions and using child contact to continue abuse. Support for victims/survivors must therefore always be long-term.

**Myth**

Violence against women and girls is an issue that only concerns women and girls

**Fact**

It is important to note that men, boys, and non-binary people also experience the types of abuse set out in this strategy. Although we recognise that VAWG disproportionately affects women and girls, violence and abuse can affect anyone, and approaches will be inclusive of everyone who needs support. Men and boys also play an important role in ending VAWG.

**Myth**

There is nothing we can do to stop violence against women and girls.

**Fact**

VAWG is the product of learned attitudes and behaviour that have gone unchallenged along with a sense of entitlement. By eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting a culture of respect and equality at home, at work, in communities, and across society we can work together to end VAWG.

**Myth**

Sexual violence is more likely to be committed by a stranger.

**Fact**

A study carried out in 2018 by Researchers from Glasgow University said it was a popular misconception that most attackers were strangers.

The study looked at the 991 women in Scotland who went through an advocacy programme and found that just 9% of perpetrators were strangers to the victim. In the same study 23% of women were assaulted by a partner or ex-partner.

**Myth**

VAWG is mainly about physical violence.

**Fact**

VAWG extends beyond physical violence. It is about the different ways that victims/survivors are controlled, intimidated, humiliated, or threatened. VAWG is about being denied human rights, which can include, but is not limited to physical violence.

**Myth**

COVID-19 has caused violence against women and girls.

**Fact**

VAWG is the result of the misuse of power and control and has long been considered a hidden pandemic. COVID-19 has shone a light on VAWG and had an impact on how people have experienced it.

## 3. NATIONAL CONTEXT

### Equally Safe Strategy

Safety of women and girls is a key area of focus for Scottish Government and is now integrated into wider government work on tackling violence against women and girls, and the attitudes that support this violence and abuse. This is not limited to physical abuse, it also includes sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space. The Equally Safe strategy provides a strategic framework for the delivery of the Scottish Government's Equality Outcome on tackling violence against women and girls.

The vision of Equally Safe is for 'A strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse - and the attitudes that help perpetuate it. The aim of Equally Safe is to work collaboratively with key partners in the public, private and third sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.' (Scottish Government, 2016).

The Inverclyde Violence Against Women and Girls Multi Agency Strategy 2023-2026 aims to implement the national strategy priorities at a local level tailored to the needs of Inverclyde. It will serve as a focal point giving clear direction to all partners in our pursuit of a strong and flourishing Inverclyde where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse.

## DELIVERING EQUALLY SAFE

### Police Scotland VAWG Strategy

The Police Scotland Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy<sup>5</sup> aims to drive change through the development of effective prevention strategies, the pursuit of perpetrators and the creation of safe spaces for everyone to live freely and safely.

The strategy is based on four key objectives: supporting women and girls, preventing harm, and securing justice, creating safe spaces, and building trust and confidence in the police. These objectives are designed to address the complex and interconnected nature of VAWG and provide a coordinated and holistic approach to addressing the issue.

The objective for supporting women and girls endeavours to collaborate with justice partners to provide holistic, trauma-informed services that acknowledge individuals' experiences and respect their perspectives.

The objective for preventing harm and securing justice prioritises using police powers to specifically target men who cause harm to women. This involves partnership efforts to prevent the occurrence, escalation, or continuation of men's violence against women and girls.

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<sup>5</sup> Police Scotland (2023) *Violence Against Women And Girls Strategy 2023*. Available at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/ofufdhff/violence-against-women-girls-strategy-v4.pdf>



The creating safe spaces objective aims to consolidate data and resources to confront and combat men's violent, threatening, and inappropriate behaviour, whether it takes place in public spaces or online.

Finally, the trust and confidence objective concentrates on implementing a strong response to sexism and misogyny, ensuring that individuals who exhibit discriminatory beliefs or have committed violent or harmful acts are removed from the police force.

The strategy also identifies emerging issues which may be of concern into the longer term as well as some which present more immediate challenges. These include cyber-flashing, up skirting, romance fraud, and the rise of contemporary men's rights movement.

## SafeLives Research 'The Whole Picture'

SafeLives conducted a research project called "The Whole Picture: Mapping the Intersection of Domestic Abuse and Mental Health" in 2018. The research aimed to understand the experiences of individuals who have experienced both domestic abuse and mental health issues, and to identify gaps in service provision and areas for improvement.

