



Violence Against Women and Girls

Strategy : 2025-2028



LONDON BOROUGH OF
RICHMOND UPON THAMES

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1 Foreword



Councillor Gareth Roberts
Leader of Richmond Council

Violence against women and girls has no place in Richmond upon Thames. It is an issue that affects individuals, families and communities, and it requires a united response. While Richmond upon Thames is one of the statistically safest boroughs in London, we know that too many women and girls still feel unsafe – whether at home, in public spaces or online.

This strategy sets out our commitment to change that. It brings together the work of the Council, our partners, and victim-survivors to prevent violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators to account. It is rooted in listening to the experiences of those affected, and in taking practical, coordinated action to address both the causes and consequences of violence.

We have already taken important steps, including our Walk and Talk events with the Met Police, our White Ribbon accreditation, and support services that offer a lifeline to those who need it. But we know there is more to do. This strategy builds on that foundation and outlines how we will work together over the coming years to make the borough a place where women and girls are not only safe but feel safe too.

Everyone has a part to play. Whether through challenging harmful attitudes, supporting a friend, or getting involved in community initiatives, each of us can help stop violence before it starts. By working together, we can build a borough where respect, safety and equality are a reality for all.

2 Executive Summary

This strategy sets out the Council and Community Safety Partnership’s (CSP) commitment to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Richmond. This strategy will introduce VAWG, providing the context on a local, regional, and national level, before setting out the local approach to tackling VAWG and the priority areas:

- **Changing attitudes and behaviours**
- **Early identification and intervention**
- **Providing safety and support**
- **Holding perpetrators to account**

A set of actions for each priority area is provided in section 7.

To create this strategy we conducted a needs assessment (overview of which can also be found in Appendix 1) and consulted with agencies and the voluntary sector. We also gathered input and feedback from victim-survivors, as well as collecting case studies of their experiences with our services.

Acronyms are used throughout this strategy. There is a glossary in Appendix 2.

Please scan the QR code to see a list of the support services available in Richmond.



3 Introduction

What is Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)?

Drawing on UN definitions, Richmond Council defines VAWG as:

“Any act of violence that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women and minoritised gender identity groups. This includes threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and other violent acts suffered disproportionately by women and girls as well as minoritised gender identity groups.”

We recognise that the crimes associated with VAWG do not solely affect women and girls. Our definition acknowledges the gendered nature of these crimes, which disproportionately have a female victim and male perpetrator¹, and which stem from the root causes of misogyny and gender inequality. However, there are support services commissioned by the Local Authority available to men who suffer abuse.



3 Introduction

Why do we need to address it?

Between May and July 2025, Richmond Council conducted a Community Safety Consultation which was available for anyone who lives, works, or visits the borough to have their voice heard on issues relating to crime and disorder. Safety of women and girls in public spaces was the number three issue for residents who responded to the survey. While 77% felt safe in Richmond during the day, this fell to 34% after dark. Female respondents were more likely to feel unsafe in the borough after dark (52.4%), compared to males (31.6%).

In 2025 Achieving for Children's Youth Council conducted a survey of young people aged 13-19 to understand experiences of sexual harassment. More than 25% of youth had experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months; 50% had occurred in public places, with public transport as a key location, and 28% in schools. Gender-specific surveys in 2022 and 2023 found that while boys reported higher uncertainty about what constitutes sexual harassment, girls had greater clarity but cited concerns about being believed as a barrier to reporting.

Achieving for Children (AFC) work with children and young people across Richmond. In a 2020 survey of young people in schools AFC found that while only 50% of girls could say they had never been sexually harassed within the school environment, only 6% told their school; 76% of girls said they been stared at in a way that made them uncomfortable in public spaces; and 50% felt pressured into sending intimate images of themselves.

VAWG can be broken down into different strands:

Domestic Abuse

- Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021², there is a new statutory definition of Domestic Abuse (DA).
- This says that DA involves people who are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other. This can include being married/divorced; are/were in a civil partnership; are/were in an intimate relationship; sharing children; or being related related (this encompasses certain types of non-blood relatives³).
- People do not have live together for domestic abuse to occur. Abuse can happen once or repeatedly.
- Children are also considered victims of DA if they witness or experience effects of the abuse or are related to the victim or perpetrator, even if the abuse is not directed towards them. Types of abusive behaviour might include: physical, sexual, violent or threatening, controlling or coercive, economic, psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Sexual Abuse

- Sexual Abuse (SA) refers to any sexual activity that happens without consent. The act or activity is unwanted or involves the use of pressure, manipulation, force, bullying, and/or intimidation⁴. This includes any behaviour that takes place online.
- There are many different types of SA including, but not limited to: rape, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, indecent exposure or 'flashing'.
- SA can be perpetrated by a stranger or by someone known to a victim.

Exploitation

- Exploitation can take many different forms. Women have particular vulnerabilities to modern day slavery (MDS), sexual exploitation and organised criminal exploitation.
- Sexual exploitation involves coercion, manipulation and abuse. This is differentiated from consensual sex work, where all parties have given and are able to freely give consent.

Stalking and Harassment

- Stalking is 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim'⁵.
- Harassment refers to aggressive pressure or intimidation, when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes another person feel scared, distressed or threatened.

Harmful Practices

- Harmful Practices (HP) are forms of abuse which have been committed primarily against women and girls in communities and societies for so long that they are considered, or presented by perpetrators, as part of accepted 'cultural' practice⁶. However, these practices can occur across all sexes, sexual identities and genders.
- The most common types of HP are forced or early marriage (FM), 'Honour' - Based Abuse (HBA), and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- HP are not unique to one culture or religion⁷. These crimes disproportionately affect Black and minoritised women and girls.

4 The Impact of VAWG

Preventing and responding to VAWG is a key priority for the Council, and it is committed to keeping Richmond safe: "Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own homes and communities."

The Richmond CSP brings together local government agencies and organisations to prevent and reduce crime in our borough. The main objective of the partnership is to keep Richmond a safe place to live, work, learn and visit for all. Preventing and responding to VAWG is one of the four priorities for this partnership.

Preventing VAWG is everyone's business: we all have a part to play.



Nationally

Domestic Abuse

- 1.4 million women and 751,000 men were subjected to DA in the year ending March 2023⁹.
- It is estimated that less than 24% of DA crimes are reported to police¹⁰.
- Police receive a DA-related call every 30 seconds¹¹.
- On average 3 women are killed each fortnight by a current or ex-partner, and an additional 3 women each week die by suicide caused by DA¹².
- DA costs the UK approximately £85 billion per year in economic and societal costs¹³.
- Certain groups have increased rates of DA, including: minoritised ethnic groups, migrant women, LGBTQ+, disabled women and those struggling with substance misuse.
- 1 in 5 children live in a home where DA occurs¹⁴.
- 1 in 4 perpetrators of DA are repeat offenders, and some have as many as 6 victims¹⁵.
- Less than 1% of perpetrators receive specialist intervention¹⁶.

