

Fact sheet 5. Getting started



What do I need to know before making a start?

Take time to build your own understanding of violence against women, what drives it and its relation to other inequalities. See Fact sheets 1 and 3 for more information. Understanding the facts about the prevalence, impacts and drivers of violence will help to build the case for action. Familiarise yourself with Our Watch resources such as [Change the story](#), [Changing the picture](#) and [Workplace Equality and Respect](#).

It is also important to understand the community you are working with. What are the demographics of the people living in your municipality? Remember that gender inequality and violence is not experienced in the same way by all women (or men) and ensure you take an [intersectional](#) approach to this work. Include demographic data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people living with disabilities and LGBTIQ people. See profile.id.com.au for community profile information. Consider the ways that discrimination and disadvantage can affect people in the workplace and in their community. Address gender inequality along with other forms of discrimination such as racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia and religious discrimination.

See Our Watch's [Practice guidance: Equality and respect for all women – an intersectional approach](#).

Who do I involve?

Get leaders and councillors on board and gain council endorsement of, and commitment to, the prevention of violence against women. This could include allocating resources to a primary prevention activity or creating a statement of commitment from council leadership. It may first require gender equality champions within council to work together to present your case collectively.

See the Municipal Association of Victoria's [Prevention of violence against women leadership statement](#).

How do I develop my prevention practice?

Prevention work may be new to many and it will take some time for everyone to understand the role they can play in their position at council. Create opportunities for staff training and professional development. Training providers in each state and territory and nationally include, but are not limited to:

ACT	YWCA Canberra
NSW	Refer to New South Wales Collaboration on Primary Prevention of Gender-Based Violence
NT	Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention Program and Dawn House Incorporated
Qld	WorkUp and Women's Health and Equality Queensland
SA	Working Women's Centre
Tas	Engender Equality
Vic	Safe and Equal and Women's Health Victoria
WA	Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing
Australia-wide	People with Disability Australia Multicultural Centre for Women's Health Rainbow Health Australia Full Stop Australia Our Watch, Prevention in Action

How do I support myself and others when talking about violence?

Undertaking prevention work may prompt disclosures from people who are currently or have previously experienced or used violence. It's normal to feel concerned when someone discloses their experience, and it is important to know the basics of how to respond. For some guidance, refer to Our Watch's practice guide on [responding to disclosures](#) and Safe and Equal's [responding to disclosures](#) resource. Some of the organisations listed on the previous page provide training on responding to disclosures, particularly in the workplace.

Always provide relevant contact numbers for victim-survivors such as [1800RESPECT](#) and your state- or territory-specific referral service for perpetrators of violence. Many councils have trained staff or an EAP service that can support you during the course of this work, if you find it has a personal impact.

What resources are available for local governments?

The Our Watch [Prevention toolkit for local government](#) outlines activities that councils might undertake and it provides examples of council initiatives in primary prevention. Other examples are provided in these fact sheets of successful prevention initiatives undertaken within the [domains of councils' influence](#). Connect with other councils in your region and with your local government association for support and to find out what's already happening.

Where do I start?

Start small and be realistic about what you can achieve. Many councils start with an internal audit of their own policies and culture and begin determining where they can influence awareness and attitudes. Your approach doesn't necessarily need to be a new program or initiative. You can integrate the [essential actions](#) into activities that you are already doing. Choose projects or areas where there are opportunities, resources, interest, community pressure or leverage points. You might even want to start a prevention initiative in a setting where there is little or no activity in your community already. Involve willing participants and tailor your approaches to what works best with your audience. Ideas include:

Running a playgroup aimed at dads, Dads of Moreland (see [MAV GE, PFV and VAW Network](#))

- ensuring that children's books at the library challenge rigid gender stereotypes (see [Beyond Princesses and Pirates](#))
- confirming that toilets and change facilities at council facilities cater to people and parents of all genders and people of all abilities
- observing annual days such as the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) and the [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#)
- promoting public messaging such as the [Doing Nothing Does Harm](#) campaign
- undertaking gender impact assessments or audits drawing on specific tools. See [gender impact assessment toolkit and templates](#).

Change is a slow process. Take one step at a time and then build on it. Celebrate successes. Remember that we can't 'fix' everything – it is about beginning a process of reflection and action. It is about building the capacity and understanding of those you are working with at council and in the community to undertake and continue the work themselves, into the future.

What if I experience resistance?

Backlash and resistance are an inevitable part of prevention work. Resistance shouldn't necessarily be seen as a problem – it can actually be a positive sign that change work is happening, and a useful energy to work with. Consultation to develop appropriate messaging is one important way of reducing resistance, as is using effective interpersonal skills so as to be curious and constructive, without shaming. See Our Watch's [practice guide to dealing with backlash](#); Respect Victoria, [Understanding, monitoring, and responding to resistance and backlash in organisational and institutional settings](#); Eastern Health, EDVOS and QUT, [Engaging men: Reducing resistance and building support](#); Safe and Equal [Facing resistance in your work](#); and VicHealth [\(En\)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives](#).

Women's Health West's [Speaking publicly about preventing men's violence against women: Curly questions and language considerations](#) can help you prepare for common responses when speaking about preventing violence against women and gender equality.