The research involved interviews with 106 survivors of domestic abuse and mental health issues, as well as professionals working in the field. The findings of the research highlighted the complexity of the intersection between domestic abuse and mental health, and the need for a holistic and coordinated response. Some of the key findings of the research include:

- Domestic abuse and mental health issues often co-occur, with survivors experiencing a range of mental health issues because of the abuse.
- Victims/survivors often face multiple barriers to accessing support for both domestic abuse and mental health, including stigma, lack of awareness, and lack of coordination between services.
- Many victims/survivors reported feeling re-traumatized by their experiences of seeking help for both domestic abuse and mental health, due to negative or unsupportive responses from professionals.
- There is a need for better training and awareness among professionals about the intersection of domestic abuse and mental health, and for more integrated and coordinated responses.

Based on these findings, SafeLives recommended several actions to improve the response to domestic abuse and mental health, including:

- More integrated and coordinated responses between domestic abuse and mental health services.
- Better training and awareness for professionals about the intersection of domestic abuse and mental health.
- Greater focus on victim/survivor-centred approaches, including trauma-informed care and support for victims/survivors to navigate complex systems of support.
- Addressing the root causes of domestic abuse, including inequality and gender-based violence.

Overall, the research highlights the need for a whole-picture approach to domestic abuse and mental health, which recognizes the complex interplay between these issues and the need for coordinated and victim/survivor-centred responses.

## White Ribbon Campaign

The White Ribbon Campaign in Scotland (WRS) supports Council areas to Work towards ending Violence Against Women (VAW) by engaging men and boys to take action and achieving White Ribbon status. WRS accepts the Scottish Government's gendered definition of VAW and is committed to playing its part in the delivery of the 'Equally Safe' strategy. The skills and experience of men in communities is used to educate and inspire other men to change attitudes in society, address gender inequalities and challenge violent and abusive perceptions of masculinity.

The award requires local areas to commit to developing projects, supported by WRS staff, resulting in them taking ownership and receiving recognition for their commitment to involving men in addressing VAW. The intention is that after a successful first year the involvement of men would become an integral, but not dominating, part of the local VAW delivery plan, thereby ensuring that the ongoing involvement of men becomes the legacy of achieving White Ribbon Status. This sends out a clear signal to the general public that if everyone plays their part in changing attitudes and behaviour there can be a real positive difference in levels of VAW. On successful conclusion of the project, councils are presented with an award which recognises the work carried out and confirms the attainment of White Ribbon Status.

## Trauma-Informed Practice

A trauma-informed practice toolkit has been developed as part of the National Trauma Training Programme in Scotland to support all sectors of the workforce, in planning and developing trauma informed services.

The voices of trauma victims/survivors, staff and leaders in the field are used throughout the document to define the steps organisations can take and the barriers that might get in their way. Case studies are drawn from settings across Scotland, namely general practice, mental health, residential care, police, criminal justice social work, addiction services and education.

Findings have been translated into a set of questions to guide organisations in their self-assessments. A set of resources is offered to provide practical help with implementation. Together, these comprise a toolkit for Scotland, aiding organisations on their journey towards becoming trauma-informed. The toolkit can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland>.

## Safe and Together Model

Safe and Together is a child-centred model, providing a framework for working with domestic abuse victims/survivors and intervening with perpetrators to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children. It does so by promoting partnership with the non-abusive parent and holding the abusive parent accountable for their abuse which is framed as a parenting choice.

The model includes providing training to social work staff and Family & Children teams to build confidence in identifying a perpetrator's pattern of behaviour, to partner' with the victim/survivor and to hold perpetrators to account.

## Routine Enquiry

In Scotland, VAWG routine enquiry is a recommended practice for healthcare providers. The Scottish Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Prevention Programme recommends that all healthcare providers should routinely enquire about experiences of violence and abuse as part of their standard care.

The VAWG Prevention Programme provides guidance and resources for healthcare providers to support the implementation of routine enquiry. This includes training materials, toolkits, and information on referral pathways to specialist support services.

The Scottish Government recommends that healthcare providers should adopt a trauma-informed approach to VAWG routine enquiry, ensuring that patients are asked about their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Providers should also ensure that patients are aware of their rights and options for support and that their confidentiality is respected.

Routine enquiry can help to identify cases of violence and abuse early, provide support to those who have experienced abuse, and help prevent further harm

## Caledonian System

The Caledonian System is an integrated approach to addressing domestic abuse. It combines a court-ordered programme for men, aimed at changing their behaviour, with support services for women and children. It is the ambition of The Scottish Government (National Strategy for Community Justice 2022) to expand the coverage of existing national programmes that support public protection (MF2C and Caledonian), that match the risk and need profile identified nationally. At the time of publication there has been no confirmation on the details of the expansion of the Caledonian System across Scotland.

