



**Gender Based Violence
Prevention and Support
Policy and Procedure
(Staff and Students)**

May 2025

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Minor changes to titles and dates	Debbie Kerr	March 2022
1.2	Revisions to wording and contact numbers	Debbie Kerr	May 2025

1. Introduction

At Borders College we believe that all members of the College community have the right to prosper and flourish in a safe, supportive, inclusive learning environment free from any form of gender-based violence, abuse or harassment. The College has a zero-tolerance approach to instances of gender-based violence on campus. All allegations of abuse will be investigated, and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the Employee Disciplinary Policy (staff) or Positive Behaviour Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (students). The College may also inform the police and other relevant agencies in line with our safeguarding duties, where appropriate.

This policy links closely with other relevant Borders College policies such as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure, Safeguarding Policy, Employee Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and the Positive Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Although gender-based violence affects more women and girls, it also impacts men and boys, and those in the LGBT+ community. We recognise that gender-based violence is an issue across all of society and we are fully committed to ensuring our campus is safe for everyone. In addition, the College seeks to provide a caring and timely response to those who have been impact by gender-based violence. In everything that we do, the College will consistently send out a strong message that gender-based violence has no place in our college community or wider society.

2. Scope

The College recognises its responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all its students and staff. Therefore, this policy applies to all students and staff.

The College is committed to:

- Taking steps to promote equality;
- Responding to allegations of abuse;
- Supporting individuals who are experiencing or have been impact by gender-based violence by facilitating access to support and specialist services, where appropriate;
- Planning and delivering preventative initiatives to reduce the risk of Gender-based violence.

3. Key Principles

3.1 For the purpose of this policy, we use the Scottish Government's definition of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence describes a range of behaviours that includes: intimidation, harassment, online abuse, intimate image sharing, gender-based violence, physical and emotional abuse, stalking, sexual assault and murder. The term also includes commercial sexual exploitation and so-called 'honour based' violence, including, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and 'honour' crimes¹.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-prevent-eradicate-violence-against-women-girls/>

3.2 Context

Gender-based violence occurs across all levels of society. The fundamental cause of violence against women and girls is gender inequality. Women and girls may also have other protected characteristics that increases their risk level of experiencing violence and abuse. For example, those from ethnic communities, with disabilities or a status which is particularly vulnerable (such as a refugee or asylum seeker, lone parent, homelessness), can greatly increase the risk factor, particularly where an imbalance of power exists.

The two factors related to gender inequality and linked to gender-based violence are:

- Social norms supporting violence as a means of conflict resolution
- The unequal position of women in relationships and society – violence occurs in societies in which men are viewed as superior and possess the economic and decision-making power.

This does not mean that women do not use violence or carry out gender-based violence. Nor does it mean that men are not the victims of these actions. It merely recognises that statistically men are commonly the perpetrators and women and girls the victims. The different forms of violence have their roots in gender inequality and in the different power relations between men and women in society. They are therefore understood as gender-based violence and are interlinked.

3.3 Gender Based Violence Offences

These can include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence (for example physical assault and sexual assault, coercive control etc).
- Unwanted and unwelcome, sexual or gender-based verbal, written, online and/or physical conduct. This may include online harassment, intimate image abuse and conduct relating to involuntary celibate (incel culture).
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at college, work and in the public areas
- Threatening or causing physical harm, extreme verbal abuse, or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health and safety of any other person.
- Discrimination, as defined as actions that deprive other members of the community of educational or employment access, benefits or opportunities on the basis of gender.
- Intimidation, defined as implied threats or acts that cause an unreasonable fear of harm in another.
- Bullying, defined as repeated and/or severe aggressive behaviour likely to intimidate or intentionally hurt, control or diminish another person, physically or mentally.
- Violence between those in an intimate relationship (this includes romantic relationships, dating, domestic, and/or relationship violence). Intimate relationship violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over intimate partners. Intimate partner violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person.

