

Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

# Annual Report

2023-2024



Equally Safe  
Edinburgh  
Committee

# EQUALLY SAFE EDINBURGH COMMITTEE

## PARTNERS:



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH



edinburgh rape crisis centre  
supporting survivors of sexual violence



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## Chair's Foreword

As I approach two years as chair of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee I am pleased to present our annual report for the 2023-2024 period.

I would like to start by thanking the members of the committee for their continued contributions, both collectively and individually, as they endeavour to improve the quality of life and tackle inequalities for women and girls in our city. Despite the challenges associated with supporting and responding to the needs of people who, in many cases, have endured significant trauma associated with serious violence and abuse, our partners have continued to deliver a huge contribution to our committee and various subgroups.

This includes our Women's' Safety In Public Places (WSPP) Community Improvement Partnership, which this year has seen two runs of the [#RespectHerSpace](#) campaign across television, social media and on posters across the city, including in licensed premises. The campaign, encouraging men to think about how their behaviour may impact on women and girls, has been very well received with a high volume of internet hits, positive reporting in the media and interest from other local authorities across Scotland in adopting the campaign slogan.

The WSPP CIP has also started to work alongside planning, design and culture across our city to promote the consideration of gender equality at every stage and in the provision of facilities, spaces, services and infrastructure. This includes working in support of the Feminist City Motion agreed by the [Council on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023](#).

A significant benchmark in the last year was the refreshed [Equally Safe strategy](#), launched by the Scottish Government and COSLA in Edinburgh in December 2023. Building on the themes of the previous strategy, a public health approach is promoted which aims to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) before it occurs. There is an enhanced focus on children and young people within the strategy and acknowledgement of the harm that can be caused within the digital world. The impact of VAWG on men and boys is also acknowledged, with gender norms recognised as placing expectations on men and boys to meet unhealthy and impossible standards of masculinity. Amongst other adverse effects on men and boys (such as drug abuse, suicide rates and suffering random acts of violence) this in turn contributes to them developing unhealthy attitudes towards women and girls and a culture of entitlement, providing fertile ground for violence against women and girls to continue.

As we enter the 2024/25 period and hard work continues, July will see me having served as chair of our committee for two years. At this time, I will stand down as chair to allow a comprehensive handover and continuity as I move on to another role in Police Scotland. It has been an absolute pleasure to work alongside the dedicated partners who make up our committee, and the other agencies who have supported us over the last two years and I am hugely grateful for all the support and guidance that has been available to me.

Adam Brown  
Detective Chief Inspector  
Public Protection Unit  
"E" Division – City of Edinburgh

## Introduction

### The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Structure

The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee (ESEC) is a partnership between organisations and services which work together to implement the [Equally Safe Strategy](#) across Edinburgh. We make sure services are always learning about how best to support and protect women and girls from abuse, violence and inequality. We provide public information on how to uphold the rights of women and girls. The work of ESEC is strategic, and we have a new five-year improvement plan which we will implement between 2023-2028. We have a dedicated webpage within the City of Edinburgh Council's website which can be found at [this link](#).

ESEC members include senior staff from the City of Edinburgh Council, Police Scotland, Fearless Edinburgh, NHS Lothian and the following organisations:

- [Edinburgh Rape Crisis](#)
- [Edinburgh Women's Aid](#)
- [Shakti Women's Aid](#)
- [Children 1<sup>st</sup>](#)
- [Sacro](#)
- [Saheliya](#)
- [Victim Support Scotland](#)
- [Feniks](#)
- [Beira's Place](#)
- [The Multicultural Family Base](#)
- [Sikh Sanjog](#)
- [Foursquare](#)

The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee reports to the Chief Officers' Group on a Quarterly and annual basis. Outside of the City of Edinburgh, the committee also reports nationally to the Improvement Service and COSLA every year on the Equally Safe Standards.

### The Vision and Aim of Equally Safe:

Equally Safe envisions "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, abuse and exploitation – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it". Its aim 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".

