

# DELIVERING EQUALLY SAFE

## Impact Report

October 2023 - March 2024



## **Content Warning**

This report includes content of a sensitive nature including real life descriptions of gender-based violence that readers may find challenging or distressing.

Please practice self-care during and after reading.

Cover photo: Orkney Rape And Sexual Assault Service,  
Peedie Birds at St Magnus Cathedral for 16 Days of Activism

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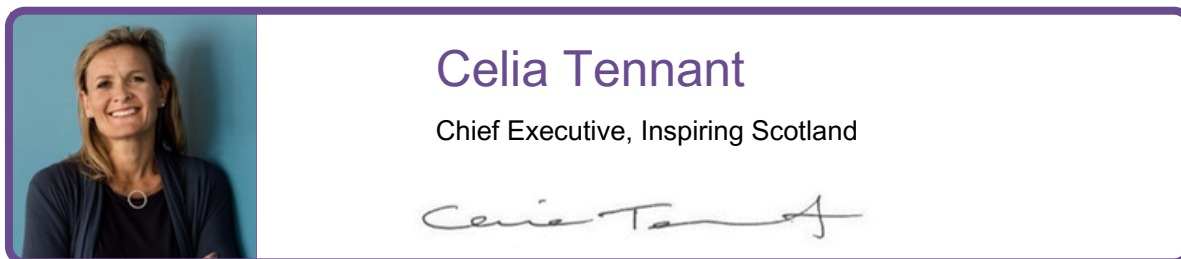
# Welcome

We are delighted to present the fifth Impact Report on the Delivering Equally Safe (DES) fund, covering the period from October 2023 – March 2024. The report highlights the essential work delivered by 120 projects funded through the Scottish Government’s Delivering Equally Safe fund. The DES funded organisations are focused on providing vital support to survivors, and on essential work to tackle gender-based violence through preventative measures. In the six months to the end of March 2024, DES funded organisations have supported 67,004 adults, children and young people.

For this report we have focused on work delivered by funded groups which mitigates the impact of violence against children and young people (CYP). The learning has been compiled from the six month progress reports submitted by funded organisations. The reports highlight the importance of tailored services specifically for children and young people, and the multi-agency response to supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

We also focus on the emerging challenges of young people in abusive relationships and the impact of increasing non-attendance at school. Throughout this report, we showcase the examples and case studies from the organisations themselves.

It remains a privilege to work alongside the funded organisations in the DES portfolio who are committed to making a difference to the lives of women and girls in Scotland. Although the external environment remains challenging, we reiterate our commitment to collaborative working with DES funded organisations to enable them to continue their vital work. We would like to express our thanks to the organisations for the work they do, and to the individuals who have shared their stories with us.



## Introduction

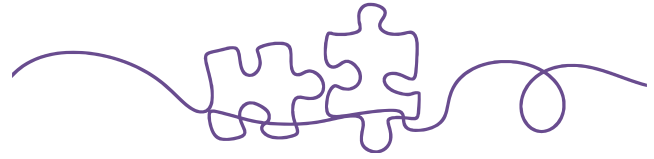
This Delivering Equally Safe (DES) Impact Report covers the period October 2023 – March 2024, and has been compiled through analysing the 120 DES progress reports submitted by funded organisations. It highlights the work the 112 DES funded organisations undertook to prevent and tackle violence against women and girls throughout Scotland.

Throughout this fifth impact report, we will focus on the work supporting children and young people (CYP) affected by violence against women, children and young people. The report focuses on key themes including; CYP affected by domestic abuse in their relationships, safeguarding CYP, mental health & wellbeing, the impact of the national housing crisis on CYP, and the impact of school non-attendance.



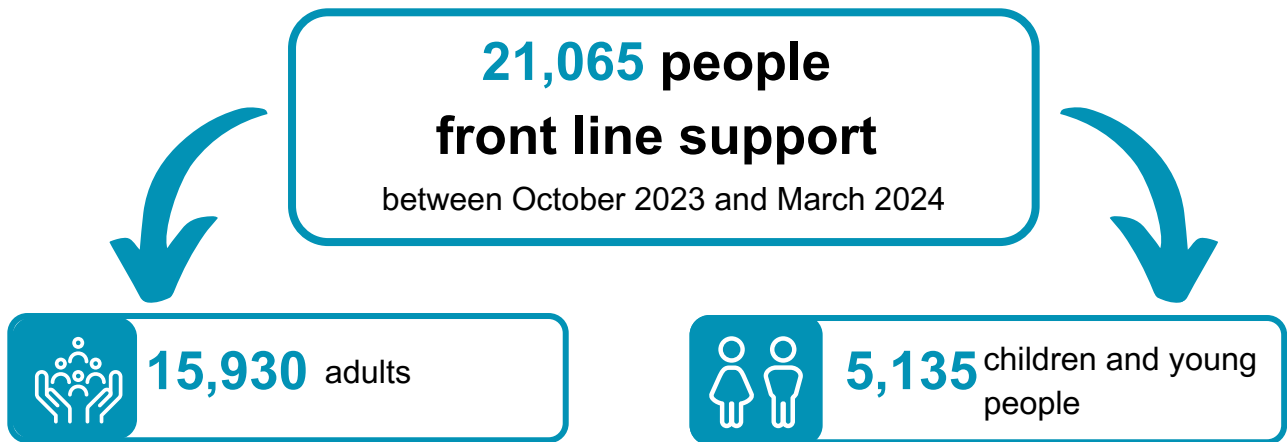
## Section 1

# DES fund in numbers



## 1.1 Frontline activity

The number of individuals engaged in frontline support dropped slightly compared to the previous reporting period with 21,065 people receiving support between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024.



Of these, **8,851 adults** and **2,673 children and young people** were **new** to services (or re-engaged after previously ending support) during the six month period.

### This included:



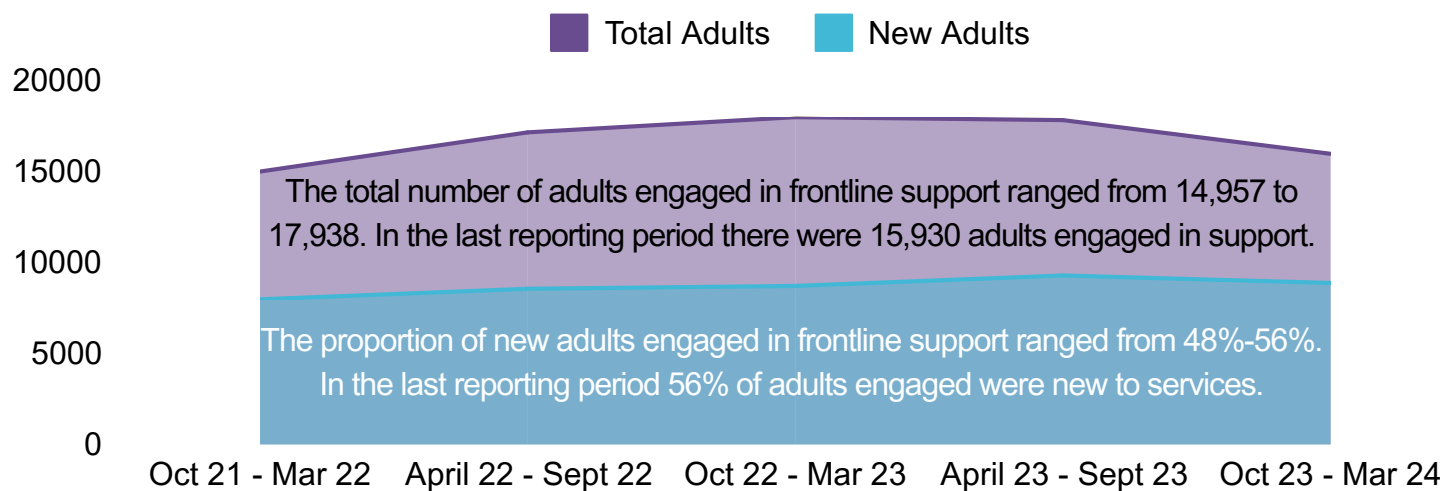
# 1.1 Frontline activity - cont.

Data was collected on the total number of adults, children and young people organisations worked with, as well as a breakdown of how many people, within this total, who engaged for the first time during the six month period. Between October 2023 and March 2024, there were 1,125 fewer adults and 681 fewer CYP engaged with services compared to the previous six months. The number of adults and CYP who were new to engaging with services also declined compared to the previous six months.

