

Tools for Change

Public Sector Equality Duties & Violence Against Women

Foreword

Violence against women is a life-threatening inequality that women in Britain still face today. Almost half of women in England and Wales experience domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking in their lifetime. Women who have been raped are most likely to suffer long-term mental health consequences. Yet support for women who have experienced sexual violence is often lacking at local level. The cost to women's lives is extremely high, but so is the cost to society - government research puts the cost of domestic violence alone in England and Wales at £23 billion each year.

In recent years radical new laws have been introduced to require public bodies to promote equality on the grounds of gender, race and disability in all that they do, i.e. their policies, services and employment practices. We believe these public sector equality duties *must* be used to address violence against women, and we hope that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (which enforces the duties) will also prioritise this issue.

Tools for Change contains factsheets on all three equality duties, as well as an action card, a postcard and template enforcement letters on the gender equality duty. We hope these will provide practical help to women's organisations, individuals, activists and others who want to make sure that public bodies get it right when dealing with all forms of violence against women. This is a crucial step along the way to achieving a goal that we all share, of a society where women and girls can live their lives free from the fear and reality of violence.



Professor Liz Kelly
Chair, End Violence Against Women coalition



Jenny Watson
Chair, Equal Opportunities Commission

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Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission



In this pack is....

....a **POSTCARD** with information about the Gender Equality Duty (GED), facts on violence against women and 5 easy ways to use the GED to take action. It's vital that we get the message out that the GED is here so please help us by putting these postcards in GP surgeries, students unions, community centres, town halls, public meetings, at work – anywhere you can! To order more free postcards please contact End Violence Against Women (EVAW) at the email address at the bottom of this page.

This pack also contains **FACTSHEETS** on all three equality duties (race, disability and gender) explaining what they are, what they require public bodies to do and the role of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in enforcing the duties. There are key facts on violence against women and ways the duties could be used to address the problem. And it's not just the GED - public bodies should address violence experienced by ethnic minority women and issues around disability when implementing the Race Equality Duty (RED) and Disability Equality Duty (DED). Our Factsheets suggest how. We have also included a **Table of Public Sector Equality Duties** which highlights the similarities and differences between the duties.

An ICM opinion poll for EVAW found that young people live in an environment where there are high levels of violence, but they feel they do not have enough help to deal with the problem. We believe that schools, colleges and universities have a crucial role to play, not only in providing support but also in challenging attitudes that tolerate violence. We have therefore included a Factsheet on how the GED can be used to address violence in educational settings.

There has been some concern that the GED will be misinterpreted or misunderstood by public bodies to mean that services, such as domestic violence refuges, should be provided equally to men as to women – even where there is overwhelming evidence that their needs are different. Or worse still, that it will be used to justify cutting a service. Our Factsheet on the GED and single sex services and single sex employment explains clearly why this is not so and if you *do* know of a case where the GED has been used to cut a much needed service - tell the Commission!

In addition to the resources in this pack, there is guidance for the voluntary sector on the Gender Equality Duty which can be downloaded from the EHRC website, along with guidance on health, education, criminal justice and other sectors. There are also statutory Codes of Practice on all the equality duties that set out legal obligations on public authorities.

But what if your police force, school or local authority has not published its gender equality scheme, or has not prioritised the issues *you* think are important? What can you do? We have included template **ENFORCEMENT LETTERS** that can also be downloaded as a word document from the Commission and End Violence Against Women website.

And finally, in the front of the folder you will find an **ACTION CARD**. Remember, there are many, many ways that the GED can be used to address violence against women and promote gender equality – it's up to all of us to make it work!

We are very grateful to the Equal Opportunities Commission for funding this pack.

For further information about the public sector equality duties, and to download enforcement letters, guidance and the Codes of Practice, go to www.equalityhumanrights.com.

For more information about End Violence Against Women and to download this toolkit go to www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk.

To order more free Factsheets, Postcards and Action cards or to give us feedback on this pack please email holly.dustin@amnesty.org.uk.