

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

# Violence against Women and Girls Strategy

2023 - 2028



**SAFER  
CORNWALL**

Kernow Salwa



Council of the  
ISLES OF SCILLY

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The strategy is set within the context of the national Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2021 and underpinned by what people with lived experience of VAWG have told us in Cornwall.

Our priorities and delivery plan reflect this and were drafted from:

- **Workshops, surveys, interviews and focus groups of professionals and survivors**
- **Case studies**
- **Data and information collected and consolidated in the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Needs Assessment 2021/22**
- **Co-production through the voices of victims with lived experience**
- **The national Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021**
- **Safer Cornwall Community Safety Partnership Strategy**
- **Safer Cornwall Strategic Assessment**
- **Lessons learnt from Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Child Serious Case Reviews.**

## Violence against women and girls is a fundamental human rights violation, which harms the lives of millions internationally.

It is now recognised as a worldwide issue of epidemic proportions. Increased media attention and political discussion in the past few years has even led many to describe this as a ‘pandemic of violence against women’.

We believe that, as with the Covid 19 pandemic, this is a public emergency requiring an urgent response.

Two women are killed every week in the UK at the hands of a man and the majority of these are not reported by the media and are unknown by the general public.

At the same time, rape convictions have fallen to an all-time low despite the number of rapes and sexual assaults of women continuing to grow.

Recent high-profile cases have led to women demanding action to address the fact that women do not feel safe from male violence. These crimes and many more have put a much-needed national focus on the extent and gravity of male violence against women and girls, and our strategy now sets out a holistic approach to making real change and improving safety for women and girls in Cornwall.

This includes actively seeking to reduce crimes, whilst also ensuring survivors are supported towards recovery and that the root causes underpinning VAWG are addressed. We can only create lasting change by challenging entrenched behaviours that may be accepted in day-to-day life but that can escalate to sexual violence and other serious harms to women and girls. Sexism and misogyny are unacceptable in this landscape. Changing societal attitudes and affecting significant cultural change is key and the only way we will end male violence against women and girls.



*Carol Mould*

**Cllr Carol Mould**  
Portfolio holder for  
Neighbourhoods



*Andy Virr*

**Cllr Andy Virr**  
Portfolio holder for  
Adults and Public Health



*Thalia Marrington*

**Cllr Thalia Marrington**  
Chair of cross-party working  
group for tackling VAWG

# Four boards | One vision

Tackling VAWG is everyone's business and can only be achieved when we all work together, which is why this partnership is so important. This strategy brings together the four statutory boards in Cornwall with responsibility for community safety, safeguarding adults, safeguarding children, and health and wellbeing plus all of the organisations represented by these boards. Our shared vision and understanding to end VAWG for tackling male violence against women and girls underpin this strategy and its delivery plan, and all four boards are fully committed to its implementation.

## Safer Cornwall

Safer Cornwall is the community safety partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, responsible for reducing crime and disorder; anti-social behaviour; problem use of drugs and alcohol; and re-offending.

## Safeguarding Adults Board

The SAB is responsible for protecting adults in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly from abuse, reducing the risk of abuse, and supporting people to stop abuse where it happens.

## Our Safeguarding Children's Partnership (OSCP)

OSCP oversees how relevant organisations work together to promote, safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

## Health and Wellbeing Board

The core purpose of the Health and Wellbeing Board is to increase joint working across health and care organisations in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Ensuring everyone knows the role they play in responding to VAWG and how they work with each other is a process known as a Coordinated Community Response (CCR). Our CCR approach will ensure a whole system response to a person. Whole system means a mix of different people, professionals, organisations, services and buildings, which have users as their unifying concern and deliver a range of services in a variety of settings to provide the right care and support.

A victim/survivor is likely to encounter a number of services, organisations and individuals on their journey to safety and recovery. Each of these will hold vital information that can help build a picture of what support is needed so a person does not have to keep repeating their stories and trying but failing to get the help they need. The earlier a person's experience is recognised and the right help provided, the better that outcome will be.



**Simon Mould**  
Chair, Safer Cornwall



**Fiona Field**  
Chair, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Safeguarding Adults Board



**John Clements**  
Chair, Our Safeguarding Children Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



**Cllr Linda Taylor**  
Chair, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Health and Wellbeing Boards

The picture below summarises our whole system response to ending VAWG:

- Eliminate any tolerance to VAWG
- Allocate funding that is focused on ways we can prevent VAWG
- Believe survivors who are not blamed for the abuse suffered.
- Listen to survivors and the recommendations they make for the support they need.
- Tackle the root causes of VAWG and challenge the cultural and societal entrenched behaviours which underpin this.
- Work with central government departments to coordinate work to tackle VAWG
- Ensure human rights are upheld and respected
- Hold those engaged in abusive behaviour to account and ensure the onus of change is their responsibility.



