



The Gender Equality Duty in Health

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About the Women's Resource Centre

- The Women's Resource Centre (WRC) is a charity which supports women's organisations to be more effective and sustainable.
- We provide training, information, resources and one-to-one support on a range of organisational development issues. We also lobby decision makers on behalf of the women's not-for-profit sector for improved representation and funding.



Gender inequality in the UK

The scale of women's inequality in the UK is huge:

- Rape conviction rates have dropped steadily from 33% of reported cases in 1977 to only 5.29% in 2004. If poverty were measured on the basis of individual income, 52% of married women would be under the income support poverty line, compared to just 11% of men.
- Female graduates earn, on average, 15% less than their male counterparts at the age of 24, with this gender pay gap widening with age.
- Just over a quarter of local authority councillors are women and no region has yet to reach the threshold of one-third female councillors.
- Only 2% of local councillors were Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women in 2006.
(Source: WRC)



Why violence against women is a gender equality issue

- Violence against women (VAW) is acknowledged by the United Nations as one of the key causes and consequences of women's inequality.
- VAW includes: rape and sexual abuse; female genital mutilation, forced and early marriage, stalking, crimes in the name of 'honour', trafficking and sexual exploitation, sexual harassment and domestic violence.



Why violence against women is a gender equality issue (2)

- Each year across the UK **3 million women** experience violence, and there are many more living with the legacies of abuse experienced in the past.
- It is conservatively estimated that 80,000 women suffer rape every year and 300,000 women experience sexual assault.
- At least 32% of children, mostly girls, experience some form of child sexual abuse.
- An estimated 86,000 women living in the UK have undergone female genital mutilation and 7000 girls under 16 are currently at risk.
- *At least 50%* women in the mental health system and in prison are survivors of violence and abuse.



Why violence against women is a health issue

- Long term effects of recent and historic violence and abuse include:
 - post-traumatic stress disorder
 - anxiety and panic attacks
 - depression
 - social phobia
 - substance misuse
 - obesity
 - eating disorders
 - self harm and suicide



Why violence against women is a health issue (2)

- Violence is the leading cause of women's morbidity.
- Violence against women is the biggest barrier to women's health and social well-being in the UK and is costly to the state.
- Rape victims are far more likely than victims of other violent crime to experience long-term mental health problems.
- It costs the NHS £1.2 billion a year for purely physical injuries with an added £176 million for mental health care.
- Each rape costs over £76,000, and the cost of sexual violence to society was £8.5 billion in 2003-04 *alone*.



Specialist women's voluntary organisations

- Specialists in meeting women's needs
- Added value e.g.
 - Long term support
 - Provide safe, women-only space
 - Women-centred
 - Independent
- Value for money



Specialist women's VCOs (2)

- Major risk of being wiped out – especially sexual violence support services
- Loss of women's organisations would result in loss of expertise & experience and increase burden on statutory services
- Women wouldn't want to go anywhere else



Specialist women's VCOs (3)

- Key issues:
 - Failure to prioritise VAW
 - Commissioning and procurement practices marginalise organisations delivering specialist services
 - DH grants failing women's health organisations
 - Misinterpretation of the GED




Policy drivers and targets

- National Service Framework for Mental Health
- **Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Mental Health**
- Safety, Privacy, Dignity
- Tackling the Health and Mental Health Effects of Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse
- Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse



Policy drivers and targets (2)

- DH Single Equality Scheme
- PSA 15 - Equality
- Tackling Health Inequalities
- Joint Health Needs Assessments
- The NHS Operating Framework
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Local Area Agreements & National Indicators
- **Gender Equality Duty** – ‘due regard’




How PCTs can address violence against women

- Gender Equality Duty and prioritisation of VAW
- Making the links between VAW & health
- Disaggregate data by gender (e.g. for JSNA, LAAs)
- Invest to save
- Involve local women's VCOs
- Debunk the equality myth!



Making the links

National indicator	Link to health
NI 20 Assault with injury crime rate	Reduction in VAW = reduction in no. women requiring health care for injuries
NI 26 Specialist support to victims of serious sexual offences	Rape Crisis Centres acknowledged as mental health service providers
NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence NI 34 Domestic violence – murder	Better identification in health would contribute to reduction in DV Specialist support for women available



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