# Wokingham Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2023 - 2026

Foreword by Councillor Sarah Kerr, Wokingham Borough Council Executive Member for Climate Change and Resident Services and Susan Parsonage, Wokingham Borough Council Chief Executive and Chair of the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership - To be added

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# 1. Introduction

The Wokingham Community Safety Partnership (WCSP), of which Wokingham Borough Council is a key partner, is determined to STOP Violence against Women and Girls in all its forms, and to help achieve this a long-term strategic approach is being taken.

Consultation with the community and the WCSP has identified six key priorities and these will underpin the essential work necessary in achieving our shared vision.

1) Putting the victim/survivor at the centre of service design and delivery;

2) Taking a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning;

3) Having a clear focus on perpetrators and holding them to account;

4) Safeguarding and supporting individuals and victims at every point with a strong emphasis on early identification and help;

5) Raising local awareness of the issues and involve, engage, and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions.

6) Changing inappropriate attitudes and behaviours of men and boys.

This strategy takes an integrated approach to help deliver the cultural and behavioural shift that is needed to change attitudes to women and girls. The strategy does not seek to demonise men and boys, the vast majority of whom are respectful and rightly treat women and girls as equals. There are however men and boys who engage in violence and abuse at all levels towards women and girls simply because of their gender, and this strategy is aimed at targeting and stopping such behaviour through awareness, prevention, tackling and bringing perpetrators to account, and supporting and keeping victims safe.

It is further recognised that men and boys are also affected by crimes classified as VAWG and this was articulated by several respondents to the community safety survey carried out in April 2023.

VAWG is a global problem that takes place in local communities, often unseen and unreported. To effectively tackle VAWG within the Wokingham Borough area, we need our own strategy and the full engagement and support of a wide range of stakeholders from the public, private, and voluntary sectors if we are to ensure that women and girls can live free from the fear of violence and other crimes.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act that received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022 places new duties on a range of agencies to work collaboratively to prepare a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence including sexual offences and domestic abuse.

Strategies relating to domestic abuse and serious violent crime have already been produced by the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership, in collaboration with a

wide range of partner organisations. Whilst domestic abuse is one element of VAWG, this strategy reflects the need to ensure there is a clear focus on tackling the full range of crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls.

Crimes of violence against women and girls include rape and other sexual offences. Stalking, domestic abuse, 'honour-based' abuse (including forced marriage and 'honour' killings), 'revenge porn', 'up-skirting' and many others are increasing nationally which is unacceptable, and measures to reverse this trend and tackle the crimes robustly must be a high priority.

Through its work on domestic abuse and serious violence and exploitation, the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership recognises the wider context of VAWG and how elements of it sit within a range of workstreams. It is for that reason that a focused strategy has been written specifically for VAWG.

## 2. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) defined

VAWG describes a range of violent and abusive acts and behaviours which are disproportionately directed against women and girls. It can take several forms including physical, sexual, psychological, or economic.

The United Nations definition of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), defines VAWG as: *"Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."*

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the "Istanbul Convention"), defines VAWG as: *"a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"* (Article 3).

VAWG takes place in communities across the UK and can happen within current or previous relationships, in families, with friends, colleagues, people in positions of power and strangers. The violence and abuse can take place in familiar locations, often behind closed doors, including homes, workplaces, leisure facilities and outdoor locations including streets, open spaces and on public transport. This is not an exhaustive list but serves to highlight why women and girls often feel vulnerable and scared if safe places are not available to them.

The abuse is not always in person. Some forms of violence, abuse and coercive behaviour take place in the virtual world of the internet and social media. This could include internet stalking, porn revenge, sexual harassment, bullying or trafficking.

Violence against women and girls describes violent and oppressive patterns of behaviour and practises, which may seek to achieve power and control over women and girls. It impacts on the physical safety, health and emotional well-being of individuals and can lead to victims taking their own lives and may well impact on families, carers, children and the community as a whole.

