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Equality and Modern Positive Masculinity Debate Briefing

**To create a Scotland free from men's violence against women,
discussions of positive masculinity must focus on gender equality.**

Stereotypical masculinity harms men, women, and children, and contributes to men's violence against women and girls.

Traits commonly associated with masculinity constrain men and boys. The pressure to be strong, competitive, independent, and stoic can make it difficult for men and boys to express their emotions and form intimate interpersonal relationships [1]. Anger becomes the sole emotional release for many men [1].

Society perceives violence as a normal part of masculinity [1]. Men who commit assault, rape, and murder report pathological adherence to the aspects of masculinity which emphasise power and dominance over others [1]. Overpowering a woman is seen as a way to gain status or respect [1]. This stereotypical form of masculinity contributes to men's violence against women and girls.

- In Scotland 14,834 sexual crimes were recorded in the year ending June 2023 [2].
- Police Scotland recorded 64,807 incidents of domestic abuse in 2021-22. Four in five incidents had a female victim-survivor and a male perpetrator [3].
- Men's violence against women and girls (VAWG) causes long term physical and mental health problems, reduced participation in the workforce, substance abuse, and death [4].

We urgently need to promote positive masculinity which views women with compassion and respect amongst men and boys in Scotland.

The solution: gender equality

It is crucial to embed gender equality in systems and cultures, and promote positive masculinities, in order to achieve a Scotland free from men's violence.



What works to embed positive masculinity?

Interventions must be gender transformative, critically examining restrictive gender norms, inequalities, and their link to violence [5]. They must challenge assumptions about male authority, and promote values like respect, compassion, and responsibility [6].

We need to change cultures [7]. This requires whole-nation approaches, and a focus on adult men, not just boys. All work on positive masculinity must align with Equally Safe.

Zero Tolerance recommends creating a coherent approach to embed structural, cultural, attitudinal, and behavioural change in collaboration with gender experts.

Recommendations from the evidence base include:

- Piloting and evaluating gender-transformative interventions in diverse settings.
- Creating safe spaces for men to discuss their feelings and form relationships.
- Training men practitioners to role model positive masculinity, showcasing their own transformations and providing guidance for change.
- Continuing to highlight the harm stereotypical masculinity causes to everyone.

Forthcoming evidence from Zero Tolerance

In 2024, Zero Tolerance will publish key recommendations to prevent radicalisation in young men. 'Many Good Men,' a research report based on participatory work by Civic Digits, explores young people's experiences of online extreme misogyny and shows how commonplace such views are among boys in Scotland.

Zero Tolerance are also working in partnership with White Ribbon and Equally Ours to identify the best way to talk to men and boys about VAWG. This strategic communication project will give us insight on the best way to engage men in the fight for gender equality.

Brought to you by Zero Tolerance, Scotland's primary prevention experts, working to end men's violence against women and girls by tackling the root cause: gender inequality.



References

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