

City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

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Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, 2019 – 23

Executive Summary

Our definition of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

VAWG is defined as any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, mental or economic harm to women or girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The acts of violence which are recognised as VAWG are domestic abuse and coercive control, sexual violence and rape, stalking and sexual harassment, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, (so- called) honour-based violence, faith-based abuse, trafficking and sexual exploitation, prostitution and breast ironing. The City of London Corporation recognises that some of these acts can affect people regardless of gender and therefore will ensure our provisions include them. It is recommended that the City Corporation's response is tailored to women and girls as they are disproportionately affected by the issues first and foremost.

Why us

The City Corporation is committed to tackling VAWG across the Square Mile for those who live, work and learn here. Striving for a safer city is a key organisational priority outlined in our Corporate Plan for 2018-23. The outcomes of the VAWG Strategy will help to deliver our aims to contribute to a flourishing society. The City Corporation has a statutory duty of care for residents living within the Square Mile. The Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 states that local authorities have a duty of care for people who are experiencing abuse or neglect. This includes ensuring they are safe and protected within their home and on the estate in which they live.

Who we will work with

We will work in partnership to deliver this strategy with the following stakeholders: the Community Safety Team, the City of London Police, the voluntary sector such as women's services, City Advice, commissioned services such as drug and alcohol services and youth services, our resident and worker population, the schools within the Square Mile, health services and probation services.



Our Vision

The Square Mile is free from VAWG and is a place that is safe for everyone to live, work and learn.

Our Aim

To ensure the City of London Corporation and its partners deliver a coordinated response to tackle VAWG.

Our Priorities

People are prevented from becoming victims of VAWG.

Links to Corporate Plan (CP) Outcome 1, 2, 3, 4,

People affected by VAWG have access to support services.

Links to CP Outcome 1, 2, 3

Perpetrators are held to account and rehabilitated

Links to CP Outcome 1

Our Activities

Our approach within all these activities is to respond with early intervention, a coordinated response and raise awareness and deliver campaigns.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and support national VAWG campaigns and continuously raise awareness of City of London VAWG support services. Provide education sessions and workshops as well as training to schools and universities within the City of London on VAWG issues, consent and healthy relationships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a targeted approach to identifying the needs and support of vulnerable cohorts Support the continued funding of the Vulnerable Victims Advocate (VVA) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) to support people affected by VAWG. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear referral pathways perpetrator programmes/organisations. Deliver campaigns to target perpetrators to deter, stop and mitigate offending; rather than putting all the responsibility for action onto the victim. Encourage young perpetrators to join the City of London Cadets to deter them becoming repeat offenders. |
|---|--|--|

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and awareness to of VAWG issues to City Corporation employees, voluntary sector services and health services frontline staff. • Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation to ensure City of London housing estate residents are protected and supported from VAWG. • Engage and work with businesses to provide them with the tools and knowledge to help prevent their employees being affected by VAWG. • Work in partnership with agencies delivering joint campaigns to raise awareness of services and support that is available to people affected by VAWG. • Promote the Women's Safety Charter to licensed venues to pledge to keep women safe at night. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage businesses within the City of London to ensure they know how to support employees who are affected by VAWG. • Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation to ensure City of London housing estate staff and managers know how to respond to domestic abuse. • Promote the Women's Safety Charter to ensure licensed venues are able to signpost and refer their customers to support services. • Supporting particularly vulnerable cohorts such as Children and young people with tailored specialist services 	
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Our Success Measures

The prevalence of violence against women and girls remains too high. In the UK alone one in four women will experience gender-based violence, and of these women over two a week are murdered. We are committed to understanding the success of this strategy through the development of baselines, benchmarks and data relating to violence against women and girls that live, learn, work and visit the Square Mile and we will look at aligning our targets to our Corporate Performance Framework to better measure outcomes. It is our hope that we will reduce and eventually end violence against women and girls in the Square Mile.

1. Introduction

Ensuring people are safe from violent crime and violence against the person is paramount for the City of London Corporation (City Corporation). We are committed to helping protect women and girls. This includes effectively responding to incidents of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). This strategy sets out how we will respond to cases of VAWG between 2019 and 2023, taking a zero-tolerance and victim-centred approach that treats reports with the utmost sensitivity.

This Strategy outlines our priorities for VAWG services across the Square Mile. It has been developed and will be implemented as part of Department of Community and Children Services (DCCS) and Community Safety's business plans. It provides a framework to shape, inform and support improvements in VAWG provisions in the City of London. It sets out a vision, priorities and direction of travel, and builds in the flexibility to develop them collaboratively going forward.

This strategy has been developed in partnership by the City of London Safer City Partnership and the City Corporation's Violence Against Women and Girls Forum. It brings together the work of the partner agencies - those who help us to deliver our priorities - to develop and support a coordinated response to VAWG in the City of London around a shared series of principles and aims. The strategy and action plan will be delivered through the VAWG Forum and driven by the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy officer. This post is funded by the City of London Corporation (DCCS and Town Clerk's) and the City of London Police.

It should be read alongside other key strategies. These include the City Corporation's *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy*, *Safer City Partnership Strategy*, *Children and Young People Plan*, *Housing Strategy*, *Carer Strategy*, *Homelessness Strategy*, *Social Wellbeing Strategy*, *The City and Hackney Female Genital Mutilation Strategy*, *The City and Hackney Multi-Agency Protocol for Preventing and Tackling Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)*, *The City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group Joint Mental Health Strategy*, *The London Borough of Hackney VAWG Strategy*, *The City and Hackney's Adult Safeguarding Strategy* as well the City of London Police's *Vulnerability Strategy*.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

Our *VAWG Strategy* supports the delivery of the aims set out in our *Corporate Plan 2018-23 (CP)*, particularly to 'contribute to a flourishing society' where people are safe and feel safe, enjoy good health and wellbeing, have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential and live in communities that are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

In addition it will contribute to Outcome 8, We have access to the skills and talent we need, as under the priority "support a thriving economy".