Women and girls are targeted because of their gender and examples of the types of violence and abuse made against them includes:

- Sexual violence, including rape, abuse and exploitation
- Sexual harassment and bullying
- Stalking
- Revenge Porn
- Up skirting
- Trafficking
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Crimes committed in the name of 'Honour'

These acts can take place regardless of ethnicity, faith, sexuality or age and whilst these have a disproportionate effect on women and girls, we recognise that men and boys are also victims of violence and abuse. Whilst the focus of this strategy is on VAWG, the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership is committed to providing support for all victims of such abuse regardless of gender.

## 3. The causes of VAWG

Whilst evidence has shown that gender inequality is a key driver of VAWG, there are many other factors including substance use (alcohol and/or drugs), mental ill health, anger issues, growing up in an abusive household, cultural practices, break up of relationships, revenge, jealousy, sexual gratification, and peer pressure.

The Council of Europe has identified a range of factors which lie at the root of the problem including:-

- Sexist views, and the idea that men can have more power over women and children, results in abuse being used to maintain this power. Gender stereotypes reinforce this inequality and creates an acceptance of violence and abuse. The belief that men must be tough, strong, and always in control can result in them exerting control over a partner.

- Although abuse is illegal, sadly we see many victims blamed for the abuse and low sentences for abusers. This results in low reporting and abuse being allowed to continue. For example, rape convictions remain low and have got worse in recent years that could potentially send a message that offenders can evade justice.

- The under-representation of women and minority groups in power and politics means they have fewer opportunities to shape the discussion and to affect changes in policy, or to adopt measures to end VAWG. It is because of the

lobbying by women's groups that, in the UK, rape in marriage became a criminal offence in 1991 and coercive control became a criminal offence in 2015.

There are increasing concerns about how the internet and social media platforms (Twitter, WhatsApp, TikTok etc.) are being used for the promulgation of the ideology around misogyny, incel, inequality and extremism. These platforms are being increasingly used by social media 'influencers' many of whom who have thousands of 'followers' and who are mainly targeting an audience of young men and boys.

Whilst the freedom of speech is an important principle allowing an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction there are concerns that on-line content being posted by individuals and influencers can have a negative impact particularly on impressionable young and vulnerable people that will potentially fuel VAWG and as such freedom of speech does not equate to freedom from consequences.

## 4. Why have we produced a Wokingham VAWG strategy?

The strategy has been designed to provide context and focus around VAWG, including defining what VAWG is, the impact it has on women and girls and society more widely, what is being done to tackle it, and what our priorities and actions are to address these concerns, behaviours and crimes.

VAWG is abhorrent behaviour and should not be accepted in any form in our community. The Wokingham Community Safety Partnership will work with stakeholders, producing a clear plan of action to underpin the activity that will drive improvements to root out such violence and abuse.

The Wokingham Community Safety Partnership will ensure that awareness of VAWG is raised among local agencies and the wider community. Perpetrators will be robustly pursued, victims and survivors will be supported and multi-agency approaches will be used to understand and meet the needs of victims, survivors and family members to support a process of recovery and to achieve positive life outcomes.

The effects of being a victim of these crimes can last indefinitely. That can include mental health problems, physical health problems, not doing well at school or work, becoming homeless, children being harmed and not feeling safe.

Women and girls should be safe and feel safe. If they don't, they can't have the same freedoms and chances in life as men and boys.

An important element of tackling VAWG will be hearing from women and girls that have been subjected to violence. From hearing about those experiences, the community safety partnership can better understand what it can do to prevent such violence. A lot can also be learnt from women and girls that, whilst they may not have been victims themselves, are nevertheless fearful of becoming victims. Their views on what measures can be taken to improve not just the risk of actual harm but also helping to improve feelings of safety can therefore be heard.

Tackling VAWG cuts across several of the CSP's workstreams including Domestic Abuse (DA), Serious Violence and Exploitation (SVE) and Substance Misuse. The strategy for tackling Domestic Abuse was adopted in 2021, and the Serious Violence & Exploitation Strategy is expected to be adopted later this year.

## 5. What the government is doing to tackle VAWG

The Government's ambition is to reduce the prevalence of VAWG, recognising that at a local level we all have a key role to play in achieving this aim.

