

Violence Against Women and Girls

Strategy : 2024-2027



Wandsworth

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who contributed to this Strategy, including the survivors, voluntary and community sector, and statutory and non-statutory partners.

Special thanks to the VAWG Officer and Serious Violence Officer for their time and effort in conducting the Needs Assessment.

1 Forewords



**Councillor
Graeme Henderson**
Lead Member for Health
and Community Safety

“As the Lead Member for Health at Wandsworth Council I oversee the work being done to ensure security for all, as this administration’s 2022 manifesto commitments^[1], including through robust action on crime.

The sad truth is that in recent years we have seen a national epidemic of misogyny and violence against women and girls, Wandsworth isn’t exempt from this. Far too many women and girls of Wandsworth feel unsafe going about their daily lives and this strategy sets out how the Council and partners plan to tackle VAWG.

There are stark statistics which we cannot ignore: a violent man kills a woman every three days, and a quarter of women have reported being victim of sexual assault. There have been many notable tragic murders in London which have brought the issue to the foreground - Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sarah Everard, Sabina Nessa, Elianne Andam. Locally here in Wandsworth between January 2022 and December 2022 there were 2,681 police reports of DA, 676 DA with injury, 671 cases heard at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference and 913 referrals into the advocacy service.

Local Authorities play a vital role in coordinating a community response to these issues, and this strategy highlights how Wandsworth and our Community Safety Partnership will tackle VAWG on both a proactive and reactive footing to create a borough that is safe for everyone, day or night.”



Councillor Kate Stock

Lead Member for Children

“The impact of VAWG is huge, and tackling VAWG is high on the agenda for this administration.

As Lead Member for Children I want to ensure that the partnership is working to tackle VAWG in the community, to make Wandsworth a safe place for our children.

Effects of suffering and witnessing abuse in childhood can include post-traumatic stress disorders, depression, self-depreciation, problems at school and with concentration, low self-esteem, drug or alcohol abuse (in the long term), and may compromise individual growth, wellbeing and relational skills in general - by working together to tackle the root causes of VAWG we hope to build a community which is a safe place for our children to grow and thrive.

I want to thank the partners who have contributed to this Strategy, and all those who work tirelessly to safeguard our children, young people and families who are impacted by abuse of all kind.”



Mike Jackson

Wandsworth Borough Council Chief Executive Officer
and Chair of the Community Safety Partnership

“VAWG has a devastating impact, so it’s right that tackling VAWG is a council-wide priority.

Officers are working with victims and survivors of VAWG to support them in their journey to safety, be it Children’s Services helping families, Adults Services supporting the vulnerable, the Housing Department providing safe accommodation or Community Safety providing crisis intervention. We also recognise our responsibilities as an employer, and that many of our colleagues may have been or are affected by these awful crimes. Wandsworth Council is determined to tackle VAWG and make our borough safer for women and girls. That commitment is demonstrated through this strategy.

We have welcomed the Domestic Abuse Act, including the new responsibilities placed on local authorities, and work with our counterparts in the Greater London Authority to ensure that our local actions supports the pan-London response.

The council’s approach to tackling VAWG cannot happen without our partners - the police, the NHS, justice, fire, schools, faith organisations, local businesses, and our residents. This strategy has been created in partnership and will be delivered in partnership.”

2 Executive Summary



This strategy sets out the Council and Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) commitment to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Wandsworth. 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 help**
- **Providing safety and support**
- **Holding perpetrators to account**

An action plan is provided in the appendices that lays out clear actions against each of the priority areas with timescales. These actions will be monitored through the VAWG Strategic Delivery Group and reported to the Statutory CSP.

In making this strategy we have conducted a needs assessment (overview of which can also be found in the appendices) and consulted with partner agencies, the voluntary sector and victim survivors.

Acronyms are used throughout this strategy, there is a glossary found in the appendices.

3 Introduction

What is Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)?

Wandsworth has adopted UN Definition:

- “Any act of gender-based violence that results or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, that is directed at a woman because she is a woman or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women”

We recognise that the crimes associated with VAWG do not solely affect women and girls, though we must acknowledge the gendered nature of the crimes and the root cause stemming from misogyny and gender inequality; these crimes disproportionately have a female victim and male perpetrator¹. However, there are support services commissioned by the local authority available to all gender identities who suffer abuse.

