





Handle with Care

A guide to responsible
media reporting of
violence against women

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FOREWORD

‘Media texts do not present messages about our culture; they are culture’¹

¹ Rakow, L. (2001). Feminist approaches to popular culture: Giving patriarchy its due. In John Storey (Ed.), Cultural theory and popular culture: A reader (pp.5–291). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press p42.



Judith Duffy

Journalist & winner of the Write to End Violence Against Women Award 2015 Best Article – News

A quick glimpse through the archives shows just how far we have come in reporting on violence against women. Back in the 19th century, the case of a husband accused of assaulting his wife and locking her in a room appeared in a newspaper with the astonishing headline ‘Extraordinary charge against a gentleman’.

Times have thankfully changed and the media is becoming more aware of its responsibilities. But the reporting of issues such as rape, domestic abuse, misogyny and sexual violence still has a long way to go. You don’t have to look back in time for shocking examples in the media – such as ‘victim-blaming’ stories which focus on how much alcohol a woman consumed on a night out or comment about the “understandable” murder of a wife by her husband after the breakdown of a marriage.

With the rise of social media, when headlines and articles can be distributed to a global audience in just a short space of time, it is even more important to get it right. However, it is not always an easy issue to navigate, which is why this guide offers journalists some common-sense advice and highlights responsibilities to consider when reporting on violence against women. It is not about dictating how a story should be written, but recognising that too often language is still being used to trivialise and sensationalise – when it can have the power to help change attitudes in society.



Jude Henderson

Zero Tolerance
Chair of the Board

It is twenty-five years since Zero Tolerance began working to end men’s violence against women. Since then we have seen many changes – social attitudes to violence, strategies to combat abuse and laws against domestic abuse and sexual offences have all improved in Scotland.

What was previously considered as a ‘private’ or a ‘domestic’ matter is now recognised as a serious and continuing social problem that affects women from all communities and backgrounds.

Responsible media reporting is vital in shaping people’s understanding of violence against women and challenging its place in our society. Our research shows that many journalists, editors and media producers continue to resort to out-dated, problematic stereotypes and attitudes when reporting on incidences of violence.

As such, we have produced this guide to improve understanding of violence against women in Scotland, and to support journalists to play a vital role in its prevention. This could encourage other women to come forward and may even improve the under-reporting of violence against women. By encouraging the media to take a ‘handle with care’ approach, a more positive contribution to achieving zero tolerance of violence and abuse in Scotland will be made.

INTRODUCTION

What the media says matters. The way violence against women is reported plays a huge role in terms of influence, thinking and behaviour. The media sometimes over-simplifies complex stories or falls into stereotyping or socially “slanted” reporting.

Violence against women continues to be a hugely prevalent and complex social problem, and the media plays a key role to keep the public aware of the issues. Those journalists who take a considered

and informed approach to violence against women are more likely to develop trusted relationships with support organisations, and indeed with the survivors of violence.

As such, this *Handle with Care* guide provides practical advice about the approach journalists and media professionals should consider taking to ensure responsible reporting on violence against women.

Why does violence against women matter? Violence Against Women and girls...



is a profound symbol of **gender inequality** and social injustice



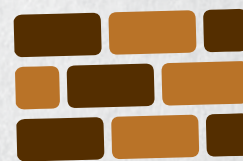
prevents girls and women's equal participation at every personal, social and political level



hurts girls' and women's bodies, minds and hearts



hinders social and economic development



reinforces other forms of discrimination including based on disability, age, race, sexuality, HIV status, class and caste



Is **extremely costly** – for families, communities and nations

WHAT IS MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

To make this guide as reader-friendly as possible, we use the term violence against women (VAW), but with the understanding that it is men's violence against women and that it does include girls as well.

All forms of VAW are rooted in gender inequality – the unequal distribution of wealth, power and opportunity between men and women. Understanding this is fundamental to accurate reporting.

Violence against women and girls includes any form of violence or abuse where the majority of victims are women, and the majority of people committing the abuse are men. Violence against women and girls includes (but is not limited to):²

- ▶ physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), within the general community or in institutions, including domestic abuse, rape including marital rape, and incest

- ▶ stalking, sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space, including work
- ▶ commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing and pole-dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking
- ▶ child sexual abuse, including familial sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and online abuse
- ▶ so-called 'honour based' violence, including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and 'honour' based abuse and killings.

These forms of violence have the same root cause: gender inequality. Men's violence against women is caused by gender inequality, and it helps this inequality to continue.

2 Scottish Government (2016) *Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls* p10 www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498256.pdf

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SCOTLAND

VAW is a significant social problem in Scotland. Preventing and eradicating men's violence against women underpins Zero Tolerance's work and Scottish Government policy.³

58,810 domestic abuse incidents were reported to the police in 2016-17; in 79% of these incidents the victim was a woman.⁴

1 in 10 women in Scotland has experienced rape.⁵

1 in 5 women in Scotland has had someone try to make them have sex against their will.⁶

1,755 rapes and 123 attempted rapes were reported to the police in Scotland in 2016/2017. There were only 98 convictions.⁷

There were a total of 10,822 reported sexual offences in 2016-17, an increase of 65% since 2007-08.⁸

In 2016-17, sexual assault accounted for 40% of sexual crimes.⁹

Reported rape and attempted rape increased by 66% between 2010-11 and 2016-17.¹⁰

Research conducted by Zero Tolerance in 2017 found that over 70% of respondents had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment, teasing or innuendo in their workplace.¹¹

3 <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/violence-against-women-and-girls/>

4 www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00526358.pdf

5 Source: Natsal-3: key findings from Scotland: www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00474316.pdf

6 Source: Natsal-3: key findings from Scotland: www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00474316.pdf

7 Recorded Crime in Scotland 2016-17 at www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00525055.pdf

8 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2016-17/pages/6/>

9 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2016-17/pages/6/>

10 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2016-17/pages/6/>

11 (Sexism is a waste...': the need to tackle violence and misogyny in Scotland's workplace, Zero Tolerance 2017 p4).