Exploitation

- The number of people impacted by MDS in the UK is estimated to be close to 100,000¹⁷.
- Research suggests that 70% of MDS victims are women and girls globally¹⁸.
- 32,000 people are estimated to be linked to the sex industry in London alone¹⁹. Sex work can be consensual, however sex workers are often at higher risk of violent crimes and exploitation.

Sexual Abuse

- 85,000 women and 12, 000 men experience rape, attempted rape or sexual assault every year in the UK²⁰.
- 5 in 6 women and 4 in 5 men* who are raped don't report it to the police, research suggests²¹.
- Less than 1% of rapes reported result in a conviction²².
- 71% of UK women have been sexually harassed, with over 95% not reporting the incident²³.
- Women are 27 times more likely to be harassed online than men, with 1 in 5 women having experienced online harassment/abuse²⁴.
- Black women were 84% more likely to receive online abuse than White women during the pandemic²⁵.

Stalking and Harassment

- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men have experienced stalking in their lifetime²⁶.
- In 22/23 the MPS recorded 11,721 stalking offences. 82% were flagged as DA related²⁷.
- 26% of domestic homicide cases showed stalking as a key theme²⁸.

Harmful Practices

- 74% of Forced Marriage (FM) cases involved female victims in 2021²⁹.
- An estimated 137,000 women and girls in the UK have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)³⁰.
- 'Honour' - based Abuse (HBA) offences have continued to rise since records began in 2019³¹.
- Approximately 12-15 reported honour killings occur per year in the UK³².

4 Impact of VAWG

Locally

Domestic Abuse

- Since November 2021, an average of 92 DA offences are recorded each month in Richmond.
- The highest rates of reporting are seen in the wards of Hampton North, Barnes, Ham and Petersham and Richmond Riverside.
- In cases of police reports where victim ethnicity is known, there is a large over-representation of Black victim-survivors (VS), making up 9% of reports but only 2% of the Richmond population over the past year.
- Over the previous year, 71% of victims who reported to the police identified as female.
- There is increasing demand on the support services, including Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- Vulnerable groups are under-represented in accessing support services locally, including LGBTQ+, disabled women, and older adults.
- In 23/24, 30% of approaches to the Richmond Council Housing Department cited DA as their main reason for homelessness.

Stalking and Harassment

- The rate of stalking offences in Richmond for the year 22/23 was 0.8 per 1000.
- Financial year 23/24 saw 49% of cases discussed at MARAC identify stalking and harassment as a type of abuse.

Exploitation

- In the financial year 21/22, 18 referrals were made in Richmond to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for human trafficking and modern slavery. 6 were for females, and the most common types of exploitation were criminal and labour exploitation.
- Almost 13% of ‘children in need’ cases in Richmond flagged trafficking or exploitation as a risk factor for the financial year ending April 2024.

Sexual Abuse

- A 2021 needs assessment did not identify on-street sex working in Richmond, but did identify one brothel and high numbers of online sex working in the borough. Although sex work can be consensual, there is a high risk of violent crime and exploitation, especially for migrant women. Sex workers may also face discrimination when seeking support, due to their work.
- The police recorded 322 sexual offences in Richmond for the financial year 23/24.
- The wards with the highest reports of sexual offences are Twickenham Riverside, Heathfield and South Richmond.

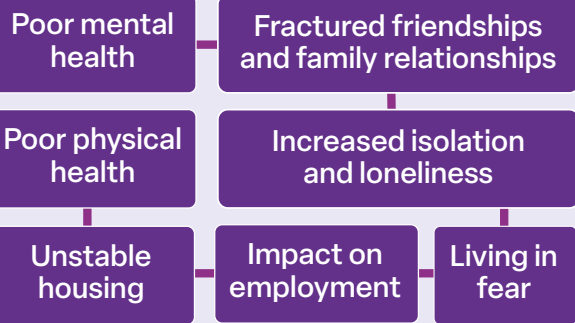
Harmful Practices

- In financial year 23/24, 9% of cases discussed at MARAC involved HP, including HBA, FGM or FM.

What is the CSP?

The CSP is a duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to bring together local partners to formulate and deliver strategies to tackle crime and disorder in their communities. Statutory partners include the Local Authority, Police, Fire, Health and Probation services plus additional non-statutory partners.

VAWG SOCIAL IMPACT



4 Voice of the Survivor

“More services need to seriously take on board women’s concerns when they come to report their experiences.

It takes great courage to reach out.”

Richmond resident and victim-survivor

CASE STUDY. Jane Doe reached out to the commissioned support, following an abusive relationship with her husband across several years. Her husband would frequently emotionally abuse her, and she was constantly afraid of how he might react. He took all of the money she earned from her job, threatened to make her homeless or send her back to her home country, as she had insecure immigration status. He constantly told her she was worthless. The abuse was escalating, resulting in the perpetrator threatening to kill her. This led to Jane realizing she needed to leave.

“There needs to be more publicity in public areas around sexual harassment and abuse - bus shelters, public spaces, public notices, and public libraries.”

Richmond resident and victim-survivor

Jane was offered a place in refuge. On arrival, her support worker worked with her to complete a risk assessment, safety plan and an aspirations assessment to understand more about Jane’s desired course of action and how they could do this safely. The risk assessment returned a high risk score. Jane, following a discussion about the process, agreed to be referred to the MARAC to make sure all risk management options were explored for her. Meanwhile, her support worker helped her secure her immigration status through helping her to access legal aid and an appropriate solicitor. As Jane had to leave her job due to safety concerns, she was supported to apply for Universal Credit and secure her bank information from her husband to ensure she had access to her own money.

“The Women’s Hub is wonderful. I feel so supported, and if something happened now, I can speak with them directly.”

Richmond resident and victim-survivor

The support worker also provided different information and options to Jane, including around reporting the abuse to the police and applying for civil protective orders such as a non-molestation order. Jane decided she did not currently wish to pursue that, but that she would like support to divorce her husband once her immigration status was secured. The support worker and Jane also explored longer-term goals and needs, which included working with Jane to register with a local GP so that she could access mental health support as the abuse had a lasting impact on her mental health; enrolling in college to develop her English language skills; converting her home country qualification to a British one; and applying for housing in the area Jane wanted to stay.

“I would like to see more support and groups for young people.”

Richmond resident and victim-survivor

Throughout her time at the refuge, the staff helped Jane to understand that the abuse was not her fault, and that she deserves to live a life free from fear and violence. When Jane left the refuge, she felt grateful for the support and empowered, as she was given information and the opportunity to make informed decisions about her support and options. She feels confident she can come back for support if she needs it.

