



Kingston Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2025-2030

Co-produced with the Kingston Survivors Forum



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Foreword

BY SURVIVORS

We believe that it is paramount for all women and girls in our borough to feel safe. We are proud to have been part of shaping and forming this strategy as we want to see a kinder, more compassionate community for all, with a strong, trauma informed approach in action. We are passionate about breaking the shame, stigma, isolation and hopelessness around abuse and seeing women have easy and effective access to whatever support they need. This requires a coordinated response between all services (statutory, frontline, healthcare, charities, faith communities, education and businesses) with the survivors' voice being heard loud and clear. We truly believe that a difference can be made going forward.

As trauma survivors, we have often felt powerless, unheard or misunderstood, but being part of this strategy brings improvement and changes from the difficulties and barriers we have experienced. The Survivors Forums have been a space where we have always felt listened to and valued, where our experiences and views have been respected. We have felt empowered when we have seen our participation make a positive difference to the services future women experiencing abuse and trauma will receive. We are all hugely grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of this vital work.



'The Survivors Forum is one of the most inspiring initiatives I have been involved in. Listening to and learning from the voices of courageous women brings such value and richness to the work we at Voices of Hope do. For the forum to be part of the co-produced strategy fundamentally communicates dignity, empowerment and hope - we're so grateful to Kingston Council's VAWG team for the opportunity.'

Sarah Clay, CEO Voices of Hope



'I'm really thankful to have been part of this process because to be heard and understood is so validating when our voices have so often been dismissed or even ridiculed. To see our input utilised to make changes in our community almost neutralises the sting of my struggles. I am part of a team, my voice is important, I can make a difference.'

Sara



'Being respected and valued for what I have to contribute where in the past my voice was silenced and shamed has built my self-esteem. It's been emotional, healing, and I am honoured to be part of this strategy; it's history in the making and I feel proud as we strive for greater equality. It's huge. Our blood, sweat and tears have been poured into this. But also lots of love and caring. It takes a level of trust to bare our souls, relieve our pain, and it is becoming fuel for change.'

Sara



'I dreamt of making real change like this, it often kept me going to see the bigger picture and I am DOING IT. It's hard to describe how that feels. Its success, a triumph, a victory over abuses of power.'



'Being in the Survivors Forum and part of the co-produced strategy has increased my confidence to speak out and to recognise what I can teach others. It has reduced the shame I used to feel about the degrading things that had happened to me and caused trauma to me.'

Maddie



'Many women often find themselves shouldering the burden of responsibilities, such as caring for their children, managing their finances and running a household, working, dealing with family dynamics and navigating multiple statutory services (e.g., social services, housing, healthcare professionals) - especially when relocating to a new area. I am truly grateful to have been involved in this process, and to have a voice in creating positive change. It is empowering to hear the perspectives of other women who share a common vision for progress. I am looking forward to seeing what comes next.'

Tracy



'Having suffered myself, I want to see a comprehensive service that shows we will be the change we want to see. It's through talking to girls and women that we shape what they require and feel safe. Being a part of this change makes my own hardships of fighting for accommodation, benefits and safety worth it. Being silent and it being a taboo subject is no longer sustainable.'

Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an umbrella term used to cover a wide range of abuse against women and girls such as domestic homicide, domestic abuse, sexual assault, abuse experienced as a child, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and harassment in work and public life. While men and boys also suffer from many of these forms of abuse, they disproportionately affect women.

Below are some key definitions of types of abuse but it is not an exhaustive list.

01. Domestic abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of **controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse** between those aged 16 or over who are or have been **intimate partners or family members** regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.

- This definition includes issues such as so called 'honour based violence' (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage (FM).
- Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily.

02. Sexual abuse

Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (world health organisation).

03. Sexual exploitation

Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (world health organisation).

04. Stalking and harassment

Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as 'A pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim.'

Stalking can consist of any type of behaviour such as regularly sending flowers or gifts, making unwanted or malicious communication, damaging property and physical or sexual assault. If the behaviour is persistent and clearly unwanted, causing you fear, distress or anxiety then it is stalking and you should not have to live with it.

05. Harmful practices

Harmful practices are persistent practices and behaviours that are grounded on discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age and other grounds as well as multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination that often involve violence and cause physical and/or psychological harm or suffering (The National FGM Centre).