WHAT ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN?

Men experience significant amounts of violence in Scottish society. However, it is important to avoid falling into the trap of seeking gender equivalency when reporting on violence against women. Women and men both experience the different forms of violence and abuse discussed in this guide. However, the prevalence, severity and impacts are greater for women than for men.

Women are far more likely than men to experience ongoing violence, need medical attention, fear for their lives, and to be murdered by an intimate partner.¹² This does not mean violence against women is more important than violence against men, but that we need different strategies for each.

¹² www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/2015DomesticViolenceDeathReviewCommitteeReport.html

Challenging men's violence is working to keep both women and men safe because:

- ▶ The majority of street violence and domestic abuse that boys and men experience is also at the hands of men.
- ▶ Men perpetrate most of all violence in Scotland against women, children and other men.¹³
- ▶ Part of ending men's violence is challenging gender stereotypes such as implying that men should always be strong. These stereotypes may prevent men who experience domestic abuse from seeking help.

¹³ Equally Safe Strategy www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498256.pdf

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Guidelines for reporting violence against women

1.

Tell the whole story

- ▶ Acknowledge that men's violence against women is caused by an unequal distribution of power and affects women disproportionately more than men.
- ▶ Put the story into context with local, national and even international statistics.
- ▶ Provide a 'bigger picture' by placing individual incidents in a wider social context.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for survivors and experts on VAW to speak about the issue.
- ▶ Be aware that seemingly one-off crimes may be part of a pattern of abuse, and that perpetrators may have engaged in a number of forms of VAW.
- ▶ Be mindful of the lack of evidence for the link between men's violence against women and their own childhood experiences of violence.¹⁴

2.

Name and frame it right

- ▶ Always use language that accurately conveys the gravity of sexual assault: sexual abuse; rape, etc. Avoid using terms like affair, sex or 'a domestic'.
- ▶ Accurately portray perpetrators of violence as 'ordinary' men, boys, husbands, fathers etc. Don't use terms such as brute, beast, fiend or monster.
- ▶ Unless an attack has resulted in murder, do not use the word 'victim' unless the woman self-identifies as one; use the word 'survivor'.
- ▶ The perpetrator is the only person responsible for their violence. Never suggest that the survivor was to blame for what happened to them.
- ▶ Do not emphasise what the survivor was wearing, whether they used drugs or alcohol, or were selling sex. None of these factors explain the perpetrator's use of violence.

14 Woman-battering, child abuse and social heredity: what is the relationship? Evan Stark, Anne Flitcraft 1985 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1983.tb00101.x>

3.

Be considerate

- ▶ Report VAW in a way that upholds the survivor's right to dignity and does not compromise their safety or anonymity.
- ▶ Do not use irrelevant personal details, such as the transgender identity of a victim, to sensationalise the story.
- ▶ When covering harmful traditional practices, be clear that these are rooted in misogyny, and avoid stigmatising any ethnic group or religion.
- ▶ Choose images carefully in reporting on VAW and ensure the images chosen do not distort the story, contribute to the problem, or objectify women.
- ▶ Call on community experts on VAW for comment; they will put the issue in context and give information about available support options for people who have experienced violence.
- ▶ Remember to always include numbers for local support services for relevant jurisdictions (i.e. England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, etc.).

If you are an editor:

- ▶ Circulate this Handle with Care guidance to all staff members involved in content creation.
- ▶ Ensure that the headline/teaser/sub heading and clickbait on social media do not distort the real story.
- ▶ Support staff to attend training on reporting of VAW and its causes.
- ▶ Ensure that images chosen to illustrate stories about VAW do not distort the story, its seriousness or contribute to the problem by further objectifying women.
- ▶ Allow Zero Tolerance access to archives to research and monitor VAW reporting.

Zero Tolerance can help by:

- ▶ Providing media outlets with detailed guidance on reporting VAW.
- ▶ Offering ongoing phone support for reporters and content producers on the reporting of VAW.
- ▶ Supplying a current list of expert contacts for reporting on VAW.
- ▶ Supporting media outlets to implement relevant policies.

LANGUAGE GUIDE

Below you will find a list of common terms and phrases that are used to speak about men's violence against women; the list is not exhaustive and the alternative language is not definitive. This list is intended to support you to make informed language choices when writing about VAW.

✗ DON'T USE	✓ DO USE	? WHY?
Euphemisms i.e.: <i>engaging in</i> or <i>sex scandal</i> , <i>affair</i> , <i>fondle</i> or <i>caress</i> , <i>private parts</i> to describe sexual violence.	Language that accurately conveys the gravity of sexual assault: <i>sexual abuse</i> , <i>rape</i> etc.	Using words like <i>sex scandal</i> diminishes and sensationalises the crime.
Salacious details of the assault e.g. <i>forced mouth onto</i> (the survivor's specific body part).	Words that make it clear that sexual assault is violent and non-consensual e.g. <i>oral rape</i> , <i>sexual assault</i> etc.	Rape is an act of violence, there is no need to insert salacious details.
<i>Fiend</i> , <i>beast</i> , <i>pervert</i> , <i>monster</i> , <i>paedo</i> , <i>brute</i> , <i>criminal</i> , <i>thug</i> , <i>wife-beater</i> , <i>woman-basher</i> .	<i>Husband</i> , <i>father</i> , <i>son</i> etc. <i>Man</i> , <i>perpetrator</i> , <i>offender</i> , <i>abuser</i> , <i>rapist</i> etc.	Men who rape, commit sexual violence or domestic abuse are ordinary men, usually someone's dad, brother, uncle, or friend.
<i>Great father/devoted dad/ a good guy/respected member of the community/esteemed coach/ professional/community leader</i> .	<i>Man</i> , <i>perpetrator</i> , <i>offender</i> , <i>abuser</i> , <i>rapist</i> etc.	These generate sympathy for the perpetrator, implying there is a 'reason' for their 'out of character' behaviour.
<i>She had several drinks then walked home alone and was assaulted.</i>	<i>He stalked the woman on her way home and assaulted her.</i>	The perpetrator is the only person to blame for the act of violence, regardless of the behaviour of the victim/survivor.
<i>Sex worker</i> , <i>porn actress/porn star</i>	<i>Woman who sells sex</i> <i>Woman involved in pornography</i>	Prostitution and pornography are exploitation of women, not work.