### Equally Safe Priorities and Definitions of Violence Against Women and Girls:

The Equally Safe Strategy has four clear priorities for Scotland:

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

Equally Safe uses 'Violence Against Women and Girls' (VAWG) to describe "violent and abusive behaviour directed at women and girls because they are women and girls. It is behaviour which is carried out

*predominantly by men. It is an abuse of power and stems from systemic, deep-rooted women's inequality. VAWG limits women's and girls' freedom and potential and is a fundamental violation of human rights"* (p.10)

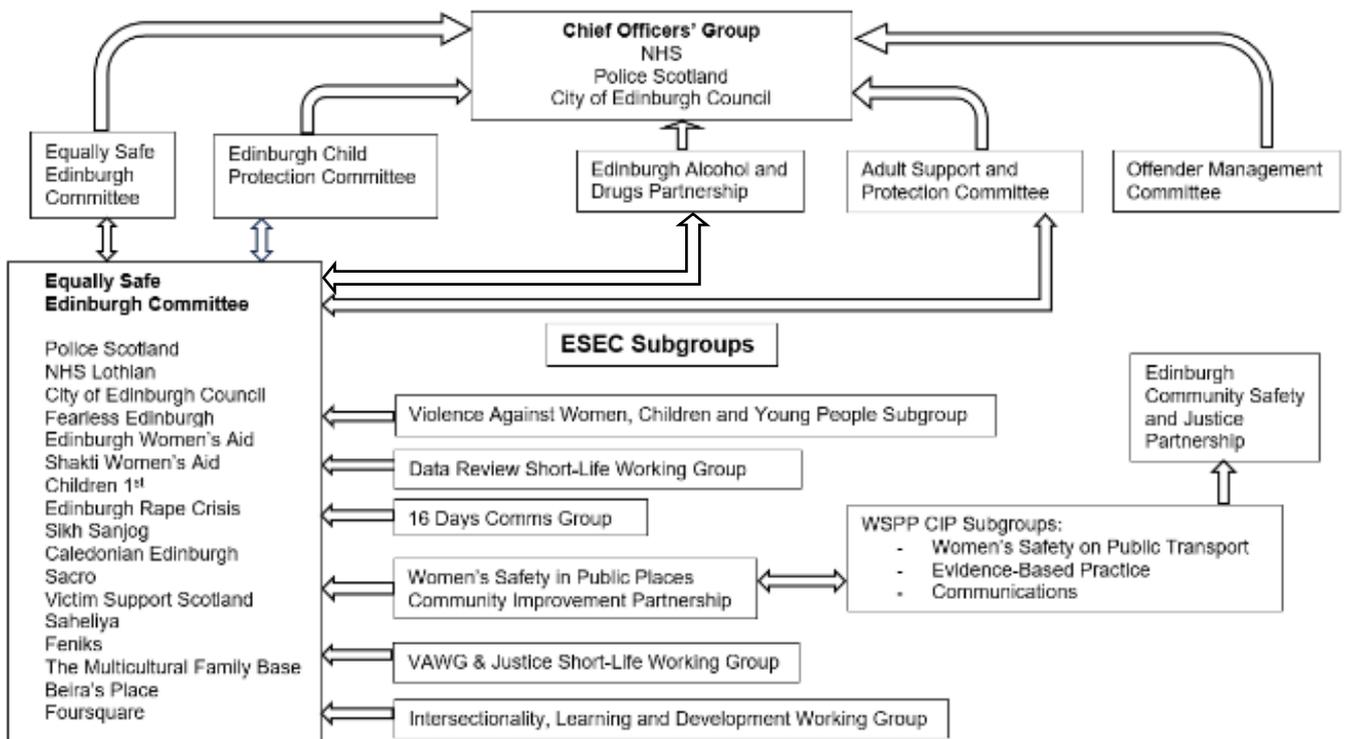
Equally Safe further explains and disambiguates the terms VAWG and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). GBV is defined as "any form of violence used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders"(p.10). It follows that VAWG is a subset of GBV specifically referring to women and girls due to their unequal status in society.

In defining Violence Against Women and Girls, Equally Safe includes the actual and threat of:

- Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial abuse occurring in the family, within the general community and in institutions in both physical and digital spaces and places
- Domestic abuse/coercive controlling behaviours, stalking, rape, incest, sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE), including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography
- Human trafficking, including for the purposes of domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, which may include gangs and organised crime networks
- Child abuse occurring within family settings, including domestic abuse, and sexual abuse by male family members including siblings
- Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation including the production and sharing of indecent images of children
- Honour-based abuse including forced marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), dowry abuse and 'honour-based' coercive control and killings.

### Governance Arrangements

The ESEC is one of three inter-agency public protection committees reporting directly to the Chief Officers' Group. Reports include activities undertaken by subgroups and short life working groups under the direct oversight of ESEC.



