



**VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND GIRLS
STRATEGY**

2021-2027

Five Lambeth residents have had their lives taken from them because of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) since the publication of our previous VAWG Strategy in 2016.

We know that more needs to be done. We dedicate this strategy and all our work to those who had their lives taken from them, and we commit to making Lambeth a safer borough for everyone.



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For support and further information see [Lambeth.gov.uk/VAWG](https://lambeth.gov.uk/VAWG)

Throughout this document, you will see quotes from Lambeth residents with lived experience of Violence Against Women and Girls. We thank them for their openness in talking to us, and promise them that we will do whatever is in our power to improve the quality of their lives.

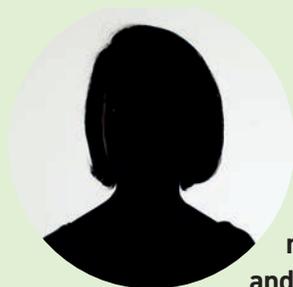
Acknowledgements

We want to thank all the victims and survivors, residents and people working to protect those experiencing abuse, who shared their experiences and expertise to create this strategy.

We would also like to thank those who have given their time to provide feedback on this strategy as 'critical friends'. Their knowledge and perspectives have helped ensure that we reflect the experiences of our residents and communities:

- Africa Advocacy Foundation
- Asha
- Black Thrive Lambeth
- Disability Advice Service Lambeth
- Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham
- The Gaia Centre
- Galop
- Healthwatch
- Lambeth Council Equalities Forums
- Milk Honey Bees
- RedThread
- Respeito
- Signhealth
- Solace Women's Aid
- Tender
- Women in Prison.

Forewords



“
First, he took my smile, then my energy, followed by my friends, family, money, dreams, motivation and zest for life. Chip by chip until I was no more.

Five years ago, after a sleepless night, I was at my lowest point and I couldn't face another day of physical and emotional pain. I had two choices: to get help or to give up my so-called life. I was not living; I was existing like a shadow. To the outside world I was still there, at least a small part of me was. The make-up and fake smile that had seen me through several years was not going to be enough any longer; now I was also fighting for my little son. Before I could cope but now, he was talking and began to understand the world around him.

That morning I chose life. While I didn't feel I had any energy left to carry on, a small light in the darkness gave me the strength. I contacted the Gaia Centre and at the beginning it was really hard

to share everything that I was going through and to ask for help. But eventually I gained strength and I slowly came back to myself.

While not all my problems went away, they provided me with the tools to prepare me for the long battle against my son's father. I know that if I had not made that choice my son would be an orphan.

When I was offered the chance to become involved as an expert by experience with this project last year, I felt that it was a unique opportunity to be heard by those that have the power to change people's lives. I met other 'experts' and realised that my journey through this process, frustrating as it is, was not uncommon and that we all had similar experiences. Navigating all our problems in this world of departments, agencies and institutions.

I can't tell you the frustration and the pain that comes with having to tell your story to someone, it drains you. Unfortunately, sometimes you have

to tell your story so many times that you feel like giving up. I have seen my now 10-year-old son telling a number of different agencies over the last three years, how he was abused by his father. I have seen his frustration and hopeless feelings of not being heard and I worry about him a lot. I know so many women whose children are waking up this morning hoping that their day will be better. I also know some who will be putting on a shield to face another day.

I think that we are lucky to be here now and with this new strategy many lives could be safer and improved. It is really important for our voices to be heard and changes to be made.

It was hard for me to contact the Gaia Centre in the first place but looking back it probably was one of the best decisions of mine and my son's life.
I wish you strength to reach out... ”

Expert by experience

Forewords



Making Lambeth safer is our priority. We are ambitious – our vision is that Lambeth is a borough where everyone is safe.

Too many women and girls are unsafe in public and in private.

All types of Violence Against Women and Girls too often remain hidden and under-reported. When women and girls feel unsafe it restricts their participation in all elements of life and prevents them from thriving.

Since the last VAWG Strategy was published in 2016, five Lambeth women have lost their lives to male violence. VAWG is a product of gender inequality and individual experiences of violence and abuse reflect wider power dynamics within our society. Other forms of structural inequality, discrimination and disadvantage impact on individual experiences of VAWG, access to support, and experiences within services.

But it is not inevitable.

This strategy has been co-produced with residents who have lived experience of VAWG and specialist services across the borough who have brought their expertise to ensure this strategy is as representative and ambitious as possible. The development of this strategy provided an opportunity for us to review our progress in tackling VAWG and have the views of residents and stakeholders at the heart of what we aim to achieve. Our role as a council is that of a facilitator, putting our communities and their needs at the centre of all we do. We will build upon our inclusive approach, removing the barriers to participation, and embedding collaboration with experts by experience and residents in the delivery of this strategy.

The priorities and goals that shape this strategy were created by experts by experience, residents and people working in services across the borough. To achieve our vision and the ambitious goals

set out in this strategy we are clear that tackling VAWG needs to be everybody's business. This strategy provides the framework by which we will achieve this.

We want to keep talking with our residents and communities about what is needed and how we can improve. Our Lambeth Made Communities engagement approach will be sustained and harness our collective energies. The delivery of this strategy will adapt and change over time in response to those conversations. ▶▶

Councillor Jacqui Dyer
Deputy Leader (Jobs, Skills and Community Safety)

Forewords



Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls is a council-wide priority as we know the devastating consequences for individuals, their children, loved ones, and the wider community.

We published our first VAWG Strategy in 2011 and over the last ten years, we have made real progress in raising awareness of all forms of VAWG and improving responses to victims and survivors, their children, and perpetrators. But there is still much to be done.

The prevalence of VAWG remains too high and its impact on individuals and wider society is too great. We have lost five Lambeth residents to male violence against women since 2016 and many more have their safety, freedom, and well-being limited every day. We also know that there are differences

in how VAWG is experienced, access to services, and experiences within services. We cannot tackle violence and abuse without recognising and addressing other forms of inequality and discrimination and we must ensure that our work supports all victims and survivors of VAWG.

As a senior leader of Children's Services over many years I have seen the impact of VAWG on children and young people. I welcome the new Domestic Abuse Act and the explicit naming of children as victims. This recognises the significant and long-lasting impact of abuse on their safety, well-being and development, and we must all work together to ensure that children and young people are safe and have happy and healthy relationships.