⊗ DON'T USE	✓ DO USE	? WHY?
<i>Murdered/dead prostitute</i>	<i>Woman who was murdered; use the woman's name where possible.</i>	Regardless of their past, women who were murdered are women first.
<i>Child prostitute, teenage prostitute</i>	<i>Abused child</i>	Sexual contact with a child is always abuse.
<i>Abusive relationship</i>	<i>Abusive partner, woman living with an abusive partner</i>	Placing blame on the relationship or relationship dynamics, rather than on the abuser, suggests that both people are equally at fault.
<i>Domestic violence</i>	<i>Domestic abuse Men's violence against women</i>	Most organisations working in this field use the term <i>domestic abuse</i> instead of <i>domestic violence</i> , as this conveys a much wider spectrum of abuse, which can be psychological as well as physical.
<i>Battered woman</i>	<i>Woman who has experienced domestic abuse A survivor of domestic abuse</i>	These alternatives better describe the survivors of domestic abuse.
<i>A domestic/domestic dispute</i>	<i>Domestic abuse</i>	Domestic/domestic dispute frames the incident of violence as a private domestic or family problem and not a crime.

PROBLEMATIC TRENDS IN REPORTING

There are a number of areas where reporting of violence against women is problematic and unhelpful. By making changes to the narrative, the language and the “slant” of media reporting, a better public understanding of the whole spectrum of VAW issues will develop.

International coverage of the murders that took place in North Carolina in April 2018 by Steven Pladl is a good example of what not to do. Steven Pladl killed his biological daughter Katie, their child, and Katie’s adoptive father and then he killed himself.

Misplaced blame and deceiving headline:

Coverage connected this man’s behaviour with the woman’s decision to contact her biological parents: *A woman’s decision to contact her biological parents on social media ends in four deaths* (BBC News Facebook); this places the blame for the outcome on the woman, rather than on the murderer.

Ignoring a pattern of violent behaviour:

Patterns of gendered violence and abuse in the family and the wider community or the problem of VAW in society more generally, were not reported. The story was reported as *a terrible tragedy that nobody foresaw*¹⁵ despite the fact that Pladl had also physically abused Katie¹⁶ as a child and was later convicted of incest and released on bail on condition he did not make contact with her.

Romanticising violent behaviour: The story was presented as a *crime of passion* where the perpetrator decided to kill his daughter because *he couldn’t live without her*.¹⁷ Framing it in this way

prioritises the murderer’s emotional turmoil above the lives of the people he killed.

Conflicting Narratives: Lots of the coverage focused on the death of a baby and sensationalised the case of incest: *Baby found dead in North Carolina* (ABC7 News), *An alleged case of incest led to 4 ‘senseless’ deaths in 3 states. One was a baby.* (Washington Post), and *Infant Found Dead At Home Where Father of Daughter Accused Of Incest Had Lived* (5 News); and *New Milford double homicide, NY suicide tied to baby’s death in North Carolina* (Eyewitness 3 News). Some of the quotes used in articles erased the woman from the story, focusing on the death of the child i.e. *Knightdale Police Chief Lawrence Capps said: We are heartbroken, and saddened over the death of this child and like you, we are trying to make sense of all the factors that led up to this senseless taking of life.* (BBC News).¹⁸ It is important to prevent ‘shadow stories’ such as these emerging through conflicting narratives when writing about VAW. This story was about Steven Pladl murdering *three* people; the baby was not “found dead”, it was murdered.

▶ OTHER EXAMPLES OF UNHELPFUL REPORTING:

Blaming alcohol: Focusing on alcohol consumption can minimise the seriousness of abuse, e.g. a regional newspaper reported a man attacking his wife using this phrase: “The sweet taste of champagne turned sour...”; this does not convey the seriousness of the assault and suggests that alcohol was a causal factor. Alcohol and drug use is not an excuse for, or cause of, domestic abuse or sexual violence.

15 www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-43747225?ocid=socialflow_facebook&ns_mchannel=social&ns_campaign=bbcnews&ns_source=facebook

16 www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5665837/Incest-killers-ex-wife-reveals-abuse-infant-daughter-iwfe.html

17 www.courant.com/breaking-news/hc-new-milford-incest-murder-suicide-steven-katie-pladl-20180413-story.html

18 www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-43747225?ocid=socialflow_facebook&ns_mchannel=social&ns_campaign=bbcnews&ns_source=facebook

Blaming football: Football is often used to excuse men's violence despite clear evidence that football matches are not the cause of domestic abuse – abusive men are.¹⁹

Blaming mental health: In one article, the perpetrator was described as “hypersensitive to rejection ... after his mother left”, suggesting that he was “desperate to avoid abandonment”²⁰. Thus “after she [the victim] dumped him”, he was distraught, and that factor, along with an “abnormality of mental function” resulted in her murder.²¹

In the story of a sailor who raped a woman while she slept the focus was on how apologetic and remorseful he was afterwards and that he is a sex addict and has attended addiction meetings.²²

Mental health issues are not a cause of VAW; blaming poor mental health also stigmatises those with mental health issues, the vast majority of whom do not perpetrate VAW.

