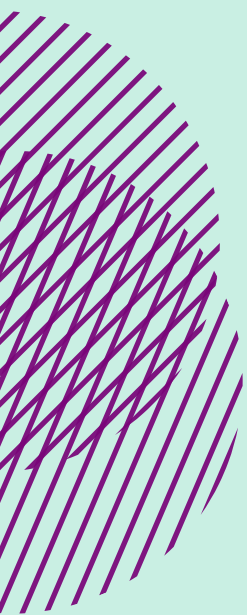


MANIFESTO TO PREVENT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A 10-year vision



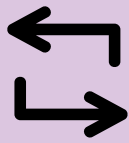
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MANIFESTO TO PREVENT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A 10-YEAR VISION: SUMMARY

Problems to be addressed

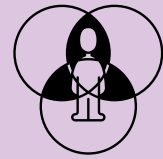
Shifting Social Norms



Engaging Men & Boys



Centring Intersectionality



Addressing the problems faced

Whole systems approach



Strategic leadership



Sustained, long-term funding



Prevention



Early and extended intervention



People who perpetrate gender-based violence



Training



Education



Multi-Agency Working



Criminal Justice System



ABOUT THE MANIFESTO

'This manifesto was developed from the input of academics, practitioners, policy makers and victim-survivors attending a two-day conference 'How can we prevent gender-based violence? A 10-year vision' in Leeds, 2024.'¹

Problems to be addressed.

Shifting Social Norms

Building on the achievements of feminists and their allies in scholarship, activism and political lobbying, gender-based violence should be viewed as everybody's business. In so doing it will put the perpetrator at the centre of system and societal cultural change processes in order to shift social norms of, for example, acceptable masculinity, femininity and to address intersecting inequalities. To achieve this, it is necessary to:

- revitalise a coordinated community response drawing on the positive effects of communities, recognising and supporting the roles of families and friends and realising that gender-based violence prevention and early intervention is everybody's concern and for everybody's benefit;
- ensure that the cultures of criminal justice and other statutory agencies are reformed to respond to long-standing criticisms of classism, ageism, racism, sexism, ableism and homo/transphobia;
- unpick the overlaying binaries of man/woman, (cis) heteronormative masculinity/ (cis) heteronormative femininity, strong/weak to allow communities and help-providers to see strength in victims, women who cause harm and men and non-binary people who are harmed.

1. While the manifesto covers gender-based violence overall, we recognise that a high number of delegates were specialised mainly on domestic abuse, and the content of the manifesto reflects that.



Engaging Men and Boys

Gender-based violence is a society level problem not a women's problem. Most (though not all) gender-based violence is perpetrated by men, and men need to be brought into focus more in prevention efforts. Men and boys also need to have greater involvement in ending gender-based violence, including contributing to campaigns, strategic leadership positions in the field, and interventions for people who perpetrate gender-based violence. The provision of high-quality support services for victim-survivors of gender-based violence is vital and in some cases lifesaving. This has been the focus for decades in the UK and it must continue. However, it is a holding position in terms of the continuation of gender-based violence. Quite simply, it is not possible to end gender-based violence without changing gender-based inequalities and investing in high quality behaviour change interventions. Alongside criminal justice remedies where required, this is the only way to end gender-based violence.

Centring Intersectionality

Different stories of domestic abuse need to be generated and disseminated to enable anybody who is harmed to recognise and name their harm, and seek and receive appropriate help. These should be visible in national or local campaigns and on government, statutory, third sector organisations' social media platforms. In addition is the need for comprehensive funding to train and employ specialist practitioners from racially minoritised, LGBTQ+, disabled, faith, refugee/asylum communities to address gaps of trust between victim-survivors and existing services.

Interpersonal harm should also be understood to take place in contexts other than a physical home and 'traditional' relationships and with more than one perpetrator. For example, peer violence in schools and public spaces, forced marriage, FGM, sexual exploitation in gangs, elder abuse in care settings, family abuse of LGBTQ+ adults, all challenge our assumptions about what counts as gender-based violence and who counts as potential victim-survivors and perpetrators. Services should approach the service user holistically, showing professional curiosity about their intersecting identities and how these might shape their victimisation (and perpetration), their support networks, their help-seeking, the degree to which they blame themselves, and their sense of what 'the problems' and 'solutions' might be.

Addressing the problems faced.

Whole systems approach

Adopting a coordinated, whole systems approach (inclusive of criminal justice, health, education and the voluntary sector) to tackling gender-based violence is needed, which is rooted in systems and cultural change. Such an approach will keep the perpetrator in view and will require effective data sharing, shared risk assessment and safety protocols and a shared vision for offender accountability. The emphasis is on reducing the stigma associated with gender-based violence and encouraging collective and whole-society responsibility linking gender-based violence to gender inequality and other structural inequalities. A whole systems approach demands an appreciation of the 'whole person' and their needs, cutting across issues such as mental health and other forms of marginalisation, reducing siloed interventions.