2. Vision, Approach and priorities

Our local vision is that: “The Square Mile is free from VAWG and is a place that is safe for everyone to live, work and learn” thus everyone residing, working or learning in the square Mile will enjoy support and protection from a range of issues encompassed under the VAWG appellation including:

- *Domestic abuse (including coercive control)*
- *Sexual violence and rape*
- *Stalking and sexual harassment*
- *Online Abuse*
- *Female Genital Mutilation*
- *Forced marriage*
- *Honour-Based Violence*
- *Faith-based abuse*
- *Trafficking and sexual exploitation*
- *Prostitution*
- *Breast Ironing*
- *Forced terminations*
- *Gendered gang violence*

While there is no evidence at this stage that all of the above are prevalent in the City of London, it is important to have plans in place to explore the likelihood of these and respond should they occur.

We acknowledge that VAWG impacts all services (adult and children social care, public health, housing, community safety, civil and criminal justice as well as voluntary and community organisations) and it is the responsibility of all agencies to tackle VAWG and address the needs of survivors and their families. Hence the City Corporation is committed to working in an inclusive partnership method to develop a whole system approach to VAWG, bringing together the criminal and justice system, the NHS, local authorities, voluntary and community sector, service users and other partners. In this manner the City Corporation’s response to VAWG will be coordinated to prevent further harm, reduce risk and increase safety for people residing, working, studying and traveling in the City.

VAWG affects people regardless of their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, religion, culture, ethnicity, background or disability. As well as the VAWG act there are a range of consequences, such as homelessness, mental health issues and substance misuse, that need to be addressed. We will aim to understand and meet survivors needs and aspirations with effective risk management, safety planning, safe accommodation, emotional support, healthcare, education, legal aid and access to justice.

Throughout this document we talk of victim or survivors, depending on the individual one or the other term is preferred thus we decided to take an all-inclusive empowering approach by utilising both terms.

Finally, we recognize that men and boys can also be victims under VAWG and our provisions include them but our response has to be tailored to women and girls because the issue affects them disproportionately and often these crimes and abuses are committed on girls and women because they are female (gendered crimes).

Our focus will be on three strategic priorities:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Support of victims/survivors
- Perpetrators (accountability and rehabilitation)

We do not underestimate the challenges that we will face in the next five years, and the need to be *both* realistic *and* innovative due to pressures on budgets, resources and services. By working together, raising awareness of VAWG, intervening earlier, empowering experienced officers and practitioners, removing barriers to support, we believe that we have an opportunity to improve outcomes.

What is covered by this strategy?

The strategy assesses the needs of our population, maps the challenges, identifies the opportunities, and explains how we will work collaboratively with partners and service users to deliver our priorities, as well as how we will monitor our progress.

It considers how we will support the needs of:

- Our residents
- Our workers
- Our students
- The most vulnerable – e.g. Children and young people, the LGBTQI+ community, the homeless and rough sleepers, older women.
- People travelling through the square mile

It is also intended as the City Corporation's local contribution to the development of national and pan-London VAWG policy.

3. The legislative context

Our approach in City is shaped by the 2018-2021 *Mayor's (of London) Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy* as well as the 2016-2020 Government's strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls¹ and the work of the Mayor's Office of Police and Crime (MOPAC)².

The Strategy is in line with the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill and we will continue to ensure that the City Corporation is working alongside the Bill and the Domestic Abuse Act when it is brought into Parliament for review in 2020.

We will also build on local arrangements to support partnership responses to victims/survivors of VAWG mental health crisis through the Safer City Partnership, the City Corporation's Domestic Abuse and Violence forum, the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership to support our focus on prevention and early intervention.

Other pieces of legislation which impact on tackling VAWG and have informed this strategy include:

- Human Rights Act 1998,
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme,
- Domestic Violence Protection Notices/orders,
- The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004,
- The Serious Crime Act 2015,
- the Care Act 2014,
- the Mental Capacity Act 2005,
- Children Act 2004,
- Education Act 2002,
- the Met Police Services Approach to Tackling DV HMIC 2014,
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2019,
- the Identified Safeguarding Priorities of the City of London and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board
- Statement of government policy on Adult Safeguarding 2013
- NICE guidelines
- the Gender Equality Act 2006
- the City and Hackney Female Genital Mutilation Strategy and Protocol 2016-2019

¹ HM Government, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Strategy 2016 – 2020,

² Mayor of London's Mayor's Office of Police and Crime, London VAWG Strategy Refresh 2013-17

4. Understanding the needs of our communities

Our current VAWG provision includes a full-time Vulnerable Victims Advocate, a part time independent domestic violence advisor based in the City Police Public Protection unit as part of the integrated victim witness service. The City Corporation organises and coordinates the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Forum where multiple agencies and stakeholders meet quarterly to tackle issues of VAWG in the City of London. Partners agencies that attend this forum provide counselling, advice and support to victims.

Our services are designed to respond to the challenges that the Square Mile faces in terms of prevention and protecting people from VAWG. These challenges include:

- **Sex work hotspot** – there are occurrences of sex work and sex trafficking in the Liverpool street area because of it being a travel hub. Under-reporting with this form of VAWG is already current but consultation with the City of London Police has also uncovered that a lot of properties are rented privately (often through internet platform) to be used as brothel which makes intervening harder than in licensed premises and hotels. Police data has shown that peak sexual offences occurred during the night-time economy operating hours, probably due to high levels of intoxication.
- **Daytime footfall** - Roughly half a million people pass through the square mile each day, even though these are not residents, we still have an obligation to protect and support them from VAWG. However, because they are not residents, obtaining data, reporting crimes and abuses, offering services and holding perpetrators to account presents challenges.
- **Under-reporting** – VAWG are generally under reported and in the City of London, we witness low level of domestic abuse referrals regarding victims and survivors from certain communities (Bengali, Chinese, LGBTQ, non-resident night workers, sex trafficking victims). VAWG is a hidden phenomenon across many social groups which is why the City Corporation must challenge certain messages around gender and advertise what protection is available to victims - we must ensure help is received by those who need it.
- **Vulnerable cohorts** - The square mile has a culturally and ethnically diverse population (our children and young people are 20% more ethnically diverse than the national average), this can create some challenges in tackling VAWG because some cohorts/communities are less aware of VAWG services, less able to access care and support than others. These particularly vulnerable cohorts include Children and young people, LGBTQI+, older women, BAME and the homeless.