- Stalking, defined as a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear of their safety or the safety of others e.g. unwanted gifts, SMS messages, through social media.
- Dowry related violence – dowry includes gifts, money, goods or property given from the bride's family to the groom or in-laws before, during or any time after the marriage. Dowry is a response to explicit or implicit demands or expectations of the groom or his family.
- Forced and Child Marriages – forced marriages is when a person faces physical pressure to marry (e.g. threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. made to feel like they are bringing shame on their family).
- Honour crimes involve physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual abuse, including murder, committed by people who want to defend the reputation of their family or community.
- FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), also known as female genital cutting and female circumcision, is the ritual removal of some or all of the external female genitalia.

4. Procedure

4.1 The College will deal with allegations of gender-based violence under either the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures or the Positive Behaviour, Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy. These policies outline the processes to be followed and the rights of the accused regarding representation and appeal. We will give appropriate support to both the victim and the accused throughout these processes.

4.2 Confidentiality

While the College will treat all disclosures confidentially, there may be situations where there is a duty to disclose information to protect a child or vulnerable adult from harm. If there is a concern that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk, staff may be required to report the matter to the relevant authorities under safeguarding procedures. If possible, consent will be sought prior to reporting.

4.3 Identification

We recognise that it takes courage to disclose experiences of gender-based violence which may include historical, recent and ongoing abuse. Those impacted may be fearful and anxious about making that disclosure. Given the barriers that can make it difficult to disclose, there may be other signs that indicate someone may have been impacted by gender-based violence.

These can include, but are not limited to:

- There may be obvious effects of physical violence e.g. bruising
- Explanations for injuries/incidents that occur that are 'explained away' by the victim
- Interruptions at college, e.g. repeated upsetting calls/texts/emails

- May cry or be very anxious
- Uncharacteristic distraction, problems with concentration
- Poor attendance or presenteeism
- Changes in behaviour
- Depression/suicidal ideation
- Fear of partner/references to anger
- Expresses fear about leaving children home alone with partner
- Appears to be isolated from friends and family
- Needing regular time off for 'appointments'

It is important not to make assumptions as some of the above indicators may be indicative of other concerns unrelated to abuse. The context within which they occur is therefore an important consideration.

4.4 If you are Asking about Abuse and/or Responding to Disclosure

When there is a suspicion of abuse or responding to a disclosure, it is important to listen to what individuals have to say without rushing to judgement, solutions or taking control away from them. Being empathetic and present with them during this process, to then work collaboratively to provide immediate and/or therapeutic solutions, will ensure those impacted feel listened to and in control of the situation. The foremost priority at all times is the safety of and care and support for the person involved.

You should provide a private space, reassure them about confidentiality and advise of the limits of this from the outset. In instances where you pick up on possible signs of abuse, proactively initiate a discussion. Ask non-threatening, open questions, including for example: "how are things at home?" or "how are you feeling generally?" If there is obvious bruising/injuries, then ask direct questions: "I'm worried about you because..." or "I'm concerned about your safety..."

Although some people don't ask about abuse because they are afraid of being intrusive or causing offence, there is evidence that most people experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence wish somebody had asked them about it.

Six steps to help guide your conversation if you receive a disclosure:

1. **Believe them.** Be kind and reassure them they are not to blame. Confirm you take the matter seriously. Do not ask for proof.
2. **Explain your role and encourage towards specialist support.** Advise that you are not a trained specialist, but you can listen and provide information and refer for support. The best outcome is they seek specialist support as soon as possible.
3. **Ask if they feel safe.** Ask them if they are feeling frightened and, if they are, ask what they are afraid of. Early on, let them know you are duty bound to tell someone immediately if they disclose that they, or someone else, is at risk of serious harm. This is to keep them safe.

4. **Listen actively.** Don't interrupt. Don't investigate or probe for details; that's not your role. Take brief, factual notes of what was said and don't make assumptions.
5. **Give them control.** The person making a disclosure needs to be in control and make their own decisions about what happens next. It is not appropriate to offer solutions or advice or to act on their behalf without their full consent unless there is a risk of harm to them or others (see 3).
6. **Safeguarding for under 18s.** If the disclosure is being made by someone over 16 but under 18, you need to pass this disclosure to the Head of Student Services who has responsibility for safeguarding procedures. This should ideally be done with the person's consent

If you are unable or feel uncomfortable about asking about abuse or responding to a disclosure, it is important that you take steps to refer to somebody else to ensure that the focus is on that person's immediate safety and health and wellbeing. In addition, if someone chooses not to share information about abuse during a first discussion, you should advise them of this policy and offer support in the future.