Harmful practices can include:

- female genital cutting/mutilation
- so called 'honour' based violence and 'honour' killings
- early, child and forced marriage
- abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession (including child abuse)
- breast ironing also known as breast flattening

Impact:

When thinking about the consequences of violence against women and girls, it is important to consider the impact (mental, emotional, physical, social and financial) on the individual survivor and their family and children. There is rarely just one victim – it affects whole families, and whole communities. We also know the most vulnerable in society often find it hardest to access support (Women's Aid)

The impact of domestic abuse on the victim and on children is severe and long-lasting (Safelives). This is why tackling VAWG is a priority for Kingston.

To successfully embed the strategy a coordinated community response is crucial for tackling violence against women and girls because it involves various stakeholders working together, including residents, communities, businesses, statutory agencies and other stakeholders. This approach ensures that victims receive comprehensive support, perpetrators are held accountable, and preventive measures are implemented effectively. Additionally, it promotes collaboration, information sharing, and a unified effort to address the root causes of violence and create lasting change in society. It ensures that we have a long-term holistic support plan to work towards.

Current picture of need and service map

Domestic abuse

In Kingston, we know that domestic abuse continues to be the most prevalent form of VAWG. Rates of police reported domestic abuse remain at a constant level since 2020/2021. It is understood that there is considerable underreporting of domestic abuse incidents. The impact of domestic abuse on the survivor, family and society is significant, in terms of the mental, physical, social and financial costs. Domestic abuse accounts for a quarter of all crime harm in the borough. One in five women have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives, meaning that approximately 16,000 women in Kingston are likely to experience some form of domestic abuse at least once in their lives.



Sexual offences

Sexual offences continue to be a concern in Kingston with reported offences being 13% higher than the previous year. 84% of victims and survivors of sexual offences in Kingston are women and 25% of victims and survivors who reported to the police had a disability. ONS Crime Survey 2022 estimates that 15% of women aged 16+ yrs experienced some form of sexual harassment in past year. Experiences of sexual harassment were highest in women aged 16 to 34 years (38%).

There continue to be increasing reports of sexual assaults from the town centre occurring at night over the weekend period. The increase in reporting can also be a positive sign with more victims and survivors feeling confident to report and night time economy venues better equipped (through training and awareness raising) to support victims and survivors of VAWG. However, there is still more that we can do as a partnership to tackle public space VAWG.

True levels of VAWG in the borough are likely to be significantly higher than the data tells us. While the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) has seen a significant increase in victims and survivors impacted by so-called 'honour'-based violence in the last three years, there are still multiple forms of VAWG that are not reflected in our data. A reason why some forms of VAWG may be under-reported is that people may not recognise their experiences as abuse

often because of 'myths' that have been perpetuated over time causing an additional barrier for victims and survivors to access support. Our discussions with practitioners in the borough also indicated there is also a lack of awareness around the different forms of VAWG amongst our local agencies and within our communities which makes it harder for disclosures to be made and support to be offered.

In 2023 our re-commissioning process included the expansion of our local domestic abuse service to offer support to victims and survivors of all forms of VAWG. In addition to this, a number of specialist roles have also been commissioned. Overall, our vision is that the expansion of the service combined with our efforts to raise awareness in the borough will ensure there is specialist and accessible support for victims and survivors VAWG across the borough and at every stage of their journey.

The term Violence Against Women and Girls is one we use because the types of violence and abuse disproportionately impact women and girls. The term can cause concerns about the exclusion of other groups from our response. However, we do know that men, boys and non-binary people can and do experience these forms of violence and abuse. Our strategy and partnership response is for anyone experiencing violence and abuse.

Local services

Kingston Domestic Abuse & VAWG Service

Single point of contact for members of public and professionals. Independent, confidential and non-judgemental support and advocacy for those impacted by gender based violence and domestic abuse. Includes the Early Intervention Worker role supporting girls aged 13 - 21 and specialist workers supporting victim survivors from minority ethnic groups and those with housing needs.

One Stop Shop

A provision where members of the public are able to walk in without appointment for support and advice around domestic abuse.

Own My Life Empowerment Group

12 week rolling programme focusing on awareness raising, safety planning and empowerment for victims and survivors

Kingston Women's Hub

holistic longer term support that includes peer mentoring, self-care sessions, empowerment groups, community choir and coffee mornings and a survivors forum.

Survivors Forums

part of Kingston Women's Hub, ensuring the voices of survivors are heard loud and clear and are incorporated into system and culture change within the local partnership.

Victim Support IDVA

provide advocacy and support to high risk victims of domestic abuse. The referral pathway is through the police and MARAC.