Not including patterns of abuse: Often incidents of violence are reported without acknowledging that the perpetrator had engaged in other forms of VAW. After the June 2010 shootings in Cumbria, the murderer was portrayed as an ‘otherwise good man’ who as it later emerged had a lengthy history of buying sex.

Reporting sexual harassment as a one-off incident: Media reports have been found to characterise sexual harassment in the workplace as an individual aberration rather than a systemic

issue, rarely using statistics on its prevalence²³. This is contrary to evidence that sexual harassment is, within Scotland, very much systemic and not just the inappropriate conduct of a ‘bad-apple’ employee, as the #MeToo movement has demonstrated.

Inappropriate use of humour: A national charity included in its magazine an article on Indian women forced through economic circumstances into prostitution which was headed, ‘Anybody fancy an Indian?’ This trivialised gender inequality and poverty-driven prostitution and dehumanised the women involved.

Glamorising pornography and prostitution: Many articles covering commercial sexual exploitation do not reference the dangers and harms. One example quoted a woman saying it was a time-saving way to make money, with no counter argument about the damaging effects for individuals or society.

Careless use of images: Images of beaten and bruised women are often used to accompany stories, reinforcing the myth that domestic abuse is only physical. Sexualised images of women used to illustrate stories about violence imply that VAW is sexy and dehumanise victims.



TIP:

You can use **one thousand words**, our ethical and free stock images produced by ourselves and Scottish Women's Aid to illustrate your article on domestic abuse/VAW.

<https://goo.gl/tD19xw>

19 www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Football-and-Domestic-Abuse_Literature-Review_25-NOV-2014.pdf

20 www.betternation.org/2011/03/football-does-not-cause-domestic-abuse/

21 The Mirror, 02.02.18, Flora Thompson, Killer “unable to take being abandoned”, p. 15

22 Camber, R., 2017. She was Asleep and Drunk...I had Sex with Her. Scottish Daily Mail, 21 Feb. p5

23 (McDonald, P. and Charlesworth, S., 2013, April. Framing sexual harassment through media representations. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 37, pp. 95-103).

REPORTING OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF VAW

The following section gives more in-depth information about reporting on different forms of VAW.

► DOMESTIC ABUSE

The terms 'domestic abuse' and 'domestic violence' are often used interchangeably. However, in Scotland we use 'domestic abuse' to emphasise that it is rarely a one-off incident and that it encompasses much more than physical violence. Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling behaviour which gets worse over time. Physical violence and threats may be used to maintain this control, but crucially domestic abuse does **not** have to include physical violence. Domestic abuse may take the form of psychological, financial or emotional abuse, including constantly criticising a woman, undermining her self-esteem, isolating her from her friends and family and other support networks and restricting her right to wear what she wants, see who she wants and enjoy leisure time as she pleases.

'Coercive control' is another term used to talk about abusive behaviour. Coercive control describes the pattern of coercion, intimidation and fear that an abusive partner will use to control their partner, making them dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey of 2014 found that: *Generally, attitudes towards controlling behaviours were less negative than those towards physical and verbal abuse... 92% of participants felt it was 'very seriously wrong' for a man to get angry and slap his wife. Only 39% believed it was 'very seriously wrong' for a man to tell his wife to change her clothes before going on a night out.*²⁴

24 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00489760.pdf>



TIP:

See our briefing for journalists who are reporting on the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act (2018) www.zerotolerance.org.uk

► ONLINE ABUSE

(By Professor Karen Boyle)

Gender-based online abuse of women and children includes bullying, harassment, threats, stalking, non-consensual taking or sharing of intimate images and deception.

It is helpful to understand online abuse as part of the continuum of men's violence against women rather than a discrete and unique phenomenon. For instance, in domestic abuse situations, men have used email, text and social media to stalk, harass and threaten female partners.²⁵ But even in cases where perpetrators are not known to victims offline, online abuse causes real world fear, often exacerbated by abusers sharing details such as a victim's address, or information about family members.²⁶

Victim-blaming is an issue in reporting online abuse too. Unintended victim-blaming in this context might include a focus on victim behaviour (e.g. the taking of an intimate selfie) or judgment as to the appropriateness of a victim's response (e.g. suggesting she should ignore it or switch off her computer).

25 Scottish Women's Aid (2015) *Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Media: A Report* at [www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/sites/www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/files/final report1.pdf](http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/sites/www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/files/final%20report1.pdf)

26 Laxton, C. (2014) *Virtual World, Real Fear: Women's Aid Report into Online Abuse, Harassment and Stalking* at www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/linkservid/934F768A-C2D4-11E5-988D48D705D43CE3/showMeta/0/

Online abuse is frequently targeted at female journalists in the course of their jobs. When *The Guardian* conducted a study of abuse in their online comments section, they found that although the majority of their regular opinion writers are white men, of the 10 writers who received the most abuse, 8 were women (4 white, 4 non-white) and 2 were black men. The 10 regular writers who got the least abuse were all white men.²⁷ News agencies therefore have responsibilities as employers as well as content-producers.



TIP:

Reproducing abusive or malicious posts, tweets or images or making it easy for readers to find the abusive material can cause further harm to the survivor and enhance the perpetrator's profile. Additionally, under current legislation, you may be at risk of breaking the law.

► COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) includes a wide range of often linked sexual activities which (typically) men profit from or buy from women, and which objectify and harm women. A sexual activity becomes sexual exploitation if it breaches a person's human right to dignity, equality, respect and physical and mental wellbeing. It becomes commercial sexual exploitation when another person, or group of people, achieves financial gain or advancement through the activity. 99% of all sex sold is by women to men indicating this is clearly a gender equality issue. While men and boys can also be sexually exploited, the evidence indicates that this is also predominantly for the benefit of other men²⁸.

27 *The Guardian* (2016) 'The Dark Side of Comments' at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments>

28 Women Support Project website at www.womenssupportproject.co.uk accessed 12th May 2017

Commercial sexual exploitation includes, but is not limited to:

- stripping, pole-dancing and lap-dancing, peep shows
- prostitution, via massage parlours / saunas, brothels and escort agencies
- phone sex lines and internet sex chat rooms
- pornography
- trafficking
- forced marriage
- mail order brides
- sex tourism

The Scottish Government has recognised that CSE has a negative impact, not just on the individuals involved but also "on the position of all women through the objectification of women's bodies."²⁹ Women must be viewed as more than physical objects for equality to be achieved, which is unlikely as long as they are commodified in any way.

Human trafficking is a gendered crime; the primary victims are women, 51%, and girls, 20%. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common form of human trafficking, amounting to 72%³⁰ of all cases. Increasingly research has found a link between rising demand for commercial sex in wealthy western countries and an increase in demand for trafficked women and girls to those states.³¹

29 Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Working Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation website at www.parliament.scot/msps/commercial-sexual-exploitation.aspx accessed 07 June 2017

30 https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2016_Global_Report_on_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf

31 Cho, S., Dreher, A., & Neumayer, E. (2012) 'Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?' *World Development* 41(1):67-82 p 19

► PORNOGRAPHY

In the digital age pornography is increasingly easy for people of all ages to access. Pornography reinforces those gender dynamics which play a key role in perpetuating violence against women. It provides an endless flow of narratives of women being treated as objects, violated or having acts 'done to' them. A study of 50 of the most popular pornographic videos found that 88% of scenes included physical aggression, 94% of which was directed towards women.³²

- Individual women involved in the porn industry are often physically and psychologically harmed by their experience³³.
- Compared to the general female population, data indicates that women involved in pornography, as children were more likely to have been victims of forced sex, have lived in poverty and to have been placed in foster care.³⁴
- There is a growing body of evidence linking pornography with sexual abuse online, sexual violence, rape and murder.³⁵

► PROSTITUTION

Prostitution not only reinforces gender stereotypes but is an expression of the idea of men's unlimited access to women's bodies in accordance with their economic power. It also entails the assumption that sexual gratification is a kind of right that every man is entitled to.³⁶ As long as any woman can be bought, equality is out of reach for all of us.

32 Bridges, A.J., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., Sun, C. and Liberman, R., 2010. Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update. *Violence against women*, 16(10), pp.1065-1085

33 Limb, M & Kluger, N. (2014) 'Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Risks in The Adult Film Industry' *Annals of Dermatology & Venereology* 141:122-9

34 Grudzen, C., Meeker, D., Torres, J., Morrison, D., Andersen, R. & Gelberg, L. (2011) 'Comparison of the mental health of female adult film performers and other young women in California' *Psychiatric Services* 62(6):639-45

35 <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/nov/11/nathan-matthews-case-reignites-debate-over-violent-pornography>

36 [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/493040/IPOL-FEMM_ET\(2014\)493040_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/493040/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2014)493040_EN.pdf)

Considerations for reporting:

- Focus on some men's choices to exploit women, not the women's 'choices' to be involved in prostitution.
- It is rare for women who sell sex to earn a lot of money and have control over their situation. Those that do are in a privileged minority. According to research, for the majority of women involved selling sex is a survival behaviour caused by multiple disadvantages.³⁷
- There are clear links between prostitution and other forms of VAW, for example coercion into prostitution by an abusive partner; experience of child sexual abuse; or failed forced marriage.³⁸
- Prostitution shouldn't be called *sex work* in reporting – it is sexual exploitation. The term *sex worker* also encompasses pimps and other men who make profit from exploiting women's bodies.

Personal account of being involved in prostitution:

It kills me inside when people talk about prostitution being a 'choice', or 'empowering', or 'harmless fun' for women. Those words don't even belong in the same sentence. In my experience, prostitution was the end result of addiction, self-hatred, and years of extreme physical and sexual abuse by my ex-partner which left me feeling I deserved nothing more... Life as an escort isn't the glamorous, well paid life you read about in women's magazines. Put bluntly, it's being paid to be f***ed, and because they've paid, johns [punters] are going to get their money's worth, they expect you to do anything and everything, whatever turns them on. It was frightening – you didn't know what you were turning up to.... When I see all over the media the message that sex work is fun and ok, it hurts me. Being a prostitute is being hurt and hurt and hurt again and being told you like it, you deserve it, and you should lighten up and enjoy it.

– Angel

37 A Review of the Literature on Sex Workers and Social Exclusion By the UCL Institute of Health Equity for Inclusion Health, Department of Health April 2014 page 4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303927/A_Review_of_the_Literature_on_sex_workers_and_social_exclusion.pdf

38 House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Prostitution Third Report of Session 2016–17 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/26/26.pdf>

► HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

'Harmful traditional practices' is an umbrella term to describe forms of violence against women that have existed in communities for so long that they are considered, or presented by perpetrators, as part of accepted traditional practice.