The scale and prevalence of VAWG has been brought to the nation's attention in recent times following a number of tragic cases. Thousands of women and girls have also shared their personal experiences of abuse and harassment online via the 'Everyone's Invited' website and the Government's Call for Evidence on VAWG received more than 180,000 responses.

Reports to helplines increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and predictably extended periods of lockdown fuelled violent and oppressive patterns of behaviour.

In addition to passing the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021, the governments VAWG Strategy is clear about the need to support victims and survivors, prevent offending and strengthen the systems in place to address all forms of VAWG. The expectation is that local strategies and services should include:-

1. Putting the victim/survivor at the centre of service design and delivery;

2. Having a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims and survivors safe;

3. Taking a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG;

4. Being locally led and safeguard individuals at every point;

5. Raising local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.

## 6. What are Thames Valley Police doing to tackle VAWG

Thames Valley Police produced a VAWG strategy (2022/23) that complements the National Police Chief Council (NPCC) strategy recognising the many forms of violence against women and girls. Provide a link to the new TVP VAWG Strategy

## 7. What is being done locally to tackle VAWG

A lot of positive work is already being carried out by the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership and in particular Wokingham Borough Council, Thames Valley Police, Probation Service, schools and colleges, charities and social enterprise and commissioned service providers including Cranstoun.

Cranstoun Wokingham has been commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council to provide a domestic abuse service and a drug and alcohol service. It is important to recognise that whilst domestic abuse is a pillar of VAWG, it doesn't just affect women and girls, but we know that it does disproportionately affect them.

The Cranstoun Domestic Abuse Service brings together an integrated range of programmes and interventions to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Programmes and services are delivered by highly experienced and skilled staff with unique skills in domestic abuse. They are dedicated to delivering the best support possible for the Wokingham community, and do so by providing the following:

- Assessment and support for victims and children
- Assessment and support for perpetrators in order to address and change their behaviours
- Support related to domestic abuse for children and young people in schools
- Targeting services to the most vulnerable and hard to reach groups
- Working with health providers to establish referral pathways
- Outreach victim/survivors case work
- Support to children including both one to one and group support
- Domestic abuse awareness including PSHE support and professional training
- 'Seeking Safety' and 'Freedom' programmes, groups for victims and survivors

There are several charitable and not for profit organisations that are based in and around Wokingham including Kaleidoscopic, SupportU, and Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) and these all provide valuable support to our communities.

Wokingham Borough Council has shown its commitment, through the Wokingham Anti-abuse Charter, to make a difference by raising awareness and changing cultures within the organisation and aim to further achieve that through accreditation to White Ribbon.

White Ribbon is the internationally recognised symbol for ending male violence against women that was founded in Canada in 1989. It encourages everyone, especially men and boys to make the White Ribbon Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women and girls. It's purpose is to remove the requirement of women and girls to change their behaviours to avoid violence against them and put that onus onto eliminating the violence in the first place.

The aforementioned list demonstrates a very real commitment to tackling VAWG but that's not enough. More could and should be done and that is why this strategy has been produced and key partners have agreed to deliver the priorities and actions contained herein.

Importantly, the strategy clearly articulates how VAWG will be tackled and what difference it will make. It also provides the opportunity for the community to take ownership through sharing concerns, views, ideas and suggestions that can feed into the action plan and review process.

## 8. Needs Assessment

We know that violence against women and girls exists within our communities, some of the violence is reported whereas much of the violence remains unreported.

The priorities for eliminating VAWG are shown in the next section and how these priorities will be delivered is detailed in the action plan.

Whilst organisations including Thames Valley Police, probation, service providers, charities etc. all collect data, that will be obtained and analysed to inform a VAWG Needs Assessment. This will help to provide a more detailed understanding of the extent of the problems and in turn that will enable the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership to focus resources in the most effective way.

The Needs Assessment will also help to ensure that where additional funding is required it can be justified on the basis of clear evidence. This is not to suggest that concerns, for which there may be limited tangible evidence, will not be tackled as that would not be the case. It is for example not possible, or indeed desirable, to try and account financially for how safe people feel. It is well known that feelings of safety are very important and can impact mental health, influence the places people visit, the routes they take to travel to and from work and venues, the people they meet, the way they dress and many other considerations.