VAWG: Some Numbers

Domestic violence costs the UK economy £15.8 billion.

St Mungo's rough sleeping team reported that nearly 50% of their female service-users had experienced domestic abuse and 19% had experienced childhood abuse.

41% of the prison population have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse which is illustrative of the wider social harm these crimes cause.

From 2011 to 2018 domestic abuse offences in London rose by 63%.

Only 1.5% of all rape cases (1/65 cases) lead to charges or summons when 4 years ago it was 14%.

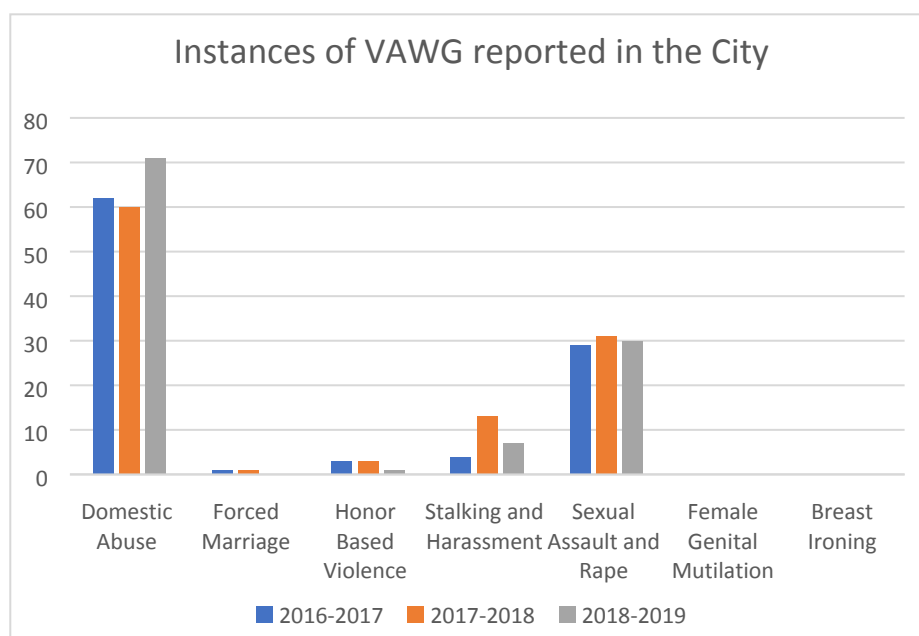
From 2015 to 2019 rape claims dealt with annually by the police in England rose by 61%.

23% of refuge places in England are located in the London area. Rates of unsuccessful referrals to London refuges remain on average 60%. Only 3% of women placed in London refuges came from that same borough.

VAWG in the Square Mile

(The below data has been collated from the VVA, Social Care, City of London Police and the Ascent Partners. The data represents people who live, work and study within the City of London. They are incidents which have been reported to the City of London Police, City of London Social Care or VAWG support services. Domestic abuse includes online abuse, stalking and harassment and sexual violence within intimate or family relationships.)

There have been 354 domestic crimes reported to the City of London Police between Jan 2016- Dec 2018.



5. Vulnerable cohorts

Children and Young People

Our 1852 Children and young people are one of the vulnerable cohort the City Corporation aims to protect against VAWG. Adverse childhood experiences such as suffering from or witnessing VAWG, has been proven to impact resilience and cause multiple social care and health issues to the person throughout their life.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 extended the definition of harm to include “impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another”.

There are no official statistics on the number of children who live with domestic abuse but there is a lot of research studies on the experience of children in the UK living with violence:

- 130,000 children live in households with high-risk domestic abuse³
- Around 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse⁴
- Domestic abuse is a factor in over half of serious case reviews⁵
- Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to have behavioural and emotional problems.⁶

Children of any age are affected by domestic violence and abuse. It is very upsetting for children to see one of their parents (or partners) abusing, attacking or controlling the other.

Children dealing with domestic violence and abuse often do badly at school. Their frightening experiences at home make it difficult to concentrate in school, and if they are worried about their abused parents, they may refuse to go to school”⁷

The City and /hackney safeguarding children board makes explicit the link between children witnessing domestic abuse and being vulnerable to exploitation. It is paramount that practitioners are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of VAWG early and intervene effectively to prevent children and young people being exposed to such harm during their childhood.

Early intervention is at the core of City Corporation’s strategy that issues such as child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, FGM or early marriage are met with robust and timely interventions from City of London services

³ CAADA (2012) a lace of greater safety: insights into domestic abuse (PDF).

⁴ Radford, L. et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today

⁵ Sidebotham, P. et al (2016) Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews 2011 to 2014: final report (PDF).

⁶ Humphreys, C. (2006) Relevant evidence for practice (chapter 1 in C. Humphrey and N. Stanley (eds) Domestic violence and child protection: directions for good practice.)

⁷ The royal college of psychiatrists

Domestic abuse and violence have an impact on how a child or young person views relationships, increasing their susceptibility to exploitation in the future. Early education, school and after school provision for children and young people would help them identify abusive behaviours when they were young.

Finally children should be able to access specialist support for themselves around their experience of living with domestic abuse.

Older women

Domestic abuse issues for older women often go unrecognised: older victims (61+) will experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61 and nearly half have a disability. Thus, older women are hugely underrepresented among domestic abuse services which means that protective or supportive measures that may have reduced the risks of harm are not put in place.

Additionally, for some older women, there will be factors that may make them less likely to disclose VAWG. These include concerns about sharing information considered to be private, and embarrassment and shame about a situation of domestic abuse. Long term undermining of an individual's self-esteem over many years could intensify these feelings, what may be perceived as 'low level' individual incidents which can, as part of a longstanding pattern of cumulative abusive behaviour, have consequences that can equal or surpass any individual incident.

Furthermore, victims aged 61+ are much more likely to experience abuse from a family member or intimate partner than those aged under. Older victims are less likely to attempt to leave in the year before accessing support and more likely to live with the perpetrator after getting support.