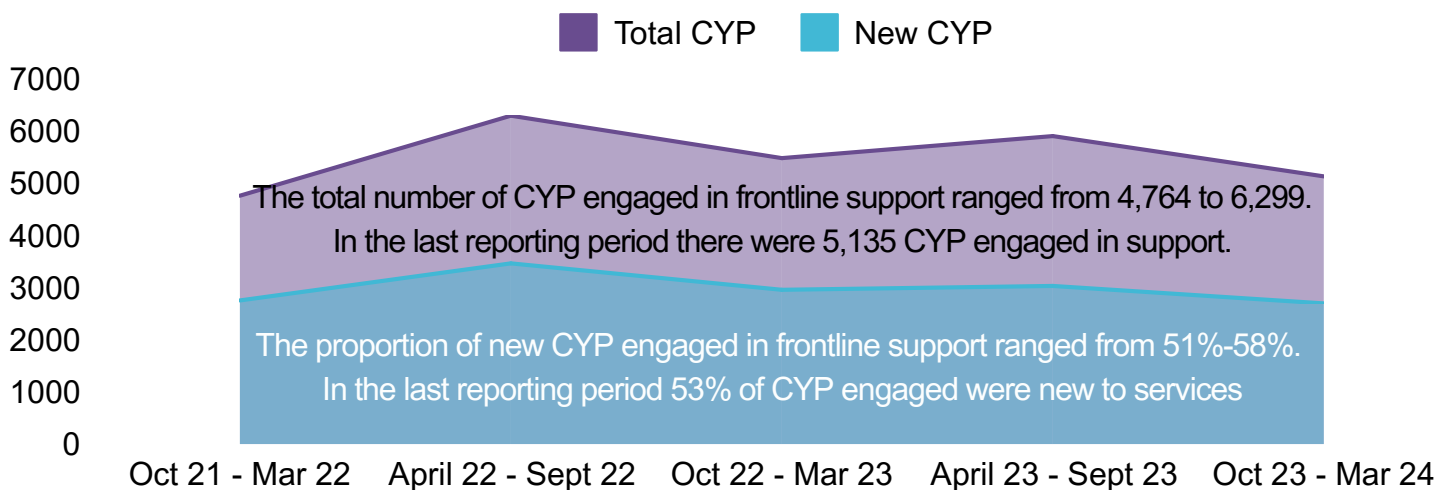


The charts below shows data for the last five reporting periods covering October 2021 to March 2024. CYP engagements consistently peak between April and September and decline from October to March.

Adults engaged in frontline support (total and new) October 2021 - March 2024



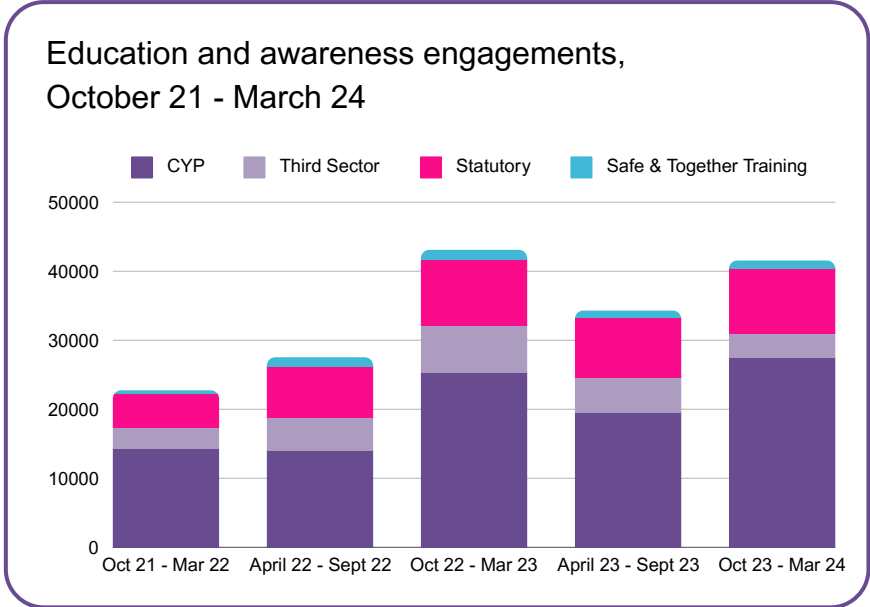
CYP engaged in frontline support (total and new) October 2021 - March 2024



# 1.2 Prevention activity

Data was gathered on the number of individuals participating in education and awareness activities across the following categories: children and young people, statutory sector, third sector, and Safe & Together Training. Engagement in DES funded education and awareness activities reached its second highest level during the October 2023 to March 2024 reporting period, with the majority of participants continuing to be children and young people.

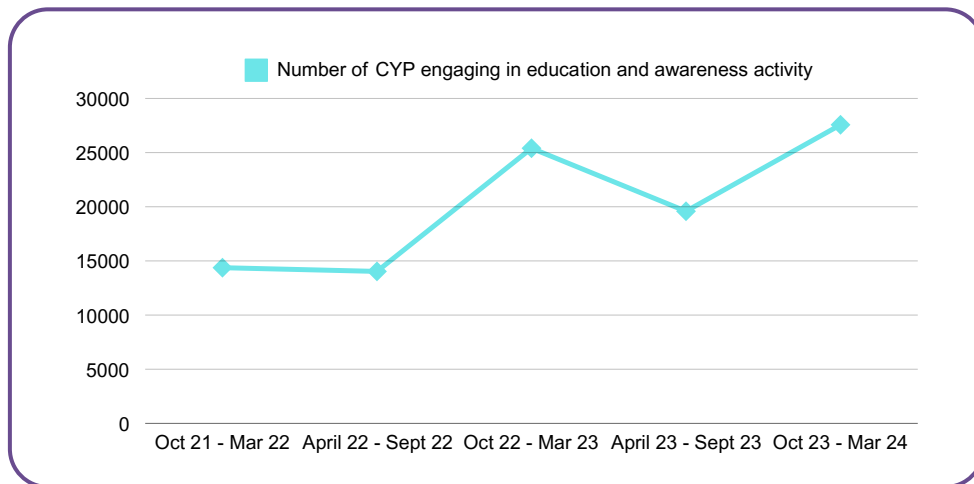
**41,565**  
people engaged in  
education and  
awareness sessions  
between  
October 23 - March 24



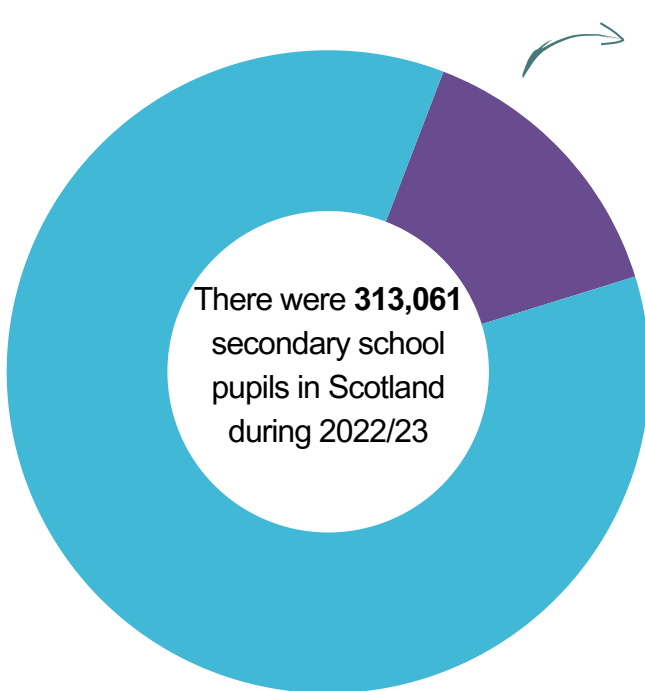
Picture Credit: Western  
Isles Rape Crisis Centre

## 1.2 Prevention activity, cont.

During the reporting period 45 organisations delivered education and awareness sessions to 27,568 children and young people.



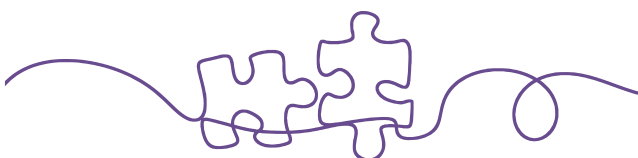
Awareness-raising and prevention work about domestic abuse is aligned with the Equally Safe Strategy, which emphasises education as a critical component in changing societal attitudes and reducing abuse. The activity addresses issues such as consent, healthy relationships, helping young people understand the signs of abusive behaviour, and challenging gender stereotypes and gender equality from an early age. This approach to domestic abuse education aims to create supportive environments where young people learn to foster healthy relationships, recognise abuse, and contribute to a culture of respect and safety.



**14%** of secondary school pupils engaged in funded education and awareness activity during the 2022/23 school term.

*"I know there were differences for guys and girls on a night out, but I didn't realise the amount girls need to think about and all they have to take into account"*

Mentors in Violence Prevention, S5,  
A Perth and Kinross Secondary  
School, RASACPK





## 1.2 Prevention activity, cont.

**Lochaber Women's Aid** delivered workshops to high school students on fostering healthy relationships, understanding domestic abuse, and recognising coercive control.

- 433 students from S1 to S3 at Lochaber High School attended workshops across three days as part of the school's Health and Wellbeing days.
- Staff delivered awareness sessions to 45 pupils in S1-S3 at Mallaig High School. Pupils watched a video highlighting an unhealthy relationship between two teenagers in their first year of university.

Feedback from pupils included:

“I found this disturbing and difficult to watch. Thank you for making people aware of what an unhealthy relationship looks like and how it can develop.”

In the six month reporting period, **Ross-shire Women's Aid** delivered four Healthy Relationship sessions in schools with 123 young people participating. They updated their presentation to ensure it was relevant to the young people taking part.

Feedback from the evaluation undertaken included:

“I learned that 1 in 4 women have experienced domestic abuse, I've also learned the different types of domestic abuse and where to go for help.”

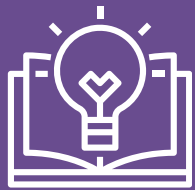
Awareness raising activity in schools can lead to children being aware of the unhealthy relationships at home. One survivor from **Women's Aid Orkney** got support after her son had attended education and awareness sessions at his school.



“My son took part in the day program sessions at school, and he came home and said ‘mum do you know dad has been gaslighting you and he's been gaslighting you for years’.”

