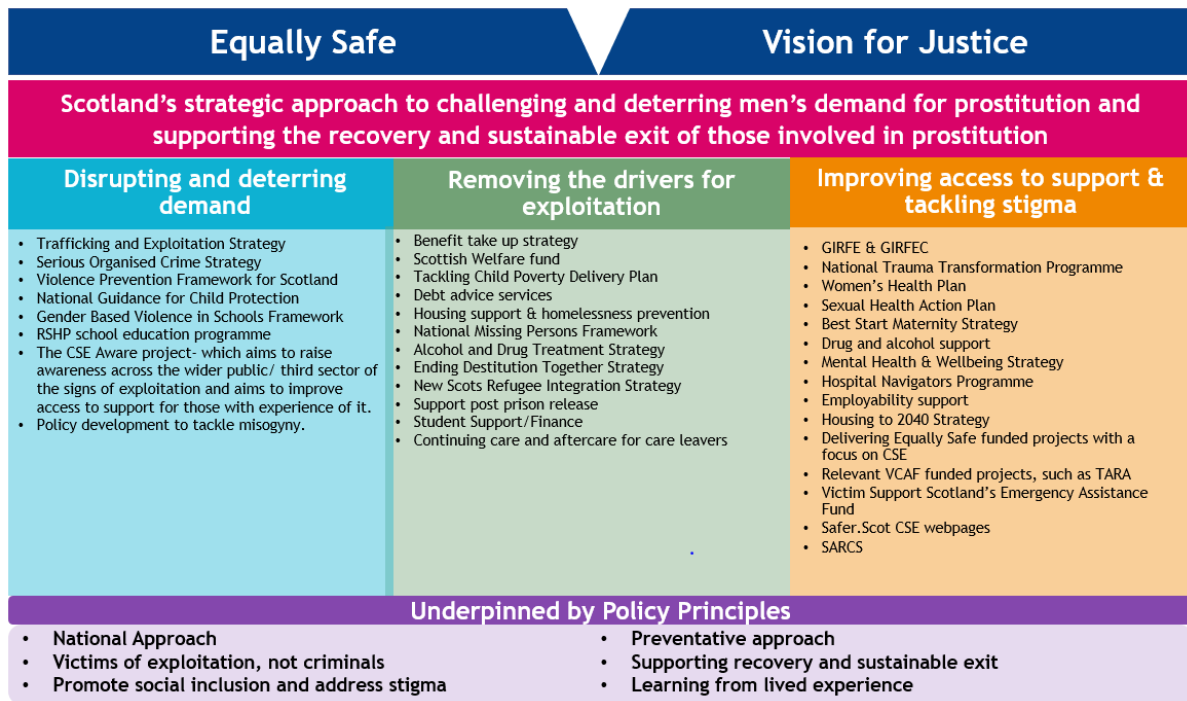


Overview of policies contributing to the strategic approach to challenging and deterring men’s demand for prostitution and supporting the recovery and sustainable exit of those involved in prostitution.



The policy map above gives an overview of related policies across Scottish Government portfolios that contribute to the strategic approach. As we implement this, and through the continued application of its policy principles, we will look for opportunities to continue to strengthen policy links and collaborate. The text below provides further information about wider related work – further highlighting the wider policy connections.

Disrupting and Deterring Demand

A key aim of our [Justice Vision](#) is that we have a society in which people feel, and are, safer in their communities. Prevention and early intervention, working to understand the underlying causes of crime are also central to it.

The policy principles that underpin the strategic approach make clear that those selling/exchanging sex should be seen as victims of exploitation, not criminals- with those involved in exploiting them, and those who commit violent and sexual offences against this group, receiving punishment proportionate to their crime.

Our approach to disrupting and deterring demand also includes interventions that look to tackle the issue 'upstream', with our relationships education in schools highlighting the complexities associated with prostitution.

Through the Delivering Equally Safe Fund support is provided to the [CSE Aware](#) project, which aims to raise practitioner awareness, across the public and third sector of commercial sexual exploitation – helping them to spot the signs of exploitation and improve support for those affected.

An overview of current related policies that contribute to disrupting and deterring demand can be found below:

Justice approaches

Serious Organised Crime – Scotland's [Serious Organised Crime Strategy](#) recognises that human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation occurs throughout Scotland and is not confined to our major cities. The [Scottish Multi Agency Strategic Threat Assessment](#) identifies sexual exploitation as a significant harm to our communities and those who are victims are often the most vulnerable in society. Partners on the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce are fully committed to using every means at their disposal to disrupt the abhorrent practice of human trafficking.