The Needs Assessment would therefore need to take account of all the facets of VAWG, prioritise them where appropriate, and ensure that we clearly show the desired outcomes.

## 9. The Priorities

The priorities for the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership VAWG Strategy compliment those set out in the National VAWG Strategy, and the strategy produced by Thames Valley Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner:

7) Putting the victim/survivor at the centre of service design and delivery;

8) Taking a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning;

9) Having a clear focus on perpetrators and holding them to account;

10) Safeguarding and supporting individuals and victims at every point with a strong emphasis on early identification and help;

11) Raising local awareness of the issues and involve, engage, and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions.

12) Changing inappropriate attitudes and behaviours of men and boys.

## 10. Turning strategy into action

The success of this VAWG strategy is dependent on the buy-in and support of the entire community. That means that the public sector (local authority, police, probation, education, health services), private sector (businesses, service providers), voluntary sector (charities, not for profit organisations, social enterprises) must work collaboratively to achieve the goal of eliminating violence against women and girls.

For the strategy and action plan to make a real difference it will be important to understand the experiences of victims and survivors. That will help the partnership to provide focussed services to tackle the broad range of offences that make up VAWG and to identify a range of methods to tackle the causes and perpetrators.

## 11. Governance

The Wokingham Community Safety Partnership (WCSP) is responsible for developing and updating this strategy and action plan. The WCSP, through the Performance Management Group (a sub-group of the WCSP), will have responsibility for monitoring and refreshing the strategy and action plan at the appropriate times with input from the Domestic Abuse Board and the Serious Violence & Exploitation Board.

## 12. Conclusion

We know violence against women and girls exists in our community, even if we don't see or experience it personally.

We know that it can seriously affect levels of confidence, independence, health (physical and mental) and life chances.

We know that many women and girls live in fear of violence and abuse and perhaps shrug it off as inevitable and not worth reporting.

We know that in order to address these issues, we need to achieve a cultural shift and change attitudes and behaviours to ensure Wokingham Borough is a safe place for our residents, visitors and commuters that live, work, study and enjoy visiting our towns and countryside.

Activity designed to tackle VAWG already exists within a range of workstreams and strategies, including Domestic Abuse, Serious Violent Crime, Hate Crime, Exploitation and Anti-Social Behaviour, and this work is delivered on a daily basis by a wide range of partner organisations. This is important work but given the seriousness and impact of VAWG, a dedicated strategy with the single aim of STOPPING VAWG is an absolute necessity and will remain as one of our highest priorities.

**Wokingham Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)**

# Action Plan

| Priority 1 | | Action | Lead | Progress |
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| **Put the victim /survivor at the centre of service design and delivery.** | 1.1 | Carry out an accessible and open consultation to identify which services are needed locally to ensure victims (including children and young people) and service providers can share their views and experiences. | | |
| | 1.2 | Set up a forum to ensure victim-survivors can share their views and experiences. | | |
| | 1.3 | Set up a forum to ensure service providers can share the work they are doing. | | |
| | 1.4 | Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to map the demographics and lived experiences of victims locally. | | |
| | 1.5 | Ensure safeguarding processes are effectively linked and involved with VAWG. | | |
| | 1.6 | Ensure there is sufficient local specialist VAWG service provision, including provision designed specifically to support victims from ethnic monitory backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims, victims with learning disabilities, male victims, LGBT victims, migrant victims, children and young people and older victims. | | |
| | 1.7 | Collaborate and have protocols with other areas to allow victim-survivors easy movement from one area to another (including access to housing). | | |
| | 1.8 | Ensure there is an effective process to identify where an individual is faced with multiple barriers (mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependencies, poverty and homelessness). Victims of VAWG are likely to come into contact with other services and systems (such as mental health, substance misuse or homelessness). Review how these services identify and respond to women's experiences of VAWG. | | |