Victim Support Hospital IDVA

co-located within Kingston hospital and offering advocacy and support to victims of domestic abuse. Referral pathway through A&E and midwifery teams.

Families First Team, AfC

Offering advocacy and support to medium risk victim survivors of domestic abuse and their children. Referral pathway is via AfC teams. Offering work with perpetrators of domestic abuse where children are open to AfC.

Enhanced Support Team

offering support to victims of domestic abuse with additional barriers such as mental health, substance use and insecure immigration status. Co-located within Substance Use and Mental Health trust locations.

Co-Production and the Survivors Forum

Central to the development of this strategy is the collaborative effort between the council and the survivors' forum. Engaging in co-production with survivors of VAWG ensures that policies, interventions, and local programs are shaped by their lived experiences, needs, and perspectives. Victims and survivors possess invaluable insights that can enhance the effectiveness and empowerment of our local response.

Co-production serves as a powerful tool to debunk the misconception that individuals with lived experiences lack the capability to engage on par with professionals. Here in Kingston, we firmly advocate for the involvement of those with lived experiences shaping our local services and strategies to combat Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

In 2022, Voices of Hope and the Women's Hub in collaboration with the Council supported the establishment of the Kingston Survivors Forum, uniting an inspiring cohort of women to collaborate with the council's VAWG team, driving systemic change. Since its inception, the forum has actively participated in various initiatives, including:

- Developing a Trauma-Informed Framework for professionals
- Shaping trauma-informed training for first response police officers
- Supporting the council to develop the specifications of our newly commissioned VAWG service
- Regular feedback for our practitioners forum and strategic board on good practice and where improvement is needed
- Sharing their experiences through the Pearl Project

In 2023, two survivors' forum sessions were created (daytime and evening) to work with the council on the development of our local VAWG strategy. The Survivors Forum met on a number of occasions over the year to:

- Review strategies from across London to identify good practice
- Agree on co-produced objectives to be included in the strategy
- Developed each co-produced objective to identify key commitments
- Discussion on what the strategy should look like and how we will roll it out

The co-production of this strategy also included feedback from a number of stakeholders and community members in Kingston including:

- One to One Stakeholder Interviews with local partners as part of the Serious Violence Duty Consultation (Housing, Police, Achieving for Children, Adult Social Care, London Fire Brigade, Kingston Wellbeing Service, South West London St. George's Mental Health Trust, ICB, Kingston University, local VAWG Services)
- Focus groups with the Youth Council, Achieving for Children, Practitioners Forum, DA & VAWG Delivery Board, Faith Leaders, Connect North Korea, Tamil Women's Support Group, Kingston Council Women's Network and Staff and the Town Centre and Surbiton Pubwatch)



The survivors forum agreed that the co-produced Ending VAWG strategy should be concise and easy to read with tangible objectives and commitments that can be taken forward into an action plan. The Survivors Forum has also collaborated on the design and will continue to have oversight of our action plan moving forward.

The forum felt strongly about key overarching themes of the strategy with a priority that all victims and survivors of VAWG in Kingston are able to live a life free of violence and abuse and that as a borough we have a zero tolerance approach to VAWG. The forum's views helped shape the four objectives in this strategy which include:

- All victims and survivors of VAWG have access to specialist support with agencies having a trauma-informed response
- Children and Young People have access to appropriate support and we address the root causes of VAWG by working with our young people and practitioners in education and youth settings
- Those who cause harm are held accountable and professionals are provided with the skills and confidence to support perpetrators of VAWG
- VAWG is everyone's business is our local campaign to ensure communities, residents, professionals and local businesses work together to deliver a coordinated community response.

Co-produced objective 1: Support to survivors

Why was this objective chosen?

We have chosen this as an objective as we are aware that there are many victim survivors of VAWG that we do not reach and that there are multiple barriers to accessing support. It is very important that we work towards reducing these barriers and raising awareness of the support services that Kingston has to offer. We also recognise that our work with diverse communities is not yet meeting the needs of Kingston and it is a primary focus moving forward.

We recognise that survivors need a range of support at different stages of their journey ensuring there is the right support at the right time. We also recognise that we need to ensure long-term holistic support alongside the crisis response as the long-term support is vital for a survivors journey to recovery.



Kingston is a diverse borough and a 'one size fits all' approach to supporting victims and survivors will not be effective. We want to ensure there are services that can deliver long term change by empowering victims and survivors and have a trauma-informed approach that looks at individual needs.