Survivor, Women's Aid Orkney





## Section 2 Spotlights

### 2.0 Overview of DES CYP services

The spotlight of this report is the specialist services that DES funded organisations provided to children and young people (CYP). Some organisations worked directly with CYP and others alongside women and families. The work that DES funded organisations undertook with CYP required different ways of working and brought unique challenges for organisations, and this report highlights this work, and its impact.

#### Targeted Support

Many organisations funded through DES deliver frontline services to support children and young people who have witnessed, been exposed to, or experienced domestic abuse themselves. The organisations provide children and young people (CYP) with confidential, emotional and therapeutic support to assist them in overcoming their negative experiences as well as a safe space to discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Safety and support planning are fundamental aspects of frontline services. Safety planning includes how to identify people that CYP can trust in their lives, identifying safe places they can go and who they can contact in a time of crisis. Support sessions are person-centred and tailored to meet individual needs. They may include safety planning, counselling, group work or advocacy. Support can be delivered on a 1:1 or group basis, possibly within an education setting, refuge or other safe environment.

#### 1:1 Support

During 1:1 support sessions, experienced staff use various techniques to facilitate open discussions in a safe space to enable the young person to express their thoughts and feelings. Funded organisations work with CYP to look at their feelings, behaviours and relationships and create safety plans with them, which gives them support and strategies for keeping themselves safe, building their confidence, resilience and insight into when to seek help. 1:1 support also gives CYP an opportunity to reflect and possibly start talking about previous experiences.

**Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid** staff used a suite of different approaches and resources to enable CYP (and women) to explore and understand their experiences and learn about domestic abuse.

*"Now I know that a child should never have to feel that way (sad, scared, confused and having to be cautious) about anything.*

*It makes me angry that I went through all of that because I really shouldn't have... ..Now I know that what he (the perpetrator) did was extremely wrong and cannot be excused in any way whatsoever."*

Young Person, Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid



## 2.0 Overview of DES CYP services, cont.

**Angus Women's Aid** provided needs led 1:1 sessions, within the boundaries of safety and child protection. These sessions followed a 13-session plan focused on the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people's lives. 1:1 sessions were held online, over the phone or face-to face. They operated a waiting list, and children/young people were provided with a stay-safe pack and received weekly or fortnightly check-ins until a worker was allocated.

### Group work

Group work is an integral element of support offered to CYP affected by domestic abuse. It aims to empower young people, help them heal, and break the cycle of abuse by promoting positive relationships and resilience. CYP can explore their feelings and the impact of domestic abuse with peers in a safe and supportive environment and develop coping strategies. Interactive sessions include understanding domestic abuse, safety planning, safe and respectful relationships, bullying and self-esteem.

Group work provides mutual support for CYP from peers with similar experiences, diminishing feelings of isolation and reinforcing the idea that they are not alone and helping them to cultivate healthy friendships. It is usually facilitated by trained professionals, skilled in trauma-informed approaches, who help CYP process their emotions and experiences in a healthy way, reducing feelings of isolation and shame.

### RATE YOUR WORRY

MY WORRY IS:

That dad and [redacted] are engaged.  
To worry mum about it.  
To worry to call [redacted] mum & [redacted]

RATE THIS WORRY:

Scr Dad ml

Can I do something about this worry?  Yes / No

WHAT CAN I DO? Talk to daddy about calling [redacted] mum. Ask questions about it.

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I FEEL THIS WORRY? Write in my diary. Read and listen to music.

**Lochaber Women's Aid** group work provided opportunities for CYP affected by domestic abuse to develop positive relationships with other CYP via their Climbing Group. CYP learned how to climb, working in pairs and learning how to support each other. Support workers reported improved physical wellbeing in participants, as well as increases in self-confidence and their sense of achievement. The group sessions enabled the CYP to interact with peers, build friendships, and support and encourage each other, which enhanced their sense of belonging and wellbeing.

“Climbing is a safe place, it makes me feel really happy. When I start climbing it makes me forget about all the bad things that have happened.”

Young Person, Lochaber Women's Aid

Picture Credit:

Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid

## 2.0 Overview of DES CYP services, cont.

### Advocacy

DES frontline services also supported CYP with advocacy support, ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard, especially when decisions affected their lives. Professional advocates worked closely with education services, social services, and legal services, often supporting children through court processes, and advocating on behalf of CYP at Children's Hearings particularly in child contact and welfare hearings.

**South Ayrshire Women's Aid** provided advocacy support to 13 CYP ensuring that the voice of the child is heard by advocating for them when required. This included attending Team Around the Child meetings (TAC), and Child Protection meetings, speaking to social work on CYP's behalf, writing letters of support sent to lawyers as well as liaising with other agencies or the mums on their behalf when they have felt unable to do so.

From their evaluations, **South Ayrshire Women's Aid** report that:

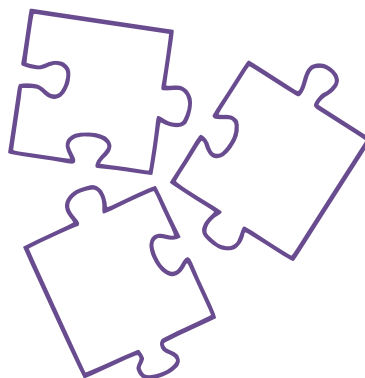
- 92% reported an improvement in their relationships with adults.
- 92% reported an improvement in their relationship with other CYP.
- 88% reported an improvement in their ability to express and manage their feelings.

### Counselling

Counselling support for CYP affected by domestic abuse in Scotland is crucial for their emotional and psychological well-being. Support is provided by trained professionals, including counsellors who are trained to work sensitively with young people, understanding the complexities of domestic abuse and its impact on mental health.

**Fife Women's Aid** provided counselling to 25 CYP between the ages of 5-17 who had experienced domestic abuse at a time and place of their choice. Most children and young people they supported chose to see their counsellor within a school setting. The counsellors used a range of approaches, including art therapy and other creative methods, to promote recovery.

**Shakti Women's Aid** offered counselling and mental health support to 30 CYP, but they had to limit the number of counselling referrals due to the lack of qualified counsellors who can speak BME languages and/or are BME culturally sensitive.





## 2.2 Safeguarding – Multi-agency responses

Domestic abuse continues to be one of the most common concerns identified at child protection case conferences for children on the child protection register. In 2022–2023 domestic abuse accounted for 16% of the total number of concerns recorded at case conferences and 42% of all registrations during the year (Scottish Government, 2024c:14).

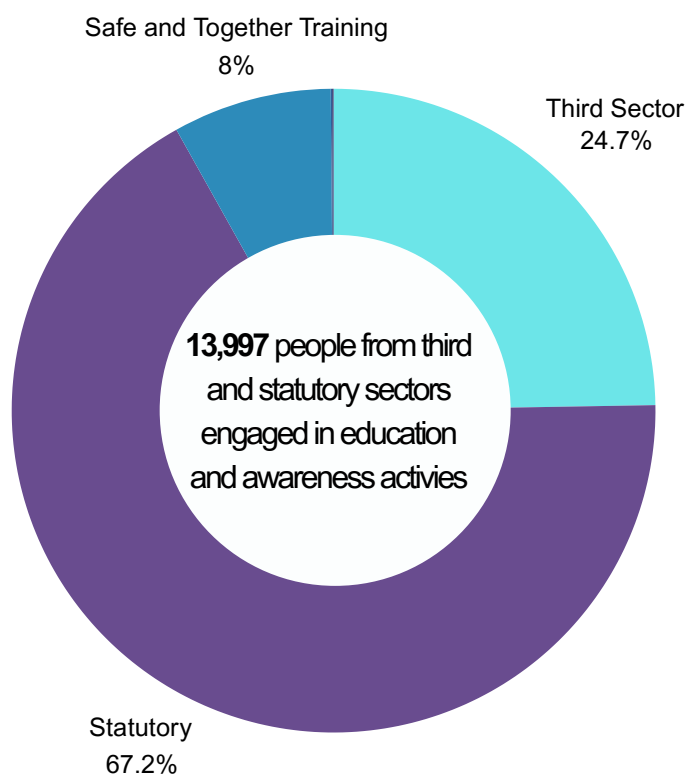
DES funded projects support both the multi-agency response to child protection concerns and the recovery of children and young people from abuse. This section will focus on funded projects' input into the learning and development of practitioners and the role of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).

### Learning and Development

Single and multi-agency agency training should be available to promote the knowledge, skills and values needed to support effective inter-disciplinary work (Scottish Government, 2023a:42).

DES funding contributes to a range of workforce training and development initiatives such as Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate training (Safe Lives), Safe and Together, Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training, Own My Life Facilitator Training as well as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland specific training. During the period, the fund engaged 13,997 people in education and awareness activities across private, statutory and third sector organisations.

### Multi-agency education and awareness activity October 23 - March 24



## 2.2 Safeguarding – Multi-agency responses, cont.

The Safe and Together (S&T) Model is a workforce development programme funded through DES. The model supports the multi-agency response to domestic abuse by providing a system change framework that offers language, thinking and practices enabling practitioners to hold perpetrators to account as parents and reduce victim blaming. Delivering Equally Safe provides funding to 14 projects to support the implementation of Safe and Together (S&T) across 19 local authority areas. In the last reporting period, 1,118 people participated in S&T education and awareness activities.