Strategic leadership

Whole systems changes require senior and political leadership to respond to and address the available evidence alongside grassroots concerns. Those with decision-making power over strategic/political direction and funding allocation should be seen to direct necessary funds commensurate with the scale of the problem, and defend and promote tackling gender-based violence as a priority for society. We still live in a society where the most senior and influential positions are held mainly by middle class, white, heterosexual men. Yet barely any men were present at our conference, and men remain almost invisible in the movement to end gender-based violence. We urgently need more men to step up, to be respectful of the work women have and are doing and not take over, but to ask: 'how can we help?' 'What do we need to do?'

Sustained, long-term funding

Gender-based violence has enormous costs for society and the state as a whole. Strategic, long-term funding and investment is urgently needed to ensure the full range of support services and housing are available, accessible and sustainable. A secure multi-year approach to funding for the gender-based violence sector is needed that provides equitable support provision for survivors, children and perpetrators across the UK nations, with ring-fenced funding for specialist services. This approach would require a systematic overhaul of the current competitive commissioning process. Longer term funding for specialist services will provide better industry planning, specialisation and retention of trained workers.

Prevention

Gender-based violence is preventable. To accomplish this, prevention needs to actively engage with boys and men, incorporating safe spaces to reflect on different cultural expectations around masculinities. This could include schools, sporting clubs, online and in shared community spaces. To achieve this, prevention initiatives require a whole systems response which recognises the intersecting inequalities across societal structures and institutions. This approach should work towards the elimination of harmful social norms, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions, including in online spaces, which sustain and reinforce gender-based violence entitlement and dominance.

Early and extended intervention

Effective early intervention necessitates an integrated, cross-sector, interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration across multiple system levels. Appropriate and timely trauma-informed referral processes alongside the provision of universal specialist community-based services, are central to early intervention. A priority is that interventions should be holistic, long-term and ensure the ongoing support necessary for victim- survivors to rebuild their lives, to recover and to heal. Investment in services for children and young people is essential, to ensure generational shift begins in terms of both attitudes and behaviours around gender-based violence. This should include emerging forms of technology-mediated violence and abuse that are increasingly prevalent amongst younger people, such as image-based abuse.

People who perpetrate gender-based violence

For people already identified as perpetrating gender-based violence, the prevention and escalation of further violence and abuse is crucial. Understanding perpetrator attitudes and behaviours is essential to build evidence-based interventions. This includes providing holistic interventions for all issues that perpetrators face that can exacerbate the perpetration of gender-based violence. These include mental health issues, substance misuse and poverty. Far greater diversity and specialism of services for different groups is required, and a much greater investment is needed for perpetrator programmes to expand. Clearer routes 'in' to this workforce are needed, and the quality of interventions must be maintained and enhanced as evidence and practice grows.

Training

Mandatory, regular and in-depth training is needed for all agencies involved in responding to gender-based violence, including criminal justice, health and social care, local authorities and family justice professionals. Training should be gendered, intersectional, trauma-informed, and holistic, centring whole systems approaches and recognise the complexities of interpersonal harm. Training should also include a focus on information sharing, risk identification and assessment and management practice across generalist and specialist settings.

Multi-Agency Working

Capacity-building is needed across statutory, third and private sectors to ensure that partnership relationships are trusted, reliable and consistent in their assessments and discussions of need and risk and with robust methods of information sharing. Statutory agencies should recognise and respect the role of third sector organisations, especially by and for organisations, in responding to gender-based violence; compensate them for their time; and be open to learning from them about the best ways to provide services to victims-survivors and perpetrators. Local commissioners should expect that service providers addressing gender-based violence will demonstrate good partnership working and recognise the importance of community engagement with local minoritised communities.

Education

Education, from primary schools to higher education, is a key site for both experiencing gender-based violence and for prevention and intervention. It is imperative that all educational settings recognise the seriousness of the problem, actively promote equality and are properly equipped to identify risk and respond to disclosures of harm. 'Whole-school' approaches to effective, trauma-informed, contextual safeguarding and investment in effective, child and young person centred, inclusive, Relationship and Sex Education are recommended. The role of specialist organisations, including 'by and for' services, in developing and delivering prevention programmes needs to be recognised and centrally funded.

Criminal Justice System

Criminal justice reform is urgently needed, which requires long-term work and systematic transformation. This includes police officers, prosecutors, the Judiciary and senior leaders in the criminal justice system. The implications of the crisis of prison overcrowding, early release and probation and court backlogs also need to be addressed. Reform should be victim-survivor centred and emphasise perpetrator accountability. This would also require greater understandings of the ways in which the criminal justice system harms marginalised and minoritised victim-survivors and offenders.



Contributors

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