Specific risk factors for older people, including the development of health needs, retirement from work (resulting in increased contact), stress associated with caring roles and social or geographical isolation may place them at increased risk from domestic abuse. As we age the ability to recover from both mental and physical abuse can be adversely affected, and the impact of domestic abuse can be particularly profound for those who may be reliant on a partner to provide care and financial support.

Services can be tailored to help older women such as being flexible in where and how support is provided – hold drop-in and outreach sessions at places older women feel comfortable or can access more easily, like health centres, GP surgeries and day/community centres, visiting victims in their own homes, where it is safe to do so, and arranging joint visits with other professionals if their presence is reassuring for the victim, being aware of refuges that can accommodate carers, remembering that all older people and carers have the right to request a Needs Assessment, and work jointly with social services, finding support services for the 'vulnerable' perpetrator.⁸

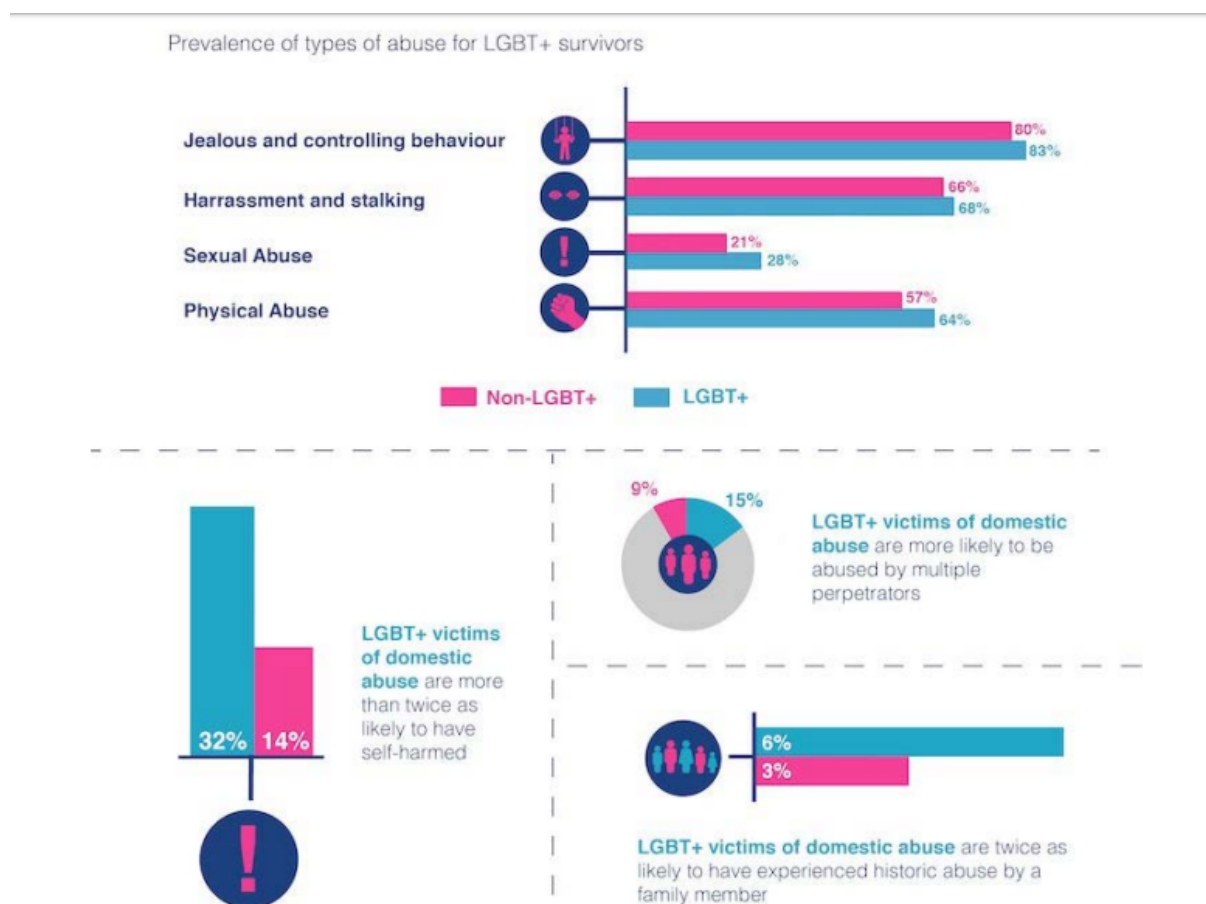
⁸ <http://www.safelives.org.uk/spotlight-1-older-people-and-domestic-abuse>

LGBTQI+ people

While we use the term Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersexed (LGBTQI+), we recognise that LGBTQI+ people are not a homogenous group, and those who identify as LGBTQI+ will have widely different identities, experiences and needs.

The limited available research suggests that some LGBTQI+ people experience domestic abuse at a higher rate than non-LGBTQI+ people. This appears to be particularly the case for bisexual women and those who identify as trans or non-binary. It is likely that many LGBTQI+ victims remain 'hidden' from services.

The data in the below picture indicates that domestic abuse affects the LGBTQI+ community quite seriously.



Reporting of abuse/VAWG is lower for LGBTQI+ victims, they face additional barriers to accessing support that are unique to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Evidence suggests that those who identify as LGBTQI+ are not accessing services at the same rate as others in the UK population.

There is variation in estimates about the size of LGBTQI+ populations, and even less data on transgender populations, but Public Health England's current estimate for the national LGB population is between 2.5% and 5.8%. SafeLives' national dataset shows that just 2.5% of people accessing support from domestic abuse services identified as LGBTQI+.

MARACs and domestic abuse services should expect to see more than 2.5% of referrals for LGBT+ people. Yet in the 12 months to the end of March 2018, only 1.2% of cases discussed at MARAC were noted to involve LGBTQI+ victims/survivors. Over a quarter of MARACs (26%) recorded no LGBTQI+ survivors at all during this period.

