



In cooperation with the



Human Rights Education Training **Gender Matters**

Bringing together the voluntary sector, youth workers, professionals, and practitioners.
A training exploring human rights education and gender equality to address gender-based violence affecting young people.

London Borough of Brent, United Kingdom

11th, 18th, and 25th November 2022 from 9.30 am - 4.30 pm

Background Information



Background information

While the impact of Gender Equality Strategies on all aspects of modern societies and human life is showing positive results, new and old vulnerabilities of our societies have emerged through the experience of a world pandemic and the growth of the Internet and social media usage. The Covid-19 pandemic revealed that gender inequality and gender-based violence remain a sad reality for many people. Youth work and youth organisations reflect the societies in which they are placed. Young people experience gender inequality and discrimination, affecting their well-being and chances of equally participating in society. Youth workers and youth leader practitioners can be the agents of change by recognising gender inequality, combating discrimination, and understanding their role in strengthening or reversing patterns of gender inequality and discrimination.

In its **SAFER BRENT Community Safety Strategy 2018-2021**, Brent Council aimed to implement the 5 Ps (Prevention, Provision, Partnership, Protection and Participation). The strategy employs a gender-informed approach, recognising that although both men and women can be victims, women and girls are more likely to be the victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

Specifically, raising awareness and increasing Prevention and Protection from domestic abuse and violence is a key point, as supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Raising awareness and strengthening pathways for support regarding Harmful Practices, including Female Genital Mutilation, is part of the preventative approach. The strategy also focuses on helping individuals Exiting Sexual Exploitation (including Human Trafficking & Prostitution).

Within this strategy, the Council is Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls according to The Mayor's VAWG Strategy for London 2022-25, where the priorities are:

- **Preventing and reducing VAWG**
- **Supporting all victims and survivors**
- **Holding perpetrators to account**
- **Building trust and confidence**

VAWG is not inevitable but sadly continues to be a part of everyday reality for women and girls in our city, causing enormous harm to victims, families, communities, and society. In the long term, the Mayor's ambition is to eradicate VAWG so that every woman and girl can participate fully in London life without experiencing or fearing harassment, abuse or violence from men. Building on the successes of the Mayor's previous VAWG Strategy, we continue that work here and now with a new emphasis. In line with what the Mayor set out in his PCP, we want London to be a safe city for women and girls.

This Strategy seeks to shine a light on what VAWG is and to increase the understanding and reporting of VAWG so that it can be challenged and prevented more effectively by the whole of society through a public health approach. This means bringing all London partners together to become active participants in eradicating VAWG. The specialist 'by and for organisations in the VAWG sector, which support women and girls with different protected characteristics and from all marginalised groups, must be part of this effort. Some of the most innovative approaches are embedded in community-based specialist women's and grassroots organisations, which are already building awareness and delivering innovative preventative work.



Building on the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces accreditation which London achieved in 2018, the Mayor will explore the opportunity for London to become the first city in the world to adopt the principles of the Council of Europe's ground-breaking Istanbul Convention. The Convention is widely recognised as a gold standard framework for addressing VAWG and places prevention at its heart. This is a significant step towards eliminating VAWG in London. As part of this, MOPAC will explore developing an international network of cities committed to tackling VAWG, sharing best practices and galvanising global action towards a VAWG-free world.

The UN defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence directed at a woman because she is a woman or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women.” This includes physical, sexual, and psychological/emotional violence, economic abuse, and sexual exploitation. Fewer than 1 in 4 people who suffer abuse at the hands of their partner, and only around 1 in 10 women who experience serious sexual assault, report to the police. More than 30% of women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, often with years of emotional abuse.

For the UN Women, gender equality refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for girls, boys, men, and women. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality is not a woman's issue but should concern and fully engage men and boys as well as women and girls. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are considered, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Equality between women and men is a human right.¹

The UN Women has declared 2030 the year of achievement for gender inequality. They stated that since women are more than half of the population, we cannot continue to have so few women in leadership positions. In June 2019, headlines around the world reported the news that no country in the entire world is prepared to achieve gender equality by 2030.

Working on the prevention of VAWG means promoting a culture of gender equality. Working on prevention means establishing partnerships at all levels – local, regional, national, and international.

Gender equality concerns almost every aspect of social interaction and public policy, including youth policy and youth work. Every individual is directly and personally affected by issues relating to gender equality, wanted or not. Gender equality is an essential aim for any society based on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Gender equality not only helps the female population, as many may think, but everyone, men, women and children. It is a win for society, from the young people representing their classes in schools to those adults who want to lead in a managerial position or be the leader of their country.

In this regard, the Government has launched a [Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021-2024](#). To engage with and listen to those with lived experience of or views on violence against women and girls, those with expertise in working with victims/survivors, those involved in preventative activity, in providing services and, more generally, the communities and

¹ UN Women - <https://www.unwomen.org/en> - UN Women is the [United Nations](#) entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls.



organisations affected by these crimes. This includes relevant professionals, such as social care, education, law enforcement, local government, public health and healthcare.

In the past, The Government has published “*Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change*”, stating that it is committed to making the UK a country where everyone can reach their full potential. Alongside this roadmap, they are publishing a Gender Equality Monitor, which brings together a suite of metrics from across the government to monitor important gender equality issues in the UK. They will further explore spending and decision-making at the household level, intersectionality, and the portrayal of gender in advertising. The Government is aware that domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of interpersonal violence and abuse disproportionately affect women and girls, which is why our response is framed within the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. 1 in 4 women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, and 1 in 5 will experience sexual violence³. Earlier this year, the government published data on the costs of domestic abuse, which found that, for victims in 2016/17, domestic abuse cost society over £66bn, of which over £14bn was from lost economic output⁴.