Survivors we spoke to said:

- There is a gap in specific support for sexual violence survivors outside of Domestic abuse and those impacted by VAWG in public spaces
- Difficulties in accessing safe accommodation is a repeated theme
- Need for clear referral pathways and understanding of what services are available and what they offer
- Agencies need to have better processes in place for information sharing so survivors aren't having to repeat their experiences multiple times
- The right response is also important. They want to be believed and supported. They don't want to have to prove themselves
- Support should be made available sooner, not when survivors reach crisis

Professionals we spoke to said:

- We need to map and build our local service offer around harmful practices
- We need sustainable and long-term therapeutic support alongside our crisis response
- There are a number of specialist services locally for victims and survivors which all partners should be aware of so appropriate referrals can be made
- Our local specialist support services need a space to be able to share information and updates and to create a seamless referral pathway for victims and survivors
- There needs to be continued access to specialist VAWG training for the partnership
- Models such as the stand-alone Harmful Practices MARACs are innovative ideas that support local professionals to upskill their knowledge on different types of VAWG

Data has shown us that:

- Intimate partner violence is by far the most prevalent form of violence against women - 1 in 3 women, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner
- 97% of women aged 18-24 have been sexually harassed, while 80% of women of all ages said they had experienced sexual harassment in public spaces
- 1200 victims and survivors of VAWG were supported through our specialist services last year
- An average of 8 - 10 victims and survivors of domestic abuse accessed the Kingston One Stop Shop every week
- 240 victims and survivors were discussed at the Kingston MARAC last year with a 40% increase in referrals on a 3 year average
- 38 Standalone Harmful practice MARAC's have been held since the start of our pilot in Nov 2021 with a significant overall increase in referrals for victims and survivors from minority ethnic communities

Feedback from our partners and survivors has suggested that the recent expansion of our VAWG offer has been welcomed. We have worked hard to identify and respond to gaps in service provision when it has been highlighted. We understand that raising awareness of VAWG and the support on offer needs to be ongoing.



What are we already doing?

- Raising awareness through comms and leaflet/poster drop to local businesses to raise awareness
- Working closely with community groups and voluntary sector services to ensure that they are aware of local referral pathways
- Created a VAWG Practitioners forum for front-line professionals to be able to come together to discuss good practice and barriers that need to be addressed
- Expanded the co-location offer with specialist roles embedded in local community locations
- Working closely to sustain the Women's Hub offer providing long-term holistic support alongside our crisis support
- Creation of a Community Outreach working group focusing on prevention work in relation to our ethnic minority communities in Kingston
- An effective MARAC response including good practice around Stand Alone Harmful Practices MARACs which has been nationally recognised

Commitments

1. Commit to our duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to develop local pathways and provide safe and specialist accommodation to victim survivors of domestic abuse
2. Work towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation for our council housing teams
3. Ensure the newly commissioned VAWG Service is promoted to highlight expansion of support from Domestic Abuse to all forms of VAWG
4. Create and embed a referral pathway between our local night time economy venues, safer neighbourhood team and voluntary sector services and the Kingston VAWG service to ensure victims of VAWG in public spaces have access to specialist support
5. Ensure that all of our awareness raising materials are culturally appropriate and are accessible in a wide range of languages
6. Enhance the community response to longer term holistic support and enable sustainability and further funding opportunities for the Kingston Women's Hub
7. Develop a better understanding of the impact of serious violence and exploitation on women and girls and ensure appropriate support is available, including mental health support
8. Continuing to learn from people with lived experience and use the learning to drive what we do, how we do it and how we measure success.
9. We will ensure that services understand the impact of trauma and commit to specialist trauma-informed training for their staff.
10. We will put emphasis on the use of language and promote our language guidance campaign to continue a zero tolerance approach to victim blaming language.
11. We will regularly review quantitative and qualitative data across the partnership (VAWG services, police, social care, health, housing etc.) to identify gaps which the partnership can improve to ensure that all victim survivors have support that is accessible and meets their individual needs

Co-produced objective 2: Children and young people

Why was this objective chosen?

What we already know from our survivor and partnership feedback is that VAWG has a huge impact on our children and young people, it extends widely in the family. This can affect children and young people's mental health, education and relationships with others to name a few. Children are victims in their own right if they are in a household where domestic abuse is taking place as part of the DA Act 2021. This can cause trauma to a child which has future impacts. We recognise that more preventative work needs to be done at a younger age to raise awareness of types of VAWG our children and young people are experiencing. Those that support children and young people have told us that as more of the world moves online this can create a platform for further hidden abuse. Supporting children and young people but also raising awareness with those that work with them is key.