- Ensure all our policies and procedures eliminate any tolerance to VAWG
- Model and empower others to use appropriate trauma informed language that reduces stigma, shame and judgement
- Work towards early identification of VAWG so that interventions, referral and support can be accessed at the earliest opportunity across all sectors
- Allocate fair and appropriate funding to VAWG services to ensure consistent support is provided by all agencies
- Listen to survivors to design and adapt the way services are provided
- Are guided by best practice and a shared understanding of the needs of survivors
- Include grassroots organisations and specialist services as part of the system
- Hold those engaged in abusive behaviour to account, ensure the onus of change is their responsibility and support them to change.

- Improve awareness and understanding of abusive behaviour and how to support family and friends
- Increase knowledge of support services.
- Ensure individuals are made aware of the services available and are supported to access them.
- Work within partnership agreements and protocols.
- Promote collaboration between individuals and agencies to end VAWG, recognising it cannot be achieved by one agency/ person acting alone
- Ensure individuals know where to go for help and support

- Support communities to be resilient against VAWG.
- Clearly display posters and literature.
- Ensure harmful attitudes can be safely challenged
- Help communities to know the role they can play in providing support.
- Create safe spaces to enable disclosures
- Ensure concerns can be shared with specialist services.
- Include community groups and organisations in partnership approaches.
- Ensure communities can share concerns and insights with VAWG agencies.
- Educate communities to challenge those engaging in abusive behaviours so that violence against women and girls is not tolerated.

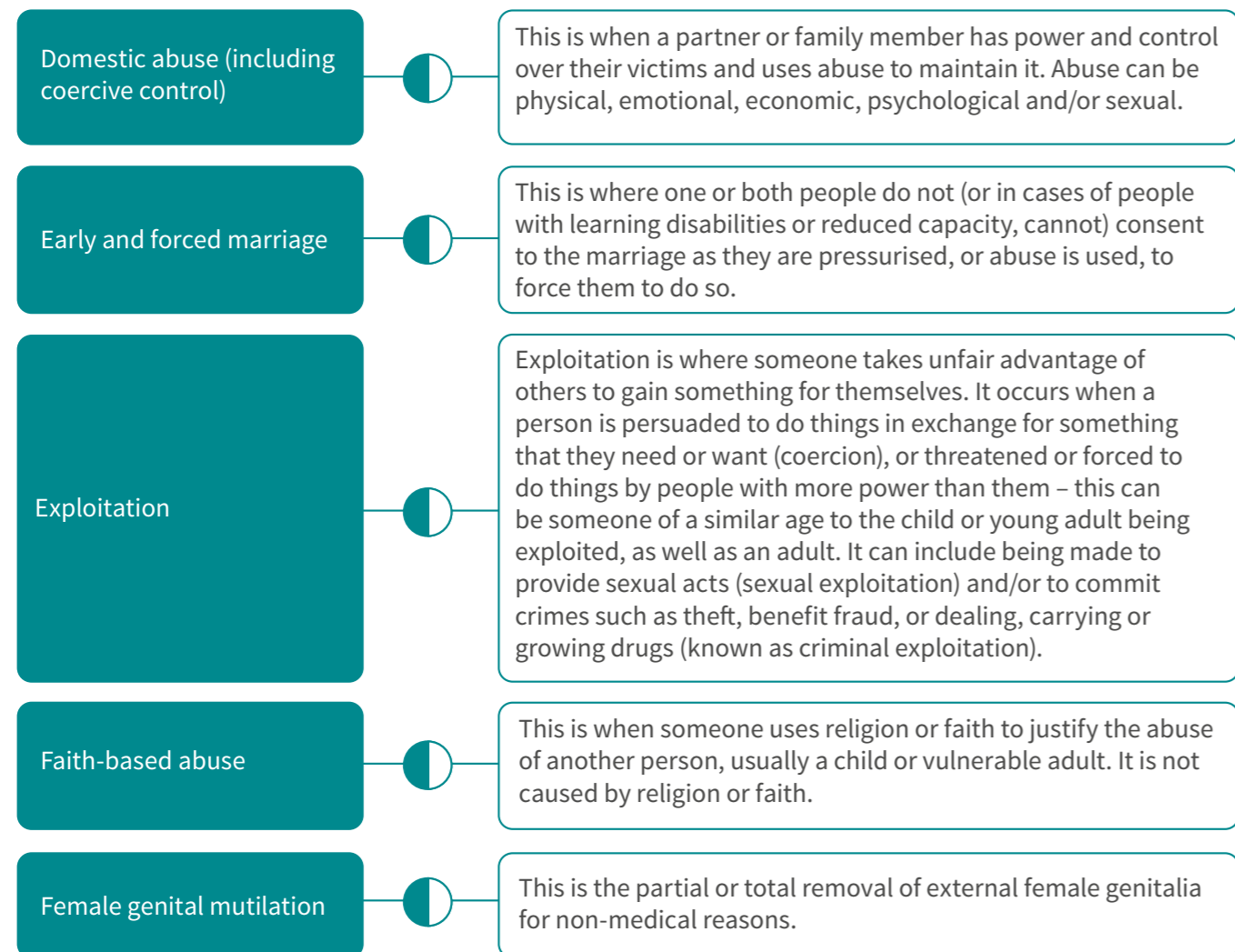
# What is VAWG?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is any form of violence disproportionately perpetrated by men against women and girls. It is deeply linked to gender inequality and includes rape and other sexual offences; domestic abuse; stalking and harassment; so-called 'honour-based' abuse; forced marriage; female genital mutilation (FGM); exploitation; 'upskirting'; and online abuse including 'revenge porn'.

