



Close the Gap briefing for Scottish Government debate Hear Me Too: 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls

November 2018

16 days of activism

The 25th of November marks the first day of the 16 Days of Activism for the elimination of violence against women and girls, an international campaign started in 1991 by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership. The campaign aims to raise awareness about violence against women as an enduring social problem that undermines communities and workplaces.

This year the campaign aims to harness the momentum of #MeToo through its theme 'End gender-based violence in the world of work.' By targeting the workplace and areas in which violence against women is perpetuated, the campaign aims to push for systemic change and create greater accountability.

Equally Safe at Work

Close the Gap has developed an innovative and world leading employer accreditation programme, [Equally Safe at Work](#), to pilot with seven local councils from January to December 2019. Equally Safe at Work supports implementation of Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy for eradicating violence against women and girls, which crucially recognises that addressing women's labour inequality is a necessary step towards ending violence against women and girls.

The Equally Safe at Work pilot will support employers to improve their employment practice to address the barriers that women face at work. It will also enable employers to better support employees who have experience gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, and work towards creating an inclusive workplace culture that prevents violence against women.

Violence against women is a workplace issue

Evidence shows that three quarters of women experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work, and perpetrators of domestic abuse and stalking often use workplace resources such as phones and emails to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partner, acquaintance or strangers¹. Perpetrator tactics such as sabotage, stalking and harassment at work affect women's performance at work, their levels of absenteeism and job retention.

Violence against women is a systematic and widespread human rights issue which is perpetrated at epidemic levels. It affects all aspects of women's lives, and the workplace is no different. The prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace is now a high-profile issue with increasing numbers of women coming forward. Over 70% of women reported having experienced or witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace in Scotland, with this figure rising to two thirds of women aged 18-24². Experiences range from unwelcome sexual comments to serious sexual assaults³.

The #MeToo movement has highlighted the magnitude of sexual harassment and that women face significant barriers in coming forward about their experience. Most women (80%) who experience sexual harassment in the workplace will never report it due to fear of being blamed, not being believed or losing their job. Some women have stated that they have not come forward because they feel violence against women is so widespread and commonplace at work that there is no point in trying to challenge it⁴. While other women have expressed their frustration with reporting procedures.

In order to end violence against women in the workplace, women's labour market inequality must be tackled. Violence against women is a cause and consequence of gender inequality and without addressing occupational segregation, toxic male-oriented workplace culture, undervaluation of women's work, lack of quality part-time and flexible roles, along with harmful

¹ CIPD (2013) *Managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse* available at https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/managing-and-supporting-employees-experiencing-domestic-abuse_2013_tcm18-10528.pdf

² Zero Tolerance (2017) *Sexism is a waste....': the need to tackle violence and misogyny in Scotland's workplaces* available at <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Sexism-is-a-waste---the-need-to-tackle-violence-and-misogyny-in-Scottish-workplaces-15.pdf>

³ Women and Equalities Committee (2018) *Sexual Harassment in the workplace* available at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/725/72502.htm>

⁴ Trade Union Congress (2016) *Still just a bit of banter? Sexual Harassment in the workplace in 2016* available at <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/SexualHarassmentreport2016.pdf>

attitude and stereotypes, progress cannot be made on preventing violence against women in or outwith the workplace.