¹Violence against women and girls: Helping to understand the scale and impact of the problem | National Statistical (ons.gov.uk)

²What is sexual violence? | Rape Crisis England & Wales

³Suzy Lamplugh Trust – What is stalking?

⁴What is Harmful Practice? | AWRC | Welfare advice Brent | Women's services Brent (asianwomenscentre.org.uk)

VAWG can be broken down into different strands:

Domestic Abuse (DA)

- Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, there is a new statutory definition of 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
- People do not have live together. Abuse can happen once or repeatedly.
- Children are also victims of DA, if it happens in their home even if the abuse is not directed towards them. This is the case if they are related to the victim or the perpetrator.
- Types of abusive behaviour might include: physical, sexual, violent or threatening, controlling or coercive, economic, psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Exploitation

- Exploitation can take many different forms and for women and girls including through modern day slavery (MDS), sexual exploitation and by organised criminal exploitation.

Sexual Violence

- Sexual Violence (SV) refers to any sexual activity that happened without consent. The act or activity was unwanted or involved the use of pressure, manipulation, pressure, force, bullying, or intimidation². This includes any behaviour that takes place online. There are lots of different types of SV including (but not limited to) rape, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, indecent exposure or ‘flashing’. SV can be perpetrated by a stranger or someone a victim knows.

Stalking

- 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’³.

Harmful Practices

- Harmful ‘traditional’ practices are forms of violence which have been committed primarily against women and girls in communities that they are considered, or presented by perpetrators, as part of accepted ‘cultural’ practice.
- The most common are forced or early marriage, so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation.
- Harmful traditional practices occur across all sexes, sexual identities and genders. They are not unique to a culture or religion⁴.

3 Introduction

Why do we need to address it?

Between September 2022 and March 2023 Wandsworth Council conducted a Community Safety Consultation which was available for anyone who lives, works, or visits Wandsworth to have their voice heard relating to crime and disorder. 487 responses were gathered of whom 94% were residents, safety of women and girls in public spaces was the number one issue for those residents. While 75% felt safe in Wandsworth in the day, this dropped to 32 % after dark.

Tackling VAWG is a key priority for the council, and it is committed to making Wandsworth a more compassionate borough that is safer and where victims and survivors are supported.

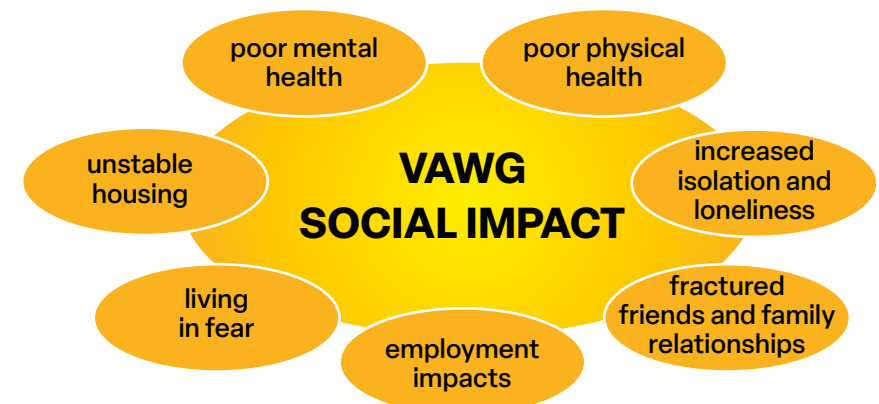
The Wandsworth CSP brings together local authorities and organisations to prevent and reduce crime in our Borough. The main objective of the partnership is to make Wandsworth a safe place to live, work, learn and visit - for all. Tackling VAWG is one of the five priorities for this partnership.



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: the Local Authority, Police, Fire, Health and Probation services. Non-statutory partners also attend.

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



4 Impact of VAWG

Nationally

Domestic Abuse

- 1.4 million women and 751,000 men were subjected to DA in the year ending March 2023⁵.
- less than 25% of DA crime is reported to police*.
- On average 3 women are killed a fortnight by a current or ex-partner, and an additional 3 women a week die by suicide caused by DA⁶.
- DA costs the UK approx. £23 billion p.a.
- Certain groups have increased rates of DA including: minoritised ethnic groups, migrant women, LGBTQ+, disabled women and substance misuse issues.
- 1 in 5 children live in a home where DA occurs.
- 1 in 4 perpetrators of DA are repeat offenders, and some have up to 6 victims.
- Less than 1% of perpetrators receive specialist intervention.

