

# COSLA submission of 6 April 2023

## PE1934/D: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

### 1. Background

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered the above petition at its meeting on 22 February 2023. At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to COSLA about the issues raised in the petition.

The Committee considered [COSLA's response](#) to its previous request for information and was keen to follow up on a number of points.

Namely:

- Which three local authorities have not yet rolled out the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme to secondary schools
- Information about what challenges might have prevented implementation in those local authorities and details of work planned to address those challenges
- The challenges facing Local Government in embedding the schools-based prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls

### 2. About COSLA

COSLA is the national membership organisation for Scottish Local Government, comprising all of Scotland's 32 councils. It sets the strategic direction for Local Government's relationship with both the UK and Scottish Governments to best deliver for Scotland's communities.

Much of COSLA's work is to ensure that councils have the powers and resources needed to deliver services that enable everyone to live well locally. [The COSLA Plan 2022 -2027](#) sets out our vision, high-level ambitions, and priorities.

**3. In response to the Committee’s query “which three local authorities have not yet rolled out the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MPV) programme to secondary schools?”**

COSLA does not hold the information that the Committee is seeking. The MVP National Implementation Team (Education Scotland) hold related information and their response to this request is included below:

**Please see the response to the Committee’s query offered by the National MPV Team:**

“Since 2020 all local authorities have continued to engage with the MVP programme. The final local authority to train staff is East Lothian and their staff teams will receive professional learning in May 2023. Our end of year report will be sent to Scottish Government at the end of April. Information regarding progress was also shared at the recent MVP board meeting.

A summary of this year’s reach is included below:

Using evidence from our school practitioner survey December 2022 (75 responses) and national team knowledge of schools that are delivering MVP, we have 165 secondary schools delivering MVP this session, with 31 local authorities at the delivery stage and 1 local authority engaged but without schools trained. Our survey indicates the average number of staff supporting the programme in a school was 4.8. The average number of mentors (senior learners) trained was 29 (range 3 to 87) suggesting this session there were approximately 4,785 mentors. Working in groups of 3, this indicates at least 6380 sessions were delivered reaching 47,820 younger learners. Many school staff deliver supplementary lessons in addition to those delivered by the mentors.”

(from MVP Business Plan 2023-24 submitted to Scottish Government)

For further information contact [Ian.Gardner@gov.scot](mailto:Ian.Gardner@gov.scot)

**About the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme**

The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a leadership programme which uses a bystander approach to empower young people to challenge attitudes and behaviours which can lead to gender based violence and bullying. The MVP Programme further supports the creation of safe and supportive learning environments. Positive relationships are directly linked to learning. The MVP Programme seeks to build relationships and support learning.

## **COSLA's Relationship with the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme**

COSLA is a member of the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme National Steering Group. The steering group was convened by the Safer Communities Division of Scottish Government with the first meeting held in January 2016. The Steering Group agrees a rolling programme of work set out by the National MVP Team.

### **4. In response to the Committee's request for 'Information about what challenges might have prevented implementation in those local authorities and details of work planned to address those challenges'.**

COSLA does not hold the information that the Committee is seeking. The MVP National Implementation Team (Education Scotland) holds related information and their response to this request for information is included below:

"Engaging in the MVP programme is voluntary and local authorities join when time is right for them to participate. (staffing / readiness checklist etc)

The national roll out of MVP was always planned on an incremental basis with a small number of local authorities newly engaged each year. This allowed careful planning and support from the small national team, both for initial implementation, further roll out and the embedding of the programme in the schools".

MPV National Implementation Team

### **5. In response to the Committee's request for information on 'The challenges facing Local Government in embedding the schools-based prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls**

COSLA does not hold the direct information that the Committee is seeking.

The MVP National Implementation Team (Education Scotland) hold related information and their response to this request for information is included below:-

“Pre-covid the main challenges identified by practitioners were timetabling including room allocation, taking senior learners out of class to deliver the lessons to younger learners. Additionally, time to prepare mentors and meet with them regularly. The buy in of the senior leadership team was important as was support from the LA central team and the national team

(MVP Annual Report 2018-19).

These challenges remain with the pandemic also impacting delivery.

Feedback from Local Authority MVP coordinators in 2022 noted that the main challenges faced were,

‘a reduction in available staff in existing schools due to staff moving on and lack of staff availability where staff have remained.’

(MVP Annual Report 2021-22).

The National team have found that changes of co-ordinator can slow progress. Additionally, many co-ordinators have multiple roles and may have limited capacity to support the roll out of MVP”.