Men and boys can also be victims of some of these forms of violence and abuse with some feeling unable to report their experiences because of societal views around masculinity. It is important that this is challenged and support is available but it does not mean that this violence isn't gendered.

Acts of violence against women and girls are interconnected and part of a spectrum of violence that is underpinned by inequality, male power and control. Each act reinforces that VAWG is a 'normal' experience that is tolerated in society.

## Type of abuse



## Type of abuse



## What does this mean?

The following link also provides a list of misogynistic behaviours and offences under which criminals can be prosecuted: [Violence against women and girl's toolkit | College of Policing](#)



# Why we need to address VAWG

**Women and girls should be able to live their lives without fear of sexual objectification, harassment, or physical or mental abuse. It is so pervasive that it affects almost all women and girls from an early age and thereby restricts life chances of thriving or equality.**

**VAWG can lead to significant and long-lasting impacts such as mental health issues, suicide attempts and homelessness. By tackling the root causes underpinning VAWG, we can all make a difference. Awareness raising, educating others and creating safe places will all help build a world where women and girls can go about their lives confidently, without fear of being assaulted or harassed.**

We know that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns linked to this, exacerbated incidents of violence against women and girls. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report identified that in mid-May 2020, there was a 12% increase in the number of acts of violence and domestic abuse cases referred to Victim Support. Between April and June 2020, there was a 65% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, when compared to the first three months of that year, and between March 2019 and March 2020, a 7% growth in police recorded domestic abuse crimes.

The hidden nature of abuse and the reluctance and limitations of victims to seek support or medical attention during the pandemic makes it difficult to fully understand the widespread impact and changing nature of domestic abuse. However, in April 2020, the Home Affairs Committee said there was “evidence that cases are escalating more quickly to become complex and serious, with higher levels of physical violence and coercive control.” We therefore need to act just as quickly to address this.

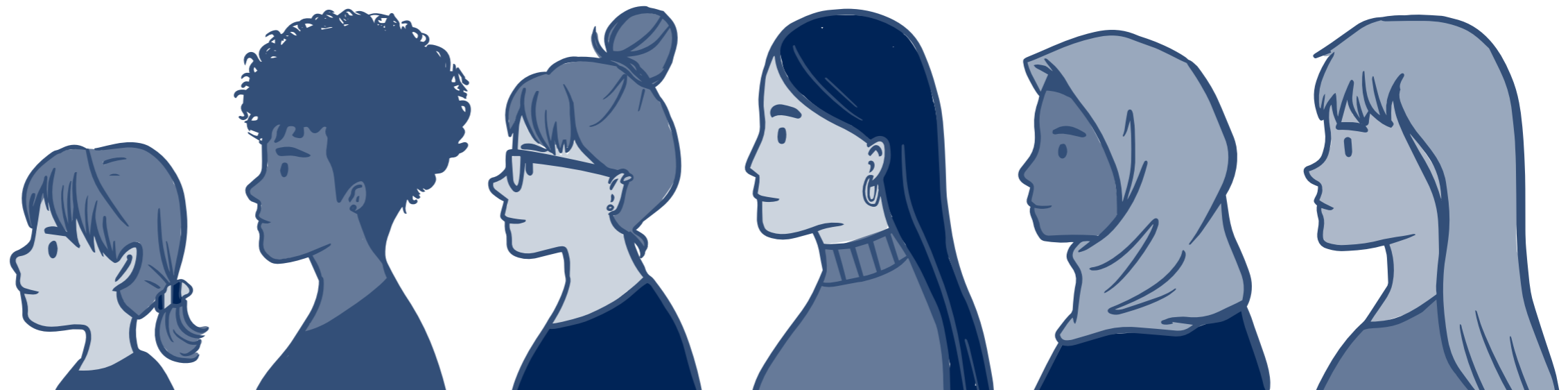
These crimes are deeply harmful, not only because of the detrimental, long-term effect they can have on victims, survivors and their loved ones, but also because of the impact they can have on wider society. This in turn creates significant social and economic costs.