Surveys conducted by the Kingston and Richmond Youth Council with boys and girls identified a lack of clear and concise education on sexual harassment in schools, the culture and society that 'allows' and normalises sexual harassment and the barriers to accessing support

Survivors and young people we spoke to said:

- Speaking about it in schools is not enough, more needs to be done to actively offer support and raise awareness about services available for those impacted by VAWG
- Very few young people were aware of local independent support services for those experiencing VAWG
- We need to be talking to boys about healthy relationships and respect as much as we talk to girls about support available to victims and survivors of VAWG
- We need to equip boys to become allies and intervene and support girls who are experiencing VAWG, we need more bystander training in schools
- We need to do more to make spaces outside the home safer for young people such as schools, open spaces, public transport hubs and online
- A lot of professionals focus on the non-abusive parents' role in safeguarding their children without being trauma-informed
- There isn't any dedicated support available for children experiencing domestic abuse in the household and this should be an integral part of our local support offer
- Lack of accessibility to timely counselling options for children and young people

Professionals we spoke to said:

- There is a significant prevalence of domestic abuse in the household where we are supporting children and young people at risk of exploitation
- We are seeing a pattern of young people who are experiencing abuse from parents and then how this impacts their relationships in a negative way
- There needs to be more awareness raising in schools working with young people around healthy relationships and better education for parents
- Most of the work is aimed at the non-abusive parent and more needs to be done to keep perpetrators accountable
- Lack of understanding of how trauma impacts parenting and support for this

Data has shown us that:

- 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of abuse (Safelives 2017)
- On average, 442 children are discussed at the Kingston MARAC every year
- 65% of MARAC cases had children in the household
- 50% of young girls do not feel safe on public transport in the evening in Kingston
- 50% of young girls out of a total of 800 surveyed felt pressured into sending intimate pictures of themselves online (KRYC Girls Survey 2022)
- 83% of young people have not reported to the school that they have experienced sexual harassment (KRYC Girls Survey 2022)
- Almost 50% of boys said they had not been taught of ways to support a friend who has experienced sexual harassment as part of their school curriculum (KRCY Boys survey 2023)

What are we already doing?

- Commissioning a specialist Early Intervention Worker role who works with girls aged 11 - 25 impacted by all forms of gender based violence with co-locations within AfC and Kingston College
- A dedicated sexual harassment working group within the Kingston and Richmond Youth Council (who have recently worked on a masculinity podcast engaging young people in conversations around the root causes and behaviours that allow violence against women to occur)
- A pilot schools project as part of Safer Streets tackling misogyny in schools
- Commissioning outreach work in the town centre supporting young people impacted by serious violence, including VAWG
- Creation of the Vulnerable Adolescent Support into Adulthood (VASA) Panel supporting young people impacted by high harm including girls at risk of sexual exploitation
- Comprehensive training package offered to schools and multi-agency practitioners on sexual harassment, Harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual abuse and exploitation

Commitments

1. We will actively seek funding and work creatively across the partnership to identify specialist support to child victims of domestic abuse
2. We will continue to work with children and young people including those from the Children in Care Council and Youth Council to co-produce interventions and ensure the voices of young people are incorporated and influence a consistent approach to tackling VAWG
3. We will continue the early intervention and prevention work with our schools, colleges and universities to tackle root causes of VAWG and increased awareness raising
4. Achieving for Children will work with the Community Safety team to provide training around supporting the non-abusive parents in a trauma-informed way.
5. We will work to improve the response to girls and young women impacted by serious violence including different forms of exploitation and serious harm
6. We will work to improve our response to tackling VAWG in public spaces through a contextual safeguarding lens, identifying those spaces outside the family home where children and young people can experience harm
7. We will work closely to support children and young people with neurodiversity needs and Specialist Education Needs at an earlier stage to prevent harm and abuse



Co-produced objective 3: Holding perpetrators to account

Why was this objective chosen?

Holding perpetrators to account is crucial to ending violence against women and girls. Our strategy recognises that accountability is a fundamental aspect as it addresses the root causes of violence, supports survivors and works towards preventing future incidents. Accountability ensures that perpetrators face consequences for their actions, providing a sense of justice to survivors. By holding perpetrators to account, it sends a clear message as a borough that VAWG is unacceptable, contributing to changing societal attitudes and preventing future violence.