Exploitation

- The number of people impacted by MDS in the UK is estimated to be close to 100,000*.
- Research suggests 70% MDS victims are women and girls.
- There are 32,000* sex workers in London alone.

* Estimated

⁵ Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

⁶ Domestic abuse is a gendered crime - Women's Aid (womensaid.org.uk)

Sexual Violence

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

Stalking

- 23% of women and 9.5% of men experienced stalking in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022
- 26% of domestic homicide cases showed stalking as a key theme.

Harmful practices

- 74% cases of forced marriage (FM) involved female victims in 2021.
- 137,000 women* in the UK have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM)
- 60,000 under 15 are at risk of FGM.
- HBA offences have continued to rise since records began (2019).
- 12-15* reported honour killings per year in the UK.



4 Impact of VAWG

Locally

Domestic Abuse

- Top five wards for reported DA in Wandsworth are: Roehampton, Falconbrook, Battersea Park, Furzedown, Shaftsbury & Queenstown.
- Women in Wandsworth report significantly higher rates of DA than men.
- Black women make up 10% of Wandsworth population, and 27% of victims of reported DA crimes⁷.
- DA crime reports were under-represented for ages groups under 18 and 65+; and over-represented in 18-24 and 35-44 year olds.
- Referrals to the main DA support service have increased 21% from 2019 - 2023.
- 26% increase in referrals to the multiple disadvantage IDVA service.
- 41% of Wandsworth residents were not born in England. The local commissioned advocacy shows English not as a first language as the most common vulnerability with 68% of those accessing support citing this, next highest vulnerability is being a repeat victim (6%) and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) (4%).
- Vulnerable groups are under-represented in accessing support services locally including LGBTQ+, disabled women, and older adults.

* Estimated

⁷References to Black and minoritised ethnic women being disproportionately affected by abuse reflects that these women can be subject to multiple forms of inequality and may not have the same access to support. It is important that any response to DA is through an intersectional lens acknowledging multiple disadvantages.

Exploitation

- Despite no on street sex working, there are many online profiles found in Wandsworth, with most women being of Latina ethnicity.
- Women are most commonly forced into sexual exploitation, domestic servitude or criminal exploitation as forms of slavery in Wandsworth.
- Girls from Wandsworth are under-represented in accessing pan-London support for organised criminal exploitation compared with nearby boroughs.

Sexual Violence

- Victims of reported sexual offences in Wandsworth are 85% females, and mostly white (66%) and aged between 25-34 (33%).
- Perpetrators are largely male, unknown ethnicity and aged 25-34.
- Top five wards that report sexual offences: Roehampton, Tooting Broadway, Battersea Park, Furzedown and Wandsworth Common.

Stalking

- Wandsworth residents were the third highest users of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's online tool (which helps a victim identify stalking behaviours).
- 25% of MARAC cases identify stalking and harassment as a type of abuse.

Harmful practices

- For the years 2021 and 2022, 3% of MARAC cases flagged having a form of harmful practice involved.



4 Voice of the Survivor

Tell us about your experience and what you would like to see:

"I don't want anyone else to go through what I've been through - there needs to be more support to stop it ever getting to abuse."

"Not taking sides."

"Misinterpreting 'poverty' as 'neglect'"

"Mandatory programs and training for perpetrators"

"Post-trauma support for families to help rebuild."

"Importance of school in prevention. Education helps support children exposed to domestic abuse."

"Not being believed, not listening and not investigating concerns report. Training for all partners - particularly for male police officers"

"I would like to see perpetrators held to account"

5 Context



National and Regional

Three women a fortnight are killed by a current or former partner. In addition to this, in recent years, several women have been murdered in high profile cases, with failings of statutory services alongside the tragic events further impacting women and girls and their confidence in getting support. Examples include Sarah Everard murdered 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 and most recently Elianne Adnam killed in broad daylight. These violent attacks by men have contributed to women feeling and being unsafe; and emphasised the need for a community response to tackle VAWG.

The current climate in the U.K has an impact on tackling VAWG. The pandemic increased demand for VAWG support services, many of which were already stretched and under-funded becoming overwhelmed with the extra demand. The pandemic also disproportionately affected specific groups: minoritized ethnic groups; migrant women (including those with NRPF); LGBTQ+; and disabled women - groups that 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 health⁸.