VAWG affects an overwhelming number of women and girls but those who face other forms of inequality as a result of their age, disability, mental health, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, wealth or social class are even more likely to experience violence and abuse, and less likely to access justice and support. It is imperative for partners to work together to meet these diverse needs of victims and survivors.

At any stage of life, violence and abuse cause harm, vulnerability and disadvantage in a number of overlapping ways. This includes impacts to physical and mental health; damage to self-esteem and confidence; isolation; homelessness; and reduced economic prospects.

For victims and survivors from protected characteristic groups - for example, from ethnic minority backgrounds; migrant women; deaf and disabled; lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans+ (LGBT+) - these issues can be compounded by additional inequalities and a broader context of social exclusion and marginalisation.

**“ The support has been life changing and life saving. I have gone from wanting to end my life to wanting to live my life. ”**



## CASE STUDY

Amelia experienced childhood sexual abuse from the ages of six to eight, by a neighbour on multiple occasions. He told her he would hurt her sisters if she told anyone and made her feel responsible for keeping them safe. This affected her ability to form healthy relationships – she did not trust men and felt a deep sense of shame, blame and guilt.

As a result, Amelia’s life was impacted to such an extent that she struggled to go to the shops or be in any situation surrounded by people. She was unable to have an emotional or sexual relationship with anyone; she had severe anxiety and depression; and aged 55, she tried to take her own life.

But with the right support, Amelia went from not leaving the house to engaging with friends and meeting them at garden centres and cafes. She entered into a relationship and started having sex for the first time – something she never felt possible. Amelia has reclaimed her life and is making plans for her future, which she feels very excited about.

## Impact on adults

- Diagnoses of depression and experience of psychosis are three times more likely for women who are/ have been abused, and they are five times more likely to take their own lives.
- Ability to care for themselves and others is often diminished and can result in punitive parenting and perceived child neglect.
- Physical and sensory impairments can develop such as walking difficulties or deafness.
- Emotional harm from increased anxiety, trauma, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, shame, and embarrassment leads to long term social difficulties.
- Alcohol problems are three times more likely and drug use is nine times more likely for abused women who are vulnerable to drinking and drug use to cope with circumstances.
- Gynaecological issues including pelvic inflammatory disease, recurrent infections and other complications during pregnancy, including miscarriage and still birth are experienced by abused women.
- Inability to secure and sustain employment due to frequent absences from work, poor concentration and not fulfilling work role.
- Long term and chronic health problems develop including asthma, epilepsy, digestive problems, migraine, hypertension and skin disorders.

### CASE STUDY

Belinda was subjected to sexual and physical violence by a man she was in a relationship with from 21 to 23 years old. At the time she did not know what consent was, she was coerced, controlled and raped. Belinda held a lot of shame, self-blame and anger towards herself for 'allowing it to happen' and for 'staying so long'.

Belinda was in the Armed Forces at this time but was not taken seriously when she disclosed the abuse and was even told it was her fault. She suffered two breakdowns and was admitted to a psychiatric ward. She was asked to leave the Armed Forces. Belinda self-medicated with alcohol to cope and this had a severe detrimental impact on her life.

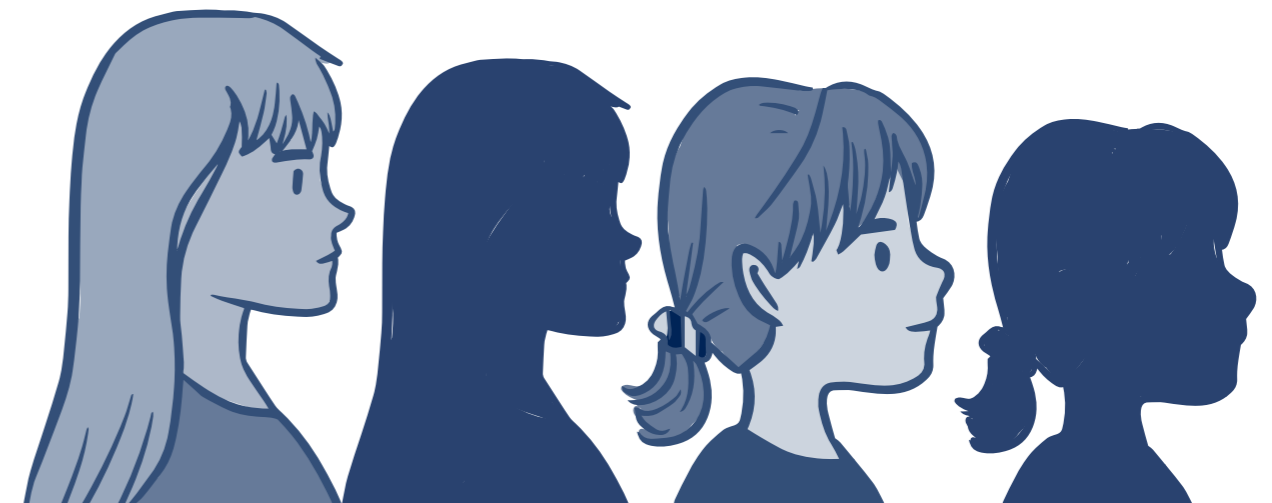
**“ I spent almost a decade ignoring what had happened to me causing many aspects of my life to breakdown. The Woman’s Centre was quick to process my referral and I am so grateful to have been able to access this support. Having a woman listen to me and validate not only the abuse but the years of fallout, where my life completely fell apart and I lost myself. Validating my anger, showing me that it is righteous and allowing me to understand it and know where to direct it appropriately. ”**

