



Something to think about when involving women victims-survivors¹ of sexual or domestic violence and abuse in your campaigning.

Feminist campaigns for women's rights and against all forms of male violence against women have always been directly informed by women's experiences, by their stories of survival and recovery and by honouring those who did not survive. Women's stories are very powerful; their voices have often galvanised public opinion and led to highly successful campaigns and social movements. The history of feminist activism against male violence shows us that women's personal experiences of sexual and domestic violence and abuse can be a key motivating factor in their involvement in social movements for change. Given the high lifetime prevalence of sexual and domestic violence and abuse in the general population of women in Scotland, it is therefore likely that the membership of women's organisations today will include a high proportion of victims-survivors.

Victims-survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse have experienced trauma, and may find it very difficult to talk about what has happened to them. Their stories continue to be highlighted at conferences, in interviews, campaigns and/or in mainstream or social media. Going public with a very personal story can be daunting and risky and places a duty of care on the organisations who invite women to participate and share their stories and it is vital that they adopt a safeguarding approach. Key to this is a recognition that recovering from trauma is a process requiring time and specialised support as survivors proceed through three key stages:

- Establishing safety.
- Remembering, processing and healing
- Reconnection and recovery².

Moving through these stages can take time and the process may not be linear. Recalling traumatising experiences from their past may cause women further distress and their safety and wellbeing is paramount. The following guidance takes a trauma-informed approach to working directly with victims-survivors in the context of public campaigning

GUIDANCE

¹ In different contexts and documents you may see two terms, *victim* and *survivor*, used to describe those, usually women, who have experienced sexual and domestic violence and abuse. The term *victim* is used in criminal justice contexts. However, anti-Violence Against Women campaigners argue that using it in other contexts implies women are passive victims and denies their individual agency and resistance. Many prefer the term *survivor* which signals recovery. However, there may be situations when one or other term is the most appropriate. We will use the term *victim-survivor* or *victims-survivors* to more closely reflect that continuum of individual personal experiences

² Herman, J. (2015), *Trauma and recovery - The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*

NB It is not advisable to work directly with:

- **women in the immediate aftermath of an incident of sexual violence;**
- **women within two years of leaving an abusive relationship;**
- **women whose experiences are the subject of court proceedings;**
- **children or young people;**
- **adults at risk of harm.**

Ask if they feel safe. Ask them if they are feeling frightened and, if they are, ask what they are afraid of and do what you can to reassure them. Suggest that they bring along a friend or someone to support them.

Explain your organisation's aims and your role in it.

Let them know in advance what to expect from their involvement with your organisation.

Ask them how and what they wish to contribute and make sure this is agreed with all concerned.

Ensure you have their informed, preferably written, consent to participate. This should include supporting the woman to consider the longer term use of her material. For example if it is a video, would she be happy with this being available on the internet forever? Agreeing with the woman what boundaries she wishes to set for the use of her material should be included on the consent form; for example time limits; sharing on particular social media platforms; use by broadcast media. Supporting the woman to consider this would safeguard her content and also protect the group. Ensuring the woman has control over the terms of use would support her to feel safe.

Give them control. The person needs to be in control and to make their own decisions about their involvement/participation in your work. Reassure them that they can stop or withdraw their consent to participate at any time.

Caution should be exercised where new, potentially defamatory, information about a third party is disclosed or where such disclosure relates to past or current criminal behaviour or court proceedings involving the participant or a third party. Should this occur the interview/contribution should be halted and the participant offered the choice of redoing or ending the interview.

Ensure your organisation is culturally competent and provides opportunities which are accessible to all women who may wish to participate. For example by supporting the involvement of women with disabilities, older women, women from black or minority ethnic communities, those for whom English is a second language, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women in rural, remote or island communities and others in hard to reach groups.

Invite them to visit the venue for the event before the start if possible.

Provide information about specialist support agencies or helplines to your contributors and to your audience.

Respect their confidentiality: ask them if they wish to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym. Let them know in advance if the proceedings are to be recorded and ask if this is OK. It is paramount to maintain the woman's privacy by not revealing her home address, workplace, place of education, social media identity or those of members of her family, children, friends or colleagues.

Spend some time with them at the end of their contribution to make sure they feel OK, to relax and debrief. Please arrange for them to get home safely if necessary.

Take care of yourself. Working alongside victims-survivors of sexual or domestic violence and abuse can be distressing. It is important that you know where to find support for yourself either within your organisation or from external support services or helplines.

Additional resources

Cultural competence for abuse survivors – Samra Zafar

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGNmIS9_ozg

Guidance on responding to GBV disclosures in campus settings.

<https://www.endgbv.uk/Supportforsomeoneelse/tabid/7986/Default.aspx>

Opening doors – trauma informed practice for the workforce

<https://vimeo.com/274703693>

This animation was developed by NHS Education for Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Government. It is designed to be relevant to all workers within the Scottish workforce.

Trauma and the brain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-tcYx24aA>

Understanding abuse survivors' responses. This animation is for any professional working with a service user when GBV is a feature in the case.

Zero Tolerance Scotland's Media Guidance for violence against women

<https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Media-Guidelines-on-Violence-Against-Women.pdf>

Support agencies and helplines in Scotland

Police Scotland

999 – Emergency 101 – Non-Emergency

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline

0800 027 1234 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Free and confidential service for anyone of any gender who has experienced domestic abuse or forced marriage.

helpline@ndafmhs.org.uk (response within 2 days by email)

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

08088 01 03 02 - between 6pm and midnight every night or by email support@rapecrisisScotland.org.uk

Full details of access to support for people who are deaf or hard of hearing can be found

at <https://www.rapecrisisScotland.org.uk/help-deaf-access-to-support/>

We can arrange for language interpreters.

Free and **confidential** support and information for anyone, women and men, affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) helpline (run by NSPCC)

0800 028 3550 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Free and confidential help for anyone who is worried a child is at risk of, or has had, FGM.

Childline

0800 11 11 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Free and confidential service to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through.

Email and online chat available <https://www.childline.org.uk>

Respect Phonenumber

0808 802 4040 - 9am-5pm - Monday-Friday

Free and confidential service for anyone who is concerned about their own behaviour towards their partner (male, female, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships).

Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre

0808 801 0301 - 10am-4pm, Monday to Friday

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

Shakti Women's Aid

0131 475 2399 - 9.30am-4pm - Monday to Friday

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

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Phone: 08088 010 789

Help for self-identifying women aged 16 and over affected by violence and abuse by providing free legal information and advice through helpline, legal surgeries and ongoing casework.

Legal information

Monday 2 - 5 pm

Tuesday 6 - 8 pm

Wednesday 11 am - 2 pm

Friday 10 am - 1 pm

Advocacy support

Tuesday 11 am - 2 pm

Sexual harassment

Thursday 5 - 8 pm

National Stalking Helpline

Phone: 0808 802 0300

This is a confidential service if you're impacted by stalking. They'll provide impartial advice and information to men and women, including:

- how to identify if you're being stalked
- the law on stalking
- how to protect yourself
- talking to the police

Victim Support Scotland

Phone: 0800 160 1985

Gives free and confidential support to men and women, and practical help for victims and witnesses of crime.

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