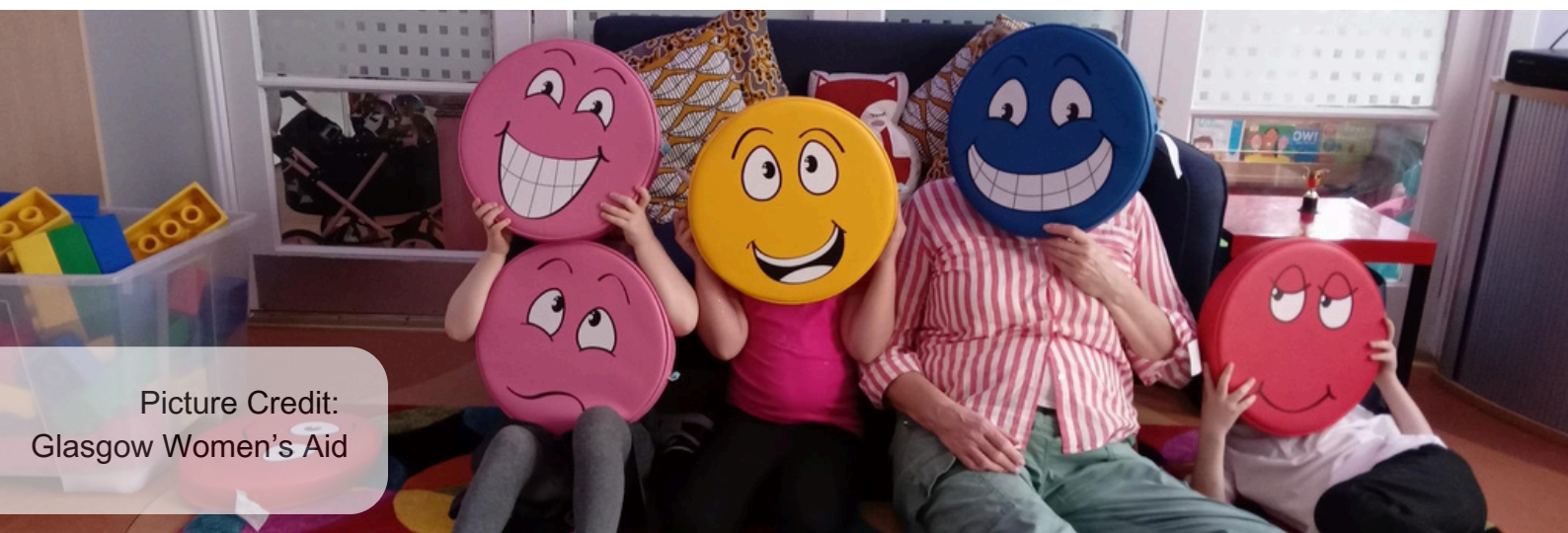
**North Lanarkshire Council** delivered S&T training to 134 social workers. A social work case file audit to assess the implementation of the model identified that 80% of case files had some evidence of clear and comprehensive documentation of a pattern of coercive control and actions taken to harm the children. 60% of case files contained some evidence, and 20% contained strong evidence of a clear and comprehensive assessment of the connection between the perpetrator's behaviour and the harm to children.

### Single-agency responsibilities and wider planning links (MARAC)

Services are required to have clear policies for identifying, sharing and acting upon concerns about risk of harm to a child or children. In this reporting period 3,991 children and young people engaged in 1:1 support with funded organisations. Support typically includes age-appropriate risk assessment tools such as the Safe Lives risk identification checklist (SafeLives, Dash risk checklist).

High-risk cases are reported to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). The purpose of these conferences is to implement a safety plan for the adult survivor of abuse. However children who are involved in the same case will be mentioned at MARAC, which ensures that the relevant agencies are informed about the children's situation. Many vulnerable, previously 'hidden' children who are living with domestic abuse are identified through the MARAC process (SafeLives, What is a MARAC?).

Children's and young people's services might carry out a separate assessment of a child involved in a MARAC case to determine whether the child requires additional support or safeguarding measures. A young person's version of the risk identification checklist is available to help identify specific considerations relating to young people, typically aged between 13 and 17. It helps to identify suitable young person cases to be reviewed at a MARAC and inform referrals to children's social care. Where the MARAC process identifies risk of harm to a child the child may be referred for an Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD).



## 2.2 Safeguarding – Multi-agency responses, cont.



### Case Study - Monklands Women's Aid Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

**Monklands Women's Aid** worked with 69 women referred to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and 48 had children involved. The graph shows the number of MARAC cases as a proportion of total adults supported has ranged from 24%-33%.

At MARAC meetings, funded organisations play an integral role in championing the voice of the survivor and appropriately holding agencies to account for resulting action plans. Monklands Women's Aid act as both a referring and receiving organisation for MARAC cases. In instances of referral to MARAC the organisation carries out a DASH RIC and safety plan. An accurate and concise report is delivered with a focus on imminent risk and holding the perpetrator to account.

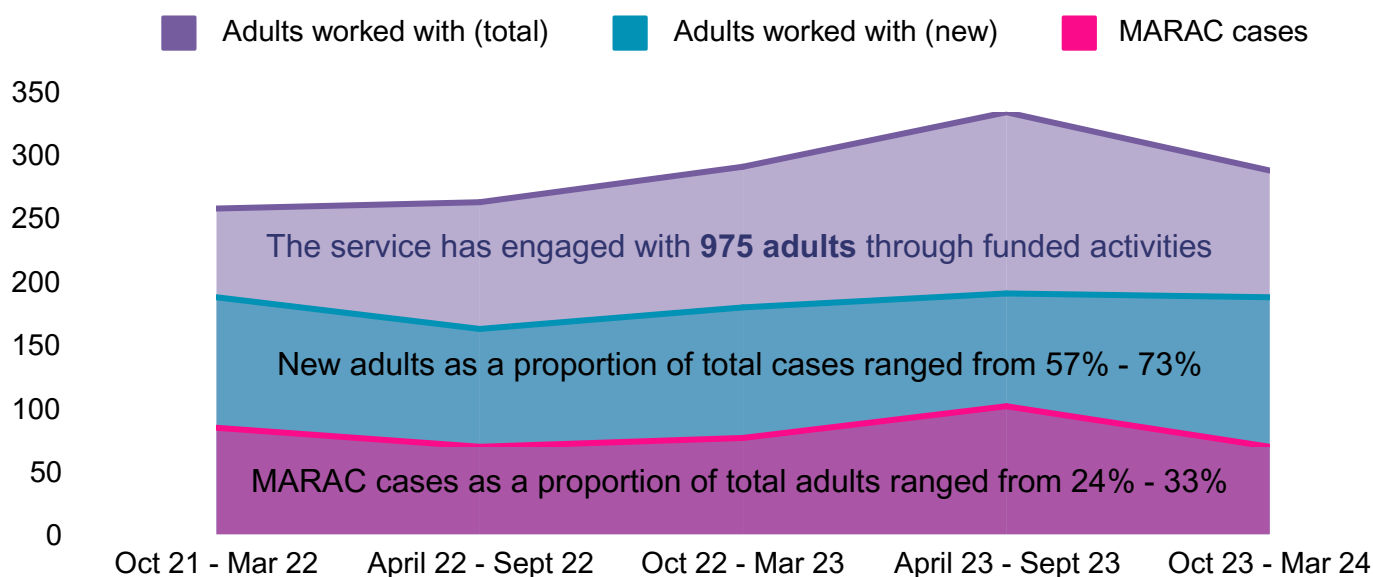
Following the MARAC meeting the worker contacts each woman to inform them of the outcomes. Safety and support plans are actioned which may require liaising with other agencies or making further referrals. MARAC cases can require more frequent and intensive support which in turn requires more time for staff. Staff members are at increased risk of vicarious trauma – the abuse disclosed during these cases, and also lesser scoring cases, often involves graphic and harrowing details shared by service users which can be emotionally draining for staff.

In the period, 90% of service users completing a self-evaluation reported an improved sense of safety.

*"This place is our safe haven, me and my girls are happy and feel safe now, we don't care if the dishes sit in the sink for a while after dinner, we aren't walking on egg shells 24-7, we can fall asleep at night, we can watch a film that we choose, we can pick what we want to eat, the simple things are making us so happy, this is a new life for us, I will be thankful forever."*

Survivor, Monklands Women's Aid

Monklands Women's Aid, Adult Support, October 2021 - March 2024





## 2.3 Mental health and wellbeing

Reports from DES funded organisations show an increase in the number of referrals of young people who need support with mental health and wellbeing. Funded organisations support children and young people to positively engage with their mental health and wellbeing early and actively promote and support the conditions for good mental health and wellbeing. They provide a range of services to enable young people to talk about and seek support for their mental health and wellbeing without discrimination or stigma, and some also provide opportunities for young people to engage in social activities, enabling peer support between children and young people.

Many organisations provided 1:1 support to children and young people, including **Committed to Ending Abuse**, who supported an young girl who was excelling in school and showing no signs of trauma or challenges. However, she felt safe to disclose to her Support Worker that she was self-harming and struggling at home due to emotional and mental abuse from her primary carer.

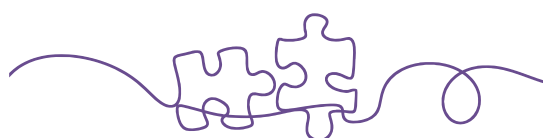
The girl recognised the behaviours through the core sessions on abuse and safety facilitated by her worker and learned she was not to blame for her experiences at home. She shared that she felt listened to and wasn't judged by her Support Worker, feeling comfortable to share which she had not done with anyone before. This led to the CYP being supported and represented at multi-agency meetings. The situation was assessed as having such an impact on her that she was moved into the care of her other parent. The CYP started to report feeling less anxious, and happier and self-harm reduced following this.