- To contribute to the development of joint public protection workstreams, campaigns and strategies, promoting the work of agencies working to eradicate violence against women and providing advice and information on access to services
- To develop, implement and review regularly a Public Protection learning and development strategy together with the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee and the Edinburgh Adult Support and Protection Committee
- To share best practice and learning with other violence against women inter-agency groups and partnerships and to manage any cross-boundary issues through participation in the National Violence Against Women Network; and
- To promote continuous improvement of work in respect of violence against women, through the:
  - Development, publication and dissemination of policies, procedures and protocols (within and across agencies)
  - Development of management information systems
  - Development, implementation and review of inter-agency quality assurance mechanisms (including preparation for integrated inspections); and the
  - Promotion of good practice.

## ESEC Key Activities in 2022-2023

In 2022-2023, the ESEC took significant steps towards implementing Equally Safe in Edinburgh, and those are outlined below:

### Domestic Abuse Local Action Group (DALAG)

The Domestic Abuse Local Action Group (DALAG) is an innovative approach exclusive to Edinburgh aimed at preventing the potential escalation of domestic abuse in families with children who are not known to, or accessing, services. It aims to provide support to families where domestic abuse is suspected to address unmet needs that can support safeguarding and increase resilience.



The year 2023-2024 saw DALAG complete its first year of operation as well as facing considerable challenges. Following its first formal 12 months, statistical information was collated by the

DALAG to explore opportunities for further development. During discussions around the DALAG's progress, it became apparent that there were considerable challenges around resourcing business support, which meant there was a real risk that the DALAG might have had to cease operations in 2024.

The DALAG Oversight Group reacted swiftly by escalating this issue within the Education, Justice and Children's Services Directorate, as well as the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership. An application was submitted to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, which was unfortunately unsuccessful. However, as of June 2024, it was decided that business support will be provided by the Support to Children and Young People (SCYP) Central Services Team, with interim support between April – Jun 2024 continuing as per current arrangements. Having overcome this obstacle, the DALAG is now able to continue operating as normal and to proceed with a review of its operations to maximise its effectiveness in protecting families with children from escalation of domestic abuse.

### Local VAWG Policy revisions

Last year, the ESEC reviewed the [Forced Marriage Policy](#) and the [Edinburgh Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy](#). Both policies were updated in line with Equally Safe, with input from experts within the Council, Police Scotland and the third sector. The Forced Marriage Policy was approved by the [Policy and Sustainability Committee on 28 May 2024](#), with an [addendum](#) requesting that a more concise version of the policy (including information on how to apply for a Forced Marriage Protection Order) be translated into multiple languages with a priority on South Asian languages. The [Integrated Impact Assessment \(IIA\) for the Revision of the Forced Marriage Policy](#) can be found on the City of Edinburgh Council website.

During the IIA process for the Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy, it was identified that an update was required to ensure that Education and Children’s Services were more prominently and clearly mentioned. The Policy is currently being reviewed to include this additional information and it will be presented to a subsequent meeting of the Policy and Sustainability Committee.

### Influencing local and national policy

In 2023-2024, the ESEC in partnership with the Council’s Justice Services participated in a key national consultation by the Scottish Parliament on the [Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#). The Bill aims to introduce changes in law to improve the experience of victims and witnesses in the justice system, to improve fairness, clarity and transparency to the process by which decisions are made on criminal cases.

The Bill proposed:

- i. The creation of a Victims and Witnesses Commissioner for Scotland, independent of the Scottish Government and Criminal Justice agencies to monitor compliance with the standards of service for victims and witnesses and to promote trauma-informed approaches.
- ii. Systems by which the trauma of victims and witnesses in the justice system can be reduced.
- iii. The application of special measures in civil cases for vulnerable victims and witnesses, including special measures prohibiting the litigant from conducting their own case as opposed to being represented by a solicitor
- iv. The removal of the ‘non proven’ verdict from all criminal cases
- v. Changes to jury sizes (from 15 to 12)
- vi. The introduction of a new specialist Sexual Offences Court
- vii. Lifelong anonymity for victims of a wide range of sexual and related offences, such as human trafficking
- viii. Independent legal representation for complainers in sexual offence cases
- ix. The piloting of rape trials by a single judge without a jury



The ESEC, together with the Council’s Justice Services, provided a lengthy response to the consultation which can be found on the [Scottish Parliament website](#).

In terms of local policy, the ESEC participated in the Regulatory Committee’s Evidence Session on the licensing of Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs). The ESEC’s position remains in line with Equally Safe’s definition of sexual entertainment as a form of Violence Against Women and Girls. The evidence provided included both lived experience accounts of violence within the sex industry, as well as academic research and data gathered through service providers on the ESEC.