In June 2023, the Scottish Government published [Criminal Exploitation Guidance for Practitioners](#) on behalf of the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce. The guidance aims to support practitioners with a shared understanding of criminal exploitation to help them identify those at risk from serious organised crime and put in place appropriate measures to support children and vulnerable adults away from exploitation. The guidance makes clear that all forms of exploitation including sexual should be considered if there is indication of exploitation taking place. It should not be assumed that one form of exploitation occurs in isolation.

Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy- In October 2015 the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015. One of the requirements of the Act was for the Scottish Government to develop a Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy. The Strategy was published in 2017.

Action Area 2 of the [strategy](#) focuses on the identification of perpetrators of human trafficking and exploitation with the intention of disrupting their criminal activity. Action Area 2 is led by Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit (NHTU).

The NHTU undertake large scale and complex human trafficking investigations, report human trafficking cases to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and to international prosecutors as appropriate, develop intelligence into actionable investigations, develop and deliver training and guidance to promote national consistency and develop and cultivate partnership working with national and international statutory, law enforcement and third sector partners.

A [review](#) of Scotland's Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy (published in September 2023), found, as part of associated stakeholder engagement, that a refresh of the Strategy should be undertaken, and that this would allow us to reflect the changing landscape and evolving workstreams in our attempts to combat human trafficking. The refresh commenced in December 2023 will continue during 2024. It will consider the evolving operational realities observed since 2017 and progress in Scotland's attempts to combat trafficking and exploitation. The refresh will be cognisant of this strategic approach – both forming part of our collective approach to tackling commercial sexual exploitation.

Misogyny- This year, the Scottish Government consulted on draft laws to implement the recommendations of the Working Group on misogyny and the criminal law chaired by Baroness Kennedy. The report presents clear evidence that women and girls are all too often subjected to misogynistic harassment and abuse when in public, at work, or while online. These proposals for new law are a comprehensive response to the need to address the type of misogynistic conduct, ensuring the criminal law can either deal for the first time, or better deal, with misogyny. In his Programme for Government speech to Parliament on 5 September 2023, the First Minister confirmed that the Misogyny Bill will be introduced in this Parliamentary session.

Prevention and early intervention approaches

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – [updated 2023](#), describes the responsibilities and expectations of everyone who works with children, young people and their families in Scotland. It incorporates learning from child protection cases, supports improved cross-agency working and outcomes for children, up to the age of 18, who are at risk. It includes detailed advice on identifying and supporting victims of exploitation.

In schools, Relationships, Sexual Health, and Parenthood (RSHP) education is intended to help children and young people build positive relationships as they grow older and should present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within

the framework of curricular values and an awareness of the law. Teachers have the flexibility to include content on prostitution if they feel it is relevant to the RSHP lesson. One online RSHP teaching resource contains a learning activity for senior phase pupils (S4 to S6) which frames prostitution as sexual exploitation and helps young people learn about prostitution in terms of the law, social attitudes, and harm to individuals.

The [Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group](#), which is jointly chaired by Scottish Government, Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance, are developing a framework document to help ensure consistency in messages on sexual harassment and gender-based violence for everyone working with children and young people. This work is expected to be completed in 2024.

School nurses play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of school aged children. Where more specialised support is required, school nurses can make referrals into other services ensuring children receive the correct care and support. We will engage with representatives for School Nursing to raise awareness of CSE and support them in gaining the requisite skills and knowledge to support individuals at risk of exploitation.

In addition, our approach to Youth Justice also contributes to our wider approach to early intervention and tackling the attitudes and behaviours that can act as a driver for exploitation. This recognises that many young people who present a risk of offending are often highly vulnerable, with complex needs. In many cases they have themselves been victims of crime, neglect, and abuse. We will make practitioners aware, where relevant, of the CSE Aware training.

The [Violence Prevention Framework](#) published in May 2023, aims to strengthen our overall approach to tackling violence, focussing on prevention, early and targeted intervention, working with funded partners to deliver a range of work to prevent and divert people away from violence, build resilience and empower individuals and communities to live free from violence. This work includes expanding the [Hospital Navigator service](#) to more young people and adults presenting with multiple complex needs (and will include the service having an awareness of CSE), to continued delivery of the [Mentors in Violence Prevention](#) programme, which provides time and space in schools for young people, boys and girls, to explore and discuss different forms of violence, and as active bystanders, how they can safely challenge negative harmful behaviours and attitudes, to help keep themselves and their peers safe, so they can become part of the solution to preventing gender based violence.

Wider related policies

Online Safety – Regulation of internet and online service providers remains a reserved matter, and we continue to liaise closely with the UK Government and Ofcom on the UK Online Safety Act 2023. We will also consider how we can further deter online sexual exploitation within a Scottish context, as part of this strategic approach's implementation.