LGBTQI+ victims present with higher levels of risk and complex needs by the time they access support. The most effective support is well-resourced specialist LGBTQI+ support as they are best placed to engage with those who have little or no trust in non-LGBTQI+ VAWG services. They can also act as a bridge between their clients and these non-LGBTQI+ services. However due to funding and staffing limitations, specialist services are extremely limited thus it is vital that non-LGBTQI+ VAWG services are adequately trained and equipped to respond to survivors confidently and sensitively.

Data shows that where non-LGBTQI+ services are engaging with LGBTQI+ people, there is a bias towards female bisexual women who have experienced abuse from a male partner. It is important that the VAWG sector is better able to support individuals whose experience differs from male to female abuse. The first step towards helping people who identify as LGBTQI+ to access support must be raising awareness that domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of sexual orientation and/or gender identity⁹

BAME

The City Corporation has to protect a culturally and ethnically diverse population: residents, workers, students and visitors. This diversity can create some challenges in tackling VAWG.

Around 40% of the City of London children and 26% (ONS, 2017) of people working within the City of London are from a BAME background, as well as the large Bangladeshi community. A significant amount of work is needed within the City of London to ensure that the different communities feel confident reporting acts of VAWG and receive the support they need. The Asian Women's Resource Centre have supported 65 women within the City of London from April 2015 to December 2018 for FM, HBV, FGM or faith-based abuse, however, during this timeframe the City of London Police have had very low number of reports of these crimes in comparison with the recorded figures in the UK. The Force Intelligence Bureau has indicated that it is likely there will be more incidents of FM and HBV than are reported due to the vast number of individuals working in the City of London from different cultural backgrounds.

⁹ <http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Free%20to%20be%20safe%20web.pdf>

VAWG affects women and girls from all ethnic groups, and there is no evidence to suggest that women from some ethnic or cultural communities are any more at risk than others.

However, because the form the abuse takes may vary; some communities can be more at risk of certain types of VAWG, for example, abuses perpetrated by extended family members such as forced marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM).

Women and girls from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities witness higher levels of domestic homicide, so-called 'honour' killings, and abuse driven suicide¹⁰

Whatever their experiences, women from BAME communities are likely to face additional barriers to receiving the help that they need.

If a BAME woman tries to escape from VAWG, she may be unwilling to seek help because she is afraid of a racist response, that service providers will base their responses on particular cultural, ethnic or religious stereotypes.

Abused BAME women are often subject to intersectional discrimination when inequality based on gender, race, caste, class and/or poverty overlaps and thus multiplies.

Some may also face additional forms of discrimination relating to insecure immigration status for non-UK nationals and – for some communities – sociocultural practices that sustain, and sometimes even permit, male dominance secured through violence against women and girls (VAWG). This situation is compounded by a reduction in or loss of VAWG services, particularly specialist provision for BAME survivors¹¹.

BAME women can also be faced with a language barrier when attempting to access information and services. We will investigate, with our partner agencies, tailored multi-lingual awareness raising campaigns through influential community and faith leaders as well as provisions for BAME women.

The rise of fundamentalism or ultra conservative forces (in all religions and internationally) has increased pressure on BAME women to conform to traditional gender roles and strengthened justifications for the use of violence to chasten transgressors.

These last few years there has been concerns from the voluntary sector regarding certain communities' diversion away from criminal and civil justice remedies through informal elder mediation or formal religious arbitration within BAME communities. This fails to provide state protection for women and girls suffering from gender-based violence such as domestic abuse and forced marriage¹². Their concern also centres on increasing state accommodation of religionist demands, who argue, for instance, that religious arbitration tribunal rulings can be upheld under the Arbitration Act 1996. More generally, another example includes schools and colleges practicing sex segregation on the grounds of faith, which were recently subject to a successful legal challenge led by black feminists.

¹⁰ Siddiqui and Patel, 2008

¹¹ Imkaan, 2015

¹² Patel and Siddiqui, 2010

Homeless

We work closely with our provider St Mungo's to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. Our homelessness team is aware that often very disadvantaged female sleep rough during their escape from abuse and aims to collaborate with women's sector organisations to provide joint initiatives and specialist gender-specific services to address their particular needs. Our rough sleeping team supports women's empowerment to move on from their experience of homelessness and abuse and stay off the streets.

St Mungo's reported that nearly 50% of their female service-users had experienced domestic abuse and 19% had experienced childhood abuse. In the specific case of the City of London, 50% of cases that were heard at MARAC in 2019, were referred in from St Mungo's. Domestic abuse contributed to the homelessness of a third of women in their study. Women that are the most vulnerable and have the most complex needs are at greatest risk of their needs not being met and of sleeping rough¹³. Women sleeping rough also experience domestic abuse in their relationships on the streets.

The links between gender-based violence, mental ill health and substance use, are well documented and for many, the trauma associated with violence is managed by substance use. Despite these clear links, safe accommodation is often difficult to access. Few local authority areas have the services in place that respond collectively to women's multiple disadvantage, experience of violence and homelessness¹⁴.

Over the last two years there has been an increase in the numbers of women with multiple disadvantage presenting to services for homelessness, and those women experienced a wide range of VAWG.

We aim to collaborate with the East London Housing Partnership and the Pan London Women's Outreach Network brings together organisations working with homeless women to collaborate on homelessness prevention and respond to women's different experiences of sleeping rough and routes into and out of homelessness.¹⁵

¹³ <https://www.mungos.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rebuilding-Shattered-Lives-Update-Nov-2015-1.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://avaproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Case-by-Case-London-refuge-provision-Full-Report.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/feb/27/women%E2%80%99s-hidden-homelessness>

6. Our priorities

The many facets of VAWG and its diverse, far reaching consequences mean it can only be tackled by multi-agency partnership work thus collaboration and partnership work is embedded within our three priorities. Indeed, a community-based, holistic approach can only be achieved by involving stakeholders, service users, partners and the voluntary sector. This will include delivering campaigns and raising awareness of VAWG across the City of London as an integral part of the three priorities.

6.1 Priority 1 : Prevention, early identification and early intervention

The first step to fulfil our vision that “The Square Mile is free from VAWG and is a place that is safe for everyone to live, work and learn”, is prevention.