| | 1.9 | Assess and build in access to mental health service provision for victims of all types of VAWG. | | |
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| | 1.10 | Consider specialist interventions that provide a complete and holistic programme of support for healthcare teams to spot the signs of abuse and understand the impact of trauma and simple referral pathways for their patients into specialist advocates and support workers based in VAWG services (in line with NICE guidelines). | | |
| Priority 2 | | Action | Lead | Progress |
| **Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG.** | 2.1 | Ensure that they understand the dynamics of VAWG and the issues that need to be addressed, for example by attending appropriate training delivered by specialist services where possible. | | |
| | 2.2 | Adopt a whole system response to VAWG (for example through a Coordinated Community Response) and draw on learning from other pilots to encourage more joined up working and drive improvements in early intervention and prevention. | | |
| | 2.3 | Understand need and provision in the local area by accessing available data, evidence, service standards and intelligence from local and national specialist providers. Gather input from victims and survivors (including those who have never used a specialist service), local authorities, health, police, education, housing, probation and the VAWG sector (including specialist 'by and for' services who may be able to offer specific expertise on issues affecting local communities). | | |
| | 2.4 | Map local issues from safeguarding, crime, health, housing and specialist VAWG sector data (noting that most cases of VAWG are not reported to statutory agencies). For example, identify 'standard' risk perpetrators and develop early intervention plans to prevent escalation. | | |
| | 2.5 | Understand local crime and other non-criminal justice data about the prevalence of VAWG crimes in the area, as well as national research on the likely prevalence of VAWG crimes. | | |
| | 2.6 | Aim to have trained professionals in hospitals and other health and social care | | |

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| | | settings to identify and support victims and signpost them to services. | | |
| | 2.7 | Have a robust and useful local VAWG disaggregated data set and develop and effective information sharing protocol that adheres to data protection requirements. | | |
| | 2.8 | Have a concise local strategy setting out how the impact of local commissioning will be measured, and what victims and survivors can expect from services, including who is accountable locally, how concerns can be raised and how success will be measured and evaluated. | | |
| | 2.9 | Have a meaningful process for measuring victims' satisfaction, including engaging with local specialist VAWG organisations to understand how they qualitatively and quantitatively measure victims' satisfaction with the services and support they receive. | | |
| | 2.10 | Collaborate and develop shared goals and objectives across local authority and service boundaries to ensure a multi-agency response, recognising that services may be commissioned in partnership or at a regional level. | | |
| **Priority 3** | | Action | Lead | Progress |
| **Have a clear focus on perpetrators and hold them to account.** | 3.1 | Take a proactive and robust approach to perpetrators and provide effective interventions to challenge and change their behaviour. | | |
| | 3.2 | Proactively seek to increase knowledge and understanding of perpetrator behaviours, such that:<br>- The tactics perpetrators use (such as manipulation, minimising, justifying and blaming others and / or external factors for their abuse) are recognised and understood<br>- Frontline staff are able to correctly identify the primary perpetrator and respond appropriately, including in complex cases where a primary aggressor is not easily identifiable<br>- Repeat and escalating offending can be tackled and reduced<br>The family, community and societal context that perpetrators operate within are taken into account. | | |
| | 3.3 | Have a robust needs assessment process, including a forum, to help shape services for perpetrators. | | |
| | 3.4 | Assess and address local specialist provision and consider diverse specialist | | |