What we already know from our partnership and survivor feedback is that holding perpetrators to account can be a challenge. Including having the resource to support those who are causing harm in behaviour change. This can cause the risk to move somewhere else if the intervention isn't there. Our aim is to have an appropriate partnership approach to responding to perpetrators of VAWG



Survivors we spoke to said:

- The responsibility to safeguard children and take actions always relies on the non-abusive parent with the perpetrator not held responsible for their actions
- Victim blaming language can have a significant impact on victims and survivors and we need to stop blaming those who experience abuse
- Professionals need to understand that manipulation of services is part of the pattern of behaviour used to further abuse towards victims and survivors
- Navigating family courts can be a challenge and court staff have no training around the dynamics of domestic abuse and risks associated with perpetrators

Professionals we spoke to said:

- Focus groups identified that we don't support the perpetrators who cause harm and instead focus and put all the responsibility on the non-abusive parent
- There needs to be a better training package for practitioners on the risk posed by perpetrators and signs of how they may manipulate professionals
- We need to do better to break the repeat cycle of violence that puts women and children at harm from perpetrators
- Professionals said multi-agency working needs to be better to tackle complex needs of perpetrators including substance use, mental health and lack of housing
- Achieving for Children Social Workers felt that there needs to be a more joined up approach on working with perpetrators and this should not just be their responsibility
- Professionals said we need to look at various pots of grant funding and collectively work towards a whole family approach where we support both parents and the children
- Professionals identified that public space VAWG is a concern in Kingston Town Centre due to our significant night time economy and a partnership approach is needed to tackle perpetrators

Data has shown us that:

- 70% of high risk perpetrators had one or more complex needs/vulnerabilities (neurodevelopmental, drug and alcohol, mental health, caring responsibilities, disability etc.)
- Mental Health is one of the most prevalent unmet perpetrator needs
- 24% of MARAC perpetrators were repeat domestic abuse offenders
- Repeat perpetrator rates double for adult child to parent violence
- There has been a 148% increase in filial abuse (to/from parents/grandparents)
- 36% of cases heard at the MARAC are for repeat victims
- Almost 50% of all sexual offences occurred in the Town Centre
- Two thirds of suspects of sexual offences in the Town Centre were not previously known to their victims, suggesting both suspects and victims are visiting the night time economy venues



What are we already doing?

- A Safer Streets Campaign to highlight a zero tolerance approach to violence against women and girls including a male allyship strand
- Ongoing development of a Night Time Economy Strategy that will include recommendations around tackling public space VAWG
- Achieving for Children perpetrator programme that includes multi-agency support, 1 to 1 and group work with perpetrators of domestic abuse
- A mechanism by which repeat MARAC victims of domestic abuse are identified through overnight crime data and offered support within 24-48 hours of an incident occurring
- Robust information between multiple risk management panels where perpetrators of VAWG are discussed to ensure the risk towards victims and survivors is minimised
- Having dedicated referral criteria for the MARAC for Adult Child to Parent Abuse and Harmful Practices

Commitments

1. We will work towards a partnership approach to disrupt perpetration of abuse and to utilise all enforcement options available to reduce the risk to victims and survivors.
2. We will work to identify opportunities for behaviour change and support for perpetrators of domestic abuse.
3. We will continue to ensure there is appropriate and effective information sharing across our relevant risk management panels to ensure a joint-up approach in tackling perpetrators and safeguarding victim survivors.
4. We will incorporate relevant specialist training around working with perpetrators into our VAWG training plan to ensure there is increased confidence amongst professionals to hold perpetrators accountable.
5. Closely work with the Police, Business Improvement District, Voluntary Sector Organisations and local businesses to improve our proactive response to tackling VAWG in the Kingston Borough.
6. We will complete a deep-dive on the adult child to parent violence data and trends to identify more appropriate support and specialist support to perpetrators and victims.
7. We will work towards improved data collection around perpetrators of all forms of VAWG to develop a local picture around needs.
8. We will build a better relationship with family courts and improve their response to supporting victims and survivors of VAWG and holding perpetrators to account.

Co-produced objective 4: VAWG is everyone's business

Why was this objective chosen?

VAWG should be everyone's business because it is a human rights issue that affects all of society. By addressing it collectively, we can create safer communities, promote gender equality, and ensure that everyone can live a life free from fear and violence.

