

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S AID WELCOMES LONG-AWAITED + TRANSFORMATIONAL NEW DOMESTIC ABUSE LAW ON 1ST APRIL 2019



Chief Executive of Scottish Women's Aid, Dr Marsha Scott, welcomes the new Domestic Abuse law on 1st April 2019.

She said: "At Scottish Women's Aid we think this new law has the power to transform Scotland. Coercive and controlling behaviours—forms of psychological and emotional violence that women and children have told us for years are the most traumatic—are now a crime in Scotland."

Dr Scott, noting that the new law has been called **"the world's new gold standard"** by international expert Evan Stark, has worked closely with survivors of domestic abuse, the Scottish Government bill team, Women's Aid experts across Scotland, the police and the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service on the new legislation.

With 1 in 4 women currently experiencing domestic abuse in Scotland, this new law will make Scotland's response to domestic abuse fit for purpose for women and children. The compelling new elements of the law are:

It criminalises coercive control, which involves controlling and abusive behaviour that may or may not involve any physical violence. Women and children have been telling Scottish Women's Aid for over 40 years that the psychological violence of coercive control affects them the most, lasts the longest time and is the hardest to recover from.

It is a course of conduct offence, where ongoing harmful and abusive actions in a relationship, which in isolation might not seem as serious, are examined together – this is about behaviour over time.

In order to get a conviction, proof that someone was harmed and traumatised isn't required, which means women and children will not have to parade their terror, humiliation, and subjugation in front of a sheriff and courtroom - instead there needs to be proof that the perpetrator, or the accused, intended to harm or that a reasonable person with all the facts of the relationship deemed the perpetrator's actions "reckless" and likely to cause harm.

Finally, this legislation is the first to put children on the face of the law, now identified as potential victims in the form of an aggravation that will allow the judiciary to impose harsher sentences when children are involved.

Dr Scott continued: "This innovative new Domestic Abuse bill is the world's gold standard for domestic abuse law, which is why I am really excited about having the opportunity to work with everyone to implement this."

Scottish Women's Aid hosts Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline. If you or someone you know might be experiencing domestic abuse, call the Helpline.

It's available 24/7 for women, men, friends, colleagues and professionals to get information or have a chat. The number is **0800 027 1234**.

Ends -

Issued on behalf of Scottish Women's Aid by Michelle Brown PR.

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