The council's approach to tackling VAWG cannot happen without our partners – police, the NHS, justice, schools, faith-based organisations,

businesses and, crucially, our residents and community groups who are the fabric of our fantastic borough. This strategy is designed to ensure collective action is taken to tackling all forms of VAWG and to embedding the expertise of those who have experienced violence and abuse in the development and delivery of all our work. We are committed as a partnership to invest in specialist support, drive improvement across all services, and creating a learning culture that can evolve and respond flexibly to the changing needs of the borough. 

Merlin Joseph

Strategic Director of Children's Services

1 Introduction

This strategy sets out our vision, approach and most importantly, our commitments to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Lambeth. We know that these issues exist across all of society and that we need everyone – residents, statutory agencies, communities, charities, faith-based organisations and businesses – to work together to make our borough safer. For now, and for future generations.

What is VAWG?

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) describes forms of violence and abuse that disproportionately affect women and girls and are usually perpetrated by men so it is important to name this as male violence. However, people of any gender can experience abuse of this nature and the consequences affect everyone. Male violence has a devastating impact on victims and survivors, children and communities. The cost to society is long-lasting and wide-ranging. VAWG robs individuals of their safety in public and private spaces, their choice and wellbeing, and can cause significant trauma. VAWG can affect anyone, everyone, and can occur at any point in life, but it is not inevitable.

VAWG refers to multiple types of violence and abuse, including:

- ▶ domestic abuse
- ▶ female genital mutilation/cutting

- ▶ forced marriage
- ▶ so-called 'honour'-based violence
- ▶ sexual exploitation
- ▶ sexual violence
- ▶ stalking and harassment

This is not an exhaustive list and our approach must continue to recognise that there is significant crossover in the types of abuse – for example, forced marriage and so-called 'honour'-based violence are forms of domestic abuse and most perpetrators of stalking or rape are current or former partners. A detailed definition of each of these types of VAWG is available on page 26.

All forms of VAWG are rooted in gender inequality. Male violence is the result of deep societal beliefs about gender roles, masculinity and femininity, and the attitudes and social structures that maintain these. These cause significant harm to women but also hurt children and create additional risks and barriers to support, safety and wellbeing for male,

Deaf and disabled women are twice as likely as their hearing and non-disabled peers to suffer domestic abuse (*British Crime Survey, 2020*). In 2019/20 39% of those supported by the Gaia Centre identified as having a disability (*Gaia Centre Annual Report 2019/20*).

trans, and non-binary victims and survivors*. Violence and abuse can happen to anyone but there are differences in how people experience it, and the multiple factors that affect people's access to services and their experiences within those services. To prevent and tackle VAWG, we need to work together to challenge myths and attitudes that excuse or minimise abusive behaviour and to create services that hold perpetrators of abuse accountable for their behaviour.

We need to involve victims and survivors and affected communities in the design and delivery of services that can offer appropriate support to all those experiencing VAWG so they are safe, able to recover, and move forward with their lives.

* We use the term *victims and survivors* rather than *'victim'* or *'survivor'* to recognise that VAWG is perpetrated by another person or persons and that some do not survive abuse, but also in recognition of the great strength and resilience of survivors.

1 Introduction

What do we know about VAWG in Lambeth?

Data tells us that domestic abuse, sexual violence, female genital mutilation/cutting, stalking and harassment are the most widespread forms of VAWG in Lambeth. We have seen increases in reporting related to these in the last five years. This may be because people feel more confident in reporting but we also know that these issues remain hidden and under-reported by victims and survivors. For many women, girls and gender non-conforming residents, sexual harassment is a daily part of life – unwelcome, frightening and rarely reported. The true levels of VAWG in the borough are likely to be significantly higher than the data tells us.

80% of London women have experienced sexual harassment and 88% of those did not report this because they didn't know how, didn't think it was severe enough to meet crime thresholds, didn't think any action would be taken, and/or did not feel safe reporting (*Lambeth Anti-Harassment Campaign, London Harassment survey results, 2020*).

A reason why some forms of VAWG may be under-reported is that people may not recognise their experiences as abuse – often this is because of 'myths' that have become accepted over time. For example, that domestic abuse always features physical violence; that someone needs to have said 'no' for it to be rape; that it can't be harassment if what's said is a 'compliment'; or that some forms of abuse (such as female genital mutilation/cutting, so-called 'honour-based' violence, and forced marriage) are 'traditional' or 'cultural' practices. These may stop people from feeling able to seek help or knowing where to get support. So, while we will prioritise tackling those forms that are most prevalent in the borough, we must also continue to offer support and interventions to victims and survivors of all forms of VAWG.

Violence and abuse can affect all people, regardless of age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, or sexuality. However, additional experiences of discrimination can have an impact on victims' and survivors' experiences of VAWG. Racism and other forms of discrimination create and sustain inequalities in society and the trauma caused by exposure to discrimination introduces additional risk factors that can make it harder for people to speak out and seek support. These challenges may be deepened as services may not have been designed with their needs in mind.



Lambeth is a borough of huge diversity, energy, and possibility but we know that these opportunities, access to services and support are not distributed equally among different communities. In our work and within the Borough Plan we have made a commitment to take an anti-racist approach when tackling inequality within the borough. We have also considered how the different identities (for example: ethnicity, religion, sexuality etc.) of residents in Lambeth intersect or overlap with each other to shape their exposure to and experiences of violence within Lambeth and the community. By bringing an intersectional perspective to this work we believe that we will be better able to tackle VAWG and support victims and survivors to recover and lead full and happy lives. This requires us to understand and respond to how male violence overlaps with systemic discrimination and oppression to produce unique experiences of violence, risks and barriers.

1 Introduction

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

In 2011 we looked at all the data we had on reported cases, consulted with victims and survivors, and knew that we needed to do more to address all strands of VAWG and the relationships between them. We are proud that from this, Lambeth developed one of the first VAWG strategies in the UK and created the pioneering Gaia Centre, offering a single point of access for anyone experiencing any type of VAWG in Lambeth.

We published our second VAWG strategy in 2016, building on the approach set out in our first strategy and responding to the significant developments in the previous five years. We spoke with victims and survivors, frontline practitioners (those working to support victims and survivors), and other interested groups, to help us shape our priorities and outcomes. They played a key role in supporting us to embed an approach that centred the voices of women and girls specifically, and for services and responses that understood the connected nature of the different types of violence and abuse experienced. The consultation and data made it clear that we needed stronger partnership working across all the agencies that are involved in tackling VAWG and this has been a significant focus of the past four years.