This will include exploring digital options to digitally equip and train support staff within specialist VAWG services so they feel digitally confident to support victims of technology-facilitated violence – this aligning with our Digital [Strategy](#)'s aim for an online environment where vulnerable people are protected from harm.

Digital technology can also be beneficial in connecting victims to the services they need most during a crisis and supporting their longer-term recovery, therefore Digital inclusion solutions will be explored with organisations supporting those with experience of VAWG.

Housing – Our Housing policy is clear that any registered private landlord offering to rent properties in exchange for sexual activity ('sex for rent') should be reported to the local authority, as well as the police. Reports can be made at any time, and the local authority will investigate the complaint. If evidence of any such activity is found, the local authority will determine if that individual is still considered as a fit and proper person to be a landlord- a local authority can re-assess the fit and proper person test at any time during the registration period. If the individual is found to no longer be fit and proper, the individual will be removed from the Landlord Register, stopping them from being a landlord in Scotland. We will ensure that relevant local authority housing staff are aware of the CSE Aware training.

Removing the drivers for exploitation

An important aspect of disputing demand is removing the drivers of exploitation. Our approach is cognisant of the need to respond to the systemic societal and economic disadvantages that women face, in order to address the conditions that can drive exploitation. This also involves recognising the risk factors and circumstances that can lead to exploitation.

Applying the policy principles to relevant policy and practice across government, the wider public and third sector will underpin a connected approach to tackling the drivers for exploitation.

Our related policies contributing to removing the drivers for exploitation include:

Welfare and wider safeguarding approaches

Benefit Take-Up Ensuring that people can access all of the social security benefits they are entitled to is a fundamental priority for the Scottish Government. As part of our responsibility to encourage people to take-up their entitlements, we have produced a Benefit Take-Up Strategy. Following publication of the first strategy in October 2019, we published an [updated strategy](#) in October 2021, outlining the core principles that guide how we help people access these benefits.

Our approach to maximising benefit take-up remains centred around being aware of, and addressing, the barriers that can exist for people accessing Scottish benefits and increasing awareness of what they are entitled to. We know that stigma is one such barrier and, in line with commitments set out in the Benefit Take-Up Strategy,

the Scottish Government are currently undertaking a participatory process, in partnership with the Poverty Alliance, to identify the impacts and challenges that stigma has on people accessing their entitlements, exploring practical examples to tackle this with people with lived experience. When developing approaches for this work, we will take into account wider lived experiences of stigma, including those identified through [research](#) into experiences of people who sell or exchange sex, sharing outputs to ensure the Scottish Government collaboratively addresses the barriers which prevent people from accessing the support and services they are entitled to.

Social Security Scotland are running communications across several channels to promote benefit take-up amongst people on low incomes. These communications provide messaging encouraging people to apply for support that they may be entitled to. We will use Scottish Government research into under-represented groups which will help us focus our messaging and improve our audience targeting. As above, this will also include having cognisance of the lived experience research Scottish Government published in 2022, on the support needs of those with experience of selling/exchanging sex.

The [Scottish Welfare Fund \(SWF\)](#) is an essential source of occasional support for those most in need. The scheme is delivered by local authorities in Scotland and provides two forms of discretionary awards: Crisis Grants to help meet immediate short-term needs arising from exceptional circumstances; and Community Care Grants to help people establish or maintain a home and assist with independent living. In 2023 we published an [Action Plan](#) to deliver 22 improvements to the scheme, including updating the statutory guidance and improving administration, accessibility and experience. As part of the work to increase awareness and improve accessibility, we will ensure that CSE Aware training is promoted to local authorities.

Welfare and Debt advice services- The Scottish Government has invested £12.5 million in 2023/24 in a range of welfare and debt advice services across Scotland. To further increase the availability and accessibility of welfare, debt and income maximisation advice, a new £1 million [Advice in Accessible Settings Fund](#) was also established in 2023-24. This fund, part of our wider package of funding, is supporting partnerships between advice providers and a range of other services to increase the availability of advice in places that people already go to within health, education, and community settings.

Minimum Income Guarantee - A Minimum Income Guarantee has the potential to deliver transformational change in Scotland, and form part of the preventative approach to protect women and girls from economic exploitation. The aim of a Minimum Income Guarantee is to provide everyone in Scotland with a minimum acceptable standard of living, ensuring people have enough money for housing, food, and essentials to allow them to live a decent, dignified healthy and financially secure life. We made a further commitment in the 2023 Programme for Government to continuing our work with the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group to consider feasible steps towards delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee in Scotland.

