



BRIEFING

16 Days of Action
2022: Prevention
and Speaking Out

The logo for Rape Crisis Scotland, featuring the text "RAPE CRISIS SCOTLAND" in a bold, sans-serif font, stacked vertically. The text is white and set against a dark, textured background that resembles a halftone or dot pattern.

**RAPE
CRISIS
SCOTLAND**



Prevention and Speaking Out

Rape Crisis Scotland is Scotland's leading organisation working to end sexual violence. We should all be able to live free from the fear and threat of sexual violence. At Rape Crisis Scotland we work to raise awareness of the prevalence and impact of rape, sexual assault and abuse, advocate for better health, justice and community responses, and work to make sure that no matter what happened or when, survivors can access specialist support.

16 Days of Action is an opportunity to focus our minds and redouble our efforts to tackle male-violence; the issues before us are not without solutions, but these solutions require Political will, investment and for all of us who believe in equality and safety to raise our voices together.

It's essential for men to speak out against violence against women and girls. But having these conversations can be difficult, especially for young men. Channels of communication around issues like consent, healthy relationships and the impact of the pressures of masculinity need to be open.

Bold leadership is needed from men in positions of authority across society to normalise these conversations and to foster a culture where violence against women and girls is never tolerated.

Prevention

We believe that sexual violence is not inevitable, and we cannot accept it as such. The scale of work necessary to challenge and change the attitudes that permit sexual violence is great, but the determination that we – and so many across society – hold to live in a Scotland that is equally safe is greater.

A key part of this work to prevent sexual violence in Scotland happens in schools across the country.

Prevention Workers from all 17 Rape Crisis Centres, from the Western Isles to the Scottish Borders, deliver workshops in schools in their areas. Workshops cover issues including gender, consent, pornography and the impact of sexual violence.

Workshops from Prevention Workers have reached over 122,435 young people since the programme started in 2013.

Equally Safe at School

Equally Safe at School (ESAS) is a key part of our prevention work. ESAS takes a whole school approach, working with secondary school staff and students to prevent Gender-Based Violence and to increase confidence and skills in responding to incidents and disclosures of such violence.

It aims to positively influence the school culture by fostering a shared, consistent approach to Gender-Based Violence. ESAS is underpinned by principles of equality, safety, and accessibility, with student voices at the forefront. ESAS has been launched as an interactive website so that schools can undertake it independently at their own pace, with staff training delivered by their local Rape Crisis Centre.

Through ESAS schools are encouraged to establish Action groups with staff and students working together to identify their own solutions, such as projects or events to educate and raise awareness, and steps to increase student confidence in seeking help when they need it. We'd encourage any boys and young men who are interested in tackling and preventing Gender-Based Violence in their schools to talk to the teacher leading ESAS in their school about getting involved, or to find out more about ESAS if their school hasn't started it yet

Several Rape Crisis Centres across the country also run youth activism groups involving young people from their local areas, supporting young leaders to run programmes of activism to tackle sexual violence in their communities, and helping to shape the content of prevention workshops targeted at their peers.

One Youth Ambassador said: "If we're to take GBV seriously, I believe we need to empower young men, and show other young men how to seek support where needed, challenge stereotypes, and ultimately have a genuine understanding of the problems that have plagued our society for years, create a movement and change a culture."

We're calling on Members of the Scottish Parliament to:

- Familiarise themselves with ESAS and engage with local authority leaders and schools to encourage leadership and engagement in the area.
- Get in touch with their local Rape Crisis Centre to ask how they can support their prevention work, and any Youth Ambassador or activist groups.
- Advocate for sustainable funding for the Rape Crisis Prevention Programme, ensuring that we have the resources to continue to deliver

specialist interventions which are critical to enabling a safe space for young people to talk about consent and healthy sexual relationships, and that these are able to reach the young people who need them the most, including those with additional support needs.

- Advocate for sustainable funding for our work with colleges and universities to ensure Violence Against Women organisations continue to be at the heart of the work of colleges and universities to prevent violence, and that survivors get the support they need when they disclose.

Creating a culture of change

Engaging with boys and young men is critical to preventing sexual violence. But children and young people cannot be expected to change cultural norms by themselves.

It's crucial that boys and young men have access to safe and compassionate spaces where they are able to express their feelings and communicate about the issues that affect them and their lives, including Gender-Based Violence and the pressures they face to conform to restrictive norms around masculinity.

For true cultural change around violence against women and girls, we need to see robust and bold leadership from adult men. We're calling for community and faith leaders, teachers, police officers, medical professionals, sports leaders and political leaders to actively speak out against sexual violence.

It's also essential that men challenge problematic views and behaviour when they encounter them, especially among their own friend and peer groups.

We saw examples of this positive behaviour in Police Scotland's recent Don't Be That Guy campaign.

We are asking Members of the Scottish Parliament to:

- Speak out against sexism, sexual violence and inequality in your communities.
- Challenge societal attitudes which prevent boys and men from expressing their feelings and concerns freely.
- For male MSPs to act as role models for young men in their communities to take a stance against violence against women and girls. Being a role model doesn't mean you have to be an expert. It just means speaking up about the belief that through equality lies a better society for us all.