This work has continued to be one of the key priorities for the Safer Lambeth Partnership, the council, and its partners. Since 2011 many dedicated individuals, services, and agencies have driven real improvements in the way we work together to address VAWG in the borough.

Trans women are at particularly high risk from domestic and sexual violence (*Galop, 2020*) and 1% of the Lambeth Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) referrals were trans women in 2019/20. There were no referrals for victims or survivors defining as trans men or as non-binary (*Lambeth, 2020*).

1 Introduction

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

▶ The Sanctuary Scheme has continued to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes through additional security measures. A recent review of the impact of the scheme showed 90% of recipients were able to sustain their tenancy 12 months after installation, generating a direct saving of £846,500 in temporary housing costs.

▶ Since 2016 we have trained over 2,000 people from a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community settings on how to identify and respond to all forms VAWG.

▶ We have maintained funding for the largest refuge provision in London. 85% of this specialist accommodation offers culturally specific support for women identifying as African and African Caribbean, South Asian, or Irish Traveller/ Traveller.

▶ Our community based VAWG support service, the Gaia Centre, receives an average of 1,500 referrals every year. The service makes a real difference with 94% of victims and survivors stating increased feelings of safety, 92% noting an improvement in their quality of life and 99% feeling increased confidence in accessing help and support.

▶ Africa Advocacy Foundation (AAF) have provided culturally appropriate 1-2-1 advocacy, casework and counselling for over 250 Lambeth residents affected by and/or at risk of female genital mutilation/ cutting. They have reached thousands of community members across a range of settings through their community champions and mentors.

▶ We know that specialist services present cost-effective ways to provide support; a recent study showed that specialist VAWG services achieved a return of £4.94 for every £1 spent. Services specifically for victims and survivors assessed at the most serious risk generate a substantial return of £7.14 for every £1 spent.

▶ Lambeth has the fifth highest number of newly recorded cases of female genital mutilation/ cutting in London (NHS, 2020).

1 Introduction

What next?

This is our third strategy and builds on the work outlined above. Through all the hard work and commitment over the past ten years, we are now in a stronger position to develop better processes to understand where there are differences in reporting, responses, risks and outcomes for individuals experiencing VAWG. We have reviewed our previous actions and examined the data available to us to understand our successes, gaps and lessons learned. From the earliest stages of design and development we have worked with those who have lived experience of VAWG. Experts by experience are best placed to advise on what solutions, support and services will make a positive difference to their lives. We worked in partnership to co-produce a model for a public consultation which included focus groups, events, one-to-one interviews and surveys. We then used this model to speak with victims and survivors, residents and practitioners from a range of organisations to develop the priorities, goals, commitments and actions outlined in this new strategy. This model of experts by experience, our communities, and agencies working together in equal partnership will be built into the delivery and evaluation of all our work going forward.

Our consultation has told us what our strategic priorities should be and these will shape the work of the Safer Lambeth Partnership in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls:

- ▶ Specialist support
- ▶ Working together
- ▶ Community response
- ▶ Children and young people
- ▶ Reducing harm from perpetrators

Intersectionality and anti-racism are principles that must be embedded through each of these priorities. Residents have told us that their experiences of VAWG did not exist in isolation. Barriers to seeking help and accessing services were much greater when these overlapped with other experiences of discrimination or disadvantage.

This strategy is just the beginning of our work. We will also ensure that it aligns with our Lambeth Made Safer Strategy, which focuses on reducing violence that impacts on our children and young people. Our Lambeth Made Communities approach to meaningful engagement and co-production will deepen our work with experts by experience and our diverse communities in a sustained way. To

tackle VAWG effectively we need to create equal access to support and ensure that the outcomes achieved are equitable for all victims and survivors. To do this we need to better understand the needs of all our communities. We know that there is over and under-representation of some groups of Lambeth's residents in services. For example, Black and disabled women are over-represented in our specialist services for high-risk domestic abuse cases when compared to the population of Lambeth. Trans and non-binary residents are under-represented in all our specialist services. We need to better understand these differences and individual experiences. We will improve our data collection and act on the expertise of those who have lived experience to ensure that our strategy and delivery are inclusive and representative. This includes people from Black, Asian and multi-ethnic communities; migrant residents; those with no recourse to public funds; those with insecure immigration status; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming residents; those who are LGBTQ+; those with disabilities; working class residents; younger and older people; and those experiencing multiple disadvantage. We want to create a truly coordinated community response, and for that we need to work together, listen, learn and act.

Lambeth is a borough where everyone is safe

There were 21,068 domestic abuse incidents reported to the police in Lambeth between 2016-2020, an average of 14 per day (MOPAC).



2 Vision

- ▶ Lambeth is a place where every resident feels safe in all public and private spaces and can meet their full potential, free from violence or abuse.
- ▶ Every victim and survivor of VAWG can access specialist support, and we recognise and remove barriers to that support.
- ▶ We prevent VAWG from happening but when it does, we hold those responsible to account.
- ▶ We challenge and address all the forms of inequality and discrimination that cause VAWG, particularly among children and young people so they are safe and have healthy relationships.
- ▶ VAWG is understood in the context of wider structural inequalities and discrimination. We recognise the individual experiences of victims and survivors and tailor support to meet the needs of our residents.
- ▶ We work in partnership with all Lambeth residents, communities and practitioners to deliver a truly coordinated community response.
- ▶ We develop and deliver our work with and alongside our residents, rather than 'to' them. We create opportunities for meaningful participation with our residents and experts by experience and act on what they tell us.
- ▶ Our strategy is reviewed regularly and our work is flexible to respond effectively to changing circumstances.

3 Priorities

- 1: SPECIALIST SUPPORT
- 2: WORKING TOGETHER
- 3: COMMUNITY RESPONSE
- 4: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
- 5: REDUCING HARM FROM PERPETRATORS

Current studies estimate that almost 80% of LGBTQ+ victims and survivors have never reported incidents to the police or attempted to find advice or protection from services (*Galop, 2019*).

PRIORITY 1: SPECIALIST SUPPORT



Residents have told us how much they value Lambeth's specialist VAWG support services and the importance of 'safe spaces' where they know they will be believed and provided with non-judgmental, holistic support to increase their safety. Peer support and being able to speak to others who had experienced VAWG was also appreciated to help better understand the abuse and its impact.

Some residents with lived experience of VAWG also told us that they faced additional challenges such as poverty, substance dependence, mental ill-health, homelessness, language barriers, having no recourse to public funds, or having contact within the criminal justice system. These impacted on their experiences of violence and abuse and created barriers to accessing services.