During the [Regulatory Committee’s meeting on 5 February 2024](#), the decision was made for 3 licenses to be granted to existing SEVs in Edinburgh, to be renewed annually. The Council has subsequently published the [Standard Conditions on the Licensing and Regulation of Sexual Entertainment Venues \(SEVs\)](#) as well as guidance and information on [Sexual Entertainment Venues \(SEVs\) – License and permit applications](#).

The ESEC also contributed to the Council’s alcohol overprovision consultation. The ESEC lead officer has been selected to attend the [Licensing Forum](#) on behalf of Edinburgh’s public protection committees. The response to the consultation proposed that no further areas in Edinburgh should be allowed to become areas of alcohol overprovision (aside from those already in existence). Arguments supporting this view include:

- The relationship between alcohol and violence against women and girls – this is not a causal relationship as alcohol does not cause VAWG but exacerbates VAWG where this is present or likely to occur;
- Alcohol overprovision acting as an enabler or encouraging unhealthy levels of alcohol consumption, particularly in children and young people, which can have serious negative effects in young people’s health and wellbeing; and
- Alcohol overprovision having a particularly detrimental effect in adults who misuse alcohol or whose use of alcohol might render them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation or that can lead to poor health outcomes.

### ESEC Improvement Plan

Following in Improvement Day facilitated by the Improvement Service and three shorter Improvement Sessions with ESEC partners, the ESEC has now finalised its 5-year Improvement Plan 2023-2028.

The ESEC Improvement Plan is aligned with the aim, mission and priorities of the National Equally Safe Strategy. It is ambitious in its scope and proposes work on preventing violence against women, children and young people; creating resources to promote the application of a gendered understanding across all services and workstream; implementing a more intersectional approach to all work preventing and addressing VAWG; and implementing a Gender- and Trauma-Informed and Responsive Approach (TIRA) across services.



A copy of the ESEC Improvement Plan is available upon request.

### ESEC Subgroups

Until April 2023, the ESEC operated three subgroups with specific remits:

- **The Commercial Sexual Exploitation Short-Life Working Group (CSE SLWG):** The CSE SLWG was constituted to deliver two very specific aims: to finalise a Position Statement on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and to compile a CSE Briefing Paper outlining the rationale behind the CSE Position Statement. The [Improvement Service](#) and [COSLA](#) have included an Equally Safe Quality Standard that “The local authority has a clear position statement in place that recognises commercial sexual exploitation (including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking) as a form of violence against women and girls and notes its commitment to promoting the safety and wellbeing of women involved in selling or exchanging sex.” The proposed position statement for Edinburgh has

been compiled and approved by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee, the Child Protection Committee, the Adult Protection Committee and it is currently pending the approval of the Edinburgh Alcohol and Drugs Partnership before it is presented to the Chief Officers' Group and the [Policy and Sustainability Committee](#) for final sign-off and endorsement. With its tasks now completed, the CSE SLWG has been formally disbanded, but with partners agreeing to reconvene should their expertise be required in future on any matters concerning CSE in Edinburgh.

- **The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership (WSSP CIP): 2023 – 2024** has been a very busy and active year for the WSSP CIP. In partnership with the 16 Days Comms Group, the WSSP CIP released Edinburgh's first ever women's safety in public places campaign on 20 November 2023. The campaign ran for 3 weeks from 20 November to 10 December, coinciding with the international campaign '16 Days of Action on Gender-Based Violence'. It was funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, Police Scotland, NHS Lothian, The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier University. A selection of campaign materials can be seen on the next page (p.11).



Figure 1: The list of the campaign founders, also displayed on the Council's [website](#)

During the 16 Days 2023, the campaign ran on television, on Spotify, on social media, while it was also displayed on posters and billboards throughout the city. Posters and leaflets were also distributed to all partners on the WSSP CIP together with a partner toolkit created by the Council's Communications Team. The campaign also has a [dedicated website](#) which continues to display the short video created to accompany all printed materials.

#RespectHerSpace was launched on 20 November at an event organised in the City Chambers. The launch was attended by over 85 guests, while speakers included Edinburgh City Councillors and representatives from the Scottish Government, [COSLA](#), [Edinburgh Napier University](#), [Public Health Scotland](#) and [Zero Tolerance](#).