| | | provisions where necessary in order to increase the safety of victims | | |
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| | 3.5 | Commission services that meet the local need. In particular, commissioners should consider:<br>- Perpetrators with complex needs, who will come into contact with other services and systems (such as mental health, substance misuse or homelessness services, or services for people with physical and / or learning disabilities)<br>- A multi-agency response, such as: -ensuring frontline professionals are trained to spot signs of abuse and understand the impact of trauma, and know how to recognise it, respond and refer perpetrators to appropriate services and<br>-having specialist workers in children's services teams who can work with diverse groups of perpetrators who pose a risk to children and their parents, as well as children displaying harmful behaviours | | |
| | 3.6 | Ensure interventions are effective, efficient and safe for the victim and their children and meet the minimum Standards set out by the Government. Ideally, perpetrator programmes should also be accredited by Respect where applicable and consider programmes which target the most prolific or highest-harm perpetrators, such as Drive. | | |
| | 3.7 | Be cognisant that programmes that work with perpetrators should form part of longer-term strategies to prevent reoffending and have a clear plan for bringing perpetrators to justice. Interventions that are not ordered by the court are not an alternative to justice. | | |
| **Priority 4** | | Action | Lead | Progress |
| **Be locally-led and safeguard individuals at every point.** | 4.1 | Identify a board of local champions or critical friends (including representatives from smaller specialist organisations from the VAWG sector) to drive challenge and learning on VAWG issues and local progress, identifying safe, accessible and open forums to bring relevant parties together to discuss all forms of VAWG and agree a local approach. | | |
| | 4.2 | Consider pooling local budgets and funding sources and working with local providers to support a commissioning process that encourages consortia bids which recognise and allow for smaller | | |

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| | local specialist providers. Where larger providers are proposing to work with specialist services as sub-contractors, commissioners should take steps to ensure that these services are aware of their inclusion in the bid. Where funding is awarded, they should follow this up to ensure that funding and referrals are reaching specialist services as expected. | | |
| 4.3 | Ensure that larger tenders do not inadvertently favour bids from large providers. For example, tenders where there is a specific request for a single, large provider, insufficient time for consortia/partnership forming, or a small number of high-value lots requiring bidders to be in a strong financial position will limit the ability of local specialist services to bid. These local services will likely have developed as a response to the particular needs of the area and have specialist knowledge and expertise relevant to the communities they serve. | | |
| 4.4 | Assess new multi-agency approaches, including ways of streamlining structures and meeting whilst improving joined up case management. | | |
| 4.5 | Identify practical steps to take to ensure learning from reviews and inspectorate reports are maximised, put into practice and shared across local VAWG partnerships. These could include domestic homicide reviews, serious case reviews, deaths by suicide where the victim had a history of VAWG, HMICFRS reports and other inspectorates' reports on VAWG and child sexual abuse / exploitation. | | |
| 4.6 | Link HMICFRS and other inspectorate reports on police response and local agency action plans into local area strategies, working in partnership with the PCC. For local authorities, this should be linked to the work of the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and be informed by the Safeguarding Adult Board Annual Report and to Clinical Commissioning Groups and the new Integrated Care Systems. | | |
| 4.7 | Make proactive and constructive links with Supporting Families Co-ordinators and local domestic abuse and sexual violence coordinators to build local networks and capacity. | | |
| 4.8 | In family contexts, ensure the safeguarding and support needs of non- | | |

| | | abusive parents alongside children are considered. Commissioners and providers should be sensitive to the harm that abuse can have on non-abusive parent-child relationships and not place responsibility for a perpetrator's abuse on non-abusive parents. | | |
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| | 4.9 | Consider how training provided to local professionals (on all types of VAWG) is evaluated, and how to ensure it is making a difference, increasing learning and awareness of local specialist services and that it builds in the voice of victims. | | |
| | 4.10 | Identify any VAWG initiatives being delivered by the local police force with funding from central Government and whether other VAWG initiatives are being delivered locally by the specialist VAWG sector. This could be, for example, via the National Lottery Community Fund or through other large charitable trusts or grant making organisations. If so, consider whether they can support local initiatives and whether there is learning to be shared. | | |
| **Priority 5** | | Action | Lead | Progress |
| **Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage, and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions.** | 5.1 | Be aware of the statutory relationships, sex and health education curriculum which covers topics such as actively communicating and recognising consent and the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, 'honour' based abuse and FGM. | | |
| | 5.2 | Refer to the Respectful School Communities toolkit for advice on creating a culture in which sexual harassment of all kinds is seen as unacceptable. The Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Safeguarding Guidance provides detailed advice on managing reports of abuse and provides links to specialist advice and support. | | |
| | 5.3 | Identify when this is being taught in schools and what additional activity is happening, including the use of nationally available campaign materials such as Government campaigns or local initiatives that raise awareness of the myths and stereotypes relating to VAWG. Encourage head-teachers and local specialist services to work together on these issues. | | |
| | 5.4 | Reach out to universities and their representative bodies, to discuss their implementation of the Office for Students' | | |