▶ All victims and survivors know where to go for help and can easily and flexibly access the right support, at the right time, based on their individual needs and identity

▶ Victims and survivors of all forms of VAWG know that they will be

believed and provided with free, independent, non-judgemental and confidential support at any stage of their journey from any service in Lambeth.

▶ Support does not stop after a crisis period and there will be a consideration of longer-

term safety, practical help and healing support for victims and survivors.

▶ The lived experiences of residents who are known to be more at risk because of other inequalities are central to the co-design and delivery of services.

Women involved in sex work/prostitution and supported by services in Lambeth have all experienced two or more areas of multiple disadvantage (domestic and sexual violence, problematic substance use, mental ill-health, offending, homelessness, removal of children, and experience in care) (*Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham (LSL), Women's and Equalities Committee Submission, 2019*).

PRIORITY 1: SPECIALIST SUPPORT

COMMITMENTS

▶ We will ensure that specialist support services are coordinated and high-quality, including 'by and for' specialist organisations.

▶ All services will be accessible, flexible, tailored to the individual, and available in a timely way to victims and survivors and their children. These will be need and risk-led and available at all stages of their journey.

▶ We will ensure that services understand the impact of trauma and promote a culture of safety, empowerment and healing to repair the harm caused by violence and abuse.

More than 50% of migrant women who had experienced VAWG feared that they would not be believed by the police because of their immigration status (54%) with more than half feeling that the police or the Home Office would support the perpetrator over them (52%) (*Step Up Migrant Women, 2019*).

▶ We will monitor the performance of specialist VAWG provision and mainstream services such as police, social care, health and housing to identify and respond to over- and under-representation of groups of people, gaps in service provision, and areas for improvement. This will seek to identify and actively address the impact of inequality and discrimination on access and outcomes for all victims and survivors.

▶ Our work will be informed by the lived experience of victims and survivors, community research, and academic literature. We will embed community engagement into the co-creation and delivery of all our work. We will listen, learn, and act on the expertise of those with lived experience of violence, abuse, discrimination and disadvantage, to build services that meet the multiple and intersecting needs of all victims and survivors.

▶ To reduce re-traumatisation, victims and survivors will receive consistent support by retaining staff across the partnership and improving safe information sharing.

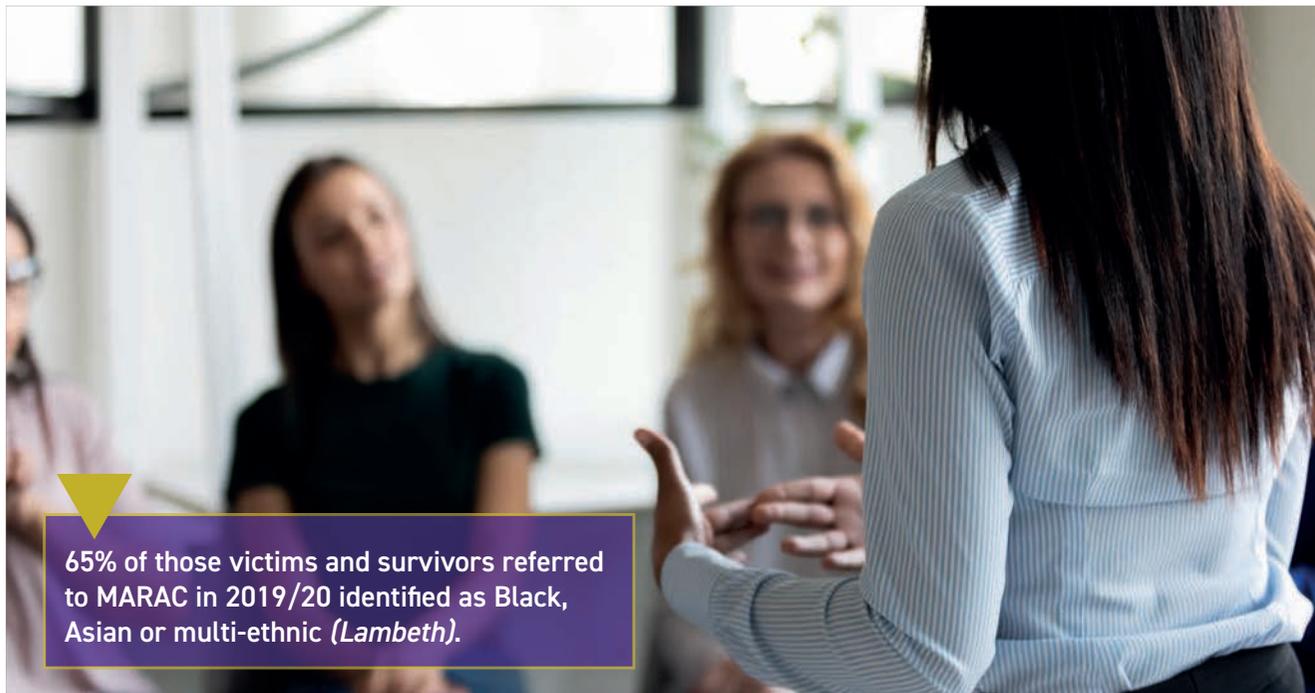
▶ We will ensure promotional materials for specialist services are culturally appropriate for our communities and residents and are accessible in a wide range of formats and languages.

▶ Services will ensure that victims and survivors feel safe and supported to disclose and seek help in their own languages. This will include sign language.



Domestic violence specialists understand your situation, others say, 'why don't you just leave?'

PRIORITY 2: WORKING TOGETHER



65% of those victims and survivors referred to MARAC in 2019/20 identified as Black, Asian or multi-ethnic (*Lambeth*).

Residents and practitioners have told us that it is vital that more services can identify VAWG and work together to make sure that victims and survivors and their children are safe and supported.

There are lots of examples of good practice but there is still more to be done to widen understanding of, and responses to, VAWG in key services.

We heard that those with lived experience want to be more involved in shaping change and making sure that all services are working in a coordinated way.



▶ Residents, communities, charities, businesses, statutory agencies and other stakeholders work in equal partnership to provide a coordinated response to preventing and tackling all forms of VAWG.

▶ Practitioners in services across the partnership and community:

- recognise abuse
- understand the impact of trauma
- make the links between different forms of VAWG

- understand the dynamic nature of risk
- understand the specific risks faced by marginalised groups
- provide an appropriate response to disclosures
- know what support is available to victims and survivors,

- their children and perpetrators
- prioritise keeping victims and survivors safe.