Tackling Child Poverty - The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets ambitious targets to significantly reduce the proportion of children in Scotland living in poverty by 2030, with interim targets to be met in 2023/24.

Our second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, '[Best Start, Bright Futures](#)' (2022-26), outlines how the Scottish Government will work in partnership with the public, private and third sectors, together with people and communities to deliver progress towards meeting the statutory child poverty targets. This includes action to provide immediate support to families, including through the [Scottish Child Payment](#), as well as wide ranging action to deliver the change needed in the longer term to support families, such as employment support, access to advice services, delivery of affordable homes and through provision of wider holistic services to promote the wellbeing of families.

The actions set out in Best Start, Bright Futures focus on delivering the transformation in our economy and public services required to meet the child poverty targets – thereby helping to address the systemic societal and economic disadvantages that may lead to exploitation.

Housing Support – Discretionary Housing Payments are administered by local authorities and can be paid to those in receipt of housing benefit/universal credit. A DHP guidance manual will be published in 2024, to highlight groups that local authorities may wish to prioritise and we will look to ensure that the guidance includes a reference to Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

Housing to 2040 is our first long-term national housing strategy. It sets out the Scottish Government's vision and route map to deliver our ambition for everyone to have a safe, good quality and affordable home. A key part of this strategy was a commitment to publish a new Rented Sector Strategy, informed by tenants, and bringing forward a new Housing Bill. We have consulted on a draft Rented Sector Strategy, A New Deal for Tenants, at the beginning of 2022, which sought views on a range of issues and proposals including in relation to supporting people with experience of selling/exchanging sex. We will consider responses to the consultation in the development of our final rented sector strategy, as well as both this strategic approach and the refreshed Equally Safe Strategy, as we further develop our approach.

The [National Missing Persons Framework](#) seeks to ensure that the risks related to going missing are highlighted to professionals, those at most risk, and more widely to the public. It recognises the links between going missing and sexual exploitation and the importance of joined up multi-agency working to prevent opportunities for exploitation. The [Framework Implementation project](#) aims to improve and highlight good practice and provide return discussion training for professionals working with people who go missing. A return discussion can provide an opportunity to work with an individual to prevent future missing episodes, reduce risk and safeguard a vulnerable person by identifying underlying issues or obtaining information around potential crime and exploitation.

Supporting people who use alcohol and drugs. Our approach to tackling the drivers for sexual exploitation includes an awareness of the need for our policy

approaches to supporting people who use alcohol and drugs, to have an awareness of the potential risks of exploitation. The Encompass snapshot [survey](#) shows the need for an intersectional approach to supporting those with experience of selling/exchanging sex, and highlights the connections that these issues can have.

Over the lifetime of this Parliament, we're investing an additional £250 million to save and improve lives of people affected by drugs. This is supporting a range of programmes to enable more people to access the kind of treatment that is right for them. For example, we have committed funding through the Residential Rehabilitation Rapid Capacity Programme for the development of several projects which will support women and their families through recovery in Scotland. More than £5.5 million has been committed to support the establishment of two houses run by Aberlour Children's Charity. The first of these houses – Cowan Grove – was officially opened by the former Minister for Drugs Policy in Dundee in January 2023, with the second now due to open in Falkirk in summer 2024. We have also committed more than £8.5 million to support the establishment of Harper House, a National Specialist Family Service run by Phoenix Futures which is the first of its kind in Scotland. We will engage with relevant practitioners to ensure they are aware of the CSE Aware training.

Support for those affected by alcohol use also remains a priority for Scottish Government, and we are treating our policies to reduce alcohol and drug deaths as twin public health emergencies in Scotland.

We are continuing to work with the UK Government on developing new UK-wide clinical guidelines for Alcohol Treatment, which was [published for public consultation](#) between 16 October and 08 December 2023. This guidance will look to introduce new approaches to treatment and will apply to a broad range of settings including primary care, hospital, and justice. The guidance highlights the importance of responding to risks and safeguarding, as well as working across different sectors to provide a holistic approach to care and support, addressing sexual violence or exploitation and domestic abuse from assessment through to treatment. We will take forward this work in Scotland to ensure our services are providing a high and consistent standard of care for those who use them.

Recognising risk at key transition points

Our preventative approach, removing the drivers for exploitation, recognises that some transition points in people's lives may lead to the risk of exploitation- relevant policy areas recognise this within their approaches to supporting individuals at these key points in their lives.