The CYP was then supported to share her views on contact with her parent. When the abuse continued during contact times she was empowered to make her own choice and stopped contact altogether for the time being recognising that it has been harmful to her. This support is ongoing.

**Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre Perth & Kinross (RASACPK)** undertook a case analysis which highlighted that young people are more likely to act on self-harm / suicidal thoughts post-COVID-19. Their review of suicide risk for their young survivors indicated that the majority of them scored high or severe on a screening tool. 72% of RASACPK crisis sessions involved a child or young person, and although the number of crisis sessions they have dealt with in the reporting period has dropped, the complexity and time taken to resolve each crisis has increased.

72%

of RASACPK crisis sessions  
involved a child or young person



## 2.3 Mental health and wellbeing, cont.

**Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highland (RASASH)** delivered therapeutic, emotional one-to-one support to survivors of sexual violence aged 13+ in the Highlands. Support is person-centred and tailored to individual needs, using a variety of methods, such as journaling, walking sessions, flashcards, visualisations, and grounding through breathing and movement.



*"It's hard to describe how life changing it is to receive emotional support when you feel so low and vulnerable, they put people back together again, they save lives".*

Moray Women's Aid

Mental health and wellbeing support provided by DES organisations also involved social activities. Some of the social activities that children and young people were able to participate in included:

- **Clackmannanshire Women's Aid** organised a trip to a local pantomime, enabling the children and young people they support to enjoy the magic of Christmas in a safe place.
- **Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid** celebrated Halloween with a party in the refuge, enabling children and young people to relax and have fun with their peers.



Picture Credit:  
Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid

*"My anxiety was bad, and I didn't have someone I could share with.... the support I receive now makes me feel cared for."*

Young person, Hemat Gryffe

My school-based support is... beneficial to me because I feel so much better mentally. When I started my anxiety was really bad and I didn't have someone I could share personal things with because I didn't feel like anyone cared. The support I receive now makes me feel cared for and has helped manage my anxiety.

My school-based support is ... I think coming here is good cause I can tell her so many stuff that can make me feel better I think seeing is making me more happy

## 2.4 Housing

The Scottish Parliament has declared a national “housing emergency” and some councils have also declared a housing emergency in their areas (SPICe, 2024) citing issues ranging from pressure on homelessness services, to rising property prices and the high levels of temporary accommodation. This, along with rising costs, is putting additional pressure on families and causing additional stress on services supporting them.

Domestic abuse is a leading cause of women’s homelessness in Scotland and local authorities have a duty to help if someone is homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic abuse. The reports from DES funded organisations in this period highlight that this national housing crisis is having an additional negative impact on the women and children that they support and the services that the organisations provide.

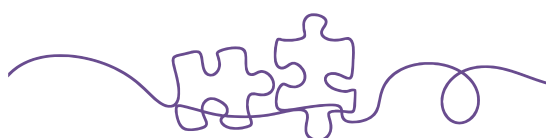
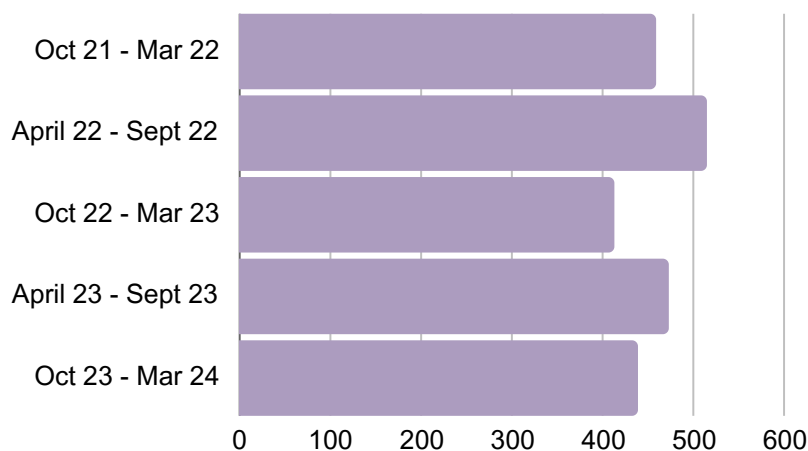
*A woman with a 2-year-old and a baby dropped into the office, with nowhere to go, describing horrendous abuse. She spent almost five hours in the office being supported to access homeless accommodation as our 19 refuge spaces were full.*

*Staff stayed with her in the office after hours, the local authority eventually gave her a flat (as opposed to a B & B) for her and her two young children to be safe. Only with donations from the public, we were able to give her some clothes, pyjamas, toys, and some food.*

Renfrewshire Women’s Aid

**Within this reporting period 23 DES funded organisations provided refuge places for a total of 439 people** – this is in line with previous reports although there are seasonal variations as shown in the graph below. There is an increase in the number of women accessing refuge within the six month periods over the summer months from April – September. However, the number of women being accommodated in refuge is only part of the story.

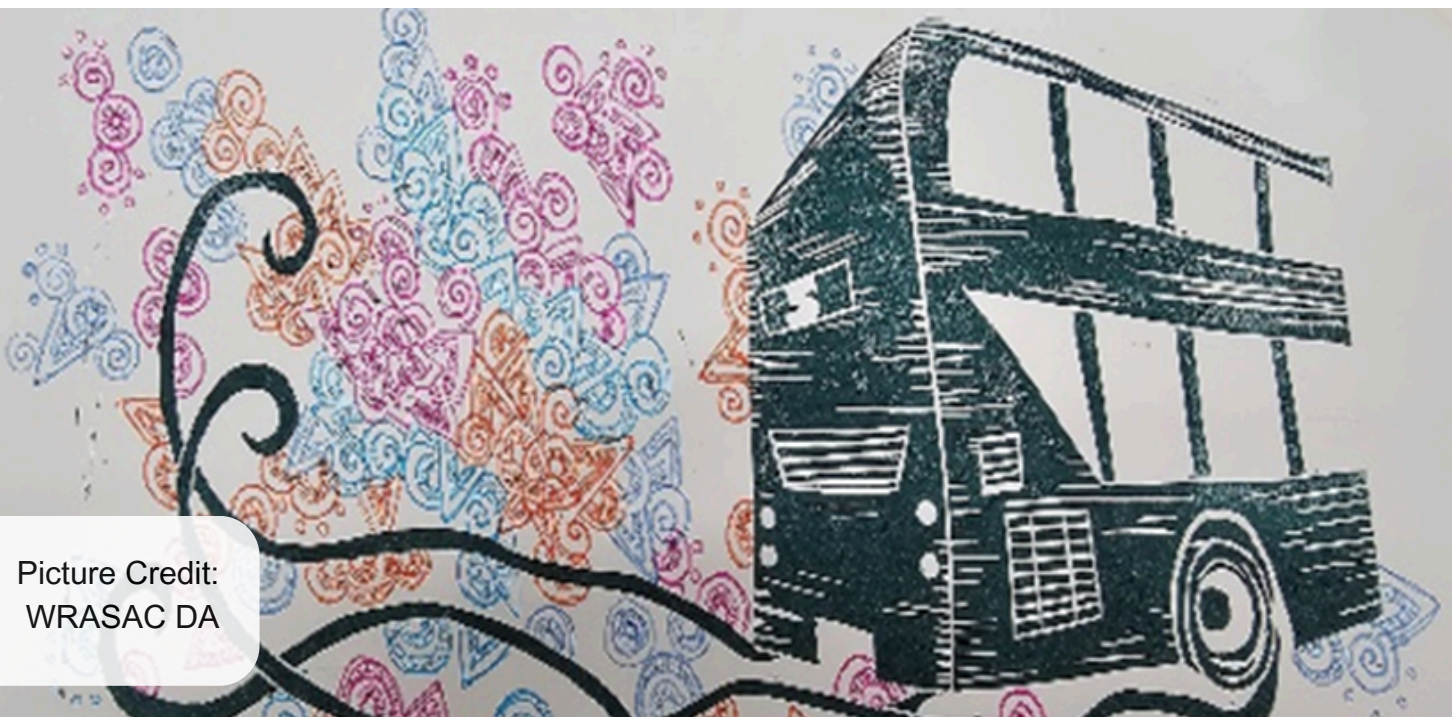
DES Funded Refuge Provision



## 2.4 Housing, cont.

Reports in this period highlight that the shortage of suitable housing stock is causing women and children to remain in refuge provision for longer, leading to waiting times for those requiring a refuge space. This delay can be increased when children are involved due to the lack of properties with more than two bedrooms, causing anxiety and concern for the families. Many of the families are living in overcrowded environments, further negatively impacting their mental health and wellbeing. This also adds additional pressure on the services supporting the families as the demand for their services increases at a time when their capacity is already stretched. The reports highlight the high pressure on social housing across the country and the increased use of temporary accommodation.