Residents, communities, charities, businesses, statutory agencies and other stakeholders should be working in an equal partnership to provide a coordinated response to preventing and tackling all forms of VAWG. We want to ensure that practitioners in services across the partnership and community are able to recognise abuse, understand the impact of trauma, understand all forms of VAWG, have a better understanding and dealing with risk, provide an appropriate response to disclosures and are fully aware of the local service provision to support victims and survivors and perpetrators.

In Kingston, there has been a great deal of work carried out around ensuring VAWG is everyone's business, however more can be done to improve our response.

In 2022 and 2023, a dedicated post was commissioned through Safer Streets Funding to engage with faith based leaders and organisations around tackling VAWG. This project has enabled a space for discussion around what more leaders within faith communities can do to ensure there are safe spaces for disclosures and mechanisms to hold perpetrators to account.



Kingston's VAWG partnership has also been focusing a great deal on engaging local businesses. Local businesses should be involved in tackling VAWG because they play a key role in shaping the communities where they operate. By actively supporting initiatives to address VAWG, businesses can contribute to creating safer environments for their employers, customers, and the wider community. Their involvement can strengthen the community response and help create a culture of zero tolerance towards VAWG.

Survivors identified this as a key theme for our strategy as they felt victims and survivors of VAWG should be able to access support as and when they need it and to ensure that we are working towards removing the stigma of VAWG in our local communities.

Survivors we spoke to said:

- There is still fear of judgement and stigma we need to tackle in our local communities to enable victims and survivors to feel supported
- Agencies need to be better about sharing information so victims and survivors don't have to keep repeating their experiences and re-living the trauma
- There is still a lot of work to be done to break down barriers around speaking about VAWG in our faith based and ethnically diverse communities in Kingston
- We need to ensure that service provision information is shared in different formats/ languages to ensure accessibility
- The Survivors Forum and Pearl Network are incredible examples of how we are breaking down the barriers and empowering women to be able to talk about their experiences
- Our Survivors Forum needs representation from a wider and diverse group of women to better understand the needs of our ethnically diverse communities

Professionals we spoke to said:

- Training and discussions with night time economy venues is an integral part of our local work to ensure women and girls are safe in their premises
- We need to be highlighting the coordinated community response model more locally so professionals can understand that tackling VAWG is everyone's responsibility
- There needs to be a space where practitioners can meet and brainstorm together and bring successes and challenges
- Our focus as practitioners remains on Domestic Abuse, there needs to be a better understanding of the different forms of VAWG and how this can impact victims and survivors

**Data has shown us that:**

- On average it takes three years for those experiencing domestic abuse in England and Wales to access support from a service (Safelives, 2018)
- Victims experience abuse for significantly lower periods if they were referred to a domestic abuse service by the police or health services, than if they had referred themselves - 2.1 years vs 4.9 years (Safelives, 2018)
- 59% of young people do not feel safe in Kingston in the evenings/night
- A majority of night time economy venues indicated in a recent survey that on average they receive training around safeguarding matters every 6-12 months and would like this to be more frequent
- While we have seen a 40% increase in duplicate referrals to the MARAC (indicating multiple agencies appropriately identifying risk), a majority of our referrals are still coming from the Police and VAWG service

What are we already doing?

- Engaging with night time economy venues through the Safer Streets Business campaign including an offer of training and support
- Developed a VAWG business tool-kit for employers to be able to support their staff impacted by VAWG
- Funded a Minority Communities Outreach Worker within the Women's Hub and implemented a Community Outreach working group
- Commissioned a Night Time Economy Strategy which includes a review of safety in public spaces
- Developed a clear communication and information sharing pathway between our Strategic Board, Practitioners Forum and Survivors Forum under a coordinated community response
- Expansion of our specialist and co-located roles now based within GP surgeries, Drug & Alcohol service, Kingston College, Achieving for Children, Kingston Hospital and the Mental Health Trust
- The Kingston Safe Zone has been in place since September 2021 supporting those who may become vulnerable while accessing the night time economy. A total of 1700 contacts were made and just under 300 vulnerable people were supported
- Some local night time economy venues have taken significant measures to safeguard customers by engaging in regular training, creating safe spaces for disclosures, having a zero tolerance approach to tackling perpetrators and supporting the Kingston Safe Zone
- Developed and rolled out a range of specialist training including bystander training with a total of 500 professionals and community members trained in the last year

