

More research needed on ways to reduce violence against women

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Whilst there are a range of good practices in criminal justice responses to violence against women, there is limited evidence when it comes to effective interventions to reduce reoffending by perpetrators, a literature review has found.

The findings arise from a Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services request to the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR), a multi-institutional research centre led by the University of Glasgow, to undertake a review of research literature on effective interventions and practices to deal with perpetrators of violence against women.

The review of literature was commissioned to inform the development of Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls which was also published today.

Professor Michele Burman said: "This literature review shows us that there are a range of good and promising practices in relation to responses to violence against women, for example, those which adopt multi-agency approaches in the identification and management of offenders, which contribute to early intervention, robust risk assessment and safety planning, and those which support victim/survivors to give their best evidence. However, more research evaluation is required to identify what works to reduce reoffending."

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: "The [justice system](#) has a key

part to play in keeping women and girls safe from violence and abuse and in supporting their recovery.

"We have strengthened laws around domestic abuse and sexual offences and ensured greater consistency in the approach of criminal justice agencies to the enforcement of the criminal law in these areas. The Crown Office established its National Sexual Crimes Unit in 2009 and has appointed a dedicated lead prosecutor for domestic abuse. The establishment of national police service has allowed for expertise to be shared across the country and better access to specialist services, including a specially established National Rape Taskforce and Rape and Sexual Crime Advisory Group.

"The Scottish Government's 'Equally Safe' strategy launched today has underlined our commitment to undertake a 'whole system' review of how the [criminal justice system](#) responds to [violence against women](#) and girls. This will include consideration on whether the current law adequately reflects the true experience of victims of long-term abuse; the support made available for victims and the impact of justice interventions in changing perpetrator behaviour and wider public attitude."

In terms of rape, the team identified that the best practices within the [criminal justice](#) system are those which increase conviction rates whilst preventing secondary victimisation of complainers.

They also concluded that specialist police investigation units and sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) can be the most effective in gathering forensic evidence in an environment which is the least distressing to the victim.

Research evidence strongly supports the use of specialist [domestic abuse](#) courts. Such courts contribute to the twin aim of improving safety and support for victims while holding perpetrators accountable for their

actions.

More information: The report, "Violence against women: effective interventions and practices with perpetrators: A literature review," is available online: www.sccjr.ac.uk/publications/violence-against-women-with-perpetrators/

Provided by University of Glasgow

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