4.5 Support Services

We encourage anyone experiencing gender-based violence to report it immediately to someone in the organisation that they feel comfortable with who can support them, or through our internal reporting mechanism, for example Report for Support. Staff can access direct support from line managers or from People Services. Students can access support from Student Support Officers, Course Tutors and the Student Association. For anyone affected by gender-based violence, immediate support can be provided and a prompt referral made to external specialised support services, if necessary. In addition, we can make arrangements to make use of the internal support services including, for example, Occupational Health Service.

We will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to anyone who discloses that they are experiencing gender-based violence. The type of support offered may include, but is not limited to:

- Agreed periods of absence (Authorised Absences for students) for relevant appointments, including for example support agencies, solicitors, to attend counselling, to rearrange housing or childcare and for court appointments.
- Where possible, give favourable consideration to temporary changes to attendance, work arrangements and workload.
- Approve requests for an advance of pay for staff, or discretionary/hardship support for students.
- Access to support services during college time and other internal support services.
- Review of the security of information held such as temporary or new addresses, bank or healthcare details.
- Alert reception, facilities staff and Health and Safety Manager where the alleged perpetrator is known to come to the College.

- Implement particular security arrangements that may have to be put in place to ensure the safety of the person concerned.
- Record any threatening or violent incidents by the perpetrator that takes place in the College.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other measures that can be tailored to the individual circumstances of the person involved. It is the choice of the person involved whether to accept the support and the College cannot share what they have disclosed with anyone unless there are reasons to break confidentiality.

4.6 Perpetrators of domestic violence

Gender based violence perpetrated by staff or students will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. The College recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting staff and students to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If an employee or student approaches the College about their abusive behaviour, the College will provide information about the services and support available to them and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source.

In addition, staff can seek support themselves directly from the Occupational Health Service, and students can access support from Student Support Services.

The College will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a gender-based violence related offence on a case-by-case basis with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change.

An individual cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence may be subject to the Employee Disciplinary Policies and Procedures, or Positive Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy. The College also reserves the right to consider the use of these policies should an individual's activities outside of College have an impact on their ability to perform the role or undertake their course and/or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute. In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in College, due to a caution or conviction.

The College views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an individual, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the College's Disciplinary Policies.

Staff and students are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on Borders College and its reputation.

These procedures can be applicable in cases where an individual has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened their partner.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against their partner.
- had an allegation of gender-based violence made against them.
- presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship.

The College is committed to ensuring that:

- allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure.
- everyone will receive guidance and support.
- confidentiality will be maintained and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know.
- investigations will be thorough and independent.
- all cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays.
- all efforts will be made to resolve the matter within 4-6 weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity.

This procedure is designed to prioritise safety, wellbeing and support, recognising that individuals may have experienced trauma. Our goal is to foster a respectful and compassionate environment.

The alleged perpetrator will be:

- treated fairly and honestly.
- helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved.
- kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process.
- advised to contact their union or professional organisation.

There are four potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- disciplinary action
- providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
- identifying risk

Any employee who is responsible for giving advice or support to those experiencing gender-based violence needs to be particularly aware of the potential consequences.

If an individual is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones, email, social media, etc. then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

If it becomes evident that an individual has made a malicious allegation that another individual is perpetrating abuse, then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

4.7 If the victim and the perpetrator both attend the College

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of gender-based violence attend the College, the College will take appropriate action.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the individual who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the College.

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim. This may include a change of duties for one or both individuals or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices.

However, it is also recognised that in certain circumstances, those experiencing and perpetrating gender-based violence in a relationship may choose to seek solutions jointly, and in such situations appropriate support should be given.

4.8 Role of colleagues

The College encourages individuals to report if they suspect someone is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. They should speak to their line manager or Student Support services about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from an individual, you should ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy and procedure.