I would lead the sentence with prevention as it is the subject of the sentence. So, Prevention is the first step...

Undeniably, if we can ameliorate awareness of and prevent VAWG or identify occurrences early and intervene, it will improve outcomes for individuals, stop violence escalating to critical levels, while reducing the pressures on services long term.

With the above paragraph, there is a lot you think could be achieved. So it may be better to break it up so people don't get lost. For example: Improved awareness of VAWG and training in identification will:

- Increase chances of intervening at an earlier stage
- Stop violence escalating to critical levels
- Reduce pressure on services, and
- Improve outcomes for individuals.

Additionally, prevention of VAWG will improve the square mile's population's resilience, well-being, ward off adverse childhood experiences, mental illness and homelessness in the years to come.

What we will do:

Awareness

- We will raise awareness of VAWG (its occurrences, how to prevent it, how to spot the signs and what services are available to people at risk as well as survivors), through Internal and external communication campaigns. We will deliver joint campaigns with partner agencies such as the City of London Police and neighbouring London boroughs.
- Communication plans will be applicable and accessible to our audiences. For example: awareness campaigns will be multi-lingual and there will be signposting to specialised campaigns/information for our vulnerable cohorts.

- We will strengthen awareness partnership work within the City Corporation's various services (community safety, children and community services, housing, employment, licensing) as well as with external agencies (hotels, licensed premises) along with community and voluntary sector specialist providers to allow clarity on messages, adopting a consistent ethos that all VAWG is unacceptable in the City of London. Every point of interaction with a victim is an opportunity for prevention and intervention and should not be missed.
- We will aim to promote the Women's Safety Charter and encourage licensed venues to sign up. We will deliver a joint campaign with Hackney Council to raise awareness of the Charter and promote the joint responsibility of keeping women safe at night.
- We will support the following agencies to have information publicly available on VAWG support services: GPs, hospitals, schools, children's centres, family planning/ sexual health services and council offices.
- We will challenge those attitudes and behaviour towards women and men which can lead to violence and abuse and act early to prevent harm. We will do this through effective, sustainable and robust commissioning and training to deliver resources and campaigns to challenge and change attitudes.
- Promote nationally acclaimed campaigns such as *This is Abuse* to build awareness.
- We will raise awareness and promote the 16 Days of Activism Against VAWG.
- We will engage with religious leaders to raise awareness in cohorts where VAWG tends to be under-reported.
- We will aim to deliver a campaign working with construction companies to promote support for modern day slavery amongst laborers.

Training and learning

- We will make sure practitioners have the training (comprehensive), tools (Safelives DASH risk assessment) and support they need to identify and respond early before situations of violence occur and/or escalate to crisis point. We will also ensure those practitioners receive feedback on which of their actions are effective and safe or not. We are currently looking at better ways of promoting this training to ensure it reaches as many people as possible.
- We will deliver training around changes to practices including statutory recording of domestic abuse in safeguarding cases.
- We will disseminate learning from the Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Review.

- We will aim for the schools and Tender to work in partnership to deliver training and awareness to school pupils.

There are clear referral pathways and regular contact in place between the City of London schools and the City of London Police Public Protection Unit.

The staff at the schools are regularly offered training around how to spot the signs of domestic abuse and Female Genital Mutilation, pupils have sessions on healthy relationships (as proposed in the Relationship, Education, relationships and sex education, and health education: government response 2019).

We will offer a guide for schools around risk assessment, as there have been differences in professional judgement around 'risk' between schools and the police.

- We will aim to achieve accreditation for the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and ensure that all staff working on our housing estates are trained to know how to spot the signs and respond to domestic abuse and VAWG. By achieving DAHA the City Corporation would be a local authority that is recognised as being committed to protecting and supporting residents from domestic abuse.
- We will offer training to licensed venues signed up to the Safety Thirst Scheme, working with external agencies such as Galop to ensure they are able to recognise and respond to incidents of VAWG especially around our most vulnerable cohorts such as children and young people, LGBTQI+.
- We will support the safeguarding partnerships by implementing statutory guidance released under the 2014 care act: delivering training around changes to practice including statutory recording of domestic abuse in safeguarding cases; conducting review of the links between domestic abuse, elder abuse and carers (either as victims or perpetrators), high risk domestic abuse and domestic homicide in order to improve local practice.
- We will deliver training and promotion on the Safelives DASH risk assessment and the MARAC to ensure agencies understand how to refer, when to refer and the purpose of the MARAC. SafeLives estimate that the CoL should have around 10 cases per year heard at the MARAC. In 2018 the City of London MARAC heard 5 cases.
- We will ensure frontline staff are trained on the needs of older survivors, including pensions and benefits available to them.

Early intervention

- Our Early Help team will work with the families to raise awareness of VAWG, support the entire family and prevent harm.
- We will aim to increase early interventions to people experiencing VAWG through mainstream and specialist support services by encouraging the creation of early identification and response system within its various departments and partner agencies.

Community development

- We will support residents, workers and employers especially non-violent/abusive members, to be educated about, take responsibility and proactively respond if they encounter abuse and to know how to help family, friends, colleagues and neighbours through ongoing communication campaigns, community engagement, prevention and awareness raising. The aim is that victims, residents, students, visitors and workers should be confident that they live/work in a community that has zero tolerance for VAWG and they know how to get help should they experience any problem.
- We will ensure residents know that their local authority take a lead in challenging the community to tackle VAWG, that their local authority is committed to ensuring healthy, safe, equal and violence free relationships.
- We will ask businesses and various agencies, through the use of surveys, events and networks how we can help them support their service users/employees and offer them tailored training and information. We will ensure these organisations have a clear protocol around how they identify and respond to staff members at risk of domestic abuse by promoting and translating the 'Spotting the Signs' toolkit.
- We will encourage support agencies in the City of London to adopt protocols regarding joined-up responses and inter-agency information sharing.

6.2 Priority 2 : Support of victims of VAWG

Once an occurrence of VAWG has taken place our services must be easily accessed by the victim, taking into account any inequity to access that may be prevalent in some population groups.