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| | | Statements of Expectations for Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. | | |
| | 5.5 | Identify whether the right local connections are in place so that schools know where to ask for specialist advice, including whether children have the opportunity to talk to someone about their personal experiences. For example, referral pathways to specialist children's domestic abuse or sexual violence services. Consider whether there is access to provision that works with young people who are displaying sexually violent of inappropriate behaviour, and how young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours are being supported to change their behaviour. | | |
| | 5.6 | Map out local VAWG support groups, including specialist 'by and for' organisations supporting victims from ethnic minority backgrounds, male victims, deaf and disabled victims, LGBT+ victims and other marginalised victims and survivors to find out who they reach and what expertise they have so that this can be aligned with the aims. | | |
| | 5.7 | Identify and promote wider touch points in your community, including, for example:<br>- Whether local employers have policies on VAWG, or whether the local Chamber of Commerce can encourage them to do so, or to sign up to the Employers' Initiative for Domestic Abuse<br>- What steps local banks and building societies are taking to identify and support victims of financial and economic abuse, including how this may be part of a wider pattern of abuse, such as controlling or coercive behaviour<br>- What steps local banks and building societies are taking to provide safe disclosure points for vulnerable customers, including disabled or elderly people who may not be able to attend a bank branch in person. This should include signposting customers to appropriate specialist support services<br>- How local deaf and disabled people and people with learning difficulties are able to disclose violence or abuse safely to | | |

| | | professionals, giving consideration to any difficulties they may have in leaving the house or in expressing themselves to receive the help they need. Information should be provided in accessible formats (to match the needs of those receiving it) and should include information describing what abuse is, as some people may not recognise that they are victims and require further support to understand what is happening<br>- Ensuring local health visitors, housing and health and social care professionals are trained to spot all forms of abuse and take the appropriate action<br>- Local initiatives like 'Ask Me' and 'Ask for ANI', Safe Spaces and 'Ask for Angela' and whether they can be part of a strategy to provide safe spaces where people can disclose abuse in the course of daily life to someone who will know what to do<br>- Local authority housing and homelessness policies that include VAWG<br>- Sexual violence bystander programmes, and how they might be used locally to raise awareness and help increase reporting<br>- Opportunities to access the latest technologies and online methods to identify and support victims and survivors and those worried about their own behaviour, noting that online mechanisms are not a substitute for face-to-face provision. | | |
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| **Priority 6** | | Action | Lead | Progress |
| **Change inappropriate attitudes and behaviours of men and boys.** | 6.1 | Work together with schools to support learning and understanding of healthy relationships, abuse and VAWG. This will be based on evidenced best practice that strengthens equality and respect and supports children and young people to increase their understanding, and knowledge of how to report abuse and receive support. | | |
| | 6.2 | Work with local colleges and Universities to develop awareness in respect of healthy relationships and awareness in | | |

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| | | respect of VAWG, that supports understanding, identification, and knowledge as to how to report and receive support. | | |
| | 6.3 | Implement a survivor forum to listen, learn and hear directly from women and girls with lived experiences of VAWG. | | |
| | 6.4 | Develop a comprehensive partnership training offer to educate, inform and empower the partnership in their work to address and support VAWG. Ensure this is co-produced with survivors. | | |
| | 6.5 | Deliver a public-facing and culturally relevant communications campaign, which raise awareness of abuse in all its forms and educate on how to get support from local and national services. | | |
| | 6.6 | Deliver a public-facing and culturally relevant communications campaign, which raise awareness of abuse in all its forms and educate on how to get support from local and national services. | | |
| | 6.7 | Work in partnership with local community organisations to ensure engagement with and, representation from across all communities including those with protected characteristics to ensure all voices are heard to better understand needs, inform service delivery, and ensure survivors know where to get support. | | |
| | 6.8 | Work with local communities and stakeholders to understand the prevalence of harmful practices locally and take practical steps to prevent occurrence, support survivors and address any permissive cultural norms that are prevalent. | | |