▶ We identify and promote good practice and encourage reflection and learning.

PRIORITY 2: WORKING TOGETHER

COMMITMENTS

- ▶ We will lead on delivering a strong coordinated community response that involves experts by experience, residents, Lambeth Made Communities, and practitioners in tackling VAWG together.
- ▶ We will create an experts by experience panel to be involved in the development, delivery and scrutiny of the VAWG Strategy and annual action plans. This will be representative of Lambeth and we will support them to ensure their involvement is not tokenistic and does not lead to re-traumatisation or further stigma.
- ▶ We will be proactive in creating a learning culture that is able to evolve and respond flexibly to the changing needs of the borough. The partnership will be open to challenge and hold itself and others accountable for poor practice. We will utilise examples of good practice to ensure services within health, housing, police and social care are routinely asking about VAWG to create opportunities for disclosures and interventions.
- ▶ We will be open and honest about the mistrust and fear victims and survivors may have in seeking help or disclosing to services and work together to actively address these.
- ▶ We will work in partnership to identify intersecting inequalities for those experiencing multiple disadvantages, to ensure services address

the connections between VAWG, discrimination, substance dependency, mental ill-health, involvement in the criminal justice system, and the removal of children.

- ▶ We will utilise multi-agency forums to share relevant information and work in partnership to safeguard victims and survivors and their children.
- ▶ We will publicise specialist services and create opportunities for disclosure and support through co-locating specialist workers in mainstream services.
- ▶ We will develop a workforce development programme to build knowledge, skills and capacity across the partnership and to create a wider range of places victims and survivors feel safe to disclose and seek help. This programme will have at its heart the need for culturally relevant and appropriate responses. This will include training with statutory services such as police, social care, housing and health.
- ▶ We will conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews and contribute to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Serious Case Reviews (where there are links to VAWG) to identify and share learning and create action plans to ensure sustainable change. These learning spaces will include representation from specialist organisations that can ensure reviews consider the impact of inequality and discrimination.

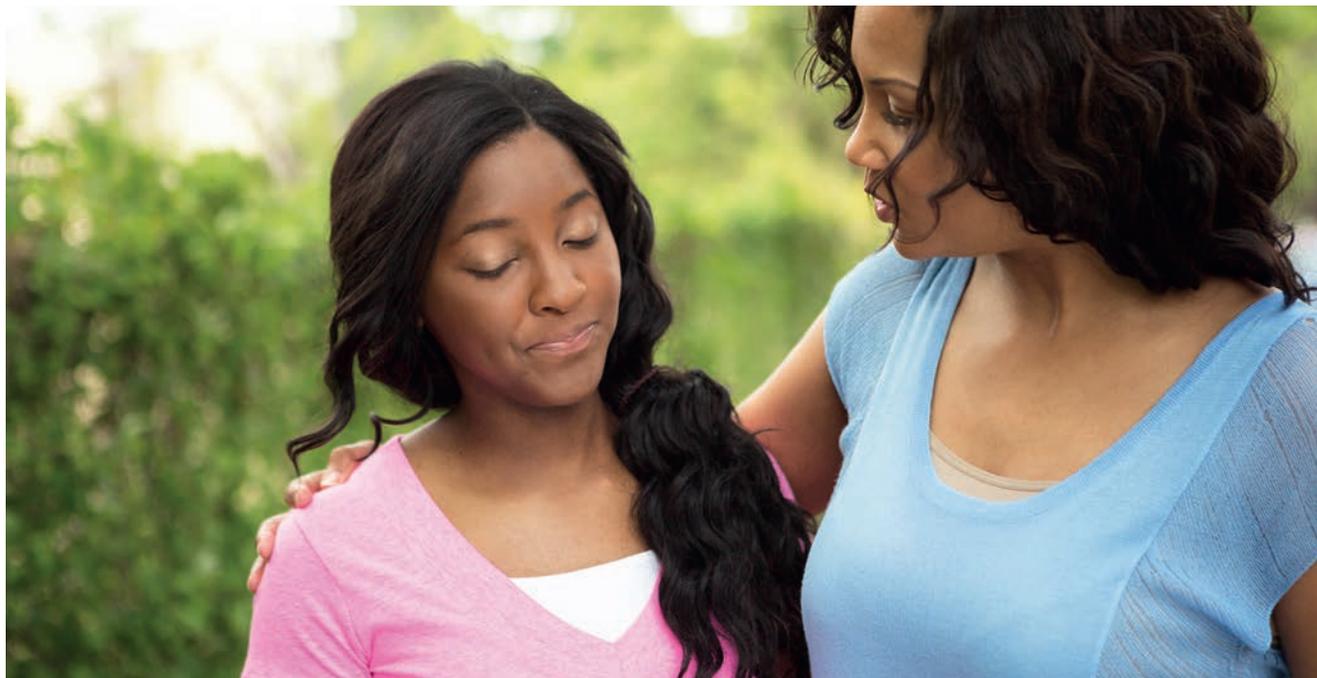
Between 2016-2020, Lambeth made 82 referrals to the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking. 94% were for children under the age of 18 (*Home Office, 2020*).

- ▶ We will ensure that the Lambeth Made Safer for Young People and the Lambeth Made Safer VAWG Strategy are aligned and that we work in partnership to address domestic abuse as a risk factor for perpetrating and experiencing serious youth violence.
- ▶ Practitioners across VAWG, the criminal justice system and offender support services will work in partnership to raise awareness and respond to the links between women's unique experiences of domestic abuse, sexual violence and offending.
- ▶ Practitioners across the partnership will understand the links between VAWG, serious youth violence, contextual harm, and modern slavery and are able to provide a safe and supportive response.
- ▶ We will align our work with national, regional and local developments.



A gynaecologist asked me if I have experienced abuse, I felt this was a real turning point for me. ▮▮

PRIORITY 3: COMMUNITY RESPONSE



Those with lived experience of VAWG have told us that friends and family are often the first and sometimes only responders to victims and survivors and that more needs to be done to raise awareness of what VAWG is and what help and support is available.

Residents and practitioners want to see coordinated and targeted campaigns that support prevention and early intervention and help us to tackle the societal attitudes that are the root causes of VAWG.



▶ All forms of inequality and discrimination, including misogyny, are challenged at every opportunity to prevent VAWG.