## Impact on children and young people

- Increased mental health problems are more likely for children and young people who have been/ are abused, and children witnessing/ hearing abuse of others and living in unsafe and fearful environments. This includes anxiety and/ or depression which can lead to eating disorders and self-harm.
- Truancy and lower educational attainment are commonplace.
- Lowered self-worth and confidence are likely and lead to a vulnerability to alcohol and drug use.
- Behavioural challenges and anti-social behaviour cause disruption to education and social interaction.
- Statutory social care interventions are more likely.
- Exposure and vulnerability to criminal activity and gangs is more likely, possibly leading to displaying abusive behaviour.

### CASE STUDY

Donna is a victim of rape, childhood sexual abuse, sexual violence and online exploitation. As a result of her trauma, Donna developed Dissociative Identity Disorder, Tourettes and ADHD. At 17 years of age, Donna is not in education or employment and has a history of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, disordered eating and is diagnosed with anxiety and depression. As a result, her mental health and standard of life became unmanageable. With support she got involved in group working.



# What we know about VAWG

An estimated **21,500** people have experienced domestic abuse in Cornwall in the last year.



**14,740 women**

**6,760 men<sup>2</sup>**



Women are more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than men.



**107 women**

in the UK were killed in 2022, in circumstances where a man or men are the principal suspect.

**Women**

are more likely to be repeat victims, to be seriously harmed or killed and to be subjected to coercive control.

**Women**

are more likely to be experience higher levels of fear which may impact negatively on their ability to seek support.

**92%** of child sexual abuse images depicted girls in 2019

**92%** of perpetrators of child sexual abuse are male

**15%** of girls/young women compared to **5%** of boys/young men

are estimated to experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16

It is estimated that **137,000 women and girls** are living with the consequences of FGM in the UK



Between April 2015 and September 2021, **28,765 women and girls** who had undergone FGM



were seen at NHS services in England where FGM was relevant to their attendance.



**Women are more likely than men to have been victims of childhood CSA**

# What survivors tell us

“The word ‘historical’ pains me! The effect is not historical. I live it every single day. It affects every part of you.”

“There is nothing teaching us about red flags and how to deal with the situation. Having posters and assemblies in schools – what about the prevention element.”

“It is hard for people to imagine what people have to go through, especially if you have a job working full-time and that you seem to function very well in your day-to-day life.”

“Support gives me hope for future positive changes it has given me a safe space to talk and be heard.”

“Need for more education.”

“Waiting lists are too long.”

“Living with post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression is life-long and impacts everything I do and experience on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. This makes my life extremely difficult and challenging.”

“I have been able to trust people better and recognise what/ who is bad for me and I am able to let that go since having sessions. I am able to stand up for myself and create boundaries for myself way better now. I have coping strategies and someone to talk to without any problems of guilt and the support that has helped me so much. Before I was quite held back by trauma and now, I feel that doesn’t define me as a person.”

“Often professionals do not understand, are not seeing the signs or see it as not their role to act on concerns.”

“I didn’t know any difference and didn’t realise it was abuse including the sexual side until I left with my boys, and everything started to unravel.”

“Services should provide a complete package of support.”

“The importance of not being judged.”

“The series of counselling sessions I received changed my life and enabled me to function again.”

“Sexual violence and abuse are not taken seriously enough.”

“Some people are still not aware of what support is available to them.”

# Our priorities



## VAWG WILL BE PREVENTED

we will support a better understanding of VAWG, the impact it has on survivors and the community and by promoting what a healthy relationship looks like.



## THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPACTED BY VAWG WILL BE MET

We will ensure professionals recognise children and young people as victims in their own right, ensuring there is long term, trauma informed support available, and by providing targeted interventions for those at risk of becoming a survivor and/or engaging in abusive behaviour.

## SURVIVORS WILL BE SUPPORTED

We will ensure women and girls are safe in public places and those who experience abuse can access the right support at the right time.



## THOSE ENGAGING IN ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT AND SUPPORTED TO CHANGE, AND THE LEVELS OF ABUSE WILL BE REDUCED



We will ensure those who engage in abusive behaviours recognise they are responsible for their behaviour and are supported to change their behaviour and attitude.

## THERE WILL BE WHOLE-SYSTEM CHANGE TO END VAWG

We will build on the strengths of the whole-system approach to end VAWG.



# 1. VAWG will be prevented

Prevention of VAWG is paramount and our priority. To do this, we must address the root causes underpinning the problem. Only by challenging the harmful attitudes and behaviours which are social and cultural norms can we make real change.

This approach must include challenging sexist and misogynistic attitudes. We want to build confidence across Cornwall in creating culture change and eliminate any tolerance to abuse in all its forms.

The behaviours and beliefs that can lead to violence against women and girls are often manifested in early years. We will work preventatively with children and young people in schools and other settings to promote healthy relationships, gender equality and respect. This work is important, but our response must be wider – working with adults, both professionals and residents is key. This also includes prevention work in a range of settings, including making our streets, our offices, and our homes safe for women and girls, as well as work with schools.

We want to support people to be allies in ending abuse and be active in improving our response to VAWG.



## CASE STUDY

“A common idea across Year 9 boys is that if a girl doesn’t want to be sexually intimate with you, you need to go and find multiple others. It’s strange to see, really, and I think it definitely isn’t a view held by the majority. It is a view, however, I have seen in multiple different schools and I think can clearly be sourced from the sort of videos they see online. These issues come up during our consent sessions.

“I am very clear on consent sessions and will use the definition from the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as the basis for warm-up activities for the sessions afterwards. And I explain to all students that if all you want from your relationship is sex and your partner doesn’t want to have sex with you, then you may leave that relationship if you want and find somebody else. But that it isn’t ok to shame them for that or make them feel like they are worse than you. If you take ‘no’ as a challenge, then you might be putting someone in a very difficult position where they feel forced and coerced to say ‘yes’ and that there are many instances whereby someone may say yes to sex but not be consenting.”

Healthy Relationships Trainer, Safer Futures





## 2. Survivors will be supported

We recognise that survivors need a range of support at different stages of their journey. We understand that survivors not only need specialist support for the abuse they have experienced, but may also need support with housing, mental health, substance use, childcare, immigration, and other support. We are determined to create a joined-up approach with services working together, so that survivors are provided the right support at the right time. This support must be led by the needs of survivors, be provided immediately and be long-term, holistic, and intersectional.

**“I never thought support would be this good or so effective. After years of minimising my abuse, I can finally see what I have survived and understand why I have felt so angry for so many years. What a gift this is to feel free.”**

Survivors have told us that they want to be asked about their experiences in a non-judgmental way, they want to know what support is available, and they want longer term support, not just a focus on crisis response. Long-term support is vital to support the journey towards recovery.

This includes access to training and employment, support groups, and opportunities for wider development. We recognise that survivors with lived experience are key stakeholders, and they have told us that they need more spaces where they can talk to other survivors and to ‘give back’.

**“Your help has changed me completely - from where I was to where I am. I am so much stronger. You have confirmed that I am a good person, I used to have so much self-doubt, I wondered if it was just me that this happened to.”**



Picture created in school workshop by CLEAR

### CASE STUDY

Sandra lived with her husband, three children and a dog. She had suffered childhood sexual abuse. Her husband would frequently binge drink and control her. She was incredibly anxious and would only leave the house to purchase urgent groceries or to take the children to school. The controlling behaviour of Sandra’s husband and his ability to reinforce her fear of leaving the house augmented the general belief in her inability to cope without him. Sandra kept herself shrouded in dark clothes several sizes too large in order to disguise herself.

The support provided to Sandra helped her to grow in confidence, make friends and find a support network through work. She gained the confidence to talk to her husband about his abusive behaviour and no longer accepted that she needed him.

Sandra’s support worker said: “Sandra transformed herself from a timid woman afraid to leave her own home to a confident working woman with a social life. She became a champion at work, dealing with any issues on behalf of colleagues.”



Picture created in school workshop by CLEAR



### 3. The needs of children and young people impacted by VAWG will be met

We must also consider the needs of children and young people as survivors of VAWG whether they experience abuse within their home, from family members, at school, in public or in their young intimate relationships.

In Cornwall, we will continue to invest in early help models, through a combination of local investment and national programmes. By intervening early, challenging gender stereotypes and reducing victim blaming, we can reduce the chances of abusive behaviours becoming a pattern of coercive control in later life.

We want to learn from good practice examples to ensure all survivors and their children receive the response they need. We will focus on identifying training needs and providing the necessary knowledge and skills training to meet these needs. We will work in partnership with children’s services to ensure risks to children are addressed and needs met in situations of family violence/ abuse.

**“I’ve learnt that I am a very strong person and it’s ok to trust people.”**

Reconnect client

#### CASE STUDY

Ellie, at age 13, experienced sexual harassment and assault by a male student who was in school with her. When Ellie told her mum about the assault she was asked: “What did you expect if you sent inappropriate images of yourself to boys?”

With the help of a support worker from The Women’s Centre Cornwall, Ellie gained an understanding of the impact of trauma and the ability to recognise and deal with triggers. She became more assertive, understanding her own rights and boundaries. With the support and education, she recognised that she was in no way to blame for the assault against her and that the boy was responsible for his actions and words.

She learned about the risks involved in sharing images of herself and that this would not give her the love, respect and connection she hoped for. She now has a good understanding of healthy and equitable relationships.



Picture created in school workshop by CLEAR

#### SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE – THE YEW PROJECT (YOUNG EMPOWERED WOMEN)

The Women’s Centre Cornwall YEW project helps young women and girls who have experienced sexual violence or abuse heal from the effects of their abuse and move on to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. By facilitating an inspirational creative and safe space, offering face-to-face support sessions that are free, impartial and confidential, as well as educational and creative group workshops; young women and girls are able to take back their power and control, be empowered to make their own decisions, plan new goals and adopt new behaviours. The support is tailored holistically to each young woman depending on their need and delivered by trained specialist facilitators. The YEW project is open to young women and girls aged 11-18 years in Mid and East Cornwall and young women can be referred by professionals, care givers and can make self-referrals by contacting The Women’s Centre Cornwall through the website.



The Women’s Centre Cornwall YEW project



The Women’s Centre Cornwall YEW project



## 4. Those engaging in abusive behaviour will be held to account and supported to change

Ending VAWG can only happen if those engaging in abusive behaviours stop their abuse. Our strategy recognises that we must address the root causes of VAWG. This involves holding abusers to account and providing intervention and support for them to change their behaviour. This should include support for young people who are displaying signs of abusive behaviour providing intervention at the earliest opportunity.

Holding those engaging in abusive behaviour to account must happen across the board. Abusers may have contact with multiple services and professionals must be trained in identifying abuse, accurately assessing the risk they pose to others, safely challenging their behaviour, and working with them to change their behaviour and influence to hold them to account. Employers also have a responsibility to

challenge any sexist or abusive behaviour amongst employees. They should have firm policies and procedures in place if an employee is identified as an abuser, using the appropriate disciplinary action where required and proportionately sharing information to ensure the safety of others.

Our response also means having a fit-for purpose criminal justice system which holds abusers to account. Victims of abuse deserve justice and it is important that this is reflected by an increase in prosecutions and convictions. However, justice is wider than just the criminal justice system. Those engaging in abuse must be held to account by all sections of society, by the services working with them and within the systems that govern us.

### SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTISE – HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR PROTOCOL

Cornwall has a specialist team called Gweres Kernow to support professionals to understand and respond to harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people. The term ‘harmful sexual behaviour’ (HSB) is used to describe a continuum of sexual behaviours, from inappropriate to problematic to abusive. Children and young people who display HSB are more likely than other young people to have a history of maltreatment and family difficulties. We also know that such behaviours can be extremely distressing for children who experience this type of harm and those who display these behaviours. Gweres Kernow offer consultation, support and advice as well as direct intervention to children and young people. Specialist Gweres Kernow social workers are supported by a clinical psychologist to deliver this important work across Cornwall.

The HSB protocol was developed to guide professionals on how such behaviours are most appropriately dealt with in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and how, and in more serious cases how Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Youth offending service (YOS) and Gweres Kernow (GK) work together to assess, safeguard and offer an intervention to reduce the likelihood of future harmful sexual behaviour.



## 5. Whole systems response to end VAWG

Tackling these crimes requires a ‘whole-system’ approach. There should be zero tolerance for VAWG to occur – at home, at work, at school, online, or on the streets. A ‘whole system’ approach means different professionals and agencies (including criminal justice professionals, as well as teachers, health and social care professionals and others), local and national Government, charities, and others all working together to tackle violence against women and girls. Partnerships at a local and regional level should be striving to ensure better joint working and more effective interventions.

We will use our Coordinated Community Response model to bring together services, including health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice, and communities, to ensure local systems a) keep survivors safe, b) hold abusers to account, and c) prevent abuse.

A successful partnership will have good working relationships and respect between agencies, but the key measure is the effect it has on improving support to survivors and their families.

Health and social inequalities can make it much harder for some people to access support than others. The people impacted by these inequalities include some of our most vulnerable members of the community.

Violence and abuse can also be perpetuated for marginalised and vulnerable groups<sup>10</sup>. The stigma and discrimination for people with complex needs and multiple vulnerabilities is often high, meaning that they either do not or cannot access services or do not receive good quality, non-judgemental care, and support.

Locally, stakeholder feedback has identified a lack of integrated working which could mean service users are falling through the gaps in service provision. It is important we work towards driving collaboration and reducing fragmentation, to enable a system wide response to VAWG.