New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy – Our approach to supporting asylum seekers and refugees¹ living in Scotland is set out in the New Scots refugee

¹ Asylum and immigration are reserved to the UK Parliament. This includes decision relating to the UK asylum system, provision of asylum accommodation and support to those who would otherwise be destitute while awaiting a decision and the applications of conditions through reserved immigration legislation and rules, for example No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

integration [strategy](#). New Scots is a partnership strategy, developed and led by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council. We are committed to supporting refugees and people seeking asylum to integrate into our communities and providing the safety and security they need as they begin to rebuild their lives.

The Scottish Government is working with our New Scots partners to develop a refreshed New Scots refugee integration strategy and will consider the work of this strategic approach and its policy principles, and the refreshed Equally Safe strategy as part of this. We will ensure New Scots continues to be shaped by refugees and people seeking asylum, as well as those with expertise supporting them. This includes ensuring that the particular needs of women refugees and asylum seekers are better understood, and that appropriate action is taken to enable their participation in the work of New Scots.

Ending Destitution Together [strategy](#) was published jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA in March 2021, and seeks to support people in Scotland who are experiencing or at risk of destitution because of their immigration status and the application of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). NRPF restrictions do not impact people equally, and the strategy recognises the different intersectional experiences which can affect people's needs and access to support. Women in particular can be at risk of domestic abuse and commercial sexual exploitation (as well as other forms of VAWG), when they are dependent on someone else for their immigration status or income.

The Scottish Government is supporting the British Red Cross in the delivery of the Scottish Crisis Fund, a project that supports people at risk of or experiencing destitution, by providing crisis funds and is inclusive of those subject to NRPF.

The Scottish Government is continuing support of the delivery of the diagnostic legal advice and advocacy support service delivered by the Scottish Refugee Council in partnership with Fair Way Scotland. The project is inclusive of people subject to NRPF. It aims to ensure people can access appropriate support and advice for their circumstances, including trusted legal advice to help them navigate UK immigration and asylum systems.

Ukraine – Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of those arriving from Ukraine is central to our response to the illegal war against Ukraine. We have provided guidance for all practitioners involved in the safeguarding of children and adults who are arriving in Scotland from Ukraine through the publication of [People arriving from Ukraine - risk and need: public protection guidance](#). This specifically highlights guidance on Violence against women and girls, including human trafficking, and witnesses and victims of war crimes and is designed to work alongside the New Scots welcome pack. A trauma informed, holistic, and rights based approach to long term integration is one of our five strategic priorities, as laid out in [Ukraine - A Warm Scots Future: policy position](#), and helps us ensure that we meet the needs of those most vulnerable.

The Ukraine Safeguarding Strategy Group, co-chaired by the Scottish Government and Police Scotland, brings together key agencies with a role in the safeguarding of displaced people. The Group provides their professional knowledge and expertise on relevant issues across the Warm Scottish Welcome programme, with gender-based harm being one of these.

Support for Care Leavers - The Scottish Government's commitment to supporting care experienced young people who are in care or are Care Leavers is enshrined in the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#). The Act sets out responsibilities for Corporate Parents who have duties to support care experienced children and young people; and introduced [Continuing Care](#) provision and extended the entitlement to [Aftercare](#) support for Care Leavers up to their 26th birthday.

Since April 2015, young people who are leaving care after their 16th birthday; and who have been looked after in foster, kinship or residential care, have been eligible for Continuing Care. This means these young people may stay with their carers or families up to their 21st birthday. When they leave their Continuing Care setting, they may then be entitled to Aftercare advice, guidance, and assistance from their Local Authority up to their 26th birthday. This can include securing accommodation, education, and employment opportunities, as well as financial support.

In order to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation and to improve support for those affected, the CSE Aware training materials will be shared with relevant stakeholders who provide support to Care Leavers.

Prison Release Support – Accessible, effective, and practical support for people leaving prison is an essential part of the rehabilitation process. The Scottish Government currently provides £3.8 million a year to support third sector throughcare services across Scotland, which offer one-to-one support to individuals leaving prison, helping them overcome issues in areas such as health, accommodation, benefits, addiction, and employment. These services can also help individuals link to and engage with specialist services.

The Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 will also ensure that improved support is available for people leaving prison custody. It places new duties on the wider public sector to engage in pre-release planning so that this starts at an earlier point in a prisoner's time in custody and provides for the creation of national standards of throughcare support to ensure a more consistent approach across the country. These provisions recognise the need for early and co-ordinated release planning so that people leaving prison have improved access to the services they need for a safe transition back into the community. These approaches will be underpinned by a trauma informed approach, with an awareness of VAWG. We will raise awareness of the CSE Aware training to relevant practitioners.

