

Zero Tolerance

To the Editors' Code Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read our consultation response. Please see attached our full Media Guidelines on Violence Against Women for reference.

Recommendations

1. Include a new point in the Editors' Code of Practice titled, 'Reporting Violence Against Women'.

This point would include:

- i) Ensure harassment, stalking, harmful traditional practices, commercial sexual exploitation, sexual assault, rape and domestic abuse are all reported as violence against women.
- ii) When reporting violence against women care should be taken to ensure that the perpetrator is the subject of the sentence and the verb is assigned to them. This is how police are encouraged to write their reports, i.e. 'The perpetrator forced the woman to...'
- iii) When covering any form of violence - including harmful traditional practices, like forced marriage or female genital mutilation - be clear that this violence is rooted in misogyny and avoid stigmatising any ethnic group or religion.
- iv) Include helplines to encourage people who read and are affected by your story to seek support.

Rational

Violence against women affects 1 in 3 women worldwide. In Scotland, 1 in 10 women has experience rape and 35% of women do not feel safe walking alone in their

neighbourhood after dark.

Violence against women happens because men make choices to be violent. Men make these choices because violence against women is normalised and excused because of gender inequality.

Most information the public receive about violence against women comes from traditional media sources.

Reporting that blames the women or lists extenuating circumstances excuses these choices and reinforces societal acceptance of this behaviour.

To end violence against women we must change our discourse by accurately reporting it as violence, as a choice by the perpetrator, and as a consequence of gender inequality.

With every story on violence against women there is an opportunity to stop it happening again.

Responsible and sensitive writing on what violence against women is, what the warning signs are, and where people can seek help, is a key part of creating a world free from violence against women.

It can save lives.

2. Point 11, Victims of sexual assault, should include a new point that focuses on small communities

This point would include:

ii) When reporting on victims from small communities, take care to not under-estimate the connections within that community; disclosing details which may seem innocuous may lead to the identification of an individual by their communities. If possible, let her check how you have described her so that she is confident that she won't be identified.

Rational

Women from small communities – whether this is rural communities, migrant communities, religious communities,

or minority ethnic communities – deserve the same respect for anonymity as all other women. To ensure this, editors and journalists must take extra care to protect their identities.

Best wishes,

Jenny Lester