- **British Red Cross** reports that due to the unprecedented levels of homelessness in Glasgow, waiting times for vulnerable women to access safe accommodation have grown, and their ability to advocate for the statutory support they are entitled to is diminishing due to an internal lack of capacity and pressure faced by social care workers. The British Red Cross is no longer able to pay for hotels from their internal budget to accommodate women and girls who have been turned away by Glasgow City Council, meaning women leave their office with no choice but to sleep in a police station or on the street.
- **Rowan Alba** has supported 19 homeless women with experience of violence, in their safe, supported temporary accommodation in Pilton, Edinburgh. Some of the women they are supporting have been waiting over two years for the offer of a permanent tenancy. They highlight that the average waiting time in Edinburgh for an offer of a 1-bed socially rented home for applicants with homeless priority is 817 days.
- **Inverness Women's Aid** reports that there are currently 102 women and children from the Highland region on the Highland Housing Register waiting list (which excludes homelessness) requiring to be rehoused and who have expressed a desire to leave their home due to domestic abuse. Half of these are women with children. Their recently reopened refuge is at capacity, and they have had to increase the staffing levels in the refuge to address this additional pressure. They have built an improved collaboration with The Highland Council's Housing and Homelessness team, which has helped three women move on from the reopened refuge in the reporting period.
- **Renfrewshire Women's Aid** reports that the demand for refuge accommodation is at an all-time high and that they have been at full capacity for most of the year. This level of demand is unprecedented and the waiting list for safe accommodation is at the highest level.



Picture Credit:  
WRASAC DA

## 2.4 Housing, cont.



### Case Study - Central Advocacy Partners Children & Young People's Service

A young person (18yo) had been supported by our **Central Advocacy Partners** CYP Service for some time. The young person was eager to leave the family home due to ongoing domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour by his parents, leading him to feel unsafe at home, with the situation proving detrimental to his mental health and wellbeing. The young person had been on the Youth Housing waiting list for a while, and was eventually offered a property. A staff member from Central Advocacy Partners supported the young person to view the property, and helped them to source white goods for his property.

The young person had anxiety around his safety, and he expressed fears of being targeted as he was young, transgender, neurodiverse and living on his own. He also worried that associates of his dad may seek him out to pay off his dad's drug debts. The young person and staff member worked together to devise a new safety plan which supported his move into independent living. They explored potential risk factors and strategies to mitigate/minimise the risk, and a home safety visit from Scottish Fire Rescue Service was arranged. This, alongside other measures such as a safety chain on front door, a ring doorbell camera and a storm marker on his address, were reassuring for the young person. The young person asked for a print out of his safety plan to place inside his kitchen cupboard door for reference. The young person has now settled well into his property and reports a feeling of comfort, security and relief at having these strategies in place and no longer having to deal with the effect of living with domestic abuse.



Picture Credit: Glasgow  
Women's Aid: A Safe Space

## 2.5 School non-attendance

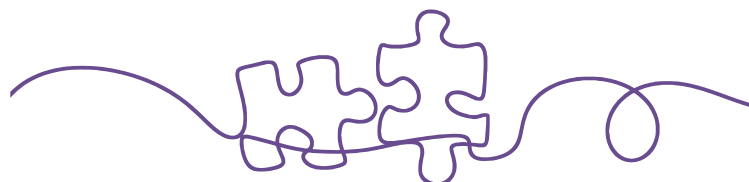
In Scotland, school attendance rates (Educational Analytical Services, 2023:28) have shown consecutive decreases and have fallen from 93.7 % in 2014/2015 to 90.2% in the latest figures for 2022/23. Research (Scottish Government, 2023b: 5 and 161) points to a challenging environment in school; 43% of school staff have encountered physical violence between pupils, and there is a perceived increase in levels of misogyny and gender-based abuse among male pupils, potentially related to use of social media and the impact of influences. This section highlights how some organisations have adapted their services in response to the prevalence of non-attendance among child survivors of gender-based violence. Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery (CEDAR) is a group work programme delivered to children and young people (aged 5-16) alongside their mothers, which explores the impact of domestic abuse experienced within the family. **Dundee Women's Aid**, in partnership with Dundee City Council, is one of six organisations funded to deliver CEDAR. In the reporting period, the Dundee partnership project supported 25 mothers and 29 children through the CEDAR programme. Their report highlighted the prevalence of non-attendance among the children and young people they support, and detailed the steps taken to remove barriers to accessing support.

*“The long-term impact of domestic abuse on children and young people has been highlighted through inconsistent or non-attendance at school, particularly within high school aged young people. Issues with attending school has been experienced by 39% of children and young people who have attended CEDAR over the last six months. Of the current teens group, 100% of participants are either non-attenders or have very low school attendance.*

*As a result of experiencing domestic abuse, children and young people's school attendance can often be impacted by mental health issues, insecure attachment to their mum or siblings, feeling overwhelmed and overstimulated in classrooms or shared spaces, and lack of positive or trusting relationships at school.*

*We worked closely with mums and teachers to ensure children had an easier transition to and from the CEDAR group, ensure as little impact on school as possible. We arranged pick-ups for group from a child's home instead of from school and marked attendance at group counting as school attendance.”*

Dundee Women's Aid, delivering CEDAR in Partnership with Dundee City Council



## 2.5 School non-attendance, cont.

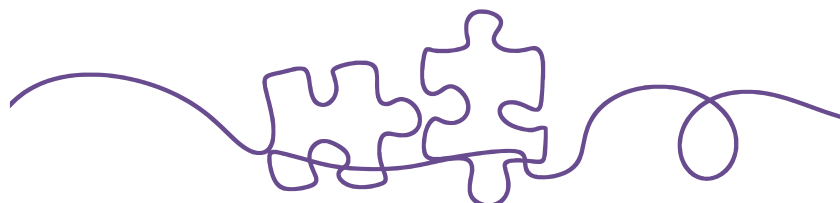
In this reporting period, **Equally Safe in Renfrewshire** worked with 1,059 children and young people through classroom and community based education and awareness sessions. Sessions targeted children from Primary 7 to S6 and covered topics such as: gender stereotypes, perceptions, role models, consent and healthy relationships, positive masculinity, misogyny - who's feeding the message, and active by-standers. The project engaged artists and illustrators to work alongside young people to create content such as campaign banners for '16 Days of Action' and supported young people to make a podcast.

Click on the logo below or use the QR code to listen to the Young and Equally Safe (YES) Podcasts



**Clackmannanshire Women's Aid** highlighted the challenge of working with children and young people who refuse school. Typically, they support CYP in school, as it is a safe place for all. However they saw an increasing number of non-school attenders. It was difficult to contact young people not at school, however staff were successful in setting up alternative arrangements on most occasions. The organisation also worked alongside schools to encourage CYP to attend school for their session and had an agreement that the CYP can then leave school. This helped overcome a barrier to school for some CYP, which allowed the school to implement a phased return timetable afterwards.

**East Dunbartonshire Association for Mental Health (EDAMH)** highlights that in their teenage group over half of the attendees are only in education on a part-time basis or at not all. Staff communicated with school guidance teams on how best to support these young people, and were successful in engaging a few teenagers. EDAMH also highlighted that non-attendance at school meant that some teenagers had no fixed routine and slept during the day, making it difficult to engage with CYP during working hours, resulting in EDAMH amending their support to be flexible.





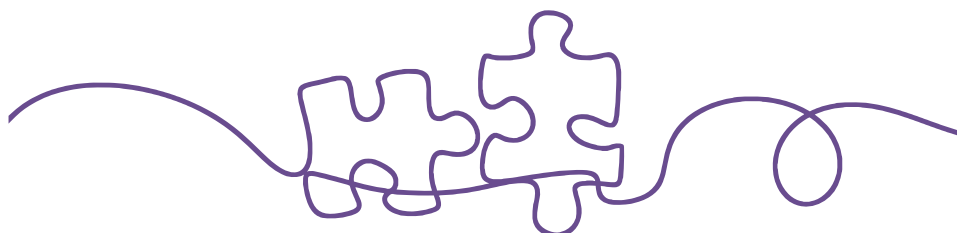
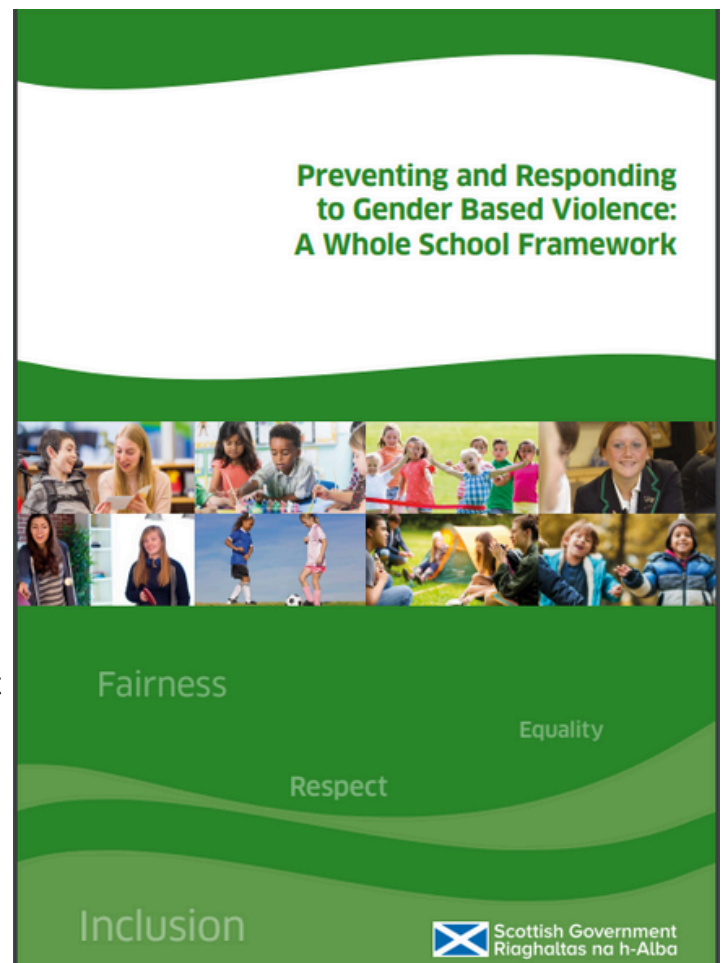
## Section 3

# Policy, research and influencing

## 3.0 Policy, research and influencing

During the reporting period, many DES funded organisations delivered research and influencing work, to ensure that the voices and experiences of women and girls are heard and included in policy and practice across Scotland.

