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# Building an inclusive Scotland: Ending violence against all women and girls

All people in Scotland should be equal and treated with dignity and respect. **Everyone deserves to live free from violence** and discrimination.

But women and girls experience epidemic levels of men's violence due to pervasive gender inequality. Disabled women experience this disproportionately and are often missing from prevention work and excluded from support and justice. Our **current policies and practice do not adequately address the intersection of gender-based violence and disability**, leaving disabled women and girls particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

## Men's violence against disabled women

Zero Tolerance and Inclusion Scotland conducted participatory research with disabled women to better understand their experience of men's violence and inform our actions to end it. Key findings from the research include:

- Disabled women face unique forms of violence exploiting both gender inequality and ableism. Their experiences are distinct from but overlap with non-disabled women.
- The root causes of men's violence against disabled women and girls are gender inequality and discrimination against disabled people. We must end both to eliminate violence against disabled women and girls.
- Societal structures and attitudes create vulnerabilities for disabled women, which perpetrators then exploit to control, coerce, and harm disabled women.
- Perpetrators often use impairment-specific tactics to abuse disabled women, such as withholding medication or assistive devices.
- Disabled women may face increased risk due to forced proximity to potential abusers, including family members, partners, or carers they rely on for support.
- Ableist narratives, such as viewing disabled women as incapable mothers or asexual, contribute to their vulnerability and societal disbelief when they report abuse.



## Include disabled women

We envision a Scotland where every woman and girl is equal and free from violence and discrimination. To achieve this vision, we must **include disabled women and consider their needs when we work to prevent men's violence against women and girls.**

We must take these concrete steps:

- **Ensure that the voices and needs of disabled women are involved in all policy making.** This includes the Equally Safe Strategy, the upcoming Disability Equality Strategy, Disability Commissioner Bill, and the Human Rights Bill. By consistently consulting with disabled women and including their perspectives, we can ensure that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) is fully realised in Scots Law.
- **Deliver relevant and inclusive relationships and sex education to all children and young people, including disabled girls.** This education will empower them with knowledge and reduce their vulnerability to abuse.
- **Invest in research to understand the specific experiences and needs of disabled survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG).** This will allow us to do more effective prevention work and end men's violence for all women and girls.

By taking these actions, we can build a Scotland where the rights and safety of all women and girls are upheld. This vision is not just a possibility—it is a necessity, and together, we can make it a reality.

Zero Tolerance is supported by



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