

TIME TO TALK

SMALL ACTIONS. BIG IMPACT.

A simple toolkit for businesses and organisations to start a conversation around Gender-Based Violence, and make Shetland a safer place for everyone.



LET'S TALK

Gender-based violence (GBV) affects every community, including here in Shetland. By fostering meaningful conversations in the workplace, local businesses can help break the silence, support survivors, and contribute to a culture of equality and respect. This toolkit offers practical prompts and resources to guide simple but important discussions, empowering workplaces across Shetland to take action against gender-based violence in our community. **Change can begin with just one conversation.**

WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful behaviours and actions directed at someone because of their gender. While anyone can be a victim of GBV, it overwhelmingly impacts women and girls, and most perpetrators of GBV are men.

GBV exists largely due to inequality and harmful gender stereotypes in our society, such as the idea that men must be strong providers or that women should be submissive caregivers. These beliefs create a culture where violence and an abuse of power is more likely to occur.

Some examples of gender-based violence include:

- Domestic abuse, including coercive control
- Sexual violence, including rape and assault
- Sexual harassment, including "catcalling"
- Stalking
- Forced marriage
- So-called "honour" crimes

It is important to remember that the victim is not to blame. GBV is a societal issue, and workplaces like yours have a vital role to play in challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours in Shetland.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Gender-based violence impacts everyone. It is not a private issue. GBV has profound effects on our whole community, including our health services, social care settings, schools, and workplaces. Survivors of GBV are more likely to face mental health challenges, housing instability, or barriers to accessing employment, which creates a ripple effect across Shetland and our vital services.

Gender-based violence does happen in Shetland, despite our reputation as a safe place. As we live in a small, close-knit community, it is very likely that you know someone who has been affected by GBV.

In 2022/23, Shetland Women's Aid supported **243** women and **106** children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Shetland.

In 2022/23, **97** people accessed The Compass Centre for support relating to sexual violence in Shetland. 82 women, 14 men and 1 non-binary person.

It is worth noting that these local statistics are from one single year, and do not include those who have yet to come forward for support.

In addition:

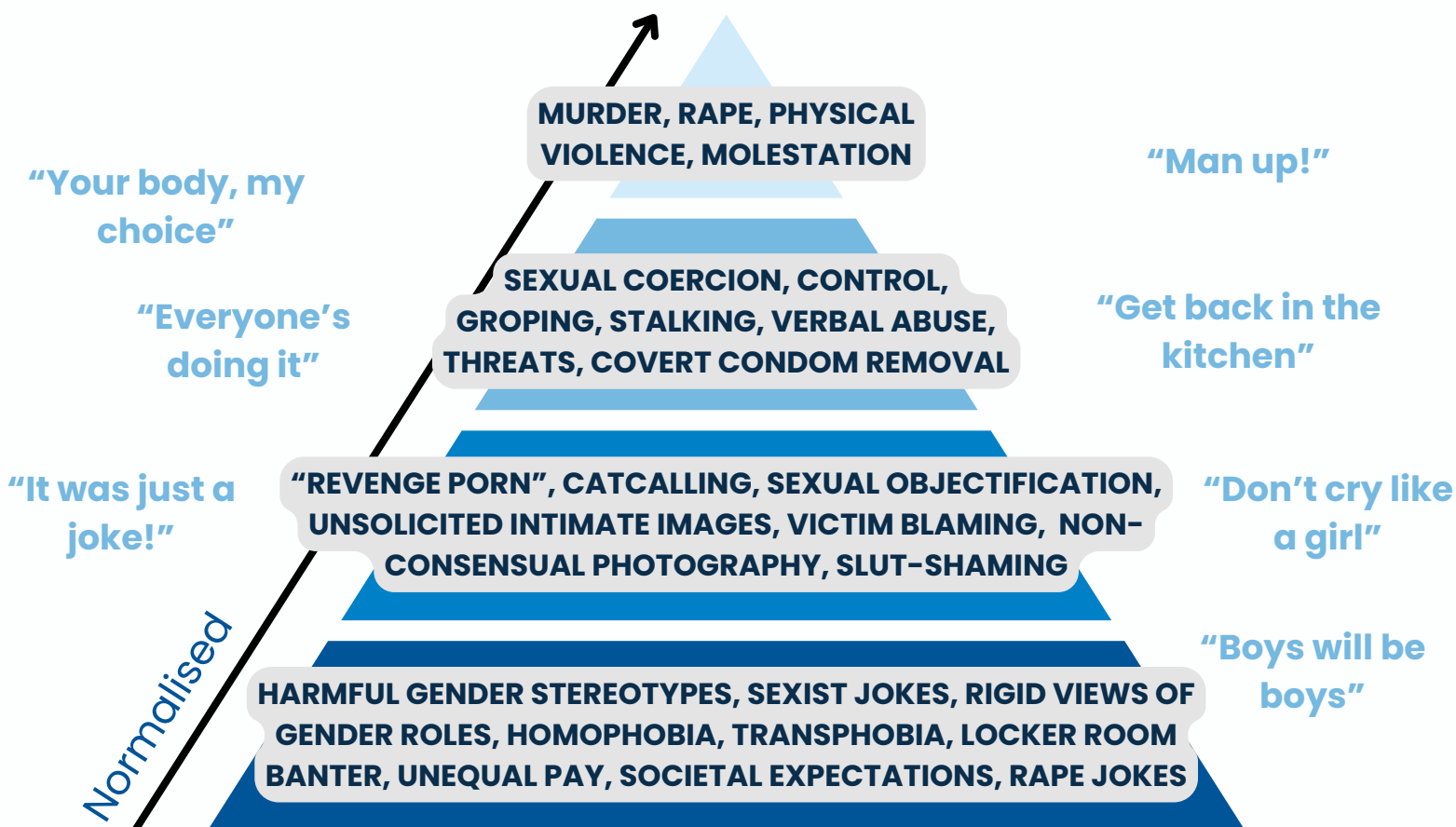
- At least 1 in 3 women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime
- In Scotland, female homicide victims are most likely to be killed by a partner or ex-partner
- In recent years in the UK, a woman has been killed by a man every 3 days on average
- In Scotland, at least 4 out of 5 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by police have a female victim and a male accused
- Around 40% of children known to statutory services in Scotland had been living with domestic abuse

A CONVERSATION CAN BE POWERFUL

Gender-based violence doesn't happen in isolation. It exists on a spectrum, starting with everyday microaggressions like harmful gender stereotypes, misogynistic "jokes", or sexist attitudes. Left unchallenged, these behaviours can escalate, growing into a culture where serious abuse and violence are normalised.

Tackling low-level behaviours is key to preventing more serious forms of violence.

We all know that murder, rape, and domestic violence is wrong and should not be tolerated in Shetland. Most people feel that they would do something about it if they could. But what about those uncomfortable behaviours that we see every day, that are technically less "serious", but somehow feel more difficult to call out? It's time to talk.



YOUR WORKPLACE CAN CREATE A SAFER SHETLAND FOR EVERYONE

As we spend most of our lives at work, workplaces have the power to challenge harmful behaviours, support survivors of gender-based violence without even knowing it, and create a culture of equality and respect for everyone.

Starting a conversation – no matter how small – is the first step towards change, and can make a real difference in our community.

TAKE ONE SMALL ACTION

We're asking workplaces like yours to take one small action: **instigate a conversation about gender-based violence at your next staff meeting, toolbox talk, or informal coffee break.**

It doesn't need to be perfect—it's about starting somewhere. By opening up this dialogue, you're helping to break the silence and the stigma, and make this important issue visible in our everyday spaces.

Doing something is always better than doing nothing. Together, we can make a difference.

Statistics show that people living in rural areas, such as Shetland, are less likely to come forward for support. It is understood that the stigma around gender-based violence is more prevalent here, due to the notion that "everyone knows everyone" and the fear that victims are less likely to be believed if their perpetrator is well known in the community.

This needs to change.