### Campaign Evaluation

The Campaign had considerable impact both locally and nationally. It was covered by the [Edinburgh Evening News](#), The Edinburgh Reporter and STV news at 6.

**Opinion**  
**Making sure women don't face worry and hassle isn't much to ask - Susan Dalgety**

Congratulations to civic Edinburgh. The #RespectHerSpace campaign, launched last week at the City Chambers is an excellent idea

By Susan Dalgety  
 PUBLISHED 21st Nov 2023, 07:00 GMT



### Edinburgh women's safety: Campaign urges men to change behaviour as 80 per cent of women experience harassment

Edinburgh council, police, NHS and universities back call for men to make 'small changes' in behaviour to help women and girls feel safer

By Ian Swanson  
 Published 21st Nov 2023, 12:36 GMT  
 Updated 21st Nov 2023, 12:36 GMT



Four out of five women say they have experienced harassment, abuse, or violence while in a public space in [Edinburgh](#).

# #RespectHerSpace



**SO SHE CAN WALK WITHOUT WORRY**

- Don't walk directly behind her, cross the street
- Call up a pal then she knows you're busy
- Take the hint if she doesn't want to talk

#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace



**SO SHE HAS FUN WITHOUT FEAR**

- Don't get too close, give her space
- Take the hint if she doesn't want to talk

#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace



**SO SHE'S ACTIVE WITHOUT ALARM**

- Don't get too close, give her space
- Take the hint if she doesn't want to talk

#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace



**SO SHE GETS HOME WITHOUT HASSLE**

- Don't get too close, give her space
- Take the hint if she doesn't want to talk

#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace



As many as **80%** of women have experienced some form of harassment in public spaces in Edinburgh



**SO SHE HAS FUN WITHOUT FEAR**



Take the hint if she doesn't want to talk



**LET'S ALL MAKE WOMEN FEEL SAFER**

**WEE CHANGES**

**LET'S ALL MAKE WOMEN FEEL SAFER**

As many as 80% of women and girls have experienced some form of harassment in public spaces in Edinburgh.

- Leave women alone if they don't want to talk - take the hint.
- If you're using public transport, don't sit too close or try to chat.
- If walking, cross the road so you're not right behind her.
- Don't make physical contact.

#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace

**SHE'LL FEEL RELIEVED TOO**

**LET'S ALL MAKE WOMEN FEEL SAFER**

As many as 80% of women and girls have experienced some form of harassment in public spaces in Edinburgh.

- Leave women alone if they don't want to talk - take the hint.
- If you're using public transport, don't sit too close or try to chat.
- If walking, cross the road so you're not right behind her.
- Don't make physical contact.

#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace

**HOLD IT RIGHT THERE**

**LET'S ALL MAKE WOMEN FEEL SAFER**

As many as 80% of women and girls have experienced some form of harassment in public spaces in Edinburgh.

- Leave women alone if they don't want to talk - take the hint.
- If you're using public transport, don't sit too close or try to chat.
- If walking, cross the road so you're not right behind her.
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#RespectHerSpace

edinburgh.gov.uk/RespectHerSpace

Top to bottom, first three rows: The hashtag used for the campaign from November 2023; posters and leaflets with the campaign's slogan; and the campaign on bus stops and billboards.

Bottom two rows: materials used for the campaign for 3 weeks from International Women's Day (8 March) 2024: Animated GIFs circulated over social media. Bottom row: posters that were displayed in men's restrooms in 80 hospitality venues across the city centre.

In addition to press coverage, the campaign delivered:

- 860,000 views of advertisements on bus stops and billboards, with free advertising supported by JC Decaux and Jack Arts
- Over 1.1 million impressions of paid digital activity
- Almost 13,000 clicks to the [website](#)
- 28,000 full campaign video views
- 240,000 impressions delivered through organic digital
- 76,000 views of the 4 videos on the [Council's YouTube channel](#)
- 15,858 views of the [#RespectHerSpace webpages](#)
- Over 400,000 impressions and reach by the advert on Spotify, STV East, STV Player, SKY Adsmart and Video on Demand.
- The partner toolkit with print and digital assets was shared with 15 internal services and external partners, and finally
- 940 postcards and 1,500 posters were distributed to partners, libraries and community centres.

Following the end of the campaign, the evaluation and materials were shared with partners in the [Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership](#), Scottish Government, [Transport Scotland](#), the [Executive Office of Northern Ireland](#) and the [Strategic Investment Board of Northern Ireland](#).