## The Impact of Covid-19 and Women in a Justice Setting

There is evidence to suggest that COVID-19 has had a direct impact on women in the justice system across Scotland in a number of ways, including on:

- Women appearing at court
- Alternatives to remand and supported bail
- Throughcare support to women in prison
- Support for women on release from prison
- Women on community orders
- Where they exist, the impact on the provision of any dedicated women's support services
- Resourcing issues.

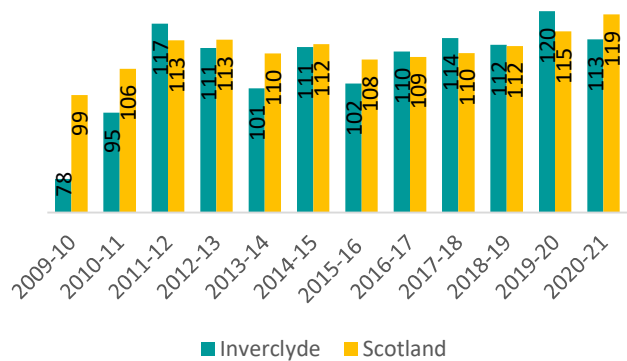
In relation to women appearing at court, there is a substantial backlog of cases still to be dealt with in the court system. The Scottish Government put in place the 'Recover, Renew and Transform' (RRT) programme of work. This aims to enable the justice system to both operate again at pre Covid-19 levels and prepare for future transformation. The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) estimates that the criminal courts backlog will return to pre-pandemic levels by March 2024 for summary sheriff cases. It estimates that high court cases will be brought back down to pre-pandemic levels by March 2025 and sheriff solemn cases by March 2026. The effect of this means that many cases of domestic abuse have been deferred for lengthy periods of time which can cause further concern and increase risks for victims.

# 4. THE LOCAL PICTURE

The difficulty of capturing an accurate statistical picture of VAWG is nationally recognised. This is for a range of reasons including the hidden nature and underreporting of VAWG issues, alongside inconsistent approaches to data collection across organisations. Our data picture is therefore only the tip of the iceberg

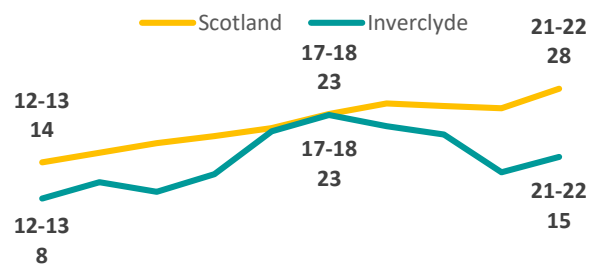
The rate of incidents of domestic abuse has increased 45% over the eleven-year period between 2009-10 and 2020-21. In 2020-21 the Inverclyde figure sits below the national average, but this is subject to annual fluctuation.

Rate of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by police per 10K population<sup>6</sup>

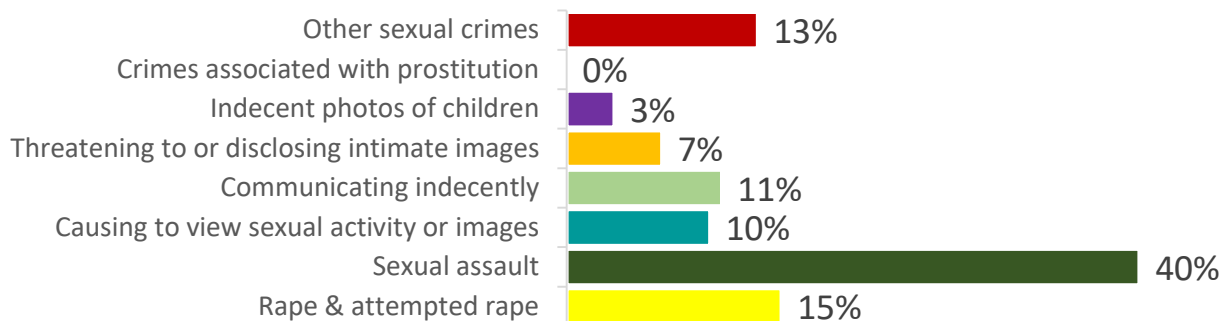


The rate of sexual crimes has almost doubled since 2012-13, although in Inverclyde it has decreased from a ten-year high rate in 2017-18

Sexual crime rate per 10K population<sup>6</sup>



Breakdown of crime type within sexual crimes grouping 2021-22 (Inverclyde)<sup>6</sup>