Student Support – The Scottish Government continues to support students, through the provision of a number of student support packages, including for Care Experienced, disabled, and estranged students, and our commitment to free tuition.

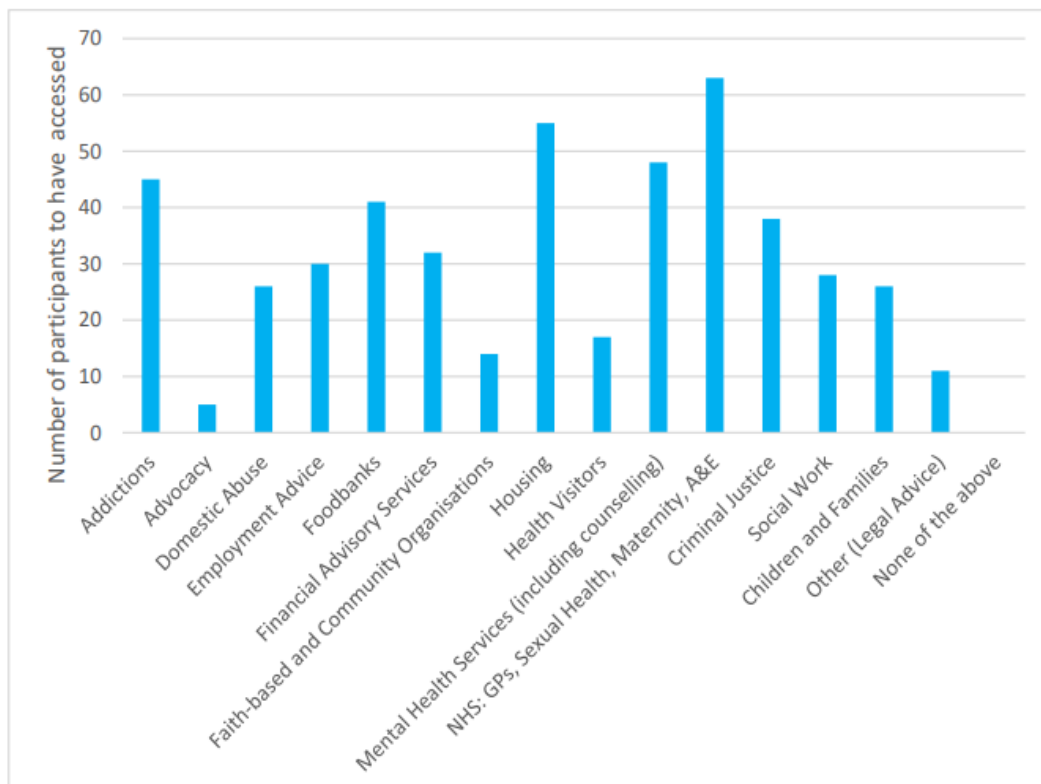
Improving access to support and tackling stigma

The lived experience [research](#) published in 2022, highlighted the need for greater awareness within mainstream services of the support needs that those involved in prostitution may have. The research found on average that participants had 7 different support needs – with the issue of individuals having to repeat their experiences to different practitioners further underlining the need for joined-up trauma informed responses. The range of support that those affected may access is demonstrated below in a table from the research. In addition the [Encompass snapshot surveys](#) highlight this- key areas of support the surveys have highlighted include: benefits, finance and housing.

In June 2023 we produced a webpage informed by the lived experience research and stakeholder insights, which details the support available to those with experience of prostitution and guidance for practitioners. This can be found here: [Commercial Sexual Exploitation - Safer.scot](#)

An overview of our response to improving support for those with experience of prostitution can be found below:

Table showing the key mainstream services accessed, from the lived experience research.



Person-centred, trauma informed approaches

Our Justice Vision and the [findings of the Women in Justice Leadership panel](#) both highlight the need for urgent action to ensure women are better served by our approaches to Justice and the need for trauma informed practice across the justice system.

Trauma Informed Justice: A Knowledge and Skills Framework for Working with Victims and Witnesses was launched on 3 May 2023. This [framework](#) will specifically support the development of a trauma informed approach. We are providing additional funding to support its implementation; work to develop an implementation plan for the framework is ongoing.

Our joint ambition with COSLA is to develop trauma informed and responsive workforces and services across Scotland, supported by [National Trauma Transformation Programme](#) (NTTP). The programme is delivered by NHS Education for Scotland and provides freely available, evidence-based trauma training resources and support for implementation to further progress trauma informed services, systems, and workforces.

As part of the **Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill** we are also creating a new statutory duty on criminal justice agencies to have regard to trauma informed practice in their work with victims and witnesses of crime, and to make efforts to avoid re-traumatisation.