The second phase of the campaign (8-31 March 2024) was carried out at a much smaller scale and it involved social media messages around small modifications we can all make to our behaviour to help women and girls feel safer in public spaces. The second phase also involved posters displayed in men's restrooms in 80 hospitality venues across the city centre with messages around how men specifically can help women and girls feel safer (for the material used in phase 2 of the campaign, please see page 11).

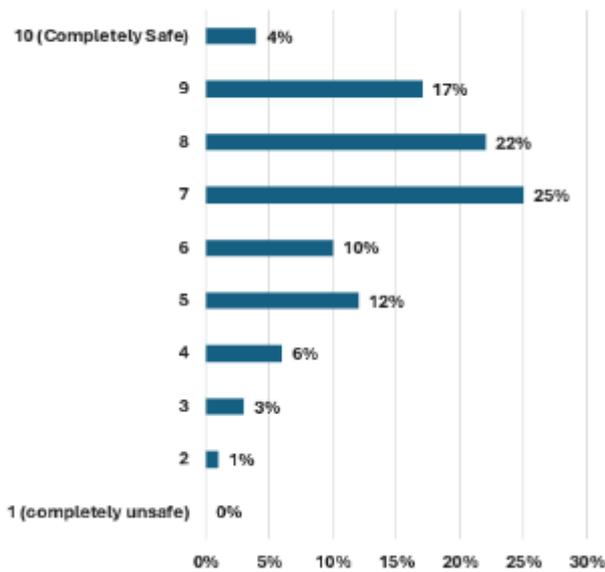
Phase two of the campaign was also publicised through an opinion piece in the Edinburgh Evening News. It further yielded:

- 103,634 impressions on targeted Facebook and Instagram advertising
- 1,908 click throughs to the website
- 27,096 reach and 41 engagements
- 1,619 views of the website
- 42,544 impressions, 22 click throughs and 1,093 engagements with the Council's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Another important activity undertaken by the WSPP CIP involved a resident survey exploring whether women and girls in Edinburgh would be interested in or inclined to adopt a personal safety app. This survey intended to explore whether women and girls would consider this option as an additional tool for enhancing their sense of personal safety when in the public realm, and not to insinuate that it is women's and girls' responsibility to keep themselves safe from harassment, violence or abuse while in public places.

The survey was open between 13 November – 3 December 2023 and it gathered 121 responses. 81% of respondents were women, 15% were men, and 4% did not state their gender.

### How safe do you currently feel moving about Edinburgh on your own?



The majority of respondents (68%) stated that they felt moderately to very safe when out and about in Edinburgh on their own (score 7/10 and above). Of those already using a personal safety app, 24% did so due to their work circumstances (commuting or working antisocial hours), while 18% had lived experience of abuse, harassment or violence in Edinburgh.

When asked what factors might influence their decision to start using a personal safety app, 58% responded 'endorsement by Police Scotland'; 50% responded 'endorsement by the City of Edinburgh Council'; while 17% stated that neither would influence their decision. 10% of respondents stated that endorsement

would make them less likely to start using a personal safety app, or they would not use a personal safety app for other reasons. Many were unaware that it is possible to have a personal safety app on a smartphone, while some reported using software and apps already within their devices to act as personal safety measures.

Residents were then given the opportunity to state what features they would find most useful in a personal safety app (please see figure 2 for a summary) and to highlight what some of their concerns may be around using an app. Responses to this question included the cost of adopting, publicising and maintaining an app; its functionality for people who might be digitally excluded, who might have a disability or who might not speak English; as well as the responsibility for the regular maintenance and update of a personal safety app to ensure that it is always up-to-date and fit for purpose.

### What features would you like a personal safety app to have?

SOS button	64%	Data access for Police Scotland and Council to analyse	44%
Geolocation Sharing	64%	Street Assist live tracking	41%
Fake call option	60%	Real time alerts to trusted contacts	38%
Nearest 'safe spaces'	52%	Maps of safe nighttime venues	38%
'Chat to an officer'	50%	Data access for Council community improvement activity	31%
Personal alarm option	48%	Piloted elsewhere in the UK	27%
24/7 monitoring centre to triage and coordinate response	45%	I would not use a safety app	7%

Figure 2: the features of a personal safety app that Edinburgh residents would find most useful, in order of popularity.