- In March 2024, the Gender-based Violence Working Group (co-chaired by the Scottish Government, **Zero Tolerance**, and **Rape Crisis Scotland**) published the first ever gender-based violence (GBV) guidance document for schools: Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence: A Whole School Framework.
- **Scottish Women's Aid** fully engaged with the Scottish Government's consultation on the Children (Care and Justice) Scotland Bill. Over the reporting period, Scottish Women's Aid engaged with Women's Aid groups across Scotland, through meet ups, online discussions, emails and other communications, and they engaged in partnership working to ensure a robust understanding of cross sector issues, ideas and solutions.
- At the We Play Festival, **Zero Tolerance** led a discussion on the harms of gender stereotyping in the early years, which examined ways to support young children to explore and play without limiting gender stereotypes.





## 3.0 Policy, research and influencing, cont.



### Case Study - Zero Tolerance Girls' Rights Are Human Rights!

**Zero Tolerance** wrote and published the paper - 'Girls' Rights Are Human Rights!', which compiled all the existing data on the state of girls' human rights in Scotland. The review found that girls in Scotland are falling between the cracks of women's and children's rights work.

'Girls' Rights Are Human Rights!' makes seven recommendations on how to help girls in Scotland thrive in Scotland. The report calls on decision makers and duty bearers in Scotland to:

1. Collect disaggregated data across all areas of children's rights, and analyse the intersections between gender, age, and other protected characteristics.
2. Use gender-specific language to make girls visible.
3. Ensure gender specialists are involved in decisions on all aspects of children's rights policy.
4. Prioritise consulting and engaging with girls and consider how dynamics of gender should apply to participation goals and projects.
5. Support and fund organisations working with girls and identify ways to support vulnerable groups of girls.
6. Ensure that incorporation of different human rights treaties is mutually reinforcing, with a focus on girls' rights across all legislation.
7. Support training and education to understand and implement children's rights from a gendered perspective.

The report was disseminated to women's and children's equality organisations, MSPs, and youthwork organisations.





## Section 4 Service pressures

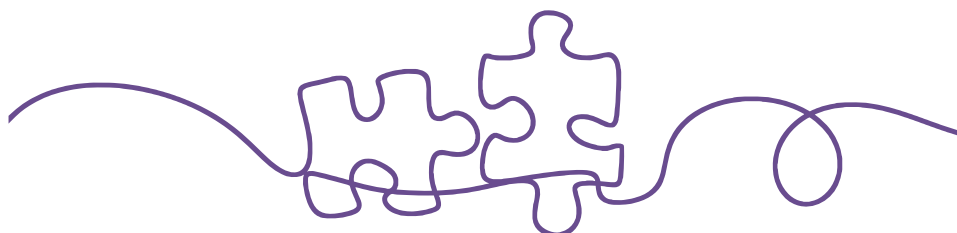
### 4.0 Service pressures

While it has always been a challenge, the uncertainty of the funding landscape, the reduction in available funds and the standstill in DES funding is becoming increasingly difficult for organisations to manage, which in turn has impacted staff and families supported.

Organisations reported:

- An increase in experienced and qualified staff leaving the sector, as they sought more stable terms and conditions.
- Funding uncertainty impacted organisational development plans; some organisations paused development/expansion plans.
- Stretched capacity putting pressure on staff members, having a detrimental effect on staff morale and wellbeing.
- Costs of running an organisation continued to increase, alongside growing demand for services, when funding levels remained static.
- Reduced capacity to maintain a range of partnerships and networks, which led to missed opportunities for collaborative work, sharing good practice or awareness of other funding sources.

*“We continue to struggle with cost of living rises and the fixed budget for the funded activity means that we are forced to support the delivery of our project with voluntary raised income from elsewhere as the service currently costs more than we have funding for. Continued increases in service delivery costs will mean our funding gap only continues to get bigger.” Children 1st*





## Section 5

# Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network

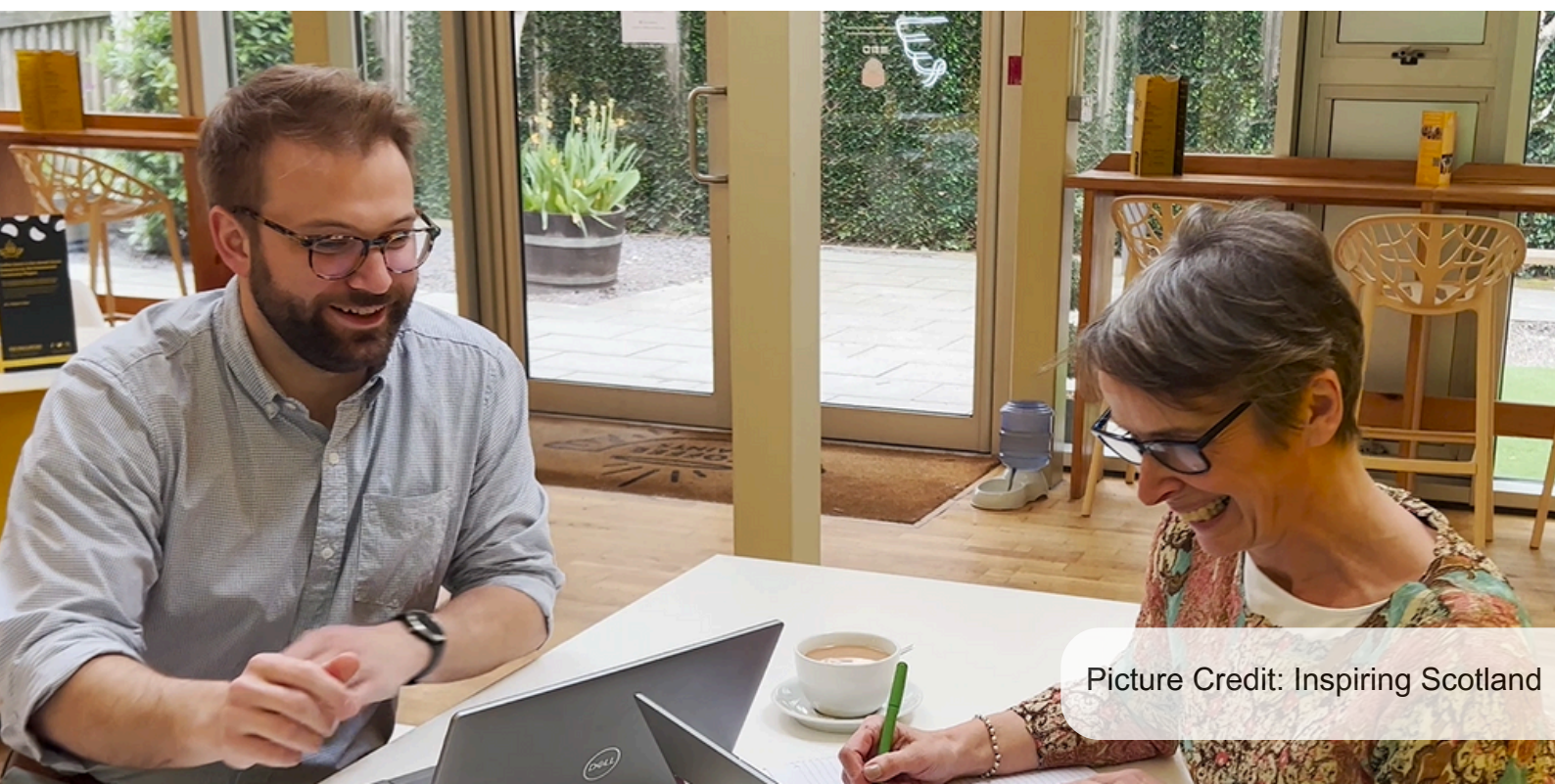
## 5.0 Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network

Inspiring Scotland's Specialist Volunteer Network (SVN) connects over 500 professional volunteers with charities to build capacity and strengthen the sector. DES funded organisations have benefited from this support throughout the reporting period, enabling them to access support which could be otherwise out of reach financially, or would divert much needed funding away from service delivery.



DES funded organisations accessed support from the SVN across a range of areas, including:

- Technology
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- HR
- Employment law
- Board development
- Governance
- Recruitment



Picture Credit: Inspiring Scotland



## Section 6

## Case Studies



### Case Study - Dundee Women's Aid Nadia's Story

Nadia\* (16) was referred to MARAC in December and her case was heard a week later. During the festive period, Nadia's circumstances took a turn, leading to the breakdown of her relationship with her mother, with whom she was living.