Justice Social Work Reports and Court-Based Justice Social Work Service Practice Guidance was published in October 2023. The purpose of this guidance is to provide social workers and paraprofessionals working within justice social work settings with guidance to carry out their duties at this crucial point of a person's entry into the justice system. Whether this is the person's first appearance in court or not, their contact with the court-based justice worker or the social worker preparing their court report represents an opportunity to consider the circumstances leading up to their appearance and what they could do differently to avoid it happening in the future. This guidance will be relevant whether within the court setting or in the preparation of justice social work reports for the court and will address developments in current practice, changes in legislation and reflections on service delivery. The guidance highlights the complex nature of the trauma experienced by women involved in the justice system and includes signposts to further information for professionals in relation to VAWG – including Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

Family and health support

Women with experience of prostitution will have support needs which many of the wider population have, for example, parent related support such as childcare. Our approach to delivering support for families recognises that anyone with experience of selling or exchanging sexual services should be able to access support and mainstream services without fear of stigma.

[Children's Services Planning](#) duties set out under the Children and Young People (Scotland Act) 2014 and statutory guidance (2020) include a number of requirements

of partners to work collaboratively, to identify the local population needs of children, young people, and families. Each area's Children's Services Plan includes services provided directly to children and young people, as well as services provided to relevant adult family members. This aims to ensure a whole system and multi-agency approach is in place across Scotland which ensures local availability of support to children, young people, and families to address local and national priorities. Further information on Holistic Whole Family Support can be found [here](#).

The best start: [five-year plan](#) for maternity and neonatal care is driving transformation in maternity and neonatal care putting women, babies and families at the centre of maternity and neonatal care. It is centred on the vision of family centred care to build strong family relationships, and confident parenting. This can lessen the impact of inequalities. Improving maternity and neonatal care can have a marked effect on the health and life chances for women and babies.

The **Universal Health Visiting Pathway** presents a core home visiting programme to be offered to all families by Health Visitors as a minimum standard. The schedule of home visits under the pathway supports Health Visitors, children, and parents to build meaningful and trusting relationships. Where additional support is required, the pathway provides a gateway to other levels of Health Visiting provision and referrals to more specialised healthcare services. We will engage with representatives for Health Visiting to raise awareness of CSE and support them in gaining the requisite skills and knowledge to support individuals at risk of exploitation/ or with experience of exploitation.

[Our Women's Health Plan](#) underpins actions to improve women's health inequalities by raising awareness around women's health, improving access to health care, and reducing inequalities in health outcomes for girls and women. The plan's principles include addressing inequalities and respectful and inclusive services.

Sexual Health - We will ensure that the policy principles underpinning this strategic approach are also reflected in our wider policy approaches on sexual health. The Scottish Government's [Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus \(SHBBV\) Action Plan 2023-26](#) includes key actions to improve outcomes relating to sexual health and wellbeing. The actions set out in the plan will drive progress towards achieving our fundamental vision for everyone in Scotland to have good sexual health and wellbeing, and ensuring that high quality, innovative SHBBV prevention, care and support services are available to those who need them, in timely manner and irrespective of age, sex, gender, sexual identity or location.

NHS Scotland Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) - SARCS is a dedicated NHS Service which offers healthcare and support following rape or sexual assault. SARCS offer a self-referral service, meaning that anyone aged 16 or over can access healthcare and request a forensic medical examination in the days following an assault, without first having to make a report to the police.

Across Scotland, SARCS will look after people's immediate healthcare and wellbeing needs and can support people to have a forensic medical examination, if appropriate, subject to professional judgement. This includes collecting forensic evidence (which can be kept for up to 26 months) should they want to report to the

police at a later date. Further information on SARCS can be found at: [Turn to SARCS | NHS inform](#)

National Care Service - The Scottish Government is committed to delivering a National Care Service to improve quality, fairness and consistency of community health, social work and social care services that meet people's needs. This is part of our broader work to provide sustainable person-centred public services that tackle inequalities. Our ambition is to create a comprehensive community health, social work, and social care services, that smooth transitions between different categories of care.

As we build the National Care Service, we will listen to the voices of the real experts: people who use community health and social care, their unpaid carers, and the staff who provide it, listening to their needs and acting on what they tell us. The needs of people with experience of selling/exchanging sex are being considered as part of our work to ensure that the NCS is inclusive to all.

Approaches to tackling stigma

The importance of the impact of layered stigma was also highlighted by the lived experience research published in 2022, regarding the support needs of those who sell or exchange sex.