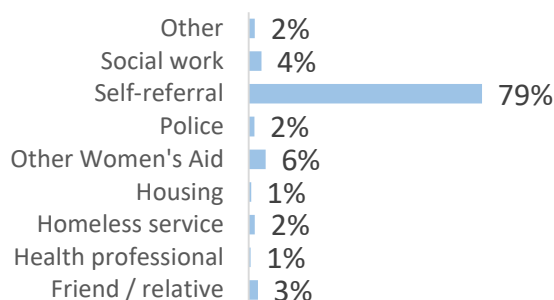


<sup>6</sup> Scottish Government (2022) *Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2021-22*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2021-2022/documents/>

Inverclyde Women’s Aid (IWA) SCIO is a charitable organisation established in 1985. They provide specialist domestic abuse services to women, children & young people who are experiencing, or have experienced domestic abuse, sexual assault, rape, and childhood sexual abuse. They offer support in relation to: Crisis, Advocacy, One-to-One, Housing, Follow-On, Outreach, Refuge and Children & Young Persons. IWA provides IDAAs (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates) that support victims/survivors who are referred to MARAC and are not being supported through the court process.

In 2020-2021 there were 235 women who accessed the IWA Women’s Service, and 1674 telephone support sessions were delivered over the year. There were 574 one to one support sessions delivered, the majority (79%) originating from self-referrals

*Breakdown of referral source for Inverclyde Women’s Aid 1:1 support session, 20-21*

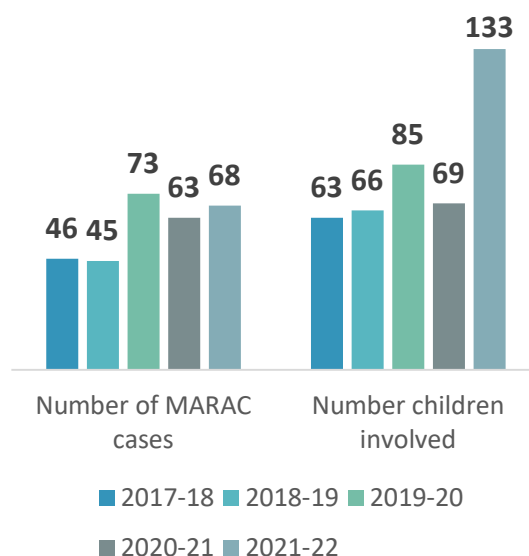


Inverclyde MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of Police Domestic Abuse Incident Units, NHS, housing providers, , ASSIST (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates, Court Advocacy, Advice and Support Service), Adult Protection, Social Work Children & Families/Criminal Justice, Alcohol & Drugs Services, Mental Health Team, (IDAAs) homelessness, Barnardo’s, SPS, Education, Scottish Fire & Rescue and the Royal Military Police.

In 2021-2022 there were 68 referrals to MARAC with a total of 133 children involved from the households.

The bulk of the referrals were received from Police Scotland and ASSIST that supports victims/survivors through the court process with additional referrals from other MARAC partners.

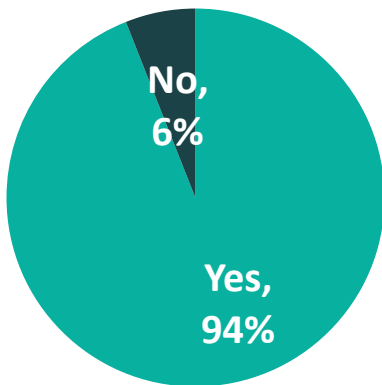
*Inverclyde MARAC numbers, 17/18 – 21-22*



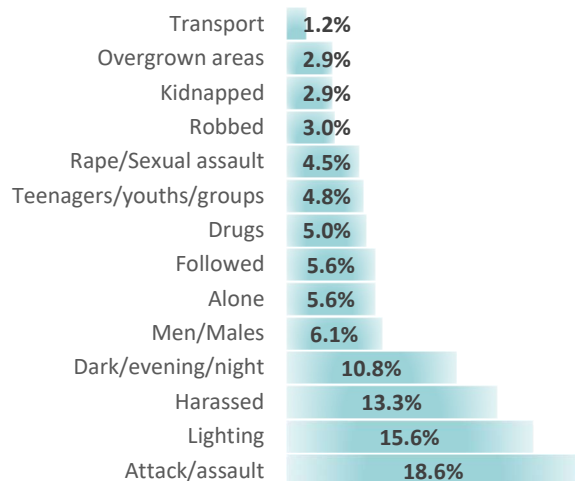
ASSIST offers specialist independent domestic abuse advocacy and support service focused on reducing the risk to and improving the safety of victims of domestic abuse. It aims to ensure that all victims are safe, informed and supported throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system. The service provides both an individual and institutional advocacy service, thereby ensuring that all victims of domestic abuse benefit whether they are an ASSIST client or not. ASSIST provides IDAAs (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates) that support victims/survivors who are referred to MARAC and are going through the court process.

