

TRI BOROUGH VAWG STRATEGY

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



FORWARD

Why are we creating a young person's version of the VAWG strategy?

We are putting together this version because we believe that children and young people should be able to access and understand information that has an impact on them. This is for a number of reasons:

- 1) We want young people to be able to hold us accountable when we promise to do something
- 2) Young people can help to improve our plans
- 3) We want children and young people to be able to benefit from and engage in services fully

But who are we?

We are the VAWG partnership. We are social workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, youth workers, police officers, probation workers and many more. We are the professionals committing to being trained to know how to work with people who have been abused and we are committed to bringing an end to that abuse.

You are included in that **we**.

As a child or young person, you can help us to better help you by:

- Being aware of the issues and risks of abuse
- Knowing where to get help for yourself
- Knowing where to get help for friends

If you or a friend is in immediate danger, call 999.

KEY WORDS

	Key Words	What They Mean
	Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	<p>The term “Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)” is a phrase which covers a range of crimes which are mostly, but not always, experienced by women and girls. Women and girls are more likely to experience these issues because they are female.</p> <p>These include the following:</p> <p>Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence/ Rape/ Sexual Harassment, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Honour based violence, Faith based abuse, Stalking, Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, Prostitution</p>
	Domestic violence and abuse¹	<p>Domestic abuse happens between people who are in a relationship, or who have been in a relationship in the past, or who are part of a family.</p> <p>It is when one person hurts the other person again and again. Often the person who is being abused is very frightened of the other person.</p> <p>It can include:</p> <p>Physical abuse (hitting, punching, kicking, using weapons)</p> <p>Sexual violence (forcing or pressuring someone to have sex (rape), unwanted sexual activity, touching or groping someone or making them watch pornography)</p> <p>Financial abuse (taking or controlling money, not letting someone work)</p> <p>Emotional abuse (Making someone feel bad or scared, stalking, blackmailing, constantly checking up on someone, threats)</p> <p>Social abuse (Isolation, controlling who someone can and can’t see)</p>
	Sexual violence including rape	<p>Sexual abuse and violence is when someone is forced or persuaded to take part in sex or sexual activities that they do not want to do.</p> <p>This includes forcing or pressuring someone to have sex (rape), any unwanted sexual activity, touching or groping someone or making them watch pornography.</p> <p>It doesn’t have to have physical contact and it can happen online.</p>

¹ Definition supported by the Mayor of London leaflet (2013) “Unsafe Relationships, supporting your friends”

	<p>Sexual exploitation</p>	<p>Sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse.</p> <p>It is when a young person is given something (for example food, money, drugs or alcohol, cigarettes, affection or gifts) in exchange for having sexual contact with someone.</p> <p>It can happen online; for example someone asks a young person to post sexual pictures on the internet, or send them by phone.</p> <p>Often the person who is doing the abuse has power over the young person for a range of reasons, including because they are older, or stronger, or because they have more money.</p>
	<p>Sexual harassment (Sexual bullying)</p>	<p>Sexual harassment can involve comments, gestures, actions, or attention that is intended to hurt, offend, or intimidate another person. With sexual harassment, the focus is on things like a person's appearance, body parts, sexual orientation, or sexual activity.</p> <p>Sexual harassment may be verbal (like making comments about someone), but it doesn't have to be spoken. Bullies may use technology to harass someone sexually (like sending inappropriate text messages, pictures, or videos). Sometimes sexual harassment can even get physical when someone tries to kiss or touch someone that does not want to be touched².</p>
	<p>Stalking³</p>	<p>Stalking is unwanted and constant attention by a person (or a group of people) towards another person.</p> <p>It can include following a person, watching or spying on them or forcing contact with them through letters, phone calls or the internet.</p> <p>This can make a person feel like they have little freedom.</p>
	<p>'Honour'-based violence⁴</p>	<p>Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of the family or community.</p> <p>It is often linked to family members or friends who believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that goes against the traditional beliefs of their culture.</p>

² Teenshealth website. URL: http://kidshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/guys/harassment.html

³ This definition was supported by definitions offered by MOPAC and the CPS:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Pan-London%20Strategy%20on%20Violence%20against%20Women%20and%20Girls%202013_17.pdf>

<http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/s_to_u/stalking_and_harassment/#a02b>

⁴ This definition was taken from: <http://safe.met.police.uk/crimes_of_honour/get_the_facts.html>

	Forced marriage	<p>Forced marriage is when one or both partners do not consent to the marriage and they are pressurised or forced to agree.</p> <p>This can include physical, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.</p>
	Consent	<p>This means when you agree to something.</p> <p>To truly agree to do something your decision must;</p> <p>Be voluntary- you should not be pressured into it by the other person or friends and family.</p> <p>Be informed- you should know exactly what you are agreeing to- including the possible good and bad things that may happen.</p> <p>Have capacity- you must be able to fully understand what you are agreeing to (for example be old enough to understand).</p>
	Faith-based abuse⁵	<p>This is child abuse linked to faith or belief. Children/young people are then abused, hurt or killed because of this belief.</p>
	Female genital mutilation⁶ (FGM)	<p>Female genital mutilation (FGM) is when part or all of the female private parts are removed without a medical reason. It is sometimes called female circumcision, cutting or sunna.</p> <p>Sometimes people might say that FGM is part of their faith or their traditional beliefs, but FGM is a crime.</p>
	Trafficking	<p>This is when people are forced or lied to and then moved from one area to another (it could be to a different area of town, or it could be to a different country). Once the person has been moved then they are often exploited (sometimes sexually), forced to work or sold to other people.</p>
	Prostitution	<p>This is when adults (18yrs +) have sex or sexual activity with someone for money.</p>