4.9 Sources of Information and Help

Police Scotland	101
Police Scotland Domestic abuse – support and information	Domestic abuse - Police Scotland
Local advice and support	
Scottish Borders Council information	Support if you are experiencing domestic abuse Domestic abuse Scottish Borders Council
Border Women's Aid	01450 218409
Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support (DAAS) service	01835 825024
Child Protection Unit (out-of-hours)	01896 662787 01896 752111
Adult Support & Protection (Social work) (out-of-hours)	0300 100 1800 01896 752111
Children1st	01750 22892
Occupational Health Service	01896 825982
The Samaritans (Scottish Borders Support) (local charges)	116 123 (free) 0330 094 5717
Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre (mobile)	01896 661070 07584149391

Victim Support	01896 751212
SBC Housing Support & Homelessness	01896 661385
	0800 3761138
Citizens Advice (Scottish Borders)	01896 753889

National advice and support

Scottish Government	Equally Safe 2023 - preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls: strategy - gov.scot
ChildLine	0800 1111
Shakti Women's Aid	0131 475 2399
LGBT Helpline Scotland	0800 464 700
<i>Tues, Wed, Thurs 12-9pm</i>	
<i>Sun 1-6pm</i>	
<i>Calls are confidential and helpline volunteers are LGBTQ+ friendly and trained to listen</i>	
MALE advice Helpline	0808 801 0327
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327
Respect (Male Support)	0808 802 4040
Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS)	0330 094 9395
RESPECT	0808 802 4040
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0800 027 1234
Scottish Women's Rights Centre	Scottish Women's Rights Centre
NHS 24	111
Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline	08088 01 03 02 https://www.rapecrisis.scotland.org.uk
Broken Rainbow UK Helpline	0300 999 5428
Victim Support Scotland	0800 160 1985 https://www.victimsupport.sco.org.uk/
Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCS)	0800 148 8888 Turn to SARCS NHS inform
National Stalking Helpline	0808 802 0300
National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)	0808 801 0331 https://napac.org.uk/
Stop It Now	0808 100 900 https://www.stopitnow.org.uk

In the event of an Emergency, call the police on 999

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1** The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for overseeing compliance with the principles of this policy.
- 5.2** The Director of People Services and Director of Student Support Services and Students' Association are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 5.3** All staff and students are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

6. Related Documents

- 6.1 Employee Disciplinary Policy and Procedure**
- 6.2 Positive Behaviour, Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy**
- 6.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**
- 6.4 Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure**
- 6.5 Safeguarding Policy**

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or more regularly if required.

Status:	Approved by JCCP
Policy Dated:	May 2025
Author:	Director of People Services
Review Date:	May 2028
Equality Impact Assessed:	March 2022

Scottish Borders support services

Useful numbers:

Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support (DAAS) Service	01835 825024
Domestic Abuse Community Service (DACS), Children 1 st	01750 22892
Domestic Abuse Officer (Police Scotland)	01896 664590
Border Women's Aid	01450 218409
Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre	01896 661070
Victim Support Scottish Borders	01896 751212
SBC Homelessness Service	0800 3761138
Adult & Child Protection	01896 664159

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999

For further information, please visit
www.scotborders.gov.uk/domesticabuse

National support services

Useful numbers:

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage helpline	0800 027 1234
National Rape Crisis helpline	08088 01 03 02
RESPECT helpline (for domestic abuse perpetrators)	0808 802 4040
Mens advice line (for male victims of domestic abuse)	0808 801 0327
Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS)	03300 949 395
National Stalking Helpline	0808 802 0300
NHS 24	111
The Samaritans	116 123
Childline	0800 11 11
Scottish Women's Rights Centre helpline	08088 010 789
Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA)	0141 276 7724
Revenge Porn helpline	0345 6000 459
Shakti Womens Aid	0131 475 2399
LGBT Helpline Scotland	0300 123 2523
CLiCK Scotland (support for women who sell sex in any way)	0300 124 5564
Scotlands Citizens Advice helpline	0800 028 1456
Scottish Legal Aid Board	0131 226 7061

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999

For further information, please visit
www.scotborders.gov.uk/domesticabuse