- **Forced or early marriage.** Can be defined as a marriage in which at least one person does not consent to the marriage and duress is involved.
- **So-called 'honour'-based violence.** Any type of physical or psychological violence committed in the name of 'honour' predominantly against women for actual or perceived immoral behaviour, which is deemed to have shamed their family or community.
- **Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM).** Refers to procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPORTING:

- Use the term 'honour' with caution – these are criminal acts.
- Maintain the distinction between forced and arranged marriage. Be clear that in forced marriage at least one party does not consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved.
- 'Honour' crimes are neither religiously nor culturally specific and anyone, from anywhere, may be affected.
- Affected communities may protect and support perpetrators, and victims themselves may be unaware they are experiencing VAW.
- The majority of honour-based violence is inter-familial; NEVER use family members or children to interpret as any member of the family could be involved, including the mother.

See pages 21-24 for information about support organisations.

► RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

When reporting rape, it is tempting to do so in reference to what many believe is the 'typical' case; a strange man in a dark alleyway dragging a woman into some bushes, probably at night-time with a weapon. Cases where this kind of incident occurs are clearly extremely alarming and generate significant amounts of press coverage.

However, only 17% of all reported rapes are committed by a stranger. This means that 83% of rapes are committed by someone known to the complainant.³⁹ Yet the tiny minority of cases which do constitute this type of attack make up the majority of media coverage of rape.



TIPS FOR REPORTING:

- Acknowledge that this crime has both a survivor and a perpetrator. Focusing only on what happens to the survivor (for instance, with headlines like 'Woman raped') can make it seem like violence is something that 'just happens' to women.
- Provide contextual information about the very low likelihood of an attack in a public place by a stranger and create awareness of the reality of rape closer to home.
- Question whether reporting of the atypical 'stranger rape' cases contains suggestions (either explicit or implied) that women should in some way change their behaviour to avoid such attacks and therefore loses focus on the men who committed the act.
- Make the perpetrator the subject of the sentence and assign the verb to them. This is also how police are encouraged to write their reports. i.e. *The police report that the perpetrator forced the survivor to...*

39 Source: Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2012/13: Sexual Victimisation & Stalking: www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/3479

► OTHER RAPE MYTHS TO AVOID PERPETUATING:

✗ MYTH	✓ REALITY
Men rape when they lose control.	Rape is a <i>form of control</i> , an assertion of dominance, not a loss of it.
Rape is a crime of sexual passion.	Rape is a crime of violence, abuse and degradation, involving sexual behaviours but primarily motivated by violence.
Only young, attractive women are raped.	Women of all ages, backgrounds and physical conditions are raped.
Women who were raped caused it or partly caused it by their dress, drinking or conduct.	Men are responsible for whether they rape or not .
Rape is less serious if a woman is raped whilst involved in prostitution.	Rape is always rape and women in prostitution are able to withhold consent the same as any other woman.
Rape is a misunderstanding or a situation that got out of control.	Rape is always a crime, whether the perpetrator is a relative, friend, acquaintance or stranger.
If a woman doesn't fight back, she consents.	Freezing is a common reaction to fear not just 'flight or fight'.
If a woman initiates kissing or other physical contact she is consenting to sex.	No, she is just consenting to kissing or other physical contact.
If a woman goes into a room alone with a man, it is her own fault if she is raped.	Going to a room alone with another person is not an invitation to commit a crime.
Often women who regret consensual sex later claim it was rape.	There are no more false reports of rape than of any other crime. ³⁹
Rape isn't an everyday occurrence.	Women are raped every day in Scotland.

THE IMPACT OF OTHER IDENTITIES – INTERSECTIONALITY

VAW affects women of all ages and racial, cultural and economic backgrounds and it is important that diversity is acknowledged in news stories. Experiences of violence against women are informed not just by gender, but also by race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, and migrant status. The term intersectionality refers to the ways that different forms of discrimination interact.

Many areas of VAW are vastly underreported and some of the most neglected are personal stories of violence against women experiencing multiple inequalities: women with disabilities, women with refugee and migrant backgrounds, LGBTQ women and women living in rural areas. Including intersectional awareness in reporting will help to build capacity to identify and respond to violence. It will also influence better understanding of what causes men's violence and help avoid marginalising the experiences of groups who already face disadvantage.

Some examples of how different inequalities effect women's experiences of VAW:

- ▶ Disabled women are more than twice as likely as non-disabled women to have experienced sexual violence or abuse from a carer, partner or family member.

- ▶ Studies suggest that BME women may be less likely to seek support or to report abuse to the authorities, potentially influenced by a concern that their report will contribute to existing racist stereotypes that their culture is particularly violent or misogynistic.⁴¹
- ▶ Trans women are specifically targeted for hate crime, often in the form of sexual harassment or sexual assault.⁴² Trans women experience sexist attitudes, discrimination and violence, as all women do, as well as experiencing an additional layer of discrimination for failing to conform to the gender norms expected of them. Bisexual women experience significantly higher rates of rape, domestic abuse and stalking compared to lesbians and heterosexual women.⁴³



TIP:

See the Zero Tolerance website for links to media guidelines on some of these issues.
www.zerotolerance.org.uk

41 NSPCC (2008) *"I can't tell people what is happening at home": Domestic abuse within South Asian communities: the specific needs of women, children and young people* at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/i-cant-tell-people-what-happening-home-report.pdf> p.3

42 <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbt-britain-trans-report>

43 www.thetaskforce.org/bisexual-women-have-increased-risk-of-intimate-partner-violence-new-cdc-data-shows/

INTERVIEWING SURVIVORS OF VAW

“As part of their duty of care media and journalists have an ethical responsibility not to publish or broadcast names or identify places that in any way might further compromise the safety and security of survivors or witnesses”⁴⁴

44 www.ifj.org/fileadmin/images/Gender/Gender_documents/IFJ_Guidelines_for_Reporting_on_Violence_Against_Women_EN.pdf

Including the words of survivors of VAW increases a story's impact and grounds it in reality. Some survivors find sharing their stories empowering and an important step in their recovery. Many others find it very difficult or impossible to talk about, particularly with a stranger. These tips will help you work with survivors respectfully and in a way that generates the best possible report.