Following analysis of the survey responses, the WSPP CIP recommended postponing any decision on endorsing a personal safety app for Edinburgh for the following reasons:

- The survey was only open for 3 weeks, therefore yielding a very small number of responses (121) compared to the population of the city. The WSPP CIP would propose a much larger-scale survey to help gather the views of a larger percentage of the population for a fully informed decision to be made, given that the endorsement of a personal safety app would require considerable investment in time and resources.
- The findings of the survey were largely inconclusive. There was no evidence demonstrating that there is an appetite for Edinburgh to adopt a personal safety or that there is not.

- Personal safety apps currently available on the market would require considerable work on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council in order to map safe spaces, nighttime economy venues, taxi ranks and other facilities. It is estimated that this would require approximately 6-12 months to complete, and there is currently no resource available to undertake this task.
- Following approval by the [Finance and Resources Committee on 25 January 2024](#), the decision has been made to employ a Nighttime coordinator for Edinburgh. It is expected that following appointment, the Nighttime Coordinator will work closely with the WSPP CIP to address issues pertaining to women's safety in the nighttime economy. As recruitment has not yet taken place, the WSPP CIP supports that prior to considering adopting a personal safety app, it would be beneficial to wait for the appointment of the Nighttime Coordinator who will be able to support and promote this work.

As part of its work, the WSPP CIP updated its Terms of Reference to come up with new actions for the year 2024-2025, and has started to link with the Feminist City Officer group to address areas of overlap as well as areas where there are gaps in provision. The Feminist City Officer group has been working to implement actions from the motion on ['Edinburgh as a Feminist City'](#). Whereas the WSPP CIP is concerned with behavioural and cultural elements pertaining to women's safety, Feminist City is more concerned with the built environment and with making Edinburgh more gender-equal and safer for women and girls by design.

- The 16 Days Communications Subgroup: In 2023 – 2024 the 16 Days Communications Subgroup focused its energy into supporting the delivery of the [#RespectHerSpace](#) campaign. Following discussions with partners, it was agreed that the time and resources available to the group would be most beneficially devoted to raising awareness of women's safety in public places and to spreading the campaign's message in line with the mission of the 16 Days.
- Violence Against Women, Children and Young People Working Subgroup (VAWCYP): the VAWCYP is a new subgroup organised by the ESEC, specifically looking to address how we can prevent and eradicate gendered violence and the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate it for children and young people – both as survivors and perpetrators, from pre-birth up to the age of 25. The VAWCYP group has held 3 meetings to date, and it has worked on finalising its Terms of Reference, its membership and work plan.

#### [ESEC 'Marketplace' – 2 November 2023](#)

On 2 November 2023, a motion was tabled at Full Council titled ['16 Days of Action on Gender-Based Violence'](#). The motion acknowledged the contributions of all ESEC partner organisations in supporting victims and survivors of gendered violence, on their work to bring perpetrators to justice and on implementing the Equally Safe strategy locally. The motion further requested an event to be organised in the spring of 2024 to introduce the refreshed Equally Safe strategy to elected members, the council's leadership team, directors and heads of service.

Taking advantage of the motion at Full Council, ESEC partners used this opportunity to create a small 'marketplace' event in the City Chambers concourse ahead of the Full Council meeting. The 'marketplace' event gave elected members the opportunity to find out more about the organisations that constitute the ESEC and to better understand the context and details involved in their work. ESEC partners also had the opportunity to showcase their work and discuss their future plans as well as challenges they may be facing directly with Councillors. A deputation was also presented at Full

Council by both Edinburgh Women’s Aid and the ESEC lead officer, presenting a summary of the work of the ESEC over the last 12 months, as well as highlighting the work of Edinburgh Women’s Aid over the last 50 years.



Left: Councillor Day and Councillor Watt with representatives from Edinburgh Women’s Aid.

Right: Councillor Nols-McVey with representatives from Foursquare and Sikh Sanjog.



Left: Councillor McFarlane with representatives from the Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre.

Right: Pawl Lawrence, former executive director of Place and recently appointed Chief Executive with representatives from Sacro and the Multicultural Family Base.



