

Equally Safe at School (ESAS) Intervention & Evaluation

Do schools need to address sexual harassment and GBV?

Sexual harassment is common in Scottish Schools: 44% of students report one or more of 5 sexual harassment experiences in a 3-month period¹. In the pilot phase of ESAS, staff and students identified many challenges to addressing gender-based violence (GBV). Whilst there is much good practice in Scotland, many schools recognise the need for support.

What is the Equally Safe at School (ESAS) Intervention?

ESAS is a whole school approach to address GBV in secondary schools in Scotland. It helps schools build a positive culture in which staff and students work together to prevent GBV and feel more confident and skilled in responding to incidents and disclosures of sexual harassment/violence.

ESAS has been co-designed by Rape Crisis Scotland and University of Glasgow, and is freely available to all secondary schools in Scotland via the online intervention hub: www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk.

ESAS is underpinned by COSLA/Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The intervention also meets the health and wellbeing outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence and policies like Getting It Right For Every Child.



ESAS provides a framework to support interventions such as MVP (Mentors in Violence Prevention) and the Rape Crisis Sexual Violence Prevention programme. The leaders of these programmes recognise their complementarity and are working together. MVP focuses on peer mentoring and bystander intervention; the Prevention programme builds knowledge and skills for healthy sexual relationships; ESAS addresses wider school culture.

Why are we evaluating ESAS?

There is some evidence for the effectiveness of Whole school approaches, but we don't yet know definitively whether ESAS itself leads to desired changes. Schools see the value of ESAS but it is still important to demonstrate these benefits. The University of Glasgow is running the evaluation with Rape Crisis Scotland and is looking for 36 schools to take part.

What does taking part in the evaluation involve?

Schools will be asked to run the Equally Safe at School intervention and to stay involved in the evaluation for three years. Key points to note are:

- The research team will visit your school to help administer an annual student survey (S2, S4, S6 only) which will be done in classroom time and using mobile phones/additional tablets.

¹ ESAS pilot research in 3 schools see also

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/comments?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0262248>

- After doing the first baseline survey (Autumn term 2023), schools will be randomly allocated to one of two groups.
 - Group 1 schools will be given a digest of their student survey results and asked to begin ESAS immediately;
 - Group 2 schools will be asked to wait for one year.
- In 2024/5 all schools (both groups) will do the survey again.
 - Group 1 schools will move into their second year of running ESAS. They will receive a second digest and can assess their progress.
 - Group 2 schools will be given a digest of their student survey results and asked to begin ESAS.
- In 2025/6 all schools do the final student survey and receive a digest of the results.
- Leadership teams and key staff will also be asked to complete brief surveys.
- Selecting schools to join groups at random helps to reduce bias and gives the most reliable results. It also makes the evaluation more manageable.

What are the benefits of taking part?

- Taking part means you will have access to support. The evaluation team will be in regular contact to guide you, in addition to the ESAS co-ordinator.
- Being part of a national evaluation can provide extra motivation to keep going with ESAS activities and may make it easier to get the whole school community onboard.
- The first ESAS activity is self-assessment, including a student survey. Taking part in the evaluation means that the research team will undertake the student survey for you and send a digest of findings to help plan your ESAS activities. Repeating the survey in consecutive years will enable you to track change over time.
- Some schools like being randomly allocated, especially if they are unsure whether to start ESAS this year or next.
- Schools will be given £500 as a financial incentive and to compensate for staff time.
- Taking part in a national evaluation lets your school community know that you are prioritising sexual harassment and GBV.

Links to website/resources:

- ESAS programme website: <https://www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk/>
- Animation on sexual harassment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-ls7gjsXd0>
- ESAS research on prevalence of sexual harassment in schools: <http://bit.ly/3Kuj0V4>
- COSLA support for ESAS: <https://bit.ly/3YM3GHZ>
- Scotsman article on school-based sexual harassment (ESAS research): <https://bit.ly/3YLcAFo>

Contact details: To register your interest or to request more information, please contact the evaluation team at the University of Glasgow via email: sphsu-esas@glasgow.ac.uk