In addition, we undertook a residents' survey to determine if women and girls perceive any safety impediment in undertaking activities in public spaces. From the 489 female responses, the following was highlighted:

**Have you ever been put off undertaking an activity in public due to safety concerns?**



**What personal safety concerns do you have about undertaking activity in public places?**



**What activities have you been put off due to safety concerns?**





# 5. APPROACH TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

## Our multi-agency approach:

A multiagency approach to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is crucial in providing a comprehensive response to this issue. It involves collaboration and coordination between various agencies such as the police, health and social care providers, housing services, education providers, and voluntary organisations. This approach recognises that no single agency can effectively address VAWG on its own and that a coordinated response is needed to ensure that victims/survivors receive the appropriate support and services. The aim of a multiagency approach is to improve information sharing, provide consistent responses, and ensure that vulnerable individuals receive the necessary support to keep them safe. By working together, agencies can also identify patterns of abuse and take action to prevent further harm.

The Inverclyde Violence Against Women and Girls Multi-Agency Partnership (MAP) convenes every two months and includes various local services. Through the VAWG MAP, regular training and briefing sessions are conducted to enhance the knowledge and consciousness of VAW among staff from Inverclyde services.

The diagram below highlights some of the agencies and services that participate in our multiagency response.



## 6. OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our vision and strategic priorities stem from the national Equally Safe strategy

### **Vision**

A strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it

### **Aim of Equally Safe**

To work collaboratively with key partners in the public, private and third sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. The priorities are:

- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls
- Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically
- Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people
- Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response

### **Strategic Approach**

Equally Safe is a strategic framework in Scotland aimed at preventing violence against women and girls. The framework sets out the scale of the problem, highlights the need for prevention, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration with partners. The framework is aligned with Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights and has a clear governance framework to support delivery. The framework is intended to help organizations and partners align their work towards the vision of reducing violence against women and girls, with action plans being developed to inform the implementation of the strategy.

There are several local strategies and plans with links to our VAWG agenda, including but not limited to:


- Community Safety Strategy
- Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan
- Community Learning & Development Strategy
- Antisocial Behaviour Strategy
- Local Development Plan
- HSCP Strategic Plan
- Local Police Plan



## Priority One: Communities in Inverclyde embrace equality and mutual respect and reject all forms of violence against women and girls

Community attitudes towards violence against women and girls can influence both perpetration and victimisation. Gender stereotypes also play a significant role, with discriminatory attitudes being more likely to tolerate violence and abuse against women and girls. The criminal justice system can shape community perceptions by imposing strong legal sanctions against violence and abuse. The media has a powerful influence on attitudes and norms, with sexualised violence and abuse in the media linked to increases in violence towards women and girls. However, cultural change cannot be achieved through media campaigns alone, and community development initiatives that reinforce messages at the local level can increase the effectiveness of such campaigns.

### Communities in Inverclyde embrace equality and mutual respect and reject all forms of violence against women and girls

Priority One	How will we achieve this outcome?	What difference will this make?
	<p>Promoting positive gender roles through campaign awareness raising prevention programmes and training/briefing sessions.</p> <p>Promoting healthy positive relationships through community engagement and promotion of cultural/appropriate language change with local services and the wider community</p> <p>Helping children and young people develop an understanding of safe, healthy, and positive relationships from an early age</p> <p>Helping individuals and communities to recognise and challenging violent and abusive behaviour</p>	<p>Communities come together to challenge harmful attitudes.</p> <p>Everyone understands their role in responding to and ending VAW.</p> <p>Increased community awareness about the prevalence and impact of violence against women and girls in communities. This can help reduce stigma and promote a culture of respect and zero tolerance of violence and abuse. .</p> <p>Stronger and more cohesive communities.</p> <p>Promoting a safer and more peaceful society.</p> <p>Healthier relationships between men and women, based on respect, equality, and mutual support</p>

## Spotlight on local practice

### **Mentors In Violence Prevention (MVP)**

A key aspect of preventing VAWG is working with young people in educational settings to raise awareness of healthy relationships. Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is ongoing in high schools, adopting a whole school approach to addressing Gender Based Violence and culture change. The MVP Bystander Approach frames men's abuse of women as a societal problem that's roots lie in the institutional structures and cultural practices of a male-dominated society. This approach is partly based on the premise that men's silence in the face of other men's abusive or violent behaviour gives "implicit consent" to such behaviour. Thus, the MVP approach emphasises changing social norms as the key to prevention.