► TALK TO THE EXPERTS

Before you begin reporting, talk with local support organisations to gain insight (pages 21-24). Developing relationships and talking routinely with service providers builds trust and could reveal new story angles. Give services plenty of notice if you want their help in finding a survivor to interview.

A survivor's perspective

“When my partner went to court it was recorded in the local paper. I was absolutely hurt and ashamed as they put my full name and address and instead of naming and shaming him it was me that was shamed. When I phoned the paper they said it was public knowledge so they printed it. Maybe something could be done about the press printing your name because it is humiliating for it to happen, without it being made public – it makes it harder to go on.”

‘Anne’, survivor of domestic abuse, named in a report in a regional newspaper.

► CONNECT

Survivors of sexual violence have experienced trauma, and each person reacts differently to trauma. It is important to have multiple conversations with survivors and get to know them. Listen and build a rapport. If other people will be involved in the interview, such as a film crew, allow the survivor time to meet everyone and get comfortable. Remember to have numbers of the support agencies on hand; you can find them on pages 21-24.

► PROVIDE SUPPORT

Reporters can help survivors feel more comfortable by explaining the interview process. Outline the areas you want to discuss in advance of the interview, giving the interviewee enough time to prepare. Suggest that the interviewee bring along a friend, relative or support worker. If you are already in contact with a support service, make arrangements for the support worker to be present, if required.

► RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

Ask how the survivor would like to be identified. Some people want to be fully identified, others want all details anonymised. Let the woman know in advance if you want to record the interview and ask if this is OK.

► QUESTIONS

While it is important to provide context for an incident, be aware that the way a setting or a person's clothing are described can unintentionally assign guilt to the victim. Avoid questions about the survivor's behaviour that imply they somehow provoked the incident. Survivors of violence are never to blame for what happened to them. Instead, ask open-ended, non-judgmental questions that allow survivors to share their stories.

Some examples of good questions to ask include:

- What do you think is important for people to know?
- How has this experience impacted you?
- What services/resources/people helped you in your recovery?
- What were the barriers to you coming forward?
- What suggestions do you have to make it safer for survivors to come forward?⁴⁵

► FIND A GOOD LOCATION

Consider the requirements of your interviewee, who may be concerned about confidentiality issues and be reluctant to provide you with their address. Please remember that women's refuges are safe spaces for women to live in when they have left an abusive situation and therefore maintaining the privacy of their locations is paramount. You have a responsibility to avoid exposing the interviewee to further abuse.

► BE PREPARED TO STOP AND START, OR SIMPLY JUST STOP

Let the survivor share the amount of information that they are comfortable with. There may be times when a woman needs to take a break, or simply think for a few minutes about how she wants to express herself. It takes bravery to share these details.

⁴⁵ www.femifesto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/UseTheRightWords-Single-Dec3.pdf p19

► REMEMBER

By their very nature violence and abuse can be deeply damaging and it can be challenging to find case studies of people that are willing and able to speak openly about these experiences. It may be that you have to find other ways to make a story real and give it a new angle – you might want to involve a vocal campaigner, a powerful new piece of research or a striking image instead.

Ultimately, the media should treat survivors with respect and accord them dignity and protection from further harm.



CASE STUDY:

WORKING WITH LOCAL PRESS

One agency in the south of Scotland working with women survivors of domestic abuse told us about their experience of building relationships with the local press after they had reported in detail on one woman's very traumatic experience in one particular incident of abuse. The agency contacted the reporter to convey the woman's extreme distress at having had the details of her abuse reported in this way. The reporter met with the agency and discussed different approaches and is now planning a feature on domestic abuse, with the agency's cooperation. The agency also worked with local police and fiscals to seek to influence the reporting of details of incidents in open court.

This experience shows that positive developments can come out of unhelpful reporting – but due to the extremely traumatic impact on the individuals concerned it is always better to avoid this kind of reporting.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Working on stories about VAW can impact on the health and wellbeing of journalists. In particular, many women journalists will have experienced, or currently be experiencing, some form of VAW, and so engaging with the issue for work can be particularly traumatising.

While threats, abuse and violence are part of many journalists' experiences, a number of these types of incidents take on a gender or sexual component when directed at women. According to a global research project investigating violence against women media workers, 64.48% of women journalists experienced 'intimidation, threats or abuse' in relation to their work.

In addition, many women who are experiencing VAW are targeted in the workplace. For example, an abusive partner may make repeated phone calls

to their partner's office or threaten to share private information with colleagues.⁴⁶

Although challenging topics, and even threats and abuse, can be seen as part of the job in some sections of the media, we would strongly recommend that news outlets consider the potential impact of VAW on their staff, and implement policies to prevent or mitigate VAW in the workplace and support staff who work on potentially traumatising subjects.



TIP:

Further information and sources of support can be found on the Zero Tolerance website.
www.zerotolerance.org.uk

46 <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24192.pdf>

EXPERT ORGANISATIONS AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA COMMENT

► ZERO TOLERANCE

ROLE: A national organisation campaigning to end men's violence against women in all its forms and with a specific focus on primary prevention of violence through changing society's attitudes, values and structures

T: 0131 556 7365

E: info@zerotolerance.org.uk

W: www.zerotolerance.org.uk

MEDIA CONTACT: Lydia House, Communications & Events Officer

T: 0131 5567365

M: 07826558068

E: lydia.house@zerotolerance.org.uk

► SCOTTISH WOMEN'S AID

ROLE: The lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse and a lead provider of services for women including refuge accommodation.