MPV National Implementation Team

### **Additional information relevant to the Committee’s Query**

COSLA’s co-owns the [Equally Safe Strategy](#) with the Scottish Government. COSLA works closely within the context of the local implementation of Equally Safe with the Improvement Service and the National Violence Against Women Network.

### **About the National Violence Against Women Network**

Equally Safe: Scotland’s Strategy to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) highlights the need for agencies across every area of Scottish life to work together to tackle violence against women and girls. At a local level, Violence Against Women Partnerships are recognised as the strategic driver for this multi-agency work and bring together the key third sector and public sector organisations working to improve outcomes for women and children who have experienced VAWG in each local authority area.

To support the local implementation of Equally Safe, the National Violence Against Women Network brings together local VAW

Partnership Coordinators/ Lead Officers across Scotland and other key national stakeholders to share information, learning and resources and ensure that there is meaningful engagement and a coordinated approach taken on relevant issues.

Violence Against Women Partnership Guidance outlines a number of 'minimum standards' that the Scottish Government and COSLA expect all VAWPs to work towards meeting. These include having a strategic plan in place that outlines how the VAWP will implement Equally Safe at a local level and using a performance management framework to measure the progress they are making towards achieving the partnership's agreed activities, outputs and outcomes.

The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provides a framework to support VAW Partnerships and their partner organisations to measure their progress and performance, and to help identify any areas where improvements may be required.

Related learning offered to the Committee in response this question via the Improvement Service is included below. This information has been taken from Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Management Framework 2021-22.

For more information contact

[Joanna.McLaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:Joanna.McLaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk)

### **Improvement Service information – Challenges VAWPS are facing with engagement with schools or youth organisations to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls**

- 50% of local authority areas reported that their VAW Partnership partly met the quality standard relating to engagement with primary and secondary schools. This indicates that there are some processes in place to engage with primary and secondary schools across the local community to help ensure they deliver age-appropriate evidence-based interventions to raise children, teachers and parents' understanding and awareness of gender-based violence, positive, healthy relationships and consent, as part of a whole school approach to tackling VAWG, however there may be no examples of partners working together to support a whole school approach to tackling VAWG. 4% did not meet this quality standard.
- 64% of local authority areas reported that they partly met the quality standard relating to youth work engagement. This indicates that there

are only a few youth work organisations delivering interventions across the area, or youth work organisations only deliver interventions to a small proportion of young people. 11% did not meet this quality standard, meaning that no youth work organisations are delivering interventions.

### Challenges – Schools

- It can take a long time to get an education representative on VAW Partnership.
- Local specialist services sometimes provide input into schools, however VAWPs themselves sometimes do not have processes in place.
- Awareness raising and other related work is taking place, however not to the same extent as pre-pandemic as limitations were put in place.
- Input in primary schools tends to be delivered within the broader context of health & wellbeing/healthy relationships and the abuse of power, rather than specifically about VAWG.
- Capacity and funding have limited the number of schools that are offered educational workshops and other awareness raising content, and certain local authority areas feel that there is not a sufficient number of schools receiving the same content.
- Often there is only one provider of programmes for schools, which impacts ability to provide to all schools across a local authority area.
- There needs to be a greater focus on prevention in engagement work with schools.

### Challenges – Youth Work

- Planned scoping for youth work involvement has been delayed due to capacity and COVID-19 pressures.
- Some local authority areas have stated they have no direct work regarding VAWG taking place in youth work settings as youth work are not involved in local VAWG planning.
- Group work still needs to be re-established since restrictions during the pandemic stopped this.
- There is insufficient funding to cover demand of programmes across youth work settings.

- Youth organisations involvement in VAWP activities can sometimes be through schools and specific organisations rather than directly through their own contacts with the VAWP.
- Sometimes only a few youth organisations, potentially even only one, engaged with the delivery of related provision in a local authority.

## **6. COSLA's involvement in wider work to tackle gender-based violence and gender inequality in education**

COSLA contributes to a number of other national forums intended to consider and address gender-based violence in education. COSLA is part of and contributes to the work of the Gender-Based Violence in Schools Working Group, which is currently working to develop a National Framework, to be used by school staff, to help prevent and respond to harmful behaviour and gender based violence in schools.

COSLA is also part of the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning, the future work of which is anticipated to focus on taking forward a range of recommendations to tackle gender inequality, and prevent and address gender-based violence, in educational settings.