Violence against women and girls is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, and the Government continue to measure changes in the prevalence of these crimes as well as looking at Intersectionality. The government recognise that other protected characteristics, socio-economic disadvantage and/or geographical location can layer upon gendered inequalities to create multiple disadvantages.

The wider legal framework

Promoting a culture of gender equality and human rights requires many conversations at different levels and an understanding of gender inequality and gender-based violence as issues humanity has been fighting since the beginning. It requires information about the history of the process and what has been achieved. How many people have died or marched and demonstrated for us to access human rights today? Those conversations and reflections should happen with everyone and, most importantly, young people.

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into British domestic law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000.

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) protects the human rights of people in countries that belong to the Council of Europe. All 46 Member States of the Council, including the UK, have signed the Convention. Its full title is the ‘Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms’.

The Council of Europe was founded after the Second World War to protect human rights and the rule of law and to promote democracy. The Member States’ first task was to draft a treaty to secure basic rights for anyone within their borders, including their citizens and people of other nationalities. Originally proposed by Winston Churchill and drafted mainly by British lawyers, the Convention was based on the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was signed in Rome in 1950 and came into force in 1953. The Convention consists of numbered

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821889/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Gender_Equality_Roadmap_Rev_1_1.pdf

³ Office for National Statistics (2019), Crime Survey for England and Wales. Coverage: England and Wales.

⁴ R. Oliver, B. Alexander, S. Roe and M. Wlasny (2019), The Economic and Social Costs of Domestic Abuse: Research Report 107. Home Office. Coverage: England and Wales.



'articles' protecting basic human rights. The UK made these rights part of its domestic law through the Human Rights Act 1998.

Formed in 1949, the Council of Europe is separate from the European Union and much larger, with 47 members compared to the EU's 28. The UK became a Council member 24 years before it joined the EU. The UK's membership in the Council is not affected by leaving the EU.

Since then, **the Equality Act 2010** and **Human Rights Act 1998** have been supporting evidence-based policymaking but also challenging the equality and human rights debate, using constructive dialogue and collaboration to improve national policy and help people use their rights in practical ways. It is paramount, now more than ever, to propose a ground-breaking initiative to help people see the relevance of human rights in their everyday lives. This is relevant in gender equality and preventing Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse.

Gender equality is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe, and the organisation has a dual approach:

- specific policies and actions, including positive action when appropriate, in critical areas for the advancement of women and the realisation of de facto gender equality.
- the promotion, monitoring, coordination, and evaluation of the process of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes.

The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 has the overall goal of achieving the advancement and empowering of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in the Council of Europe member states. This builds upon the vast legal and policy *acquis* of the Council of Europe as regards to gender equality. It links them to the current economic context and the political leverage within the Council of Europe, including the overarching priorities of the Organisation.

Objectives for the focus during the period 2018-2023 will be on six strategic areas:

- 1) Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism.
- 2) Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.
- 3) Ensure the equal access of women to justice.
- 4) Achieve balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.
- 5) Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.
- 6) Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures while actively promoting respect for both women and men".

Sustainable Development Goals

The Council of Europe has three ground-breaking, unique and comprehensive conventions in the area of human dignity that are all of relevance to the SDGs:

- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention);
- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention).



These conventions have a global outreach. They were drafted with the understanding that measures to address the global problems related to gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings, and sexual exploitation of children should not be limited to a particular geographic area. Their provisions inspire normative and policy changes in all regions of the world, and all States can become parties to these conventions.

In March 2020, The Equality and Human Rights Commission report on Civil and political rights in the UK submission to the UN looked at the state of civil and political rights in Great Britain. The report finds: The UK has still not ratified the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) and needs to put in place changes to the law, policy and practice to enable ratification.⁵ The 8th of June was the 8th anniversary of the UK signing the Istanbul Convention⁶ in 2012. The government has always been very clear that the Domestic Abuse Bill is the last step for the UK to be able to ratify the Convention⁷. The convention is the most comprehensive legal framework to tackle violence against women and girls, covering domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation, so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage⁸.

Finally, on 21st July 2022, in Strasbourg, in the presence of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, H.E. Mr Sandy Moss, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe, deposited the instrument of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for the United Kingdom.

The Convention will enter into force, as regards the United Kingdom, on 1 November 2022.

The United Kingdom became the 37th State to ratify the Convention.

Universal human rights also provide the ethical and normative frameworks to prevent, combat and overcome any form of discrimination grounded on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Achieving gender equality is not about “special rights” but about promoting everyone’s right to freedom and equality in dignity.

Despite unequivocal positive developments regarding the understanding of gender equality as a fundamental principle in a democratic society, gender inequality patterns persist across all countries. Concerns about a new backlash on gender equality are also present.

The Council of Europe’s youth sector supports organisations and youth workers to combat gender inequality by supporting their global activities. It also gives guidelines to governments and local authorities on how to mainstream human rights and human rights education into youth policies.

The Council of Europe encourages them to adopt a gender equality dimension (such as in the activities supported by the European Youth Foundation or the activities held at the European Youth Centres) and by providing awareness-raising and educational materials for multipliers. The most recent is the manual “Gender Matters” on combatting gender-based violence affecting young people. Gender equality is also addressed in other educational manuals of the Council of Europe.

⁵ <https://www.equalyours.org.uk/equality-and-human-rights-commission-report-civil-and-political-rights-in-the-uk-submission-to-the-un/>

⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home?>

⁷ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmpublic/DomesticAbuse/memo/DAB12.htm>

⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-ratify-istanbul-convention-women-girls-rights-european-a8768606.html>