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, published June 2023, sets out our vision of a Scotland, free from stigma and inequality, where everyone fulfils their right to achieve the best mental health and wellbeing possible. It recognises that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by poverty, which can lead to social isolation, anxiety, depression, and stress. The Strategy sets out a priority to tackle mental health inequalities, recognising that we must take a trauma informed, intersectional approach so we can most effectively tackle structural and health inequalities, including gendered inequality. Our recent [Delivery Plan](#) sets out the specific actions we will take. Our approach to improving mental health support includes aims to tackle stigma – both mental health and wellbeing related and as part of multiple stigmas, and therefore has cognisance of this strategic approach's policy principles.

Tackling stigma is a cross cutting priority of our **National Mission on drugs**. As part of the Cross Government Response to the Drug Deaths Taskforce, we published our [Stigma Action Plan](#) in January 2023. The plan turns principles into actions through developing a voluntary accreditation scheme to tackle structural stigma and implementing a national programme of activity to challenge social stigma.

We know that stigma can be intersectional, and people can experience multiple and compounded stigma, which is why across the work of our National Mission to reduce drug deaths and improve lives we are committed to supporting people with a holistic and trauma informed approach. We will consider the different experiences and needs of people affected by substance use, including those affected by CSE, throughout the work of the National Mission.

[Fair Work First Guidance](#) was updated in March 2023 to support the implementation of our Fair Work conditionality approach which requires public sector grant recipients to pay their workers at least the real Living Wage and provide appropriate channels for effective voice. Through Fair Work First, we also encourage those who receive public sector funding - including grants, contracts, and other funding - to adopt Fair Work First principles. Within the principle of 'action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace', the guidance provides best practices examples and encourages awareness amongst employers of VAWG. The guidance includes that staff and policies should recognise Commercial Sexual Exploitation as a form of VAWG and support this strategic approach's policy principles, applying these to relevant policy and practice.

Our **Delivering Equally Safe** fund includes support for organisations both supporting those affected by prostitution and tackling the stigma associated with it. Zero Tolerance, a DES funded organisation have produced [guidance for the media](#) on the reporting of VAWG, which includes guidance related to reporting on commercial sexual exploitation.

Funded projects improving access to support

The Scottish Government supports a range of projects supporting women with experience of commercial sexual exploitation, from crisis support through to support, when ready, to exit from prostitution sustainably. This includes through our Delivering Equally Safe Fund (DES). A [report](#) in March 2023 gave an overview of the DES projects with a focus on CSE. Wider projects within the DES fund are also supporting the delivery of the principles and this strategic approach.

Our Victim Centred Approach Fund (VCAF) was launched on 1 April 2022 and will provide more than £48m to support 23 victims' organisations over the period 2022-2025, including significantly increased funding for organisations supporting victims of human trafficking and exploitation.

The Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA) and Migrant Help will share over £7.45m during this period to provide support and assistance to adult trafficking victims. As part of the VCAF, we are also providing:

- £480k to Justice and Care to support two Victim Navigators who are working alongside Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit.
- £130k to JustRight Scotland to support the work of a Scottish Anti-Trafficking Centre, including early legal advice to potential victims.
- £329K to Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland to provide a longer-term support pilot.
- £817k to NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to provide a psychological trauma support service to adult trafficking victims to potential support victims of human trafficking in Scotland.

The [Victim Surcharge Fund](#) (VSF) is used to provide direct, practical help to victims. This includes providing emergency household, food, utility, or clothing expenses for those escaping domestic abuse, or installation of alarm systems to help victims feel safe.

We also provide providing to Victim Support Scotland, who offer an Emergency Assistance Fund, which is open to people affected by crime who are in urgent need of financial help as a result of what they have experienced. Those with experience of Commercial Sexual Exploitation can also access the Fund.

Wider support

Our approach to improving support for those with experience of prostitution recognises the need to ensure that all adults with experience of prostitution can access support at any stage, and that there is long-term and consistent support when ready and preparing to exit, and that support should be available for those who continue to be affected after they exit. Access to employability and training is one of a range of the important aspects of sustainable support.

Employability Support Helping people into fair, sustainable jobs is central to achieving the Scottish Government's vision for a wellbeing economy and delivering on the ambitions in Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and in tackling child poverty as outlined in Best Start, Bright Futures. The Scottish Government are investing up to £108m (2023/24) in employability support through No One Left Behind and Fair Start Scotland to prioritise those who face complex barriers to accessing the labour market. Through No One Left Behind, the Scottish Government is committed to delivering person centred employability services which support individuals who are furthest from the labour market to overcome structural barriers to entering and sustaining employment. Employability support will be tailored to meet the individuals needs including those who experience prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, providing support towards and into employment.