- To change attitudes and behaviour around the violence agenda particularly in relation to gender-based violence and bullying prevention.
- to support and empower peers in schools, to speak up, challenge violence and change social norms.
- To support all High Schools in Inverclyde to develop and deliver MVP on an ongoing basis.

### **Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

There are clear links between child abuse, childhood neglect and domestic abuse and women's involvement in CSE. Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) contribute to the acceptance of objectification of women in society, also perpetuating Violence Against Women and Girls.

Inverclyde Council passed a resolution to licence SEVs in Inverclyde, with effect from 9 June 2022, in order that both performers and customers benefit from a regulated environment. The Council believes that introducing this regime promotes securing public safety and preventing crime and disorder. The Council's view is that if SEVs are not licensed in Inverclyde this activity would be unregulated and due to not being controlled could have a detrimental impact on public safety, local businesses and from those involved in these types of activities.

The Council is required to set the number of SEVs permitted in their area and for each relevant locality. The responses to a public consultation were considered and the Council have determined that the appropriate number of SEVs within the entirety of Inverclyde will be zero.

While there are no formal venues there is still activity locally which is a concern for vulnerable young women who are at risk in our communities and men who are exploiting them.

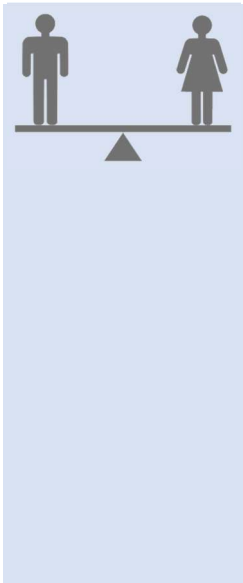
## Priority Two: Women and girls in Inverclyde thrive as equal citizens: culturally, economically, and politically

The relationship between gender equality and levels of violence against women and girls in society is that societies with greater gender equality tend to have lower levels of violence against women and girls. When women and girls are empowered and have more opportunities for economic, social, and political participation, they are less likely to be subjected to violence and abuse. However, simply achieving gender equality in terms of workforce participation is not enough, as attitudes and structures that underpin violence and abuse must also be addressed. Addressing unpaid care work, poverty, alcohol and drug misuse, and women's safety in public spaces are also important factors in reducing violence against women and girls.

Reducing poverty among women is necessary to address gender power imbalances. The Scottish government plans to improve women’s access to decision-making structures and processes, increase political representation, and tackle occupational segregation. They want women to have the same opportunities as men, including economic independence and equal opportunities in all sectors and levels of the labour market. This requires addressing barriers to work, eliminating the pay gap, and increasing the representation of women in senior positions. The government also aims to ensure women feel safe where they live and work and can go about their lives without fear.

### Women and girls in Inverclyde thrive as equal citizens: culturally, economically, and politically

Priority Two



How will we achieve this outcome?

Working towards development of communities where women and girls are safe, respected, and equal.

Working towards development of communities where women and men have equal access to power and resources.

What difference will this make?

Higher economic prosperity and reduced poverty

Better health outcomes for women and their children.

More diverse and inclusive perspectives, leading to better decision-making and a more equitable distribution of resources.

Greater political and social cohesion.

Stronger and more stable communities and workplaces

## Spotlight on local practice

### **Inverclyde Council Corporate Equalities**

The Inverclyde Council's Corporate Equalities Outcomes 2021-2025 plan outlines actions to prevent VAWG in the area, with a focus on: achieving Bronze accreditation for Equally Safe at Work; improving housing outcomes for women and children impacted by domestic abuse, led by COSLA; improving outcomes for women with learning disabilities who have experienced domestic abuse, led by NHS Scotland; and identifying safety issues for women and girls in the community. The Council's Violence Against Women and Girls Coordinator is involved in working groups to implement these priorities

### **Public space, activity, and women's safety survey**

In accordance with Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategic priority 2, which aims to ensure women and girls are equal citizens socially, culturally, economically, and politically, Inverclyde Council conducted a public survey in April 2021 to identify safety concerns of women and girls when participating in activities in public spaces.


The survey results indicate that the fear of crime and intimidation has discouraged a majority of female respondents from participating in social and leisure activities, especially in poorly lit, overgrown, or isolated areas, during dark evenings, and around male/youth groups. Safety concerns on public transportation were also identified.

Respondents, especially young people, expressed fears of kidnapping, stalking, and physical assault. Harassment and unwanted sexual attention from males were reported across all age groups, with younger females experiencing more harassment from adult males than from their peers. These findings underscore the ongoing need to address gender-based issues in society that disproportionately impact women, including public lighting, policing, and sexualised experiences.

