

# Falkirk Strategy on **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**

and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)



**“We feel empowered as we are listened to and not looked at as the problem. We have a voice in the solution. They stand with us, and we feel valued.”**

**We are deeply grateful to the survivors across Falkirk who have shared their feelings and truths. Their lived experiences drive this strategy, shaping its priorities, language, and purpose.**

**The voices throughout are not side notes.  
They are central to what we aim to do.**

**“I want to be able to help other people in the same way you have helped me. If I can make a difference, no matter how small, it would be rewarding.”**

**“When you feel degraded, you stop reaching out for help, and that’s a very dangerous path to be on.”**

**“We feel empowered as we are listened to and not looked at as the problem.”**



# GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

**Gender Based Violence (GBV) can impact anyone, regardless of background, race, beliefs and ability, from pre-birth through all stages of life.** While women and children are most often affected, we also recognise that any individual, including men, can and do experience violence and abuse. Our approach across Falkirk aims to be inclusive and ensures anyone who experiences harm can access needed support and protection.

**GBV violates human rights and can have severe, life-altering consequences and can pose a risk to life.** It encompasses a wide spectrum of behaviours and actions that can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm. Preventing and responding to GBV is vital to safeguarding health, wellbeing, dignity, and safety.

**We respect human rights, and they are central to this strategy.** There are multiple types of harm that people experience, and often, different forms of harm and inequality overlap. We work with Scottish Government and the United Nations definitions, recognising GBV and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as including but not limited to:

**Rape and Sexual Assault**

**Domestic abuse**

**Childhood Sexual Abuse**

**Child Exploitation**

**Human Trafficking**

**Sexual Harassment and Stalking**

**Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

**Prostitution**

**Pornography**

**Harmful Traditional Practises including:**

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

**Forced Marriage**

**“Honour”-based violence**

**Dowry related violence**

# WHO WE ARE

The Falkirk GBV Partnership (FGBVP) is a group of services and organisations across Falkirk with a shared goal: **To make Falkirk safer, more inclusive, supportive, and free from GBV and VAWG.**



Equally Safe is Scotland's national strategy to end VAWG. We agree that:

**“gender based violence, in any form, has no place in our vision for a safe, strong, successful Scotland. It damages health and wellbeing, limits freedom and potential, and is a violation of fundamental human rights”**  
(Equally Safe, 2014)

GBV does not exist in isolation. It happens alongside other concerns and harms such as child protection, adult support and protection, addictions, housing instability, mental health challenges, suicidality, and poverty. To deal with these connected issues effectively we must take a coordinated, trauma-informed approach that focuses on what people need. Limited resources, increasing demand, and the growing complexity of harm in our society means that **we must push forward with determination.**

# GBV IN FALKIRK

**Rape and attempted rape** reports increased by **45%**

**Domestic Abuse** reports increased by **54%**

*Between 2020 and 2024 in Falkirk – Scottish Government*

Falkirk has the 6<sup>th</sup> highest domestic abuse rates across all Scottish local authority areas. Domestic abuse continues to be one of the most common reasons for children being placed on the child protection register in Falkirk.

Whilst specialist services work to support more than a thousand children and families each year, the need is higher and many adults and children find themselves unable to access services or are placed on lengthy waiting lists. **Through awareness raising and campaigning, we aim to shift the culture in Falkirk to stand against GBV in all forms.**

“While experiencing domestic abuse, my cats and my job were all that mattered to me until my son was born. I knew I had to get away from it. Until then I didn’t know I was being abused. **It took over 3 years to find the right support for me and my son.**”





# OUR PRIORITIES

We need to work together to respond to these complex harms. Our strategy focuses on four key areas:

**Prevention:** Addressing root causes by challenging harmful norms, promoting equality and intervening at the earliest opportunity to prevent harm.

**Support & Protection:** Working to ensure people who experience harm can access the right services, that are trauma informed and person centred, at the right time.

**Tackling Perpetration:** Encouraging people to stop GBV, deterring people from causing harm and influencing systems which hold perpetrators to account.

**Capacity Building:** Equipping professionals with the skills and knowledge to take a trauma informed, human rights based approach. Improving multi-agency work and accountability. Proactively working to get services sufficiently and sustainably funded.



# PREVENTION

**Prevention** means stopping something harmful before it happens. When we talk about GBV, prevention is about **protecting people from being hurt, abused, or mistreated**. It is also about stopping life-long harm before it begins. When people experience trauma, their mental and physical health can be impacted, as well as things such as work, education and relationships. Prevention builds a safer, fairer world.