▶ Lambeth residents and communities are aware of all forms of VAWG, know how to recognise abuse,

and where to find information and advice if they are experiencing VAWG or are supporting a family member, friend, neighbour, or colleague.

▶ Everyone in Lambeth knows that violence and abuse are not inevitable and feel empowered to work with

other members of their community to prevent and tackle all forms of VAWG.

▶ Our public spaces are safe so women, girls and gender non-conforming residents can move freely through our streets, parks, transport hubs,

hospitality and retail venues and other parts of Lambeth without fear of harassment, violence or abuse.

Almost 20% of women over the age of 16 have experienced stalking, as well as almost 10% of men (*British Crime Survey, 2020*).

PRIORITY 3: COMMUNITY RESPONSE



Get feedback from the community who have experienced this type of violence. Maybe in the form of a focus group of individuals, that can communicate to organisations to understand and improve ways of helping the community who face these issues.▶▶

COMMITMENTS

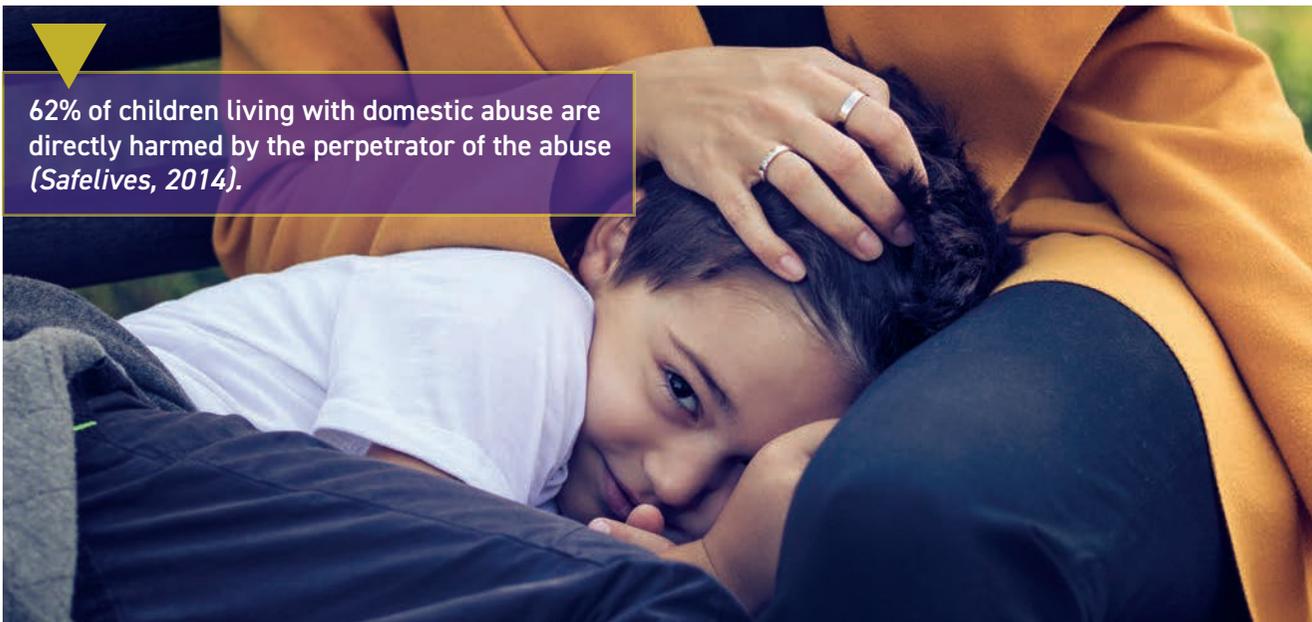
- ▶ Lambeth residents and communities will have the support and resources to proactively respond to all forms of VAWG at the earliest opportunity.
- ▶ We will work with residents to understand what different communities need to feel that services are open to them and address the barriers that impact on seeking help. We will tailor our services and communications based on what we are told is needed.
- ▶ We will work together to embed practices that understand the impacts of trauma; are gender-responsive; culturally informed and anti-racist/oppressive, in order to support recovery from harm and prevent re-victimisation for victims and survivors. We will raise awareness within our Lambeth communities about the impact of VAWG on children and the available interventions to aid recovery.

- ▶ We will consult and co-create with our residents to learn what is needed for people to both feel and be safe in our public spaces, and work with them to deliver on what they tell us.
- ▶ We will utilise the Lambeth Made Communities approach to collaborate with our residents at a ward level. This will ensure we have a strong understanding of issues at a local level and what solutions and interventions are needed to create sustained change.
- ▶ Agencies across the partnership will review their own policies and practices with a view to align their approach to reflect the values and approach of the strategy, identify areas for improvement and incorporate examples of best practice for responding to VAWG.



Older victims and survivors experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61 and nearly 50% have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely underrepresented among domestic abuse services (*Safelives, 2016*).

PRIORITY 4: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse (Safelives, 2014).

Those with lived experience of VAWG have told us about the devastating impact of abuse on their children and the need for specialist support and coordinated responses to help them to recover.

We also know that children and young people are the victims and survivors of VAWG in their own relationships, from adults and their peers, and that these overlap with experiences of other forms in inequality and discrimination.

We must support them to understand VAWG, consent and healthy relationships if we are to prevent future abuse and promote social and emotional wellbeing for all.



- ▶ Children and young people who have experienced or been affected by any form of VAWG have access to specialist support to recover and lead positive lives safe from abuse.
- ▶ All Lambeth children and young people understand consent and

healthy relationships and are safe from all forms of VAWG.

- ▶ Those working with children and young people in Lambeth can identify VAWG, the dynamics of exploitation and abuse, and respond rapidly and appropriately based on their individual needs and identity.

- ▶ Practitioners understand the impact of VAWG (particularly coercive control) on the parenting of non-abusive parents and hold abusive parents responsible for the impact their behaviour has on the safety and wellbeing of their children.

- ▶ Spaces where children and young people experience harm beyond their families (such as schools, parks, transport hubs, neighbourhoods and online) are identified and made safe.
- ▶ The impact of children and young people's experiences of VAWG is understood

in the context of wider violence, structural inequalities, and discrimination. Interventions are culturally appropriate and able to minimise trauma and allow all children and young people to lead happy and healthy lives.