⁵ This definition was taken from: <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Pan-London%20Strategy%20on%20Violence%20against%20Women%20and%20Girls%202013_17.pdf>

⁶ This definition was taken from: <<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>>

THE VAWG PARTNERSHIP

What is the VAWG partnership?

Any professional in Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster who is working with women and children affected by VAWG a buses can be part of the VAWG partnership. Since this includes a third of all women in our area, this means all professionals should be joining in this agenda. This includes social workers, doctors and nurses, teachers and youth workers, the police and probation and many more. By working in the VAWG partnership area they are committing to be trained in how to work with people who have been abused, and are committed to working to end that abuse.

You, as a young person are also in the VAWG partnership, by making yourself aware of the issues and risks of abuse and knowing where to get help for yourself and your friends if you are abused.

61% of the young people we asked knew someone who had experienced a VAWG abuse, and 25% had experienced it themselves

This work is overseen by the VAWG partnership board, who work to make sure there are services available for victims of abuse and that everyone is working together in a safe and effective way.

This is important because there are different issues that women and girls might like support with. This includes:

- **Domestic Violence and Abuse**
- **Sexual Violence**
- **Sexual harassment**
- **Stalking**
- **'Honour'-based violence**
- **Forced marriage**
- **Faith-based abuse**
- **Female genital mutilation or cutting**
- **Prostitution and trafficking**

What is the VAWG Partnership doing?

The VAWG partnership has asked lots of local children, young people and adults what they would need to get help, feel safe, and recover from abuse. They have used this feedback to help design services and resources.

The Partnership realises that there is no one way to work with everybody. They know that everyone is different and will have different needs. They asked people aged 12-15 years what they would specifically like, so that services can make young people feel included and listened to.

There are 7 priority areas of work which the VAWG Partnership are going to focus on from 2015-2018.

These are: Access, Response, Community, Practitioners, Children and Young People, Perpetrators, Justice and Protection.

Involvement of children and young people

The VAWG Partnership want to make sure children and young people's voices are heard and their opinions are valued.

The VAWG Partnership has consulted with young people through online surveys and focus groups. Now they know what young people feel is important they will try to use this to shape VAWG services.

If you have any comments, questions or complaints about the work that the VAWG partnership are doing then let us know by emailing TBVAWG@rbkc.gov.uk.

PRIORITY 1: RESPONSE

Response

This was the most important issue for the young people the VAWG partnership spoke to.

“If you get a bad response then the victim may devalue their problems and continue having the abuser abuse them” (Female, 17yrs)

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure

- **You get a good response when you do go somewhere for help.**

Once a disclosure has been made children/young people wanted reassurance that they have done the right thing in telling someone and they will be made safer as a result.

- **You are believed and listened to by the helper**

For young people, being believed was the most important feature of a good response; *“Response is really important. If the helper doesn't believe you then teenagers will not want to get anymore help” (Female, 17yrs).*

How is the VAWG Partnership going to do this?

The VAWG Partnership is going to make sure that all staff who may meet young people who have been abused are offered training so they know the best way to respond to them.

This includes

- **To be believed:** The importance of a believing response should be included in all VAWG/ safeguarding training for professionals, as part of wider training on dealing with disclosures of abuse.
- **Clear explanations of what will happen next:** Professionals, when delivering education and awareness sessions with children/young people need to explain the process of disclosure to justice and acknowledge children/young people's fears of not being believed in light of recent press.
- **Reassuring and validating messages in publicity:** VAWG publicity materials to include reassuring and clear messages about what will happen after disclosure.

PRIORITY 2: JUSTICE AND PROTECTION



Justice and Protection

“The feeling of not being believed stops a lot of people from reporting crimes like these. Having a justice system that understands this is important (Female, 22yrs)”.

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure:

- The police act quickly when they are needed to protect people who are abused.
- People who work in the police and courts know about different types of abuse and how they affect people.

The Children/young people told us the police is one of the first places they would go for help, however they were worried that reporting VAWG issues wouldn't be taken seriously.

How is the VAWG Partnership going to do this?

- **Reassurance that the Police will take VAWG issues seriously:** Children/young people have said that one of the first places they would go for help is the Police, however they are also concerned that they will not be taken seriously. Outreach and publicity to reassure children/young people would be beneficial.
- **For the Police to give out more in depth information about VAWG on call-outs:** Children/young people felt that the information slip with helpline information should have more info about how to know if you are in an abusive relationship (including emotional abuse).
- **Training for Youth Court Staff on VAWG issues:** Across the shared services area there are Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC's) for adults (18 years+) who bring a domestic violence case to court. It would be beneficial to explore whether there is a need for specialist training on VAWG issues in youth courts.