### Committee reports

- During the [Full Council meeting on 4 May 2023](#), a motion was made titled ‘[Make Public Sexual Harassment \(PSH\) Illegal Campaign](#)’. The motion requested for the Lord Provost and elected members to endorse the campaign; for joint work with trade unions to raise awareness with staff networks; and for actions to be identified through schools to support parents and teachers to teach children that PSH is not acceptable. The report was subsequently referred to the ESEC and the Education, Children and Families Committee, who received [the report](#) on 16 April 2024.
- Another motion tabled at the [Full Council meeting on 4 May 2023](#) was titled ‘[Edinburgh as a Feminist City](#)’. This motion acknowledges that current city planning processes and practices are not gender-neutral and that they, in fact, disadvantage women. It called for Edinburgh to learn from other European Cities who have implemented feminist town planning approaches and for a Cross-Party Short-Life Working Group (CPSLWG) to be formed to support this work. The creation of the CPSLWG was approved by the [Planning Committee on 15 November 2023](#) following a [report](#) by the relevant Officer Group, which includes the ESEC lead officer.
- As per its constitution, the WSPP CIP presented its [annual report to the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 28 May 2024](#). Prior to the annual report, during the Policy and Sustainability Committee’s meeting on 12 March 2024, the [WSPP CIP presented an Actions Update report](#) to bring the Committee up to date with actions allocated to the CIP in the previous year.

## CSE Pilot

A final important update concerning the ESEC in 2023-2024 has been the Scottish Government's announcement of a new strategy titled '[Prostitution – challenging and deterring men's demand: strategic approach](#)'. The strategy announced its priority to:

- disrupt and deter demand for prostitution and tackling its drivers
- improve access to support and tackle stigma
- recognise those involved in selling/exchanging sex as victims of exploitation
- creating a new support pathway and
- establishing a multi-agency group to support the strategy's implementation.

The strategy proposes, as a first step, the creation through more coordinated national support pathway which builds on existing good practice and takes advantage of opportunities to improve access to support. Three local authority hubs were identified to initiate this pilot:

1. Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders
2. Highland, Perth & Kinross, Aberdeen and Dundee; and
3. Glasgow and Ayrshire.

The approach was due to be piloted in the above areas in the summer of 2024. However, the local authorities in which the pilot was due to take place were concerned with the lack of communication, clarity, governance, guidance, support and resources available following the announcement by the Scottish Government. As a result, COSLA has become involved in conversations around clarification and preparation for the pilot to support a smoother delivery in the local authorities involved. The decision was subsequently made that instead of the abovementioned clusters, the pilot project will now start in Glasgow with regular reviews. The ESEC is monitoring developments in this area and will keep the Chief Officers' Group informed of any developments.

## Next Steps for the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

The ESEC marks another year of effective partnership work and consistent efforts to implement the Equally Safe strategy. The committee's work has become more visible throughout Edinburgh, enabling wider conversations to take place around domestic abuse, forced marriage, women's safety in public places and commercial sexual exploitation.

In the next financial year, the ESEC aims to undertake a number of activities to support the Equally Safe strategy's implementation, including, but not limited to:

- The election of a new Chair by the ESEC to be ratified by the Chief Officers' Group as per the ESEC's Constitution
- Ongoing communication with the Council, particularly the Regulatory Committee regarding the licensing of Edinburgh's three Sexual Entertainment Venues
- Strengthening the DALAG by improving practice and ensuring that it delivers on its mission to support vulnerable families and prevent the escalation of abuse
- Strengthening the various subgroups of the ESEC and ensuring that the Committee's Improvement Plan continues to be implemented
- Monitoring legislative developments, particularly on the [Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#); the Misogyny Bill for Scotland, as outlined in '[Equality, Opportunity, Community: Our Programme for Government 2023-2024](#)'; and the Children (Care and Justice) Scotland Bill, and keeping the Chief Officers' Group as well as other key stakeholders informed of any developments
- Continuing to deliver campaigns and to undertake activities that promote women's safety – both in the public and private spheres through the work of the WSPP CIP and the 16 Days Comms group
- Reporting consistently to Council Committees to ensure that elected members continue to be informed of the work of the Committee and its contribution to public safety arrangements in Edinburgh
- Monitoring developments around the Scottish Government's pilot on challenging and deterring men's demand for prostitution and ensuring that any new updates and developments are reported to Edinburgh's public protection committees

In the financial year 2022-2023 a number of ESEC partners marked significant milestones. The year 2023-2024 sees another ESEC partner, [Sikh Sanjog](#), commemorating 25 years of providing support to Edinburgh's Sikh women through services that promote resilience, empowerment and safety from domestic and 'honour'-based abuse.

In this year, we also thank DCI Brown for serving a two-year term as Chair of the ESEC. His contributions, insight and support of the Committee have significantly contributed to the Committee's accomplishments, to its resilience and to continue to operate seamlessly through challenges to continue to successfully deliver on its mission to implement Equally Safe.

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# Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

July 2023