PRIORITY 4: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

COMMITMENTS

- ▶ We will prioritise prevention of violence and abuse, early intervention, and provision of support for all Lambeth children and young people.
- ▶ We will engage with children and young people to co-create a plan to develop interventions, resources and services to prevent abuse and to help young victims and survivors to recover.
- ▶ We will utilise statutory changes to Relationships, Sex and Health Education in schools to promote a whole school approach to healthy relationships, including LGBTQ+ relationships. This will aim to ensure a consistent understanding of what VAWG is and where children and young people can access support if they are affected by or are subject to violence and abuse.
- ▶ Schools and Education partners will ensure that they prevent and respond to gender-based abuse in

Nationally 43% of women supported by the No Woman Turned Away project were from Black and minoritised backgrounds, highlighting the additional barriers faced in accessing safe accommodation (*Women's Aid, 2020*).

and around schools so that all children and young people have access to education that is safe.

- ▶ Those working in early years services, schools, voluntary services, care and youth settings will receive training to recognise, support and signpost children and young people experiencing VAWG and exploitation. This will be monitored and evaluated to measure its impact.
- ▶ We will work in partnership to identify and respond to the links between VAWG and contextual safeguarding, in recognition that children and young people can experience significant harm beyond their families. This will involve the expertise of children and young people, their families and communities to identify the spaces where young people experience violence and abuse and to make them safer.
- ▶ We will work to improve the response to girls and young women involved in criminal activity with a recognition of the links between VAWG and offending.
- ▶ Lambeth Children's Services will view children whose caregivers are experiencing domestic abuse as victims in their own right. They will review responses to ensure that non-abusive parents are supported and perpetrators are held accountable for their abuse.
- ▶ The partnership will embed anti-oppressive practice that seeks to address the inequalities gap that exists for our children and young people and that intersects with their experiences of VAWG.



“ I'm worried I've done the right thing [fleeing], we had to transfer school and my children didn't get a chance to say goodbye. ”

PRIORITY 5: REDUCING HARM FROM PERPETRATORS



Residents and practitioners have told us that there is a need for a sustained and systematic response to perpetrators as part of the coordinated response in Lambeth.

We have also listened to the need to raise awareness of the unacceptability of VAWG within communities and to ensure perpetrators are aware of where to seek help to change their behaviour.



Rape offences reported to Lambeth police were 28% higher in 2019/20 than in 2016/17 (MOPAC).



- ▶ Perpetrators, and not victims and survivors, have their behaviour (and the causes for their behaviour) challenged and are held to account for their actions.

- ▶ To prevent ongoing violence and protect future victims and survivors, perpetrators are encouraged to access support to help

them to recognise, address and stop their abusive behaviour at the earliest available opportunity. These responses will be gender responsive, trauma informed and culturally competent.

- ▶ When perpetrators access support, or approach services, practitioners have the

knowledge and skills to respond appropriately. Practitioners know what services are available to perpetrators of all forms of VAWG and organisations actively publicise these.

- ▶ Wherever appropriate, perpetrators are prosecuted and the full range of criminal and

civil powers are used to protect victims and survivors, and those experiencing abuse have confidence in these systems.

- ▶ Communities are supported and empowered to raise awareness of VAWG, model healthy relationships, and challenge the harmful

attitudes that cause and condone abusive behaviour.

- ▶ Services understand and respond to the additional vulnerabilities a perpetrator may experience while remaining clear that violence and abuse are always a choice.

PRIORITY 5: REDUCING HARM FROM PERPETRATORS



Perpetrators might be arrested and charged and go inside for a bit but then they come out and abuse someone else.▶▶

A total of 1,877 domestic abuse victims and survivors assessed as being at high risk of serious harm or homicide were discussed at MARAC over the four-year period 2016-2020. They had 1,683 associated children (*Lambeth MARAC – Annual Reports*).

COMMITMENTS

- ▶ Our work will be informed by the existing evidence base and examples of good practice to support the development of an effective multi-agency offer for perpetrator interventions in Lambeth. This will hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour, provide opportunities to work through past traumas and offer support for behaviour change when and where appropriate.
- ▶ We will acknowledge the intersections of VAWG and other forms of discrimination and inequality, and how this may lead to some perpetrators being reported or subject to enforcement disproportionately, so that our interventions are not discriminatory .

- ▶ Services will work in partnership to disrupt perpetration of abuse and to utilise all enforcement options available to reduce the risk to victims and survivors.
- ▶ Our approach to perpetrators will be tailored to each of the different forms of VAWG in recognition of different dynamics and risks. Our primary concern will always be safety of victims and survivors.
- ▶ We will work together to promote an understanding of healthy relationships and to intervene early to challenge and change harmful behaviours and attitudes.

4 Delivery

Delivering the commitments to meet our goals

Violence Against Women and Girls impacts all our lives and it will take collective responsibility to address it. This strategy will be delivered by listening to the needs and experiences of our communities and we need a dynamic structure in place to reflect that. Moreover, we know that our communities are rich with assets that can provide solutions to many of these needs, and we are open to considering all possible solutions to meet our commitments and goals.

The strategy will be delivered by a wide range of partners, our councillors, council officers, our residents, experts by experience, practitioners, stakeholders, and our communities.

Lambeth Made Communities

Lambeth Made Community meetings and websites allow residents and community groups to work with organisations that provide local services, like the police and the council. The aim is to build community resilience, improve community safety, and reduce violence. Lambeth Made Communities will be embedded in all our work.

Practitioners' Forum

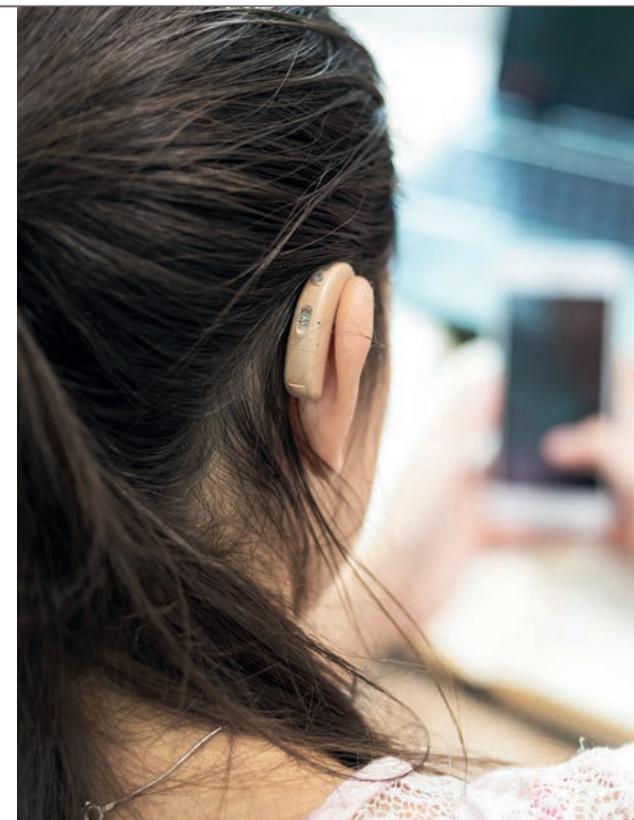
Practitioners working or volunteering in VAWG services will have unique insight into needs and solutions and as such will have a route in to influencing and informing our work via the Lambeth VAWG Forum.