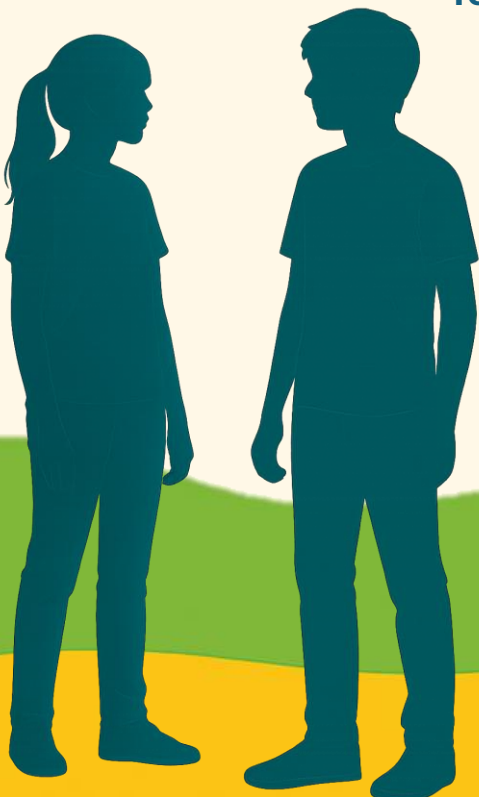
Young people told us that they learned a lot from prevention work:

**“You shouldn’t expect sex to be like in porn.”**

**“Consent means a lot and if someone doesn’t feel like it then you can’t do it.”**

Parents told us that interventions changed behaviours:

**“There has been a massive improvement in his behavior. I can now talk to him about what is triggering his behavior and how he is feeling. [...] he listens.”**



**We need to tackle the causes of GBV at the root.** This includes working with those who have caused harm and with individuals at risk of becoming abusive. We commit to finding ways to utilise earlier opportunities for interventions.

# SUPPORT AND PROTECTION

**“For the first time in years, I was able to feel genuine joy in my life.”**

**“I feel like my lion self is returning, rather than the mouse I had become.”**

**Adults and children deserve to be protected from harm.** People who have been harmed deserve access to support that is trauma informed. We need to focus on creating clear pathways for people to receive support when they need it and prioritise the wellbeing and rights of people at risk.

To do this, we will need to focus on support services being sustainably funded, reduce waiting lists and work closely together to protect those at risk. We are committed to finding solutions, despite challenges, because we know the value of good support.

**“My confidence has grown and although I am not the person I once was and longed to be again a new and improved person has appeared in her place.”**

**“I’ve got a voice now and I’m learning how to use it and how to be part of the world.”**





# TACKLING PERPETRATION

We want to make Falkirk a place where we don't tolerate people abusing others. When someone causes harm, we want them to be brought to justice.

"He broke my ribs, my arm... I couldn't hide the bruises when I gave birth to my son. When the police came, I knew there was no going back. He was charged but he didn't go to jail or anything. I'm always looking over my shoulder."

We want to use the law to prevent and stop people causing harm.

"When they were convicted of raping me the courts made it so they can't come near me again. It makes me feel safer."

"I couldn't go to the police. I was like 12 when it started and I believed they'd kill my mum and brother if I told. I don't even remember how many people raped me over the years."

We want to keep children safe from offending parents by working with offenders and the systems.

"[The perpetrator] was charged, but he applied to family court for shared contact with the children."



# CAPACITY BUILDING

We are committed to building lasting capacity to prevent and respond to GBV. This means investing in training, awareness, and strong partnerships to ensure individuals, workers and services are equipped to recognise early signs of harm, respond effectively, and promote a culture of safety and respect. By focusing on education, collaboration, and confidence building, we aim to strengthen our whole community's ability to prevent abuse before it happens.

**“They didn’t believe me, like it was my fault and I was an attention seeker. I was a child who needed help.”**

**“Services need to have a better understanding of the impact on individuals and their family.”**

**“The biggest change for me has been the use of language. [...] I still read and hear unhelpful, blaming language and am confident in challenging this now.”**

**- Practitioner**

**“I am much more confident challenging perpetrators and always bring this back to their parenting choices and impact of their behaviour on the child.”**

**- Practitioner**



# OUR COMMITMENT

The Falkirk GBV Partnership is committed to evidence-based action that meets both the immediate and long-term needs of survivors while working towards a society free from gender based violence.

**This Strategic Plan is our united effort to eliminate gender based violence through innovation, collaboration, and accountability. By promoting a culture of respect, empowerment, and safety, we aim to create a future where everyone in Falkirk can live free from violence and abuse.**

We know that:

GBV, in all its forms, is unacceptable.  
We need a whole systems and long-term approach.  
GBV needs sustained investments across services.  
Survivors must be heard, respected, and supported.  
We need interventions for people who cause harm.  
Changing attitudes is key to ending the tolerance.

Our work will be driven through our local action planning, aiming to achieve the objectives in this strategy.





## **Falkirk Gender Based Violence Partnership**



**These organisations provide support for people  
who have experienced GBV in Falkirk.**

**Forth Valley Rape Crisis Centre  
Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARCS)  
Equally Safe Falkirk  
Committed to Ending Abuse (CEA)  
Shakti Women's Aid**

**For further information about FGBVP or this strategy, contact:  
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