Gender inequalities already existed economically; the cost of living crisis has further worsened this and stretched services even further⁹. 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.



⁸ Shadow_Pandemic_Report_FINAL.pdf (womensaid.org.uk)

⁹ Domestic abuse and the cost of living crisis | Safelives

¹⁰ A Gendered EU Settlement Scheme: Intersectional Oppression of Immigrant Women in a Post-Brexit Britain - Adrienne Yong, 2023 (sagepub.com)

¹¹ What does Brexit mean for the future of gender equality? | British Politics and Policy at LSE

¹² UNHCR Statement on the UK's Homes for Ukraine scheme | UNHCR UK

¹³ 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

5 Context

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 changing immigration rules making it harder for victims to secure their status and a gender inequality in policy¹¹;
- War in Ukraine and the U.K. 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme creating opportunity for predatory males to exploit vulnerable women¹²;
- The Illegal Migration Act 2023 in the U.K. preventing exploited or trafficked people claiming asylum if trafficked via illegal channels¹³.

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

¹⁴ BARONESS CASEY REVIEW Final Report (met.police.uk)

¹⁵ A New Met for London

¹⁶ The Mayor's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022-25 | London City Hall

¹⁷ Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet
- GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁸ Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet
- GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Policies and Laws

Casey Report and New Met for London 2023-2025

- The Casey report¹⁴ was a review carried out into 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 and has put them at further risk.
- The New Met for London Strategy¹⁵ was published following the Casey Review to work to deliver the changes that are needed. The plan focusses on three key pillars: more trust; less crime; high standards.
- MPS have launched a VAWG Action Plan which comprises three pillars: Building Trust and Confidence, Relentless Pursuit of Perpetrators and Safer Spaces. The plan acknowledges that there are issues within the MPS to resolve to build trust in the community. Appropriate actions have been woven into this strategy and will be monitored through the MPS run South West Basic Command Unit (SWBCU) VAWG Board across Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth which interfaces with the VAWG Strategic Delivery Group locally.

Mayor of London's VAWG Strategy 2022-2025¹⁶

- 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 or violence from men.
- It has four key priority areas: preventing and reducing VAWG; supporting all victims and survivors; holding perpetrators to account; building trust and confidence.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021¹⁷

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aims to raise awareness and understanding of the devastating impacts of domestic abuse on victims and their families.
- For the first time a statutory definition of DA has been created, and part of this definition includes recognising children as victims of DA if it happens in their home.
- Alongside this, new laws and protections have been created by the act and more can be found on the government's website¹⁸ and the statutory guidance published.
- The Act also placed 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 Wandsworth 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.

5 Context



Local Commitment to Addressing the Issue

Wandsworth Council provides support to women and girls affected by abuse mainly through commissioned services. There is a mainstream commissioned advocacy service and mainstream refuge providing bed spaces, there is also an enhanced support advocacy and refuge. For both refuges occupation generally runs more than 90%. Sadly, demand for support remains high. In addition to crisis intervention, the Council provides floating support and commissions holistic services available to those suffering who are not in crisis e.g., therapeutic support.

Wandsworth Council and CSP has committed to meet the pledges of relevant charters and accreditations to make sure a coordinated community approach to tackling VAWG is being taken, and some of these examples are below.

Wandsworth Council is signed up to the Mayor of London's Women's Night Safety Charter¹⁹.

"London is a safe city, but too many women feel unsafe when travelling, working or going out at night. Londoners have asked the Night Czar to prioritise women's safety. That's why the Mayor has created this charter: to make London a city where all women feel confident and welcome at night."

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

- Supporting all local residents to know what they can do if they experience harassment when out and how to report it

- Encouraging active bystanders
- Training all staff to ensure all reports are taken seriously, and are recorded and responded appropriately

Wandsworth Council is the first London borough to develop a Night Time Strategy²⁰. Wandsworth has a bustling night-time economy that should be a safe and welcoming environment for all to enjoy. The Night Time Strategy interlinks with the VAWG strategy with many actions including:

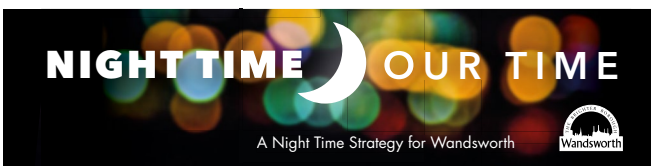
- Taking a 'place based approach' to tackling VAWG
- Requiring all new drinking establishments to understand sexual harassment training
- Offering bystander training

Wandsworth Council have the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation for the housing department²¹.