**“I want a team around my lead helper so that I can see everyone working together.”**

### CASE STUDY

Since the age of ten, Frankie has been using drugs. She fled her perpetrator who was also her drug dealer after he repeatedly sexually and physically abused her. Although she wants to be free of crack cocaine, she struggles with the inner work that she needs to do to heal from her childhood trauma. She has been formally diagnosed by a clinical forensic psychologist with emotional unstable personality disorder as a result of childhood neglect and substance abuse. These have had a profound impact on her being able to manage her behaviour and emotions. Frankie also has depression and anxiety and carries a lot of guilt that she is unable to be the mother she wanted to be, which resurfaces when she takes drugs or gambles. Frankie has attended several rehab programmes over the years that she has not been able to sustain. Specialist support workers from the EVA project offer continued support and encouragement to Frankie to work with councillors and specialist addiction workers, to break her life-long cycle of drug use and to reduce the likelihood of her returning to her perpetrator.

<sup>10</sup> Department for International Development Guidance (2015), Addressing violence against Women and Girls in Health Programming, Part A Rationale and Approach

# Turning strategy into reality - our Charter and Commitments



## VAWG will be prevented

- We will increase public awareness of VAWG, its impacts and the services available.
- We will work with education establishments, Early Years, and 16-18 years provision to develop whole, inclusive approaches to VAWG.
- We will commit to provide mandated VAWG training for professionals across Cornwall.
- We will roll out a train the trainer programme for healthy relationships interventions for adults and young people.
- We will continue to develop community responses to VAWG, including bystander interventions, safe spaces, working with local businesses and domestic abuse champions and targeted groups for those at risk of being impacted by VAWG.
- We will fully support extending hate crime laws to those based on someone's gender — including misogyny — and for all hate crimes based on protected characteristics to be treated equally.



## Survivors will be supported

- We will ensure there is a range of choice and flexibility in the support we offer across Cornwall, including gender specific services and services for families who wish to stay together.
- We will ensure long term recovery support is prioritised alongside crisis support.
- We will ensure all services are gender informed, understand VAWG and are meeting the needs of victims and survivors of VAWG.
- We will commit to investing in Safe spaces for women and girls across Cornwall.
- We will work to extend and expand peer mentoring models across Cornwall.



## The needs of children and young people impacted by VAWG will be met

- We will ensure that children are recognised as victims, and that appropriate support is offered and put in place.
- We will work with children and young people in partnership to develop and deliver age-appropriate responses to VAWG.
- We will pilot targeted interventions for those at risk of becoming a victim and/or engaging in abusive behaviour.
- We will assure this strategy is aligned to the Childhood Sexual Abuse Strategy.
- Work with our partners to promote safety where children are displaying harmful behaviours, understanding that this behaviour is often routed in trauma.



## Those engaging in abusive behaviours will be held to account and supported to change

- We will ensure that there is a robust approach to identifying and responding to those engaging in abusive behaviours.
- We will ensure there is support and behaviour change programmes available to those who engage in abusive behaviour.
- We will roll out training for professionals on recognising and responding to those engaging in abusive behaviours.
- We will hold abusers to account through appropriate use of criminal justice processes.
- We will work to reduce the disparity between the number of reports to the police, and positive criminal justice outcomes.
- We will improve our response to women in the Criminal Justice System who have been impacted by domestic abuse and/or sexual violence.
- We will aim to end the blame culture for victims, treating them with respect and support.
- We will provide greater opportunities for the reporting of abuse perpetrated by anyone in a position of trust.



## There will be whole-system change to end VAWG

- We will prioritise VAWG in our plans, policies, and processes.
- We will refresh our own organisations policies to DA, SV, sexual harassment and VAWG and ensure we improve support for our own employees impacted by VAWG.
- We will support effective system change to better respond to those with the most complex needs.
- We will ensure the voice of experts by experience continuously informs our response through collaboration and co-production.
- We will promote Compassionate Cornwall and rollout the Trauma-informed programme.
- We will share intelligence with partners on a quarterly basis.

# We will know we are successful when...



Abuse is identified earlier, and support is offered



Survivors can access support through multiple routes



Organisations' initial response to survivors will be positive and support offered beyond immediate incident/crisis point



All children who are impacted by VAWG are offered support



Families will receive a whole family response to VAWG



Residents and professionals are supported to better identify and respond to VAWG



Communities will feel more confident to intervene, support those impacted by VAWG and challenge harmful attitudes

Schools are confident in identifying and responding to those impacted by VAWG



Everyone understands their role in responding and ending VAWG



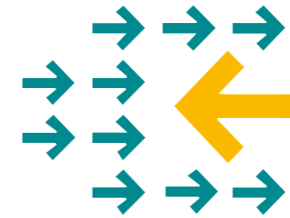
Those with lived experiences will be heard and shape our responses



Everyone will know misogynistic, sexist or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated



There will be justice for survivors



Those engaging in abuse will change their behaviour, reducing harm to others



We see a reduction in reoffending, revictimisation and first time offending



Everyone's equal human rights are