The victim should feel believed, listened to, respected and not blamed; the victim must be informed on how to engage with services, what will happen next; get expert independent advice and feel supported short and long term.

Awareness of available services and easy access to support services matter because needs can remain unreported and unaddressed. When people are unable to access care and support, it has serious negative impact on people's lives (e.g., alcohol and drug problems, loss of employment, debt, housing problems and homelessness), families and communities (e.g. adverse childhood experiences, family breakdown, crime or anti-social behaviour) and other services. It also matters because some groups in our diverse communities are under-represented in our services, including children and young people, LGBTQI+ people and older adults.

The response to an instance of VAWG must be coordinated, holistic, consistent, confidential, safe, personalised.

A referral pathway was created for all professionals with a step-by-step process detailing how people will be supported if a disclosure of domestic abuse is made. It was then circulated to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Forum in order for it to be embedded in standard practice.

Being clear on the demographics of our communities and working in partnership with service providers with whom the City Corporation has trusted relationships will enable a consistent delivery of services.

What we will do:

Services

- We will aim to provide high quality services which are easily accessible, flexible, and available in a timely way to a wide range of survivors.
- We will monitor performance of both mainstream and specialist services regularly to ensure the provisions available remain efficient and useful by collecting various data (number of referrals and their origins, outcomes, cost, etc).
- We will aim to regularly review the City Corporation website to ensure that the resources available on the website are kept up to date and relevant.
- We will ensure the City Corporation's Domestic Abuse Policy is regularly reviewed and updated.
- We will aim to increase access to services and provisions through outreach workers and community navigators.
- We will ensure that victims and survivors can influence service development (service user satisfaction surveys) through regular feedback on services and consultation.
- We will utilise a cross sector recognised specialist quality standards and outcomes framework to ensure quality provision with commissioning, for example the DAHA.
- We will ensure access to counselling services through partner agencies such as Iranian Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO).
- We have made a commitment to tackling child sexual exploitation and modern-day slavery and will continue to provide and commission services to fight these issues.
- We will support women and girls at risk from gangs.
- We will continue to provide a robust police response and access to criminal justice remedies.
- We will continue to provide access to refuge provision as identified by survivors as essential in making the decision to leave an abusive relationship.

- We will aim to ensure the safety of those who stay in their own homes by providing security measures.
- We will promote the 24 hours Victim Support help line.

Partnership

- We will aim to support survivors of VAWG in the short and long term in their health, social and economic wellbeing and treated with equality regardless of their life choices, culture, age, gender, sexuality, immigration status, etc by liaising with various partner agencies.
- We will endeavour to work with primary care networks, the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other CCGs, to promote a consistent response in GP practices via the use of the Identification Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) model around domestic violence and abuse.
- We will increase access locations, strengthen working relationships and improve referral pathways between providers, partners and agencies.
- We will promote coordinated need led and risk led provisions and services (safety but also housing, advocacy, employment, benefit support, child custody, criminal cases, civil justice measures, resettlement, therapeutic, group work, peer mentoring) and provide joined up specialist and bespoke responses.
- We will work collaboratively with St Mungo's and other voluntary sector services to aim to ensure that staff are trained to respond to disclosures and incidents of VAWG, and staff know where to refer or signpost individuals for support.
- The City of London Police will work with the voluntary sector to encourage sex workers to report crime and seek assistance.
- We will aim to ensure the City of London Police and VAWG support services are working in partnership to signpost and refer people that are not City of London residents and affected by VAWG for appropriate support.
- We will work in partnership with the City of London Police Cybercrime team to ensure people who are experiencing online abuse are receiving advice from the police and being referred for specialist support.
- We will develop a multi-agency approach that reflects the varying need of individuals involved with sex work.
- We will aim to work with specialist human trafficking services to provide support to survivors and avoid repeat victimisation.

- We will provide survivors of VAWG with advocacy support throughout the Criminal Justice process, from the early stages of reporting the incident through to support at court.
- We will ensure the safety of victims at court including a separate waiting area and they are referred to the Witness Service when giving evidence in court.
- We will aim to invest in resources to help prevent women and girls entering prostitution, to reduce harm to them whilst in it and to help them to be able to exit and have viable alternatives
- We will aim to criminalise those who profit from individuals selling sex – pimps, managers, exploiters as well as challenge the demand for prostitution by penalising the buyers of prostitution

Vulnerable cohorts

- We will ensure continued provision to survivors with a range of needs/ complex needs (women-only support group, accommodation and services, face to face multi-lingual support, LGBTQI+-only space, SEND specialist services, counselling services).
- We will ensure that children and young people witnessing/victims of abuse are supported, and that they understand the meaning of VAWG, healthy relationships and consent.
- We will link in with CityAdvice to ensure people working within the City of London are supported.
- We will engage the 'hidden workforce' in support and services available to workers in the City of London.
- We will identify and support high-risk domestic abuse cases and provide support to those who need it most.
- We will ensure that men and boys who have been affected by any of the issues under VAWG are supported.

6.3 Priority 3: Taking action against perpetrators and rehabilitating them

We take an assertive approach towards the prosecution of perpetrators. Survivors of abuse must know that their perpetrators are held responsible and to account for their actions.

However, perpetrators should be given the chance to rehabilitate. Making sure that those who cause harm understand the impacts and implications on victims, their children and themselves is an

important step forward in ending violence. Rehabilitation gives perpetrators the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour and make positive change.

Perpetrators need to access help to sustainably change their behaviour, this is particularly important for those women who do not want to end the relationship.