Commitments

1. We will lead on delivering a coordinated community response which includes collaboration between our survivors forum, practitioners forum and strategic delivery board and relevant sub-groups.
2. Continue to work within our night time economy venues to tackle VAWG through prevention, education and partnership working.
3. Develop an action plan linked to the Night Time Economy Strategy and align ongoing work in relation to tackling VAWG in public spaces with the VAWG strategy.
4. Closely work with the Police, Business Improvement District, Voluntary Sector Organisations and local businesses to improve our proactive response to tackling VAWG in the Kingston Town Centre.
5. Continue to develop our White Ribbon Action Plan to ensure local businesses and communities collaborate on programmes to end male violence against women and girls.
6. Continue to strengthen the survivors forum network and build on our services being led by local needs.
7. We will support the running of the Pearl Project bi-annually to raise awareness, engage public, business sector, VCSE and wider partnership to continue to break the stigma against speaking out about VAWG
8. Continue to raise awareness around VAWG and build on the existing work with our minority ethnic communities.
9. Continue our work in relation to awareness raising and collaboration with local faith based communities to ensure safe spaces for disclosure and support.
10. We will ensure that multi-agency information sharing is effective and appropriate to safeguard victim survivors and their children.
11. We will ensure services are accessible through awareness raising, strong partnership links, co-location of specialist roles within services and a comprehensive training package for professionals.
12. Practitioners across the partnership will understand the various forms of VAWG and its links with serious youth violence, contextual harm and modern slavery and are able to provide a safe and supportive response.
13. We will conduct Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) and link in with Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Serious Adult Reviews (where there are links to VAWG) to identify and share learning and create relevant action plans to ensure systemic and long-term change.
14. Agencies across the partnership will review their own policies and practices to identify areas of improvement and incorporate examples of best practice for responding to VAWG.



Governance and delivery

Our strategy sets out our vision for ending violence against women and girls. This will be taken forward by a collaborative approach involving multiple partners, council officers, our residents, survivors forum, young people, practitioners, stakeholders, local businesses and our communities.

Our action plan to take the themed commitments forward will also be co-produced to ensure that we are working towards our vision in a coordinated way. The emphasis of the action plan will be on our coordinated community response and the role we can all play in ending VAWG. The action plan will also build on what we have been delivering across the borough which has been highlighted in each of our themed sections.

The Safer Kingston Partnership will have governance of the Ending VAWG Strategy and Delivery Plan while key partnership groups locally will be responsible for delivery of the themes set out in our strategy. The Safer Kingston Partnership Plan 2024 - 2029 is the overarching Plan under which tackling Violence Against Women and Girls is a key priority area. The development of a VAWG strategy is a commitment under the SKP Plan.

Kingston DA & VAWG Delivery Board

will be responsible for delivering the themes and commitments in our strategy and will review the action plan on a regular basis to ensure our vision that has been set out to end Violence Against Women and Girls is being delivered. The Strategic Board will also support any barriers that are faced with the action plan implementation and on-going work.

Practitioners Forum

includes front-line practitioners from across the partnership who will have insight into the operational implementation of our action plan and will be able to drive the work as well as feedback through the Practitioners Forum

Survivors Forum

has been an integral part of the production of this strategy and will continue to work closely with strategic leads and practitioners to have oversight of the action plan. The forum will also support us to hear the voices of our diverse communities to ensure that our action plan takes into consideration their experiences

The strategy objectives and commitments will be reviewed by all 3 partnership panels on an annual basis to ensure they are still relevant and meet our local needs.



Additional strategic boards will also have oversight of the strategy and delivery plans as our themes and commitments include shared priorities that will require a coordinated approach to move forward. These include:

- The Kingston Partnership Board (incorporating the Health and Wellbeing Board)
- Kingston's Safeguarding Adults Board
- Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Children's Partnership



Our plan aligns with the statutory priorities and aspirations outlined in London's Police and Crime Plan 2022-25. It also aligns with Kingston's Council Plan 2023-27, which provides a vision for working with partners and communities to ensure the borough is Greener, Fairer, Safer, Together. It reflects the ambition outlined in Inclusive Kingston 2021-25 to reduce inequality and establish Kingston as an area with equality of opportunity, an area of fairness and an area that is inclusive. Kingston is a Marmot borough and we will embed the Marmot principles from the Marmot Review, Fair Society, Healthy Lives into our work to reduce inequality and improve health outcomes. This guarantees a collective approach to achieving the best possible outcomes for our communities.

If you have difficulty reading this document or would like it in a different format, please call our helpline on 020 8547 5000 or ask someone to call on your behalf.



Kingston Ending VAWG Strategy 2025-2030

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