PRIORITY 3: ACCESS



Access

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure

- You have easily available local services

“Young people should know that there is always some where they can go to for help no matter what time or day it is. This would make them feel very safe” (Female, 17yrs).

Young people told us that they would go to their Doctors Surgery or the Police, the internet or a helpline for initial support with a VAWG issue.

- You know where to go for help and support at any time of the day and night

80% of the young people we asked said they would use the internet to get information about VAWG issues.

- **Local Online Information:** Children/young people would like to see a VAWG online information portal, designed with them in mind, giving accessible and local information 24/7 with links to social media.
- **Available Services:** We discovered a high number of children/young people who had personal experience of VAWG issues (61%). Thus it is imperative that there are services available to

support them, not only as direct victims, but also as children survivors who are exposed to domestic abuse at home.

- **Support services to create publicity materials aimed specifically at the 12-25 year old age group**
- **Provision of a discreet and consistent place to display information and support advice:** Children/young people want to have consistent access to information and have suggested long standing VAWG notice boards in corridors of schools/colleges/public buildings. They have also noted the benefit of information in private and gender segregated spaces such as toilets.
- **Ensure that local professionals are trained to deal with VAWG issues and how they specifically affect young people.** Including the local police, GP surgery staff, schools and youth workers- these are the people young people identified as the people they would seek help from first.

PRIORITY 4: PRACTITIONERS



Practitioners

“When negative stories are heard by abuse victims about the ways in which professionals respond to others it can unfortunately deter them from getting help” (Female, 17yrs)

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure:

- Professionals who help people recognise problems as early as possible, to try and stop things getting worse
- Professionals who help people work together- for example my school and my doctor- so that you get help quicker and easier

How is the VAWG Partnership going to do this?

- Not time limited: CYP want to work with a project until they feel ready to move on which may be longer than the time period offered to adult service users.
- Professional and supported front-line workers: The most important feature of a support worker is for them to offer a professional and pragmatic response. This response needs to take into account that disclosure is not a one off event. This needs to be supported by training and also effective and possibly specialist supervision to support staff with their own reactions to disclosures.
- Consistency in support worker: Not to have to keep repeating your story as you get referred between many places.

PRIORITY 5: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Children and Young People

For the young people we asked, learning about VAWG issues was very important. They wanted schools and youth club workers to be trained to know how to help young people who experience abuse and awareness raising sessions to be given to young people.

“Education] is very important as I feel it will raise more awareness and understanding of the subject, rather than it becoming a stigma” (Male, 16yrs).

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure:

- That there is education for young people in schools on these issues.

80% of the young people we asked said they think having lessons on VAWG issues in school is the best way of getting information out to young people

- There is support specifically for young people if these issues happen to them or their family

How is the VAWG Partnership going to do this?

- Make clear Information accessible to children/young people: Organisations who work with VAWG issues will make publicity materials specifically for the 12-25 age group.
- Sessions in schools: on VAWG issues to serve both an identification and prevention function.
- Training for teachers so they are equipped to raise awareness of VAWG issues and can deal effectively with a disclosure.

PRIORITY 6: COMMUNITY



Community

“It is important for people to feel safe within their community and knowing that everyone is looking out for each other creates a safer environment” (Female, 17yrs)

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure

- Community members know how to help friends and neighbours
- The whole community is clear that abuse is never ok

How is the VAWG Partnership going to do this?

- **Publicity campaigns:** Children/young people value campaigns in everyday areas such as on transport are important and feel they have a place alongside the more targeted awareness raising activities as discussed in Section 1.
- **Community Education briefings:** Providing awareness raising sessions to the community could serve to raise awareness and knowledge in a more thorough way than a leaflet or poster campaign could, offering a greater impact on the community.

PRIORITY 7: PERPETRATORS



Perpetrators

'Perpetrators' is a term used to describe the people who carry out the abuse.

"There should be some sort of punishment for what they have done as abuse can damage a young person not only physically but also mentally, however I do believe they should get help to change so they understand what is wrong with what they were doing" (Female, 17yrs)

Abuse is never ok and there is never an excuse for it. To prevent abuse and to protect victims the VAWG Partnership is committed to dealing with perpetrators effectively.

The VAWG Partnership aims to ensure

- That the person who is carrying out abuse is held responsible.
- That the person who is carrying out abuse is offered help to change.

Young people thought this was important:

"I think perpetrators are more likely to try to change and cooperate if they have a chance to get help, they need to be able to change so they don't go on to hurt others" (Female, 22yrs).

How is the VAWG Partnership going to do this?

- **Provision of Perpetrator support services, including for children/young people:** Perpetrators (from 12 years +) should be offered the chance to change through engaging with specialist support locally.
- **Direct publicity to perpetrators:** Advertising services directly to perpetrators to offer them the chance to seek support directly.
- **Sensitivity to the children/young people whose family is separating due to abuse:** Although effective punishment and/or rehabilitation of perpetrators is in the best interest of the whole family it is important to be mindful that from a child's perspective this can be very distressing.