TIPS FOR GOOD CONVERSATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Start Small:

Starting a conversation doesn't have to be a big thing. It can be as simple as setting aside 10 minutes at your next team meeting, toolbox talk, or coffee break to open up the discussion. The important thing is to do something—because doing something is always better than doing nothing.

Create a Safe Space:

Encourage openness by creating a non-judgmental environment where people feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics. Be sure to remind folk that there is no expectation to share their own experiences of GBV.

Use Neutral Prompts:

Start with general questions or topics to avoid putting anyone on the spot. For example:

- *"Why do you think gender-based violence is still so common in Shetland today?"*
- *"How can workplaces like ours better support people affected by GBV?"*

It may be helpful to use real local statistics to begin these conversations:

- *"Did you know that over 300 people in Shetland accessed support from Shetland Women's Aid in one year alone?"*

Keep It Action-Focused:

Shift the conversation toward practical solutions:

- *"What small steps can we take as a business to support survivors or raise awareness about this issue?"*
- *"How can we promote equality and respect in our workplace?"*

GETTING STARTED

Once you have scheduled a time to talk, let your team know about it! Why not pin up a poster in the break room, or send out a simple company-wide email? You can also add Time to Talk as an agenda point for your next meeting.

Please remember that your aim is to prevent gender-based violence in Shetland, and reduce the stigma for those affected. Do not encourage personal disclosures, especially in a group setting. If someone does disclose their experience of GBV and requires support, contact information for local services can be found at the end of this Toolkit.

Here are some simple prompts to encourage meaningful conversations in your workplace:

- Have you ever noticed if stereotypical gender roles influence workplace interactions or decisions?
- How do you think businesses in Shetland can better support survivors of domestic abuse?
- What are we doing well as an organisation, when it comes to tackling the issue of gender-based violence?
- What do you think we can do to challenge harmful behaviours or attitudes in our specific industry?
- Why is it important for businesses like ours to be part of the solution to tackle gender-based violence in Shetland?
- What would a workplace free of gender inequality look like to you?
- Are you aware of our sexual harassment and domestic abuse policies, and where to find them?
- If a customer or client disclosed an incident of sexual violence in our building, how would we respond?

It may be helpful to print out the pyramid in this Toolkit to assist with your discussions.

DONE WITH TALKING? HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

If your workplace conversations have left you wanting to do more to tackle gender-based violence in Shetland, here are some things to consider:

- **Review your policies:** Ensure your organisation's policies address domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and gender equality (maternity, paternity, parental leave, breastfeeding, etc.) at work. You may wish to become an Equally Safe at Work accredited employer (www.equallysafeatwork.scot) for additional support reviewing your documents.
- **Training Opportunities:** Arrange for staff to attend local GBV Level 2 awareness training to better understand the issue and its impact. Shetland Women's Aid can provide a variety of bespoke training tailored to your organisation's needs, for example on how to respond to disclosures of domestic abuse in Shetland.
- **Donate or Volunteer:** Support local services through workplace fundraising initiatives or offering pro bono services where applicable.
- **Share Resources:** Provide staff, clients and customers with information about local support services, such as Shetland Women's Aid, The Compass Centre, and Victim Support Shetland. Place some leaflets in your reception area.

END THE SILENCE

Every single workplace in Shetland has the power to make a huge difference. By starting conversations, showing support, and taking meaningful action, your organisation can play a vital role in creating a safer and more equitable Shetland. **Remember, even one small action (like starting a short conversation) can spark change.** Let's make it [Time to Talk](#).

LOCAL SUPPORT

For women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Shetland:

Shetland Women's Aid

Tel: 01595 692070

Email: office@shetlandwa.org

Web: www.shetlandwa.org

For anyone aged 13+ affected by sexual violence in Shetland:

The Compass Centre

Tel: 01595 747174

Email: contact@compasscentre.org

Web: www.compasscentre.org

For more information on safeguarding in Shetland:

Safer Shetland

Web: www.safershetland.com

**In an emergency, please do not hesitate to call 999.
For non-urgent reports, call 101.**