## Priority Three: Interventions are early and effective, prevent violence and maximise the safety and wellbeing of women, children, and young people

Collaborative working between the third sector and public services through multi-agency activity has been productive in providing support to those affected by gender based violence. Women, children, and young people may have different support needs depending on the form(s) of violence experienced and individual circumstances. Early identification and intervention are essential to eliminating violence and its negative consequences in women and children’s lives. However, only a minority of those affected by violence report it to the police or seek help from specialist women’s services. Reporting remains an issue despite ongoing work by both women and children’s organizations and statutory agencies, including the police.

### Interventions are early and effective, prevent violence and maximise the safety and wellbeing of women, children, and young people

Priority Three	How will we achieve this outcome?	What difference will this make?
	<p>Ensuring that women, children, and young people have access to relevant, effective, and integrated services.</p> <p>Service providers competently identifying violence against women and girls and responding effectively to women, children and young people affected.</p>	<p>Violence and abuse is identified and support is offered.</p> <p>A joined-up approach is created with agencies working together.</p> <p>Victims/Survivor’s holistic needs are met and services are trauma informed</p> <p>Victims/Survivors’ voices are heard and shape responses.</p> <p>Responsive services are supporting those identified as high risk</p> <p>Victims/Survivors can access support through multiple routes.</p> <p>Processes are in place to ensure a positive initial response and referral to appropriate specialist support if needed.</p> <p>Professionals are well trained and feel competent and confident to respond.</p>

## Spotlight on local practice

### **Inverclyde Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)**

MARAC is a process established to respond to victims of Domestic Abuse at very high risk of Serious harm and domestic homicide and is recognised nationally as best practice for addressing this level of cases. The MARAC process allows strategic and voluntary agencies to respond in a consistent and structured way to manage high risk perpetrators of Domestic Abuse. It allows relevant agencies to share information and decide upon the most appropriate way to reduce or manage risks for cases discussed at MARAC. The model uses multi agency working very effectively as no one agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all have insights that are crucial to their safety of themselves and their children. The views of the victim are represented by an Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDAA) who speaks on their behalf.

Using the MARAC process and knowledge and expertise of different agencies, the identified risks will be either reduced or managed in the most appropriate way. The aims of the MARAC are to:

- ✓ Share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of victims
- ✓ Determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any individual or the general community
- ✓ Jointly implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk and reduces harm
- ✓ Reduce repeat victimisation
- ✓ Improve agency accountability
- ✓ Improve support for staff involved in high-risk domestic abuse cases
- ✓ Identify situations that indicate a need for Child Protection or Adult Support and Protection procedures to be initiated

### **Domestic Abuse Screening**


Domestic Abuse screening takes place between Social Work Children & Families and Police Scotland every fortnight. All domestic abuse related referrals are discussed, regardless of whether these are low level (verbal abuse), where the child(ren) were present or physical assaults witnessed by the child. This screening considers the need for a referral to the Children's Reporter if repeated patterns are emerging and non-engagement with Social Work Services is identified as an issue. The Children's Hearing system is a forum in which legal orders can be considered when a child has a close connection to or resides in the same household as the perpetrator of domestic abuse. This can look at any specific conditions required to be attached to the legal order such as no contact or no unsupervised contact between the child and the perpetrator and any other measures to ensure safeguards are in place.

## Priority Four: Men are challenged to desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response

The justice system plays a crucial role in preventing violence against women and girls through detection and prosecution of domestic abuse, sexual crimes, stalking and harassment and other forms of VAWG. However, barriers to prosecution still exist, and prosecution alone is not enough to eradicate the problem. Perpetrators must be supported to change their behaviour, and early identification and intervention is important.

The Scottish government is committed to preventing violence against women and girls and ensuring that victims receive support and justice. They aim to reduce delays in court processes, hold perpetrators accountable, and improve support for victims/survivors throughout the justice system. They also want to enforce laws that reflect the true nature of violence and abuse and consider using technology to better protect vulnerable witnesses. Additionally, they plan to research factors that influence jury decision making in criminal cases.

