

Fact sheet 7.

Embedding prevention of violence against women into council business



Every area of council can play a role in the long-term systemic and cultural change needed to prevent violence against women. A 'whole-of' approach to prevention means taking coordinated and complementary actions across different levels of council and the community, seeking changes at the personal, organisational and community levels. Ways to prevent violence against women in the four domains that council can influence are interwoven throughout these fact sheets. Fact sheets 8, 9, 10 and 11 respectively are dedicated to each domain. Different ways that council can embed prevention of violence against women into its core business include the following.

Getting your house in order

You may need to build your council's internal capacity to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality. This might include training, building awareness of the causes (drivers) of violence against women and skilling up internal advocates to lead the work. Councils can create action teams made up of staff able to lead activities on preventing violence against women. See MAV's booklet [Communities free from violence](#) for information about [Yarra Ranges Council](#) and [Nillumbik Shire Councils](#)' gender equity advocates programs.

Leadership engagement

See Fact sheet 5 and Fact sheet 8 for more ideas on getting leadership on board with your council's prevention work.

Community consultation

Ensure your community consultation framework includes processes that consider and document the needs and perspectives of women and men from diverse backgrounds, with diverse needs.

Strategy and policy

Local government provides multiple opportunities to embed the essential actions to prevent violence against women into policy and practice. Councils' strategic documents, such as the council plan or health and wellbeing plan, are increasingly expressing a commitment to gender equality as a key prevention strategy. These strategic documents allow annual reporting and provide the opportunity to reflect on, measure and build on the effectiveness of actions. More specific council strategies and policies, such as the [youth strategy](#), [sport and recreation strategy](#), [community safety strategy](#), [emergency management](#) or [early years plan](#), also provide scope to include tailored actions into these functions of council.

Raising awareness

There are many opportunities to raise awareness and promote consistent messages about councils' commitment to preventing violence against women, internally and in the community. Ensure messages are expressed in accessible language with translations as required. See Fact sheet 6 for more ideas.

Human resources

Many council employees have access to family violence policies and/or leave provisions for women experiencing family violence in their Enterprise Bargaining Agreements. Encourage staff to participate in free online e-learning provided by [DV-alert](#) to build understanding about family violence. Include messages and initiatives about the prevention of violence against women in staff induction or orientation sessions. For an example of a free, publicly available prevention and response induction pack developed by a consortium of Victorian councils in conjunction with the MAV, see [Liberate for Equality](#).

Local laws

There is a strong link between family and domestic violence and the abuse and neglect of animals.¹ Your council can include provisions in your animal management strategy for accommodating pets when a woman needs to go to a refuge. Ensure your local laws officers know how to identify violence and make appropriate referrals to family and domestic violence organisations. Contact [FVREE](#) or your local state- or territory-based domestic and family violence training provider for information on the most appropriate training for staff, and see Fact sheet 5 for suggestions. In addition to training, and supporting the housing of animals during periods of relocation, strategies could include updating policies and operating procedures and developing partnerships with the local Police Family Violence Unit.

Sustainability and long-term nature of the work

Short-term, project-by-project approaches to primary prevention will not have a lasting effect. A consistent, coordinated and sustained approach across all sectors and all levels of government is required to change attitudes, practices, structures and norms. Longer-term funding ensures that activities are embedded across the council and are more likely to be sustained.

Measuring progress and celebrating success

A key part of successful implementation of prevention initiatives is monitoring progress, measuring outcomes, celebrating successes and capturing learnings along the way. Celebrating even the small wins can be motivating and important. Working with your team to set realistic expectations of what is achievable with current resources, and developing a plan accordingly, will support sustainability.

Councils may be new to formal monitoring and evaluation related to gender equality and preventing violence against women. During the development of your activity, consider how you will define success, what it is you hope to achieve, and how you will measure your progress. Consider whether there are existing processes within council that already measure similar outcomes that the team can build upon or utilise, such as staff or community satisfaction surveys. Consider how the team will celebrate success and share learnings.

Case studies

- Information about a range of prevention initiatives funded by the Victorian government 2018–2020 grants program – [Communities free from violence: local government leading change report and video](#).
- Blue Mountains City Council (NSW) – [Gender Equity Strategy 2021–2026](#), to raise awareness and promote gender equity across the organisation and in the wider community.
- Mornington Peninsula Shire (Vic) – [Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2030](#), outlining principles, strategies and actions in their community, their workplace and the services they offer.
- Merri-bek City Council (Vic) – [Gender Equality Commitment](#), promoting equality and inclusion through collaboration across council and partnerships with organisations and the community.

¹ Domestic Violence NSW. (2020). [Animals and people experiencing domestic and family violence](#).