What we will do:

Response

- We will aim to improve the arrest conviction rate of perpetrators.
- We will provide interventions to manage risks posed by perpetrators and support them to change their behaviour.
- We will work closely with the City of London Police, the national probation service and community rehabilitation company and the East London specialist domestic violence court to provide an effective criminal justice response and pursue perpetrators.
- We will work directly with perpetrators of abuse as needed to reduce the risk they pose as well as protecting victims and survivors. This will complement working with perpetrators within children and young people services, the national probation service and the community rehabilitation company.
- We will encourage young people to join the City of London cadet's if they have experienced or perpetrated VAWG.
- We will commission perpetrator programmes for perpetrators involved with City Corporation's Social Care. We will refer perpetrators who do not meet the threshold for a programme to be commissioned to a specialist perpetrator service such as Respect.
- We will work to engage with the British Transport Police, the night-time economy and City of London Police to hold perpetrators to account and counter sexual harassment on transport, on our streets - in public as much as private spaces.
- We will ensure that systems such as MARAC and MAPPA, already in place to deal with high risk victims, will continue to work in partnership to ensure effective responses to these victims and perpetrators.
- We will explore the option of perpetrator programmes for women with external specialist agencies such as Respect.
- We will investigate utilising the CoL police lifetime offender management unit for prolific VAWG offenders in the City of London.

- We will ensure partnership working through the police and Crown Prosecution Service response, specialist domestic violence courts, sanctions and interventions.
- We will support victims and signpost them for legal advice when applying for civil injunctions and ensure breaches are notified to the police.
- We will lobby criminal courts to order the use of electronic tagging as a way to monitor behaviour and movements of perpetrators.
- We will encourage The City of London Police to keep delivering training and awareness workshops to their staff on Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Domestic Violence Notice Orders to increase the use of these orders.
- We will continue to encourage victimless prosecutions, in cases where victims are unable or unwilling to pursue the perpetrators themselves, to make the Square Mile safer for everyone.
- We will work with Criminal Justice Courts to explore ways that vulnerable victims can give evidence at a secure location away from the court.
- We will aim to create a collaboration between the police and the NHS to support perpetrators and victims, by addressing mental health support needs.
- We will encourage the City of London Police to supply body worn cameras to frontline officers who might respond to VAWG incidents.

Campaign and training

- We will deliver awareness raising campaigns aimed at perpetrators to encourage them to take responsibility for their actions, rather than putting responsibility to stay safe on the victim.
- Reduce perpetrator risk by intervening to address their behaviour through prevention and rehabilitation workshops as well as training of offenders.
- Services will be identified to support people and specialist training will be offered to service providers who work with perpetrators in order to be skilled and confident to engage and champion the positive outcomes of perpetrator programmes.
- We will ensure the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police are working in partnership using the stalking threat assessment centre.
- We will aim to create pathways between the Civil and Family Courts and the City of London Police to ensure that protection orders are being monitored.

- We will aim to challenge the lack of separate waiting rooms in Civil and Family Courts for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. We will also aim to work with Civil and Family Courts to ensure Judges are trained on domestic abuse and VAWG.
- We are supporting the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill in its aim to pilot the use of polygraph testing as a condition for high risk offenders' release.

7. Development, oversight and accountability

We have developed this strategy collaboratively by consulting the City of London Police, voluntary sector organisations and members of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence forum (DASV).

It is our expectation that this strategy and the accompanying Action Plan will be naturalised within the planning and strategic processes of partner organisations as appropriate, to inform and drive delivery of objectives for which they have a lead responsibility.

This strategy is supported by an action plan with SMART performance indicators. The Action Plan will be overseen and managed by the DASV forum as well as the Safer City partnership's (SCP) senior officers and partner representatives. Both SCP and DVSA oversee the work of partnerships and provide a robust governance structure that will hold agencies accountable for their contributions to the work outlined.

Each action in the action plan will be assigned either a DASV or SCP lead. Reporting on the Action Plan will occur quarterly at SCP and DASV meetings.

Progress will be reported annually to the City Corporation's Health and Wellbeing Board and to other key committees, including the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership. A short and accessible annual progress report will be produced and published on our websites, as well as disseminated through our service user networks. The Action Plan will also align targets to our Corporate Performance Framework.

New opportunities and challenges will emerge with time and change but we committed to an evidence-based approach that incorporates new data and research findings, learns from experience and through engagement, and adapts to new circumstances. The Safer City Partnership and the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence forum will therefore oversee a bi-annual review of the strategy's action plan, alongside progress reporting.

Appendix 1: Definitions

For more information on the City Corporation's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, please contact the Community Safety Team at safercity@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Violence against women and Girls - Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. This includes physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence, economic abuse and sexual exploitation. VAWG can take place at home, work or in public places such as on the street or public transport.¹⁶

Domestic abuse – is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between anyone over 16 years who are or have been intimately involved or are family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Rape – is when someone has penetrative sex with another person against their will. This includes vaginal, anal and oral penetration.

Sexual violence/abuse/assault- is any sort of sexual contact and behaviour that is unwanted, causing pain, fear, intimidation or humiliation.

Sexual harassment – is a type of behaviour which is 'meant to' or has the 'effect of either' violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual exploitation – is the abuse of a vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes including profiting financially, socially or politically from the exploitation of another.

¹⁶ United Nations definition

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) - is the partial or total removal of the female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. This is illegal under UK law.

Trafficking – selling or trading human beings for sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, servitude or removal of organs.

Forced Marriage - is when someone faces physical pressure to marry (e.g: threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g: if you're made to feel like you're bringing shame on your family). Forced marriage can also include taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place) or marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not).¹⁷ It should be noted that there is a difference between Forced marriage and arranged marriage.

Honour Based Violence – is any act of violence, predominantly against women and girls, which is committed by family or community member/s in order to defend their perceived honour. It is normally collectively planned and carried out by the victim's family, sometimes with the involvement of the wider community.¹⁸

Stalking - is a particular behaviour consisting of the repeated "following" and harassment of another person. It includes a series of actions that, although when isolated may seem normal and constitute legal behaviour, become menacing causing anxiety or fear of harm. For example, constantly waiting for someone outside their place of work.

Online Abuse- Online abuse covers a wide range of behaviours and technologies. Abuse happens when someone acts in a way that causes harm and distress to others. People have the right to expect the same standards of behaviour online as those expected in face-to-face interactions.

Breast Ironing – Breast ironing "is the pounding and massaging of pubescent girls' breasts using hard or heated objects, to try to make them stop developing or disappear".

¹⁷ Forced Marriage Unit, www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage

¹⁸ Iranian & Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, www.ikwro.org.uk