Nadia sought refuge at homeless accommodation but was asked to return the following day. Despite the agreement to allow Nadia to stay one more night at home, she returned to homeless accommodation the same day, where her application was processed by the Housing Options team. Feeling lost and vulnerable, Nadia sought support from Dundee Women's Aid and spent most of the afternoon in a support room at their office. There, she was offered a safe space to discuss her options, and it was confirmed that she had been granted a place in homeless accommodation by the Dundee City Council Housing Options team. Concerned about Nadia's vulnerability, Dundee Women's Aid contacted the Housing Options team to discuss her situation further but were informed that their duty had been fulfilled, leaving Nadia in a precarious position. Recognising the urgency of Nadia's situation, Dundee Women's Aid reached out to Dundee City Council's Social Work First Contact team, and began professional discussions to explore more suitable accommodation arrangements.

Despite efforts to find an alternative solution, including temporary placement in a hotel, Nadia's age posed a barrier, as no accommodations allowed individuals under 18 years old. Efforts to involve Nadia's mother in reconsidering her decision proved futile, leaving refuge as the safest option for Nadia. She expressed feeling overwhelmed and unable to make decisions for herself, highlighting the need for support and guidance during this challenging time. Nadia stayed with Dundee Women's Aid for three months, receiving intensive wraparound support aimed at developing her independent living skills, money management, and participation in group activities. She also benefited from the Connecting Women programme, which paired her with a befriender and provided access to out-of-hours mental health support. Throughout her stay, a robust support and safety plan was implemented, and regular professional meetings ensured a collaborative approach to keeping Nadia safe and supported. Despite the challenges she faced, Nadia's time at Dundee Women's Aid provided her with the stability, guidance, and resources needed to navigate her circumstances and begin rebuilding her life.



## Case Study - Glasgow Women's Aid L's Story

L\* was referred to the 'Enough' service following a two year relationship where she experienced ongoing physical, psychological, and sexual abuse since she was 16 years old. The perpetrator physically assaulted her in September 2020 and L used this assault to end their relationship. Following the relationship breakdown, the perpetrator continued to stalk and harass her, which led to L experiencing anxiety, low moods, and poor sleep. L placed much of the blame for her relationship on herself. At the outset of her support, she often wondered what was wrong with her that had led to him behaving this way. She felt confused by the perpetrator's actions and was experiencing very low self-esteem and self-worth.

L had very few supports as the perpetrator had isolated her from her friends and family. She hid all the abuse she experienced from them to protect the perpetrator and ensure everyone still liked him. When she did disclose the abuse her friends did not believe her. The perpetrator was found not guilty following trial in December 2020 which led to L feeling her experiences were not validated and perpetuated the feeling of not being believed. She found it difficult to open up about her experiences following this as she worried about how others perceived the abuse.

We used 1:1 space to let L explore her experiences in a safe, non-judgemental space. Much of the time was spent validating L's experiences, utilising tools like case studies or domestic abuse resources to explore common themes, behaviours, and feelings around this. This helped L conceptualise that she was not alone in what she experienced, to destigmatise her beliefs about abusive relationships and help break down those fears of not being believed.

Similarly, we explored the nature of the abuse she experienced and how this impacted on her mental health. L experienced flashbacks and anxiety in public and we looked at fight or flight responses and appropriate coping strategies. L found it difficult to speak about the sexual assault she experienced, so we initially focused on the psychological and physical abuse. When enough trust was built up, L opened up about her experiences of sexual assault. L reflected that speaking about the sexual assault frequently enabled her to speak more openly about the sexual abuse, and in time help her to process this better.

L is now in the process of reporting the domestic abuse to the police. Glasgow Women's Aid are providing ongoing support and advocacy to help promote a trauma informed environment of belief and non-judgement. Working alongside the Domestic Abuse Incident Unit (DAIU) we are supporting L during this process, helping to break down previous beliefs around judgement from the judicial system. L has also been referred on for psychological support around her trauma as a way to support her while she begins exploring her sexual abuse and disclosing this to the police.

# Conclusion

This report highlights the important and valuable work that organisations across Scotland are doing to support vulnerable people affected by gender based violence (GBV). In the six months covered in this report, 21,065 people were supported through frontline support, which includes 15,930 adults and 5,135 children and young people, which has dropped slightly compared to the previous reporting period.

27,568 children and young people participated in education and awareness activities in schools and other education settings. The activity addresses issues such as consent, healthy relationships, helping young people understand the signs of abusive behaviour, and challenging gender stereotypes and gender equality from an early age. Engagement in DES funded education and awareness activities reached its second highest level during October 2023 to March 2024.

This report places a spotlight on some of the challenges that young people are experiencing, and some of the impact of wider societal issues. DES funded organisations are providing a range of specialist services to children and young people affected by domestic abuse. Organisations also reported a rise in the number of young people experiencing domestic abuse in their relationships, with one organisation reporting a 167% increase in the number of referrals among the 16-20 age group.

Organisations are reporting their involvement in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and how these are identifying children and young people affected by domestic abuse who were otherwise hidden. The mental health of children and young people was also supported by DES funded organisations, through a range of services tailored to their specific needs.

Children and young people have also been affected by the national housing emergency, with longer stays in refuge and longer waits to be placed in suitable longer-term accommodation all having an impact on them. In addition, organisations have reported on the impact of the increase in non-attendance at schools, and the work they are doing to combat this, and enable them to continue to support young people out with the school setting.

Inspiring Scotland would like to again extend our thanks to the women, children and young people who have kindly shared their stories with us.



Picture Credit: Dundee Women's Aid



## Appendix 1

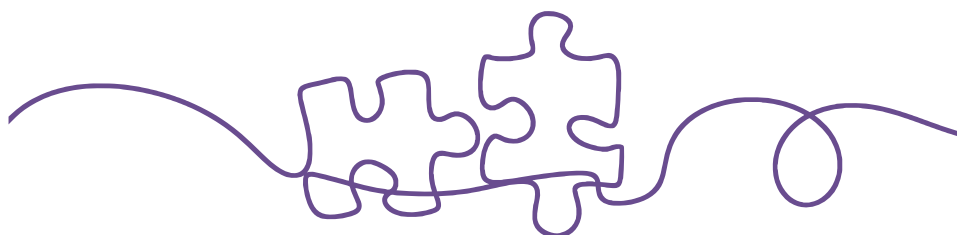
### Inspiring Scotland's support

Inspiring Scotland's core approach is based on offering support, coaching and constructive challenge to portfolio organisations to help them be their best for the people they support.

Each of the 120 funded projects has a named Performance and Impact Advisor (PIA) Through regular one-to-one meetings, the PIAs built supportive relationships, made connections and helped mitigate emerging risks. These ongoing connections with portfolio organisations facilitated project delivery, and collaboration between organisations.

**Argyll & Bute Women's Aid** reported that the training, webinars and funding updates were an invaluable source of information, support and networking opportunities for their remote/hybrid working Service Manager. **ASSIST - Glasgow City Council** commented that the monthly portfolio sessions provided an opportunity to see the reach that the DES funded services have and to reflect with other services, identify common issues as well as the challenges.

*"The added value benefits of being part of the Delivering Equally Safe community /network is of great value to us as a local organisation, both in terms of awareness of other work happening across Scotland and in terms of practical support, alongside support /check-ins from our designated officers at Inspiring Scotland." - DES funded organisation*



# Inspiring Scotland's support



## Strengthening Organisations and Communities

- Dedicated DES Resources page updated regularly with links to recordings of portfolio/learning sessions, useful documents and fund information.
- In the reporting period the DES team carried out two Financial Monitoring Visits as part of our ongoing monitoring and to help advise on financial procedures.
- PIAs provided support to new staff joining DES funded organisations, ensuring they had support to make connections across portfolio.

## Support, Develop and Connect People

- We hosted six DES portfolio sessions, enabling organisations to learn from others, facilitating connections and collaboration. **Deaf Links** presented their work with women who are deaf and experiencing domestic abuse, and research findings from University of Glasgow and University of Cambridge on the impact on workers in this sector.
- Inspiring Scotland staff held regular meetings with DES funded organisations, building good working relationships and facilitating collaboration between individuals and organisations.



## Making Money Go Further

- Provided bespoke fundraising support through customised GrantFinder database searches for individual organisations.
- Provided seven organisations with pro-bono specialist support through the Inspiring Scotland Specialist Volunteer Network (SVN).

## Encourage New Ideas

- Encouraged sharing of ideas between portfolio partners through showcasing innovations and case studies from organisations.
- Worked collaboratively with a group of funders to devise new ideas and solutions to gaps in service provision.



## Inform and Influence

- Hosted a DES portfolio session in March 24 where members of the Equalities Team at Scottish Government presented the Equally Safe Strategy refresh and liaised directly with funded organisations.
- Produced a six monthly Impact Report, highlighting the impact of the DES funding, supporting Scottish Government with decision making.
- Produced three focused thematic reports on DES funding; Safe and Together, CEDAR and Developing New Projects to help inform the Equalities Team at the Scottish Government to highlight trends and developments on the sector to help inform policy.





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# About Inspiring Scotland

Inspiring Scotland is a registered Scottish charity with a mission to inspire people, communities, organisations and government to work together to drive social change and transform lives. Our vision is that every person in Scotland can enjoy a happy, healthy life free from poverty or disadvantage.

We do this by raising funding from private individuals, trusts and foundations, Scottish Government and local authorities and investing in social funds addressing our strategic themes. These include improving the life chances for children and young people and supporting people who face barriers to inclusion because of discrimination and disadvantage to live flourishing lives.

Our aim is to amplify and strengthen the impact of organisations across civic society by helping them build their strength, resilience and reach.

# INSPIRING SCOTLAND

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