5 Context

National and Regional

There has been a 37% percent increase in VAWG crimes being reported from 2018 – 2023. Alongside this, several high-profile cases have related to VAWG, with failings of statutory services alongside these tragic events further impacting women and girls and their confidence in getting support. Examples include Sarah Everard’s murder by a serving male MPS officer; Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, where male police officers in charge of guarding the scene were guilty of gross misconduct; the murder of Zara Aleena as she walked home; the murder of Sabina Nessa as she walked through the park. The case of Gisèle Pelicot, whose husband drugged and raped her over the course of their marriage, alongside inviting over 50 other men to rape her whilst she was unconscious, has increased the spotlight on the widespread issue of VAWG.

The current climate in the UK has an impact on preventing and responding to VAWG. The pandemic increased demand for VAWG support services. Many services were already stretched and under-funded and became overwhelmed with the extra demand. The pandemic also disproportionately affected specific groups: minoritised ethnic groups, migrant women (including those with No Recourse to Public Funds), LGBTQ+, and disabled women. These groups are known to experience increased rates of VAWG. Post-pandemic, many services are still recovering and there has been an impact on frontline workers’ mental health³⁴.

Additionally, the cost of living crisis has further worsened economic gender inequalities and has stretched services³⁵. The financial crisis has made it even harder for victims, especially those with children, to flee unsafe homes due to a lack of affordable housing.

Socio-political events around the world have been linked to increased risks of abuse and exploitation of women, especially migrant women in the U.K. These events include:

- Brexit changes to immigration rules making it harder for victims to secure their status³⁶ and entrenching gender inequality in policy³⁷;
- War in Ukraine and the UK ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme creating opportunity for predatory males to exploit vulnerable women³⁸;
- The Illegal Migration Act 2023 in the UK preventing exploited or trafficked people from claiming asylum if trafficked via illegal channels³⁹.

These schemes and legal changes have increased opportunities for the exploitation of women and girls and have created further barriers to accessing support, with many fearing deportation or prosecution for immigration crimes.



5 Context

Policies and Laws

Policing and Crime Plan 2022-2025

- This sets out a plan for ‘building a safer London’ with four priorities, all of which link closely to our local work to prevent VAWG:
 - Reducing and preventing violence (including VAWG)
 - Increasing trust and confidence
 - Better supporting victims
 - Protecting people from exploitation and harm

Casey Report and New Met for London 2023-2025

- The Casey Report⁴¹ reviewed the behaviour and internal culture of the MPS, following the cases of serving Met officers exploiting their positions to commit abhorrent crimes against women. The report found many failings of the Met to protect women and children.
- The New Met for London Strategy⁴² was published following the Casey Report to work to deliver the changes that are needed.
- The plan focusses on three key pillars: 1) More trust, 2) Less crime and 3) High standards.
- MPS have launched a VAWG Action Plan comprised of three pillars: 1) Building trust and confidence, 2) Relentless pursuit of perpetrators and 3) Safer spaces. The plan acknowledges that there are issues within the MPS and resolves to build trust with the community. Appropriate actions have been woven into this strategy.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021⁴⁴

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aims to raise awareness and understanding of the devastating impacts of DA on victims and their families.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (continued)

- For the first time, a statutory definition of DA has been created. Part of this definition includes recognising children as victims of DA if they witness or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the victim or perpetrator.
- Alongside this, new laws and protections have been created by the Act. More can be found on the government’s website⁴⁵ and the statutory guidance published.
- The Act also places duties on Local Authorities to consider anyone fleeing DA in ‘priority need’ for housing, and to provide safe accommodation under the Act.
- Under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Richmond as a Tier 2 authority must cooperate with the Tier 1 authority – the GLA – in their delivery of statutory duties. This includes feeding into the London needs assessment, applying for funding from the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Fund, ensuring that Londoners are accessing the safe-accommodation based support, and feeding into the local partnership boards and annual reports

Mayor of London’s VAWG Strategy 2022-2025⁴³

- This strategy is part of the Mayor’s long-term plan to eradicate VAWG in London, and to make sure that women and girls can fully participate in life without fear of or violence from men.
- It has four key priority areas: 1) Preventing and reducing VAWG, 2) Supporting all victims and survivors, 3) Holding perpetrators to account and 4) Building trust and confidence.

Criminal Prosecution Service VAWG Strategy

- The CPS developed a VAWG strategy, not only due to the importance the CPS places on improving prosecutions of these crimes and supporting victims, but also in recognition of the United Nations, Council of Europe and End Violence Against Women Campaign initiatives and as part of the cross-government VAWG strategy.

Victims and Prisoners Act 2024

- This Act aims for victims to no longer be treated as bystanders in the criminal justice system, but instead to play a central role with enhanced rights that will improve their status and experience of the justice process.
 - The principles of the Victims’ Code will be enshrined in law.
 - Relevant bodies must promote awareness of the Victims’ Code to ensure victims know their rights.
- Implementation of the Act will improve support for victims of VAWG crimes specifically by:
 - Enhancing the Victims’ Code and its use in the justice system.
 - Requiring statutory guidance on the roles of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs).
 - Enhanced management of offenders convicted of controlling or coercive behaviour sentenced to 12 months or more.

5 Context

Local Context

Richmond is statistically the safest borough in London. However, Richmond's population has a relatively high proportion of affluent and elderly residents, which presents unique challenges in addressing VAWG locally. The widely-believed misconception that DA only affects those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, along with the financial resources of affluent families that enable them to keep issues private, complicates the identification of risk. Additionally, the experiences of older victims often remain hidden, especially when there are caregiving responsibilities interlinked, for example with adult children. Accessibility of services must also be considered, with some older adults requiring different models of accessibility.

Richmond Council provides direct support to victims of abuse, mainly through commissioned services and indirect support through strategic oversight and projects-based work. There is a mainstream commissioned advocacy service and mainstream refuge providing bed spaces for safe accommodation. There is also an enhanced support advocacy and refuge service for victim-survivors with enhanced needs. Refuge occupation generally runs at more than 90%. Often, demand for support is higher than services can meet. In addition to crisis intervention, the Council provides floating support and has provided grant funding to charities to deliver post-crisis support and holistic rehabilitation through a women's sanctuary.

Richmond Council and CSP have committed to meet the pledges of relevant charters, accreditations and strategies in order to ensure a coordinated community approach to preventing and responding to VAWG. Examples of these efforts are set out below.

Richmond Council is signed up to the Mayor of London's Women's Night Safety Charter⁴⁶

As part of the Charter, Richmond Council has committed to meeting its pledges, including:

- Supporting all local residents to know what they can do if they experience harassment in public and how to report it;
- Encouraging active bystanders;
- Training all staff to ensure that all reports are taken seriously, and are recorded and responded to appropriately.

Richmond Council Night Time Strategy

The Night Time Strategy interlinks with the VAWG strategy. Its many recommendations include:

- Taking a 'place-based approach' to tackling VAWG;
- Requiring all new drinking establishments to understand sexual harassment training;
- Offering bystander training.

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation for the Housing Department in Richmond Council



DAHA aims to transform the housing sector's response to DA by accrediting individual housing providers and supporting them to improve their practices. Richmond Council received DAHA Accreditation in 2021, recognising the Council's robust response to DA in the Housing Department. The DAHA accreditation structure has now changed to a 3-tier system, providing Bronze, Silver and Gold accreditations. The Housing Department is aiming to be reaccredited at the Bronze level in 2025, and to progress to Silver or Gold in 2026.

As part of DAHA, the Council has:

- Reviewed policies and procedures;
- Ensured support is offered to everybody including those who have protected characteristics;
- Delivered DA training to all staff.
- Developed robust partnerships and joint working agreements.

White Ribbon Accreditation as a Council⁴⁷



- White Ribbon is a global campaign that encourages people, and especially men and boys, to take action and change the behaviour and culture that leads to abuse and violence.
- Gaining the accreditation means Richmond meets the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. It commits the Council to ending male violence against women by engaging with men and boys, changing cultures, and raising awareness.

5 Context

- If you work for the Council you can become a White Ribbon Champion or Ambassador or you can take the promise individually.

Achieving for Children (AFC)

AFC are an active partner in the Council's work undertaken to prevent and respond to VAWG. AFC is staffed with a number of DA professionals and its staff provide and attend regular training and development events. AFC also run a scheme for fathers to support them in addressing abusive behaviours. AFC's mission is to provide children, their families and carers with the support and services they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives. AFC promises to:

- Put children and young people first;
- Embrace diversity and champion inclusion;
- Be resourceful, adaptable and dependable;
- Nurture strong, responsive and caring relationships;
- Value and invest in staff to deliver innovative and quality services;
- Work with customers to deliver the most effective solutions for them.

In addition to AFC, there is the Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Children Partnership (KRSCP), which brings together the statutory partners for safeguarding across Kingston and Richmond to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. The KRSCP works with statutory partners including, for example, to conduct safeguarding reviews or support Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR) panels where cases involve children.

Richmond Council Safeguarding Adults Board⁴⁹

The Board has a vision of making safeguarding

everyone's business by:

- Raising awareness about abuse;
- Preventing abuse from happening wherever possible;
- Reporting and responding to concerns and incidents of harm and abuse;
- Sharing information and intelligence to reduce and remove risk;
- Share and utilise learning from safeguarding enquiries and reviews to develop practice and preventive strategies;
- Embedding a "Making Safeguarding Personal" approach across the partnership which ensures people are involved and in control of all safeguarding activities.

Richmond Council Public Health Prevention Framework and Toolkit⁵⁰

Richmond Council have adopted a Public Health Prevention Framework approach that incorporates preventing and responding to VAWG, in partnership with the Public Health department. This approach looks at violence not as an isolated occurrence, but as the result of a set of preventable occurrences, adverse early-life experiences, or harmful social or community experiences and influences.

Through acknowledging these and embedding prevention programmes, the Framework aims to support the public in living healthy, fulfilling lives free from violence and abuse.

Borough of Sanctuary

Richmond is proud to have become a Borough of

Sanctuary. The Council's vision is for Richmond to be a place where all sanctuary seekers not only feel welcome and safe but also have access to opportunities and support to thrive. This is particularly relevant to the VAWG strategy as those seeking sanctuary are often the target of MDS and exploitation. Asylum seekers and refugees often face additional barriers in accessing support, including due to insecure immigration status, language barriers and previous trauma.

Richmond Council Sexual Health Strategy

An updated Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2025 - 2030 is due to be launched. This strategy recognises the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of sexual and reproductive health, which acknowledges that there must be choice and freedom from coercion, discrimination and violence - linking it intrinsically with VAWG.



6 Our Approach

Our approach to preventing and responding to VAWG is broadly framed by the following key areas:

Hearing the Survivor’s Voice

We will ensure that the voices of survivors, communities and professionals are meaningfully heard. We will hold regular forums to obtain a unique insight into community perspectives and survivor experiences, identifying areas to focus and improve upon. This will include developing opportunities for co-production.

Providing a Coordinated Community Response

No single agency can be responsible for our vision of ending VAWG. Working in partnership across all agencies and the community will ensure that we can achieve the best possible outcomes for victim-survivors in Richmond. Too many DARDR reports include recommendations for better coordinated and joined-up working. Richmond will strengthen partnership working to ensure VAWG is everybody’s issue, and the response will be collective and robust.

Beyond the local structures, regional and national partnership work is undertaken with other Local Authorities, MOPAC and the Home Office. There are regional London Heads of Community Safety

Ensuring Intersectionality

VAWG can affect anyone; however it does affect different groups disproportionately. Not all victim-survivors of abuse are treated equally by society, and this needs to be acknowledged and addressed. An intersectional approach to preventing and responding to VAWG acknowledges the intersecting factors of race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexuality, and other identities that shape individuals’ experiences of violence and discrimination. It also ensures that services are inclusive and responsive to survivors’ diversity, are culturally competent, accessible and informed. Richmond Council will engage and amplify diverse and seldom heard communities on VAWG issues, to better understand and address underlying structural inequalities, and to improve intersectionality of services. This strategy also recognises the need to address ‘hidden abuses’ such as tech/online abuse, carer/elder abuse and ‘Honour’-Based Abuse, which are all challenging to identify, more likely to impact seldom heard communities, and require special care to address.

meetings, London VAWG Coordinators meetings, SWBCU VAWG Boards and ad hoc national meetings called by the Home Office to ensure the response across the country is meeting the expected standards.

Continuous Learning and Developing

VAWG is a complex issue, with research and policy constantly developing. We must continue to adapt our practice and learning to ensure the best experience for anyone needing support. All learning will be trauma-informed and victim centred. We will continue to develop our workforce and Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) through continuous learning and development. This includes implementing any learning from Safeguarding Reviews or DARDRs and ensuring that all forms of abuse are well understood, including those which are ‘hidden’ or difficult to identify.

Addressing the Root Causes of VAWG

The UN WHO identifies gender inequality and norms on the acceptability of VAWG as root causes of VAWG⁵⁵. This strategy acknowledges these root causes, and the partnership seeks to tackle gender inequality and misogyny through multi-agency proactive work with a clear focus on the perpetrator and prevention. This includes engaging support from specialist organisations, training our professionals and engaging children to ensure that the misogyny which underpins VAWG is addressed from a young age.

6 Our Approach

Governance and Partnership Work

Richmond CSP has created a robust governance structure to ensure effective delivery of the CSP priorities, including VAWG, both strategically and operationally. The simplified VAWG governance structure diagram can be found below.

The CSP has overall responsibility for delivery of any strategies relating to crime and disorder in Richmond. The governance structure includes a VAWG Strategic Delivery Group made up of statutory and non-statutory partners with responsibilities to respond to VAWG; these include Police, Health, Community Safety, Social Services, Housing, commissioned services, and others. Each of the members of the VAWG Strategic Delivery Group has its own Operational Group where any operational barriers can be addressed.

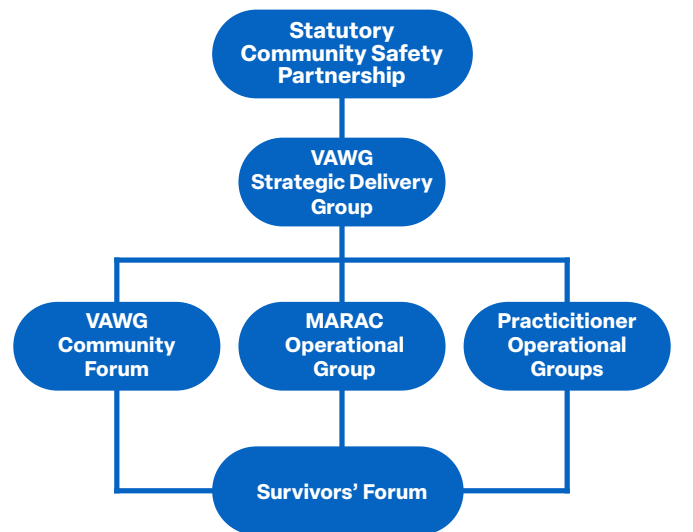
Richmond Council is proud of the VAWG Community Forum, a quarterly forum facilitated by the Council but led by VCS and independently chaired. This is an opportunity for the VCS and other VAWG professionals to get together, learn, network, and support one another in preventing and responding to VAWG in the community. One key aim of this group is to improve local links to ensure that victim-survivors can access suitable support.

All work will be underpinned by a survivors’ forum, led by the commissioned service to ensure the voice of the survivor is heard through all of the work that the partnership does to prevent and respond to VAWG.



Quote from the Community Forum Independent Chair

“The VAWG forum is an empowering, uplifting and great place to meet and network with other professionals in the VAWG sector. I have loved being a part of this work to drive change collectively - even though the subject matter is difficult, being in a room with others having the same vision helps make the mission believable.”



7 Our Priorities

Changing Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviours

The partnership recognises that VAWG does not occur in a vacuum; it is underpinned by gaps in knowledge and driven or facilitated by harmful attitudes and beliefs. This priority seeks to address these root causes, working proactively with a broad cross-section of both the public and professional sector. Our work in this area will improve knowledge, challenge harmful and outdated attitudes and beliefs, and raise awareness about how everyone can play a role in addressing VAWG.

The aims of this priority are to:

- Maintain a proactive, public-facing arm of our work;
- Empower everyone to take action through increased understanding of VAWG, including communities, employers, and our partners;
- Provide a tailored and inclusive offer on VAWG that reflects diverse experiences, attitudes and beliefs.

To deliver this priority, we will:

- 1.** Carry out ongoing public-facing awareness activities around all aspects of VAWG to challenge and shift outdated and harmful beliefs, include ensuring that our activities and materials are both widely accessible and culturally competent. This includes raising awareness by maintaining the Council's White Ribbon Accredited status and seeking to gain any other relevant accreditations.
- 2.** Engage youth by working with education providers, from primary schools through to higher education, and with youth representatives to deliver trainings and engagements on healthy relationships, the dangers of the online environment, healthy masculinities and related topics. These efforts will seek to build positive attitudes and behaviours early on, raise awareness among youth on how to recognise and report VAWG, and provide an avenue for dialogue that will enable the partnership to proactively identify emerging trends.
- 3.** Work with local businesses and organisations to ensure that employers are addressing harmful attitudes and behaviours in the workplace and providing support for victim-survivors of abuse. Our efforts will increase employers' understanding of their responsibility to provide safe workplaces with access to support for all VAWG issues for staff and customers.
- 4.** Increase our engagement with seldom heard communities, ensuring that their voices are heard and needs reflected in our approach and working to remove any barriers to support. This will include bolstering our training offer across the partnership on VAWG issues that uniquely or disproportionately impact these communities and seeking to address gaps in service provision for specific groups that may arise from policy changes.

Early Identification and Intervention

Interventions to reduce the risk of harm are most effective when warning signs are identified early and escalation is prevented. Work under this priority will ensure that our interventions are built with the capacity to identify the early signs of abuse and exploitation, and to ensure that those at risk receive appropriate, timely support.

The aims of this priority are to:

- Ensure our services are confident in identifying risk factors and the early signs of abuse;
- Intervene proactively and creatively when risk factors are identified in order to reduce harm;
- Improve practice across the partnership to prevent escalation, including through information sharing and adaptive learning.

To deliver this priority, we will:

- 1.** Enhance training across the CSP to improve staff capacity to identify early risk factors and signs of abuse, including those that are nuanced or commonly misinterpreted in their presentation.
- 2.** Ensure clear and transparent data sharing agreements, expectations and escalation procedures are in place across the partnership to facilitate early identification and reduce the likelihood of escalation that leads to harm.
- 3.** Develop early intervention services that engage at-risk individuals prior to points of crisis. These services will be consistent, non-judgemental, and trauma-informed. The partnership will additionally work with identified high-risk groups to ensure that interventions are appropriately targeted and tailored for prevention.
- 4.** Regularly update strategy and implementation in line with relevant new guidance, legislation, research and best practice. This includes ensuring the CSP maintains a focus on early intervention as well as applying learning from DARRs, Drug and Alcohol Death Panels and Safeguarding Adult Reviews, alongside other local learning opportunities.

7 Our Priorities

Providing Safety and Support

Victim-survivors have diverse experiences of VAWG, underscoring a need for safety and support measures that are both robust and tailored. These interventions must consider and address the unique needs present at different stages of crisis and post-crisis; of individuals experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence and/or other types of harm; and of communities with intersecting vulnerabilities. Efforts under this priority will ensure that support offered is suitable, proportionate, inclusive and non-judgmental, with the voice of the survivor at its centre.

The aims of this priority are to:

- Ensure safe spaces are available for women, girls and minoritised groups disproportionately impacted by VAWG across the borough;
- Provide accessible and free crisis intervention for all victim-survivors;
- Provide holistic support through all stages of recovery for victim-survivors and their children through a coordinated community response;
- Ensure safety and support services are tailored to individual circumstances and led by victim-survivors' choices.

To action this priority, we will:

1. Through partnership working, ensure safe spaces are provided to women and girls, including refuge accommodation, Safe Havens, and the Safe Space.
2. Provide a widely accessible and free domestic abuse advocacy service, including for individuals with enhanced needs.
3. Ensure effective delivery of victim-focused domestic abuse MARACs to safeguard high-risk victims of domestic abuse, to minimise the risk to victims and their children, prevent repeat victimisation and address perpetrator behaviour.
4. Work towards resourcing a support offer that meets critical needs beyond domestic abuse crisis intervention. This includes increasing provision of tailored support for sexual violence victim-survivors, as well as holistic non-crisis interventions for individuals who have experienced any form of VAWG to support their recovery following abuse.
5. Create and embed opportunities for co-production, ensuring survivors' voices and needs are guiding our service provision. This will include survivors of all forms of VAWG and from diverse backgrounds, ensuring regular and meaningful input into strategic and operational decisions.
6. Ensure a multi-agency approach and partnership working is embedded across services to provide effective wrap-around support. This includes proactively identifying opportunities to commission or collaborate with 'by and for' organisations.

Holding Perpetrators to Account

The partnership acknowledges that to meaningfully prevent and respond to VAWG, action to ensure accountability for perpetrators should not be limited to the criminal justice system. Support to victim-survivors must be accompanied by comprehensive efforts to hold perpetrators to account. Under this priority, we will create a holistic, multi-agency approach to ensuring perpetrator accountability.

The aims of this priority are to:

- Proactively identify, target and disrupt high-risk and repeat perpetrators;
- Improve partnership policy and practice to promote perpetrator accountability;
- Improve data and information-sharing in order to improve understanding of perpetrators and support early identification and intervention;
- Emphasise and invest in measures to promote perpetrator responsibility for behaviour change.

To action this priority, we will:

1. Develop strategies to identify and disrupt repeat offenders across the CSP, including by strengthening cross-borough working and support for MPS efforts where needed.
2. Continually identify obstacles to effective accountability for perpetrators and work to remove these. This includes ensuring that the partnership holds perpetrators to account through zero-tolerance policies, and that agencies themselves are held accountable for victim-blaming language, ensuring the onus for women and girls' safety sits solely with perpetrators.
3. Collect more consistent data on perpetrators across the partnership in order to build a better understanding of who they are and key risk factors for VAWG crimes locally.
4. Provide support for perpetrators who want to change their behaviours through behaviour change programmes, and evaluate this support to identify best practice.

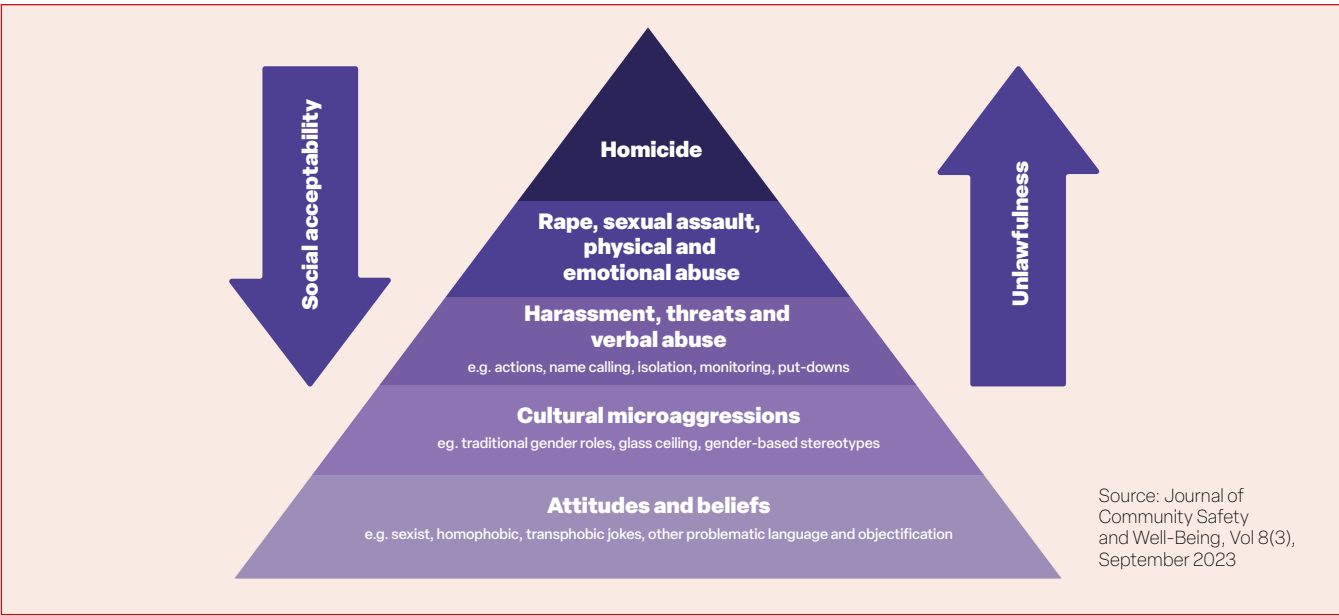
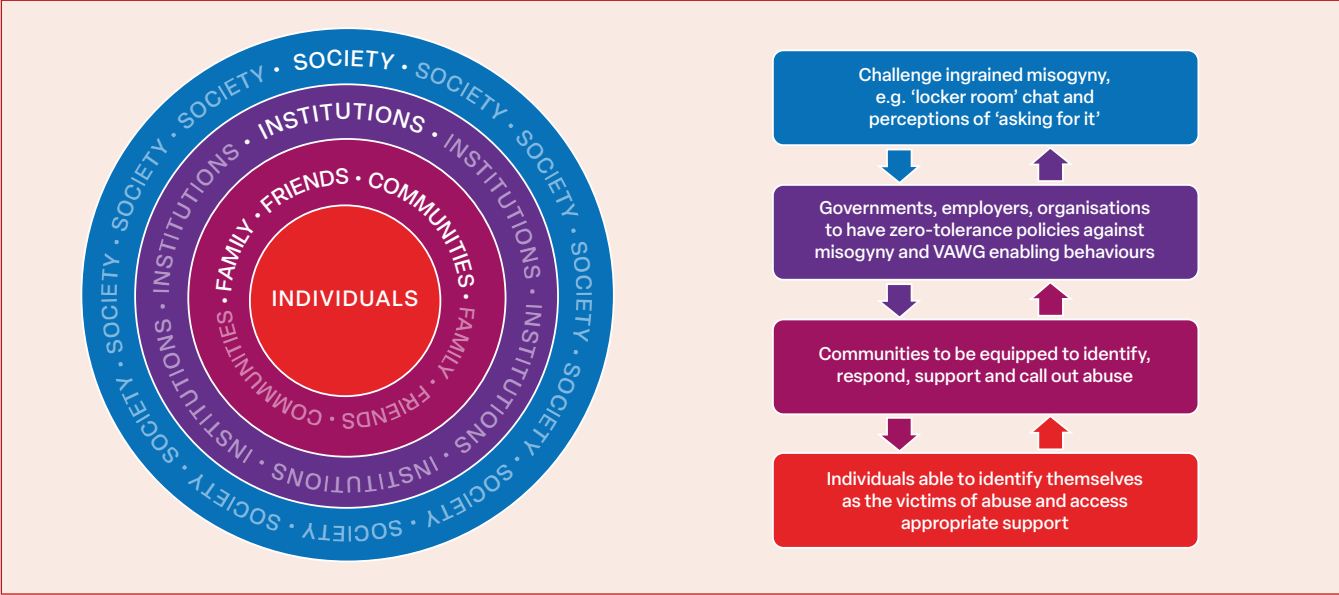
8 Model

We will adopt an ecological model to underpin our approach to VAWG. An ecological model looks at how different factors at various levels of society interact - like an ecosystem. We need to consider all levels, how they interact and the wider context in which VAWG occurs to prevent it and respond effectively.

The centre focusses on individual-level factors, like attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. The next level focusses on interpersonal relationships, such as between family, friends, or intimate partners, and their dynamics.; The institutional level explores the broader community environment, like schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. Finally, the societal level encompasses larger factors like laws, policies, or cultural norms. All of these factors influence how someone behaves and can either work to perpetuate or prevent VAWG.

Another framework that can help us understand why we need to look holistically at VAWG is the pyramid of violence. Attitudes and beliefs form the base of the pyramid. For VAWG, this may include things like sexist stereotypes about gender roles and rights. At the top of the pyramid are the most extreme manifestations of VAWG, such as homicide. The factors at the bottom of the pyramid create a system and culture that normalises violence. The pyramid again demonstrates the importance of preventing and responding to VAWG and the misogyny that underpins it at all levels.

In implementing this strategy, we will explore how we can meet our priorities by further examining the actions that individuals, communities, institutions, and society can take to meet our aim of ending VAWG.



9 Summary

In summary, Richmond Council and the CSP are committed to preventing and responding to VAWG and making Richmond a safe place for our women and girls. Our approach will be a multi-agency coordinated community response; we will use an intersectional approach to provide contextual safeguarding. Hearing the survivors voice is integral to preventing and responding to VAWG, as is continual learning and development.

Over the lifespan of this strategy, the partnership will prioritise:

- **Changing Attitudes and Behaviours**
- **Early Identification and Intervention**
- **Providing Safety and Support**
- **Holding Perpetrators to Account**

Actions set out in the strategy will be monitored through the VAWG Strategic Delivery Group and reported to the statutory CSP.



APPENDIX 1 - Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment Overview

A needs assessment (NA) was commenced in May 2023 to help inform service development given national changes in policies and law and impacts of the pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis. The assessment focused on several areas, including prevalence and administrative data, consultations with professionals and service mapping through survey and literature review.

Note: the below provides an overview of an in-depth needs assessment exercise. There is a full needs assessment report which exceeds 100 pages of information and data

Findings

Domestic Abuse

- DA in Richmond disproportionately affects women, in line with the national picture.
- In DA crime reports, Black victims are over-represented and under 18s and 65+ are under-represented.
- DA crime reports have been decreasing locally since 2020 despite a big increase in the demand for DA services.

Exploitation

- Despite no on-street sex working, there is a large number of online profiles working in the boroughs leaving many women open to exploitation.
- Modern slavery data shows women were most likely to be referred to the National Referral Mechanism due to sexual exploitation.
- Organised criminal exploitation affects 0.5 per 1,000 under 18s in Richmond.

Harmful Practices

- Localised data is very limited around Harmful Practices, leading to an over-reliance on national figures/data.
- In Forced Marriage (FM) 50% of cases are related to Pakistan, and most cases involve women under 25.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is identified largely in healthcare settings, mostly commonly related to Somalia.
- ‘Honour’ -Based Abuse does not have a statutory definition, so is recorded and defined differently by different services. However, there has been a continual rise in offences recorded by the Home Office (HO) since 2019 and there is a high risk level associated with these behaviours.

Sexual Violence

- The majority of victims in police reports in Richmond are girls aged under 18, and the most commonly identified perpetrators are males aged 45-64.
- SV crime report numbers fluctuate across Richmond for sexual offences and rape.
- Sexual violence is increasing in all aspects, including in public spaces and private education and workspaces.
- Online sexual violence is increasing, especially for young people.
- There is a need to increase safety and feelings of safety so women can fully participate in the nighttime economy.

Stalking

- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men have experienced stalking in their lifetime.
- The Suzy Lamplugh Trust’s online tool used to identify stalking behaviours was used 37 times by Richmond residents in the period April 2022 - March 2023.
- An average of 25% of cases discussed at MARAC meetings included stalking and harassment as types of abuse.

Vulnerable groups

- NRPF and migrant women are at higher risk of DA and exploitation.
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are overrepresented in high-risk DA.
- LGBTQ+ groups experience higher levels of SV and DA but are underrepresented in accessing local support.
- Substance misuse is often treated in isolation but has many links to VAWG areas and high rates of SM among perpetrators.
- Mental health services are very oversubscribed. Victim-survivors with mental health needs are more vulnerable to abuse and mental health is the most common factor in accessing the enhanced needs service.
- People with disabilities people are 3x more likely to experience DA, are at increased risk of abusive behaviour and are very under-represented in accessing local services.
- An estimated 1 in 5 children are affected by DA in the home nationally. Alongside this there is a clear need for education around healthy relationships and support around criminal exploitation.
- Older adults experience abuse and DA differently and this is often not picked up on by services. It is unclear whether older adults are accessing support, as different services use different age delineations.

Barriers to support

- Reporting barriers include a lack of trust in services/support and the criminal justice system.
- Intersecting vulnerabilities are not always acknowledged or supported effectively by services, and there is a lack of accessible specialist services.
- Oversubscribed or stretched services are often unable to provide support.
- Economic barriers and housing are common barriers to victim-survivors of DA moving forward after abuse.

APPENDIX 1 - Needs Assessment

Recommendations (Key Themes)

Vulnerable groups

- **Enhance Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Improve range of commissioned services and resources to engage vulnerable and seldom heard communities.
- **Targeted Support and Training:** Offer targeted, preventive support to high-risk groups and provide training for CSP partners to confidently support vulnerable groups.
- **Victim Survivors’ Voices:** Ensure the voices of victim-survivors from all groups are central to services and support, with accessible means for them to share their experiences.

Perpetrators

- **Shift Focus to Perpetrators:** Emphasise perpetrator choices and actions rather than victim actions, addressing the need for accountability.
- **Collect Perpetrator Data:** Implement routine data collection on perpetrators to enhance accountability and understanding.
- **Share Good Practices:** Review and disseminate effective practices for working with perpetrators to build confidence in service delivery.
- **Perpetrator Management:** Enhance services to manage and support perpetrators, with proper evaluation and monitoring.

Training

- **Housing Staff Training:** Provide specific training on available housing options in line with DAHA accreditation.
- **Online Safety:** Provide training on online safety for both young people and parents.
- **Harmful Practices Awareness:** Deliver training to support early identification and awareness of Harmful Practices.

Awareness Raising

- **Raise Public Awareness:** Conduct activities to increase public understanding of all aspects of VAWG, including DA and stalking.
- **Employer Engagement:** Collaborate with employers to raise awareness of their responsibilities in supporting staff experiencing VAWG and preventing workplace sexual violence, including policy development.
- **Prevent Exploitation and Criminalisation:** Launch campaigns to highlight signs of exploitation in women and girls to prevent unfair criminalisation.
- **Inclusive Communication:** Develop inclusive and accessible communication materials that represent different types of relationships.

Early Intervention

- **Early Intervention:** Focus on early intervention and ‘low-level’ support to prevent crises and escalation.
- **Inclusive Education:** Provide comprehensive education in schools on VAWG, healthy relationships, and proper employment, inclusive of diverse groups and communities.

Data and Data Sharing

- **Review Information Sharing:** Update policies and guidance for information-sharing across partnerships, services, and boroughs, especially in high-risk cases.
- **Consistent Data Collection:** Ensure consistent VAWG data collection for regular review and proactive monitoring, and implement local recording systems to identify hotspots.
- **Consider Diverse Experiences:** Avoid assuming homogeneity in data collection, considering diverse experiences within groups (e.g., LGBTQ+).
- **Intersectional Data:** Collect data that reflects intersectional factors and vulnerabilities, recognising multiple barriers faced by women and girls.

Strategy and Guidance

- **Monitor Governance:** Continuously monitor the governance structure to ensure all groups are connected.
- **Update Strategies:** Regularly update VAWG strategies and guidance in line with new directives.
- **Inclusive Policies:** Ensure policies specifically reference vulnerable groups to prevent exclusion.
- **Incorporate Co-production and Feedback Opportunities:** Regularly integrate victim -survivors’ feedback into all aspects of work at regular intervals and allow VS voices to be included in different ways.

Services

- **Understand and Remove Barriers:** Collaborate with services to identify and address barriers for over- and underrepresented groups accessing services.
- **Diverse Specialist Services:** Commission more diverse specialist services and raise awareness of available services across London.
- **Local Sexual Violence Support:** Explore options for a local sexual violence support service.
- **Therapeutic Support:** Increase the availability of therapeutic support for VAWG survivors, including children.

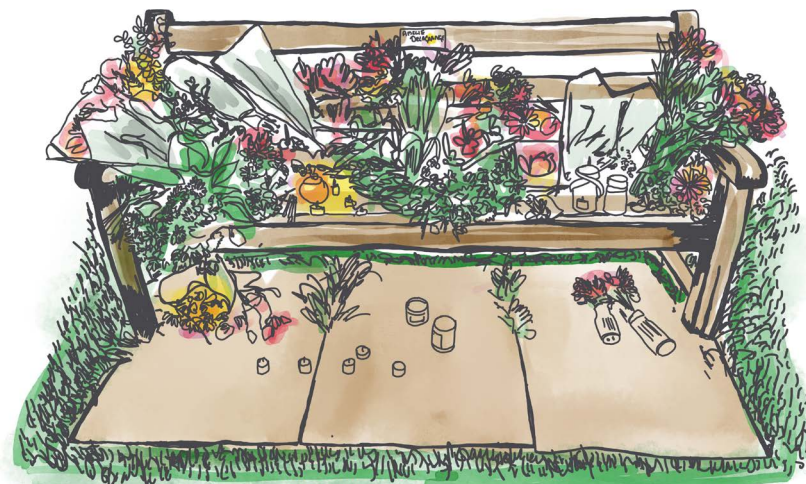
APPENDIX 2 - Glossary



AFC	Achieving for Children
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAHA	Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
DARDR	Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Forced Marriage
GLA	Greater London Authority
HP	Harmful Practises
HBA	‘Honour’ Based Abuse
HBV	‘Honour’ Based Violence
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
ISVA	Independent Sexual Violence Advocate
KRSCP	Kingston Richmond Safeguarding Children Partnership
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Plus
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MDS	Modern Day Slavery
MH	Mental Health
MOPAC	Mayor’s Office of Policing and Crime
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NRM	National Referral Mechanism for human trafficking and modern slavery
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
SAB	Safeguarding Adults Board
SA	Sexual Abuse
UN	United Nations
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VCS	Voluntary Community Sector
VS	Victim Survivor
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit

APPENDIX 3 - Notes

¹ Violence against women and girls: Helping to understand the scale and impact of the problem National Statistical (ons.gov.uk)	²¹ Rape, sexual assault and child sexual abuse statistics Rape Crisis England & Wales	³⁹ Women for Refugee Women : Updated May 2023 - Joint briefing on the ‘Illegal Migration Bill’: Take action against the proposed new powers to detain pregnant women indefinitely
² Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - GOV.UK	²² New scorecards show under 1% of reported rapes lead to conviction – criminologist explains why England’s justice system continues to fail • City, University of London	⁴⁰ https://www.london.gov.uk/publications/building-safer-london
³ Family Law Act 1996.	²³ Don’t forget the women behind the 97% – A personal account on women’s safety - LGiU	⁴¹ BARONESS CASEY REVIEW Final Report (met.police.uk)
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⁵ Suzy Lamplugh Trust – What is stalking?	²⁵ Crowdsourced Twitter study reveals shocking scale of online abuse against women - Amnesty International	⁴³ The Mayor’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022-25 London City Hall
⁶ What is Harmful Practice? AWRC Women’s services Brent Welfare advice Brent Women’s services Brent (asianwomencentre.org.uk)	²⁶ Statement on interviewing perpetrators Suzy Lamplugh Trust	⁴⁴ Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
⁷ What is Harmful Practice? AWRC Women’s services Brent Welfare advice Brent Women’s services Brent (asianwomencentre.org.uk)	²⁷ E&I Stalking Deep Dive	⁴⁵ Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
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¹² Domestic abuse is a gendered crime - Women’s Aid (womensaid.org.uk)	³² Honour Based Violence in the UK	⁵⁰ Framework for Prevention 2021 to 2025 - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
¹³ Microsoft Word - PUBLIC-FACING VERSION - DAC Submission - HMT Autumn 2024 Budget and SR	³³ PRO0130 - Evidence on Prostitution	⁵¹ Borough of Sanctuary - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
¹⁴ How to Protect Children From Domestic Abuse NSPCC	³⁴ Shadow_Pandemic_Report_FINAL.pdf (womensaid.org.uk)	⁵² Tackling Violence Against Women & Girls: An Analysis of the VAWG Strategy.
¹⁵ Perpetrator Strategy David Challen	³⁵ Domestic abuse and the cost of living crisis Safelives	⁵³ Violence against women (who.int)
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Violence Against Women and Girls

Strategy : 2025-2028