T: 0131 226 6606

E: info@womensaid.scot

W: www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk

MEDIA CONTACT: Brenna Jessie, External Affairs Officer

M: 07387575163

E: brenna.jessie@womensaid.scot

► RAPE CRISIS SCOTLAND

ROLE: The national office for the rape crisis movement in Scotland, supporting service development and raising awareness of sexual violence, challenging attitudes and pressing for legal change.

T: 0141 331 4180

E: info@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

W: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

MEDIA CONTACT: Sandy Brindley, National Coordinator

T: 0141 331 4180

E: Sandy.Brindley@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

► ENGENDER

ROLE: A membership organisation working on an anti-sexist agenda in Scotland and Europe to increase women's power and influence and make visible the impact of sexism on women, men and society.

T: 0131 558 9596

E: info@engender.org.uk

W: www.engender.org.uk

MEDIA CONTACT: Alys Mumford, Communications and Engagement Manager

T: 07889805790

E: media@engender.org.uk

► SAHELIYA

ROLE: Specialist mental health and well-being support organisation for black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women and girls (12+) in the Edinburgh and Glasgow area

T: 0131 556 9302

E: info@saheliya.co.uk

W: www.saheliya.co.uk/

MEDIA CONTACT: Alison Davies, Director

T: 0141 552 6540

E: alison@saheliya.co.uk

► THE EQUALITY NETWORK

ROLE: national charity working for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) equality and human rights in Scotland

T: 0131 467 6039

E: en@equality-network.org

W: www.equality-network.org/

MEDIA CONTACT: Hannah Pearson,
Policy Co-ordinator

T: 0131 467 6039

E: hannah@equality-network.org or
press@equality-network.org

► TRAFFICKING AWARENESS RAISING ALLIANCE (TARA)

ROLE: support service for trafficking survivors, to help identify and support women who may have been trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation

T: 0141 276 7724

E: CommsafetyTARA@glasgow.gov.uk

W: www.communitysafetyglasgow.org/what-we-do/supporting-victims-of-gender-based-violence

► INCLUSION SCOTLAND

ROLE: Inclusion Scotland works to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens.

T: 0131 281 0860

E: info@inclusionscotland.org

W: inclusionscotland.org/

► WOMEN'S SUPPORT PROJECT

ROLE: A feminist voluntary organisation, which works to raise awareness of the extent, causes and effect of male violence against women, and for improved services for those affected by violence

T: 0141 418 0748

E: enquiries@womenssupportproject.org.uk

W: www.womenssupportproject.co.uk

► SCOTTISH TRANS ALLIANCE

ROLE: Equality Network project to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality, rights and inclusion in Scotland

T: 0131 467 6039

E: sta@equality-network.org or info@scottishtrans.org

W: www.scottishtrans.org/

► AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SCOTLAND

ROLE: The Scottish office of Amnesty, a campaigning organisation whose purpose is to protect people wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

T: 0131 718 6076

E: scotland@amnesty.org.uk

W: www.amnesty.org.uk/

► WHITE RIBBON SCOTLAND

ROLE: A campaign for men in Scotland who want to end violence against women.

E: info@whiteribbonscotland.org.uk

T: 07563 774 525

W: www.whiteribbonscotland.org.uk

► BARNARDO'S SCOTLAND

ROLE: A children's charity whose purpose is to reach out to the most disadvantaged children, young people, families and communities to help ensure that every child has the best possible start in life. Barnardo's Scotland runs a number of projects on domestic abuse and sexual exploitation.

T: 0131 334 9893

E: info@barnardos.org.uk

W: www.barnardos.org.uk/scotland

MEDIA CONTACT: Katrina Slater, Media and Communications Manager

T: 0131 446 7000

E: katrina.slater@barnardos.org.uk

HELPLINES

► POLICE SCOTLAND

T: 999 – Emergency

T: 101 – Non-Emergency

► SCOTLAND'S DOMESTIC ABUSE AND FORCED MARRIAGE HELPLINE

Help for anyone with experience of domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues and professionals who support them

T: 0800 027 1234 – Free, confidential, 7 days, 24 hours a day

E: helpline@sdaafh.org.uk (response within 2 days by email)

► CHILDLINE

Counselling service for children and young people

T: 0800 11 11 – Free, confidential, 7 days, 24 hours a day

► RAPE CRISIS SCOTLAND HELPLINE

Help for anyone affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened.

T: 08088 01 03 02 - any day - 6pm - midnight.

T: 0141 353 3091 if you are deaf or hard of hearing

RESPECT PHONELINE

For anyone who is concerned about their own behaviour towards their partner (male, female, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships)

T: 0808 802 4040, confidential, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

► FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) HELPLINE

Call the FGM helpline if you're worried a child is at risk of, or has had, FGM.

T: 0800 028 3550 – Free, confidential, 7 days, 24 hours a day

► AMINA MUSLIM WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

Help for women in English, Urdu, Arabic, Punjabi, Bangli and Swahili and, when required, using online interpreting.

T: 0808 801 0301 – Monday to Friday – 10am – 4pm

W: www.mwrc.org.uk

► SHAKTI WOMEN'S AID

Help for black minority ethnic (BME) women, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse.

T: 0131 475 2399 – 9.30-4pm / Mon-Fri

W: www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk





For further information please
email **info@zerotolerance.org.uk**
or **call 0131 556 7365**