DAHA aims to transform the housing sector's response to DA by accrediting individual housing providers and supporting to improve their practices. Wandsworth DAHA accreditation recognised the Council's comprehensive and robust response to DA in the housing department.

As part of DAHA the council has:

- Reviewed policies and procedures
- Ensured support is offered to everybody including those who have protected characteristics.
- Delivered enhanced training to all staff.



5 Context

We are White Ribbon Accredited as a council²²

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 Wandsworth Council is committed to ending male violence against women by engaging with men and boys, changing cultures, and raising awareness.

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

The Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) are an active partner in the work undertaken to tackle VAWG.

Updates on VAWG are periodically heard at the WSCP and this network is utilised to engage with our communities. It has the ambition²³ of ensuring all young people in Wandsworth have a great future where:

- Children are happy and have good opportunities to develop skills.
- Children are safe both at home and in the communities where they live.
- Children are enabled to live healthy and fulfilling lives.
- Children receive a good education, suited to their individual needs, which supports them in staying safe and achieving their potential.
- Looked after children feel safe, secure, cared for and happy in an environment where they can thrive and succeed.

The WSCP are an active partner in the work undertaken to tackle VAWG, updates on VAWG are periodically heard at the WSCP and this network are utilised to engage with our communities.

Wandsworth also has a Safeguarding Adults Board²⁴ which has the 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.

Wandsworth Council use a Prevention Framework²⁵ and Toolkit through the Public Health Department.

We are committed to promoting good health, preventing ill health, and reducing health inequalities across the borough. The Prevention Framework is an approach to embed prevention in the work that we do. The aim is to achieve the outcomes identified above through:

- Building resilience
- Prevention of Health Inequalities
- Protecting against emerging threats to health

¹⁹ Women's Night Safety Charter | London City Hall

²⁰ Night Time Strategy - Wandsworth Borough Council

²¹ Accreditation for Wandsworth's response to domestic abuse - Wandsworth Borough Council

²² White Ribbon accreditation for Wandsworth as it prepares for 16 Days of Action against domestic violence - Wandsworth Borough Council

²³ Home - Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Partnership (wscp.org.uk)

²⁴ Vision & Strategic Plan 2021-2023 (sabrighmondandwandsworth.org.uk)

²⁵ Prevention framework to promote good health - Wandsworth Borough Council

6 How We Will Approach Tackling VAWG

The partnership approach to tackling VAWG has been broadly broken down into the below key areas:

Hearing the Survivors' Voice

We will ensure that the voices of survivors, communities and professionals are listened to. 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 VS in Wandsworth. Too many DHRs include recommendations for better coordinated and joined-up working, Wandsworth 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 completed with other Local Authorities, MOPAC and the Home Office. There are regional London Heads of Community Safety 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.

Ensuring Intersectionality

VAWG affects everyone, however it does affect different groups disproportionately with not all victims of abuse being treated equally, and this needs to be acknowledged. Intersectionality means taking into consideration more than one social category and recognising how these overlap to create interconnected disadvantages. These social categories may include race, class and gender. An intersectional approach is a more holistic understanding of an individual and does not just focus on one aspect of their identity.



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 through continuous learning and development, including implementing any learning from Safeguarding Reviews or DHRs.

Addressing the Root Cause of VAWG

According to the UN, gender inequality and norms on the acceptability of VAWG is the root cause²⁶. This strategy acknowledges the root cause of VAWG, 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 early education through to support from specialist organisations and training for our professionals.