### Men are challenged to desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response

Priority Four	How will we achieve this outcome?	What difference will this make?
	<p>Ensuring justice responses are robust, swift, consistent, and coordinated</p> <p>Identifying men early who carry out violence against women and girls and the criminal justice system holding them to account</p> <p>Making relevant links between the experience of women, children, and young people in the criminal and civil system</p>	<p>Justice for victims/survivors.</p> <p>Perpetrators know that their behaviour will not be tolerated.</p> <p>Perpetrators will change their behaviour, reducing harm to others.</p> <p>Risks in the delivery of Restorative Justice are considered and understood</p> <p>Positive role models for other men and boys help promote a culture of respect and zero tolerance of violence and abuse and inspire other men and boys to become allies in the fight for gender equality.</p>



## Spotlight on local practice

### Up2U Programme

In response to the varied challenges relating to domestic abuse in Inverclyde, including childhood trauma and emotional deregulation, learned behaviour, attitudes that support gender differentials, poor conflict resolution and the use of power and control, Inverclyde HSCP made the decision in 2019/2020 to deliver Up2U: Creating Healthy Relationships programme; a cognitive behavioural programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse. The Up2U Programme was developed by Portsmouth City Council. The Up2U Programme is for people who use domestically abusive and unhealthy behaviours in their relationships. It seeks to reduce the incidents of domestic violence and prevent the cycle of abuse. It is an assessment-based programme and can run from a minimum of 6 to over 40 sessions (dependent on assessed need). The Up2U programme can be tailored to work with both males and females from the age of 16 and can be delivered to people in same sex relationships or couples where both partners use abusive behaviours. A total of 20 social work personnel were trained initially in the delivery of the programme: half from Criminal Justice and half from Children and Families Services. As a precursor to this training, 44 staff were trained in the most recent version of SARA (Spousal Assault Risk Assessment).

A further 8 staff have been trained in 2023 in Criminal Justice. Criminal Justice staff in Inverclyde use the SARA and Up2U Assessment Module to identify the level of intervention required to promote the reduction of risk and need for those involved in the Justice System. The programme is then tailored to each individual.

### New Attitudes Service

Inverclyde Council provides funding to Inverclyde Women's Aid New Attitudes Service to assist in the provision of a service for young people who are beginning to display signs of violent and abusive behaviour, to address the long-term prevention of the cycle of violence and its potential to blight the lives of the next generation.

The New Attitudes Project offers one-to-one support to young people who have been identified as starting to display anti-social, violent or abusive behaviour. The programme is open to young people between the ages of 11 and 16, or up to 18 for those still attending education. For the young person to be considered for the programme, they have to be in full-time education.

This programme is usually carried out on a weekly 1-1 basis within the school environment. The programme runs over 10-12 weeks, excluding any holiday or absences. It is only available to young people who live in the Inverclyde area.



## Early Action System Change Project

Inverclyde Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) is hosting an Early Action System Change Project “Women involved in the Justice System”. The Project is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Following local research into the rates of female offending in Inverclyde and the drivers for this. A literature review carried out by the project indicates that:

- Problematic relationships appear to be of significance to female offending with abusive relationships frequently associated to female offending.
- It appears that women involved in offending are more likely than men to be at risk of sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and mental health issues.
- There are links between women involved in offending and abusive relationships with victimisation recognised as a contributing factor to female offending. Self-reported statistics suggest that a significantly higher proportion of women than men in prison in Scotland have experienced domestic abuse.
- A Scottish review of evidence found links between persistent offending in women and their relationships with men who are also involved in offending. It also found that women are more likely than men to connect their reasons for trying to stop offending to their relationships with other people (e.g., children, friends not involved in offending, a job etc.).
- Evidence suggests that routine enquiry about domestic abuse should be carried out by criminal justice agencies as it increases the opportunities for women to make a disclosure and access support as well as reduce their chance of re-victimisation and potential related offending. It is essential that staff responses are not dismissive and involve clear referrals for support.
- Services should be trauma-informed with staff trained to understand the drivers of behaviour. Whilst criminal justice services should not aim to tackle the trauma, they should understand the impact trauma has on the behaviours they aim to address with service users.

The project has developed two tests of change, firstly, for the workforce across Inverclyde HSCP and two local third sector partners to become trauma trained and trauma responsive and secondly to strengthen referral pathways for women within the Justice System, or at risk of coming into the Justice System, into supportive community resources, i.e., volunteering, training, and employment. The project also works with a group of women with lived experience of the Justice System to re-design systems and services to produce better and more positive outcomes for women.

## 7. MEASURING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS

A yearly action plan will be produced to go alongside the VAWG Strategy 2023-2026. The actions will be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the year and an outcomes report will be produced to provide updates and progress and presented to the VAWG MAP at the start of the new financial year. At this point the action plan will be refreshed for the next year. The chair of the VAWG MAP will provide an update to the Community Safety Strategy Group on a quarterly basis to update on current work. In addition, the VAWG Coordinator produces an update report to the Council's Chief Officers Group on a two monthly basis.

### **Publication**

Please contact us if you would like an alternative format of this document.

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