Experts by Experience – Survivor Forums

Whilst survivors will be involved with the Lambeth Made Communities approach, we understand that they may also need a safe space to share their experiences. VAWG crosses public and private spaces and impacts people in different ways; those with lived experience, both adults and children and young people, may need a separate space that is survivor-led, inclusive, confidential, and appropriately supported. A small panel of survivors will lead and manage these forums and engage directly with the wider structure on their behalf.

Strategy Priority Workstreams

Each priority in this strategy will be overseen by a Strategy Priority Workstream – each workstream will represent the relevant expertise in our borough, collectively identify what action is needed and own the delivery of those actions. Lambeth Made Communities will be embedded and central to their thinking.



The action plans they create will set out how we will deliver on our commitments to meet our goals; these will be shared and publicly available. Lambeth Council will ensure there is officer resource available to support these groups.

Strategic Partnership Board

The Strategy Priority Workstreams will report regularly to a Strategic Partnership Board to ensure there is singular and central oversight of the workstreams, who will in turn report to the Safer Lambeth Partnership Executive.

4 Delivery

Lambeth Made Communities / VAWG Practitioners' Forum / Children and Young People's Forum / VAWG Survivors' Forum



5 Definitions

VAWG is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality in society. Locally we have adopted the United Nations Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women, which defines violence against women as:

'Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women [or girls], including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty' (1993, Article 1).

We use the term VAWG in recognition that most victims and survivors are women and girls, but people of any gender identity can experience abuse. The vast majority of perpetrators are men and it is important to name this as male violence while recognising that men and boys can be victims and survivors. This abuse happens in all societies and communities and affects people regardless of their background, ethnicity, occupation, religion, sexuality, or personal characteristics including disability. It can happen to children and adults of all ages.

Many people may not recognise what they are experiencing as abuse. To learn more about the different forms of VAWG see our website: lambeth.gov.uk/VAWG

Domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created a statutory definition of domestic abuse:

Behaviour of a person (A) towards another person (B) is 'domestic abuse' if:

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following:

- ▶ physical or sexual abuse
- ▶ violent or threatening behaviour
- ▶ controlling or coercive behaviour
- ▶ economic abuse
- ▶ psychological, emotional or other abuse and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

'Personally connected' covers intimate partners or ex-partners, or family members and as part of this definition, children are explicitly recognised as victims if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim for their behaviour and/or identity, perceived or real.

We acknowledge that within the definition of domestic abuse there are a wide range of different abuses including: intimate partner violence and abuse for people of all ages, genders and sexualities; adult family violence and abuse; so-called 'honour'-based abuse; forced marriage; child to parent, and adolescent to parent violence and abuse. While all are gendered (most victims and survivors are women and most perpetrators are men) and coercive control is the main feature of the abuse, there are differences and we need to ensure responses and interventions are tailored and appropriate.

Female genital mutilation/cutting

Female genital mutilation (FGM)/cutting is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there is no medical reason for this to be done. This is a traditional practice in some communities and is sometimes portrayed as a religious requirement although there is no basis for this. It is also known as female circumcision, and by other terms such as sunna, gudniin, halalays, tahur, megrez and khitan, among others.

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, or those under the age of 18, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. This is a form of domestic abuse but can involve people other than family or intimate partners and can be an element of so-called 'honour'-based abuse affecting victims and survivors of all gender identities.

Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is when one person or a group of people abuse or attempt to abuse a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes. This includes but is not limited to profiting financially, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. It is child sexual exploitation when the victim

or survivor is under the age of 18 and can include prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery.

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation and is a form of VAWG when the exploitation is of a sexual nature.

Trafficking is also a form of VAWG when it involves the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of adults (without their knowledge or consent) and children for the purposes of sexual exploitation across international borders and within countries ('internal trafficking').

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual act or activity. There are many kinds of sexual violence that exist including, but not limited to rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse (CSA) and sexual harassment. Perpetrators range from total strangers to relatives and intimate partners. It can happen to anyone, anywhere – in the family/household, workplace, public spaces, social settings – and at any point in life. Sexual harassment is often first experienced by women when they are girls and young women are at increased risk of sexual violence.

Sexual violence can occur online in the form of grooming, sharing intimate images of someone without their consent and using technology such as apps, websites and other online platforms to coerce or distress a victim or survivor.

So-called 'honour'-based violence

So-called 'honour'-based violence is a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families to protect perceived cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs and/or 'honour'. It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. This is a form of domestic abuse but in most so-called 'honour'-based violence cases there are multiple perpetrators from the immediate family, sometimes the extended family and occasionally the community at large. It is important to note that since the concepts of 'honour', 'purity' and what is 'natural' exist across cultural borders, so-called 'honour'-based violence has been witnessed and reported in every community.

Stalking and harassment

Stalking is unwanted, repeated, obsessive and/or controlling behaviours that make someone distressed or scared. There are many ways stalking can be perpetrated and it is most likely to be someone the victim or survivor already knows well such as an ex-partner. The law states that harassment is when a person behaves in a way which is intended to cause distress or alarm. The behaviour must happen on more than one occasion. It can be the same type of behaviour or different types of behaviour on each occasion.

ENDING VAWG IS IN EVERYONE'S INTEREST

The greatest impact of VAWG is felt by its victims and survivors. However, VAWG presents a significant cost to the taxpayer and the economy. The Home Office estimates that the total annual cost of domestic abuse alone in Lambeth is over £27 million. This is the cost to public services, including police, courts, health and social care, but this increases to £107 million if we include lost economic output where victims and survivors cannot work. If we were to also include the physical and emotional harm caused, the Home Office quantifies the total cost of domestic abuse in Lambeth at £376 million.