²⁶ Violence against women (who.int)

6 How We Will Approach Tackling VAWG

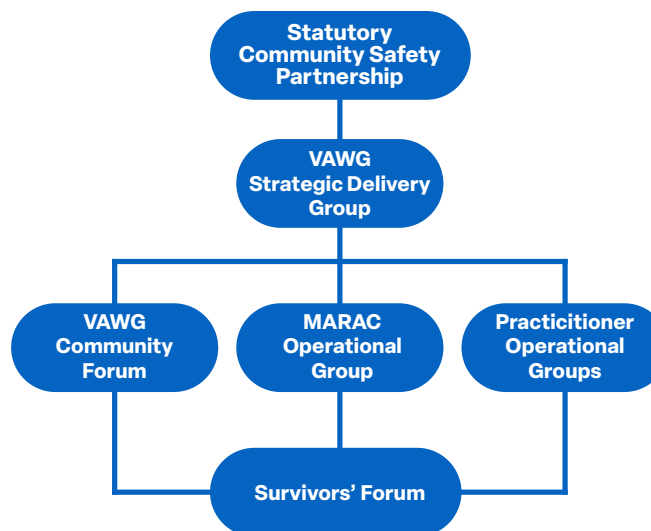
Governance and Partnership Work

Wandsworth Council CSP has a governance structure to ensure effective delivery of the CSP priorities both strategically and operationally. One of these priorities being VAWG. 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 Wandsworth. To ensure effective delivery there is a VAWG Strategic Delivery Group made up of statutory and non-statutory partners with responsibilities to respond to VAWG including Police, Health, Community Safety, Social Services, Housing, commissioned services, and others who meet to update on delivery of the strategic priorities and ensure we stay on track and up to date. Each of the members of the VAWG Strategic Delivery Group has its own Operational Group where any operational barriers can be addressed.

Wandsworth Council is proud of the VAWG Community Forum: a quarterly forum facilitated by the Council but led by community services and independently chaired by a survivor. This is an opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to get together, learn, network, and support one another in tackling VAWG in the community. One key aims of this group is to improve local links between the specialist non-commissioned providers and the Council to ensure victims can access suitable support.

All work is underpinned by a survivors' forum, led by the commissioned service to ensure the voice of the survivor is heard throughout all of the work that the partnership does in tackling 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 Attitudes and Behaviours

The partnership will work proactively in the community and across the partnership to improve understanding of VAWG including the root causes, and how everyone can support in tackling the issue.

The aim of this priority is to:

- Empower the local community and public to better understand VAWG and provide the tools to respond effectively.
- Work across the CSP to change outdated attitudes and behaviours and increase understanding of the complexities of VAWG.
- Encourage everyone to take action including public bodies and employers encouraging a common approach to supporting employees who experience abuse.

To action this priority, we will:

- Develop culturally relevant and accessible awareness raising activities for the public.
- Partner with education providers, businesses and local organisations to ensure VAWG is being tackled together by all local institutions.

Early Identification and Help

The partnership will identify and intervene at the earliest point to prevent abuse and minimise the risk of escalation. We will support agencies from across a range of services to identify the early signs of abuse and exploitation and provide opportunities for women and girls to receive the right help early on.

The aim of this priority is to:

- Have services that are confident in identifying risk factors and the early signs of abuse.
- Improve practice including information sharing to prevent escalation.
- Ensure best practice and learning from historic cases is shared and implemented across the partnership.

To action this priority, we will:

- Develop a training offer across the CSP that ensures early support is available in a consistent, non-judgemental and trauma informed way, where appropriate training should be delivered by specialists..
- Extend the availability of early intervention support and services.
- Update guidance for the CSP regularly, in line with emerging research and policies.

Safety and Support

The partnership will seek to provide appropriate safety and support measures at the right time. This support will meet the needs of the local community including vulnerable high-risk groups, taking into account intersecting vulnerabilities.

The aim of this priority is to:

- Provide accessible and free crisis-intervention for everyone.
- Ensure there are safe spaces provided for women and girls, including in the form of refuges, respite, Safe Havens, or the Safe Space.
- Provide ongoing, holistic support through all stages of recovery for all survivors and their children through a coordinated community response.
- Make sure support is tailored to individual circumstances and is led by survivors' choices.
- To grow and adapt the available services dependent on need.

To action this priority, we will:

- Continue to provide a range of free support services.
- Aim to diversify the range of support available, to ensure high risk and vulnerable groups are able to access support appropriate for their needs.
- Ensure a multi-agency approach is taken to support to make sure it is holistic and longer-term where needed.

8 Summary

Holding Perpetrators to Account

The partnership acknowledges that while supporting victims of abuse is important, we need to hold perpetrators to account for their actions to truly tackle VAWG. Perpetrators should be held to account not only through the criminal justice system, but through earlier intervention and behaviour change programmes. This will involve strong partnership and multi-agency work.

The aim of this priority is to:

- Identify and disrupt repeat offenders.
- Place responsibility on perpetrators to change their behaviour through provision of behaviour change programmes and support.
- Record data and information on offenders to build a better understanding of perpetrators to support early identification and intervention.

To action this priority, we will:

- Provide behaviour change programmes and perpetrator support.
- Develop a better understanding of perpetrators locally for targeted intervention.
- Explore ways perpetrators can be held to account across the CSP.



In summary, Wandsworth Council and the CSP are committed to tackling VAWG and making Wandsworth 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 tackling VAWG as is continual learning and development.

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

- **Providing Safety and Support**
- **Early Identification**
- **Awareness Raising**
- **Holding Perpetrators to Account**

Periodic updates against the Action Plan (Appendix 1) will be provided to monitor delivery of this strategy.

See how this fits into the Community Safety Partnership Plan on the Council's website²⁷.

²⁷ <https://wandsworth.gov.uk/community-safety/community-safety-partnership/>

APPENDIX 1 - Action Plan 'how we will deliver'

Changing Attitudes and Behaviours

We will	Timescale
Carry out public facing awareness activities around all aspects of VAWG, to challenge outdated and old-fashioned beliefs. This will include accessible and culturally competent activities and materials.	Ongoing
Work with all education providers, from primary schools through to higher education, to deliver training on healthy relationships and VAWG.	Ongoing
Work with local businesses and organisations to ensure employers are providing safe workplaces with access to support for all VAWG issues for staff and customers.	Ongoing
Work with local community groups to engage with seldom heard communities to ensure their voice is heard, and work to remove any barriers to support.	Ongoing
Maintain the Council's White Ribbon status and seek to gain any other relevant accreditations to continually improve the service.	Ongoing

Early Identification

We will	Timescale
Develop training across the CSP to recognise risks and signs of potential issues affecting women and girls, and how these may present in unexpected ways to ensure consistent non-judgemental, trauma-informed support is provided at the earliest opportunity.	Q1 2024/25
Develop early intervention services to offer support prior to when crisis intervention support is needed.	Q1 2024/25
Ensure transparent data sharing agreements/ expectations and escalation procedures which are clear across partnerships, to minimise chances of escalation.	Q1 24/25
Work with all education providers, from primary schools through to higher education to develop training and support for staff and students to identify all VAWG and how to access support.	Q2 2024/25
Keep strategy and guidance updated regularly in line with new guidance, laws and research.	Q4 2024/25
Continue work on the Women's Safety at Night charter including providing active bystander training to ensure all residents are confident in intervening in situations to prevent situations worsening.	Ongoing

APPENDIX 1 - Action Plan 'how we will deliver'

Providing Safety and Support

We will	Timescale
Provide an accessible and free advocacy service and safe accommodation-based support as per Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act.	Ongoing
Continue to provide safe accommodation.	Ongoing
Improve access to accommodation-based support through a new post within the Housing Department to improve the service's response to DA survivors.	Q4 2023/24
Create opportunities for co-production as this should be embedded to ensure survivors voice is at the centre and services are meeting the needs and demands of the local community. This needs to include survivors of all forms of VAWG not just DA.	Q4 2025/26
Seek to commission and engage more diverse and inclusive services and resources for hardly reached and vulnerable communities.	Q4 2024/25
Work with identified high risk groups offered targeted and preventative support.	Ongoing
Offer CSP training to ensure all staff feel confident in supporting diverse groups.	Q1 2024/25
Seek to increase support locally for sexual violence victim survivors.	Q2 2024/25
Ensure a multi-agency approach and partnership working is embedded at all stages to provide effective wrap-around support.	Ongoing
Work on a holistic support offer including the availability therapeutic support for those who have experienced any form of VAWG, including children to support with moving forward.	Q4 2023/24

Holding Perpetrators to account

We will	Timescale
Hold agencies accountable for victim-blaming language ensuring the onus sits with the perpetrator and not the victim.	Immediate
Support our MPS colleagues in their relentless pursuit of perpetrators through partnership working.	Ongoing
Collect more consistent data on perpetrators to build a better understanding of who they are and risk factors associated.	Q1 2024/25
Provide support for perpetrators who want to change their behaviours and evaluation of this support to identify what works.	Ongoing
Develop strategies to identify and disrupt repeat offenders across CSP (and outside of borough).	Ongoing
Identify barriers to perpetrators being effectively held to account and work to remove these.	Ongoing
Ensure partnership policies hold perpetrators to account e.g., Council tenancy agreements.	Q1 2024/25

APPENDIX 2 - Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment Overview

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

Please note, this is 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 Wandsworth 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 are more likely to experience domestic servitude or sexual exploitation, especially those from Black, Asian and Minoritized ethnic groups.
- Organised criminal exploitation affects 0.8 per 1000 under 18s in Wandsworth, but there has been a decrease referral to Wandsworth children's for girls affected by criminal exploitation.

Harmful Practices

- Localised data is very limited around harmful practices so have to rely on national figures/data mostly.
- In Forced Marriage (FM) 50% of cases are related to Pakistan, and mostly affects women under 25.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is identified largely in healthcare settings, mostly commonly related to Somalia.
- So called honour-based abuse is does not have statutory definition so is recorded/defined differently by different services but there has been a continual rise in offences recorded by the Home Office (HO) since 2019 and there is a high risk associated with these behaviours.

Sexual Violence

- Majority of victims in police reports in Wandsworth are white women aged 25-34, with perpetrators being most commonly male, unknown ethnicity and aged 25-34
- SV crime reports have increased and Wandsworth's reports of rape have increased much more than the average across London, other sexual offences have not increased in line with the London average increase.
- 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

- High rates of stalking across the U.K. with 23% of women experiencing stalking in the year ending 2022.
- Wandsworth borough residents used Suzy Lamplugh's online tool to identify stalking third most frequently out of London's boroughs.

Vulnerable groups

- NRPF and migrant women are a 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 under-represented in accessing local support.
- Substance misuse often treated in isolation but has many links to VAWG areas and high rates of SM among perpetrators.
- Mental health services very oversubscribed, and victims with MH are more vulnerable to abuse and most common factor for VS accessing the multiple disadvantage service.
- Disabled people 3x more likely to experience DA and at increased risk of abusive behaviour and very under-represented in accessing local services.
- High rates of children affected by DA in the home and large numbers are affected. 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 often not picked up on by services, and it unclear whether older adults are accessing support as different services use different age delineations.

APPENDIX 2 - Needs Assessment

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/stretched services unable to provide support.
- Economic barriers and housing are common barriers to VS of DA moving forward.

Recommendations

- Commission more diverse and inclusive services and resources for hardly reached and vulnerable communities
- Identified high risk groups should be offered targeted and preventative support
- There needs to be a move to focus on engaging perpetrators and them changing their actions, rather than victims. This also needs to include more routine data collection on perpetrators/offenders to develop more understanding.
- Public facing awareness activities are needed around all aspects of VAWG, to challenge outdated and old-fashioned beliefs.
- Training is needed across the CSP to recognise risks and signs of potential issues affecting women and girls, and how these may present in unexpected ways.
- Staff need more support and training to feel confident in supporting diverse groups.
- Early intervention work is needed to prevent crisis situations occurring.
- Data sharing agreements/expectations needs to be transparent and clear across partnerships, especially in the cases of risk.
- Data collection on issues of VAWG needs to be reviewed to show more intersectional factors and ensure communities who are often grouped together are not assumed to have the same needs.
- Strategy and guidance need to be updated regularly in line with new guidance and laws, and to ensure effective partnership working to tackle VAWG.
- Opportunities for co-production should be embedded in strategies to ensure the victim survivors voice is at the centre and services are meeting the needs and demands of the local community.
- There should be an increase in support locally for those who experience sexual violence.
- Work towards increasing the availability of therapeutic support for those who have experienced any form of VAWG, including children.



APPENDIX 3 - Glossary

CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAHA	Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
DHR	Domestic Homicide Reviews
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Forced Marriage
GLA	Greater London Authority
HBA/ HBV	Honour Based Abuse/ Honour Based Violence
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Plus
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MDS	Modern Day Slavery
MH	Mental Health
MOPAC	Mayors Office of Policing and Crime
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
SAB	Safeguarding Adults Board
SV	Sexual Violence
UN	United Nations
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VS	Victim Survivor
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit
WSCP	Wandsworth Safeguarding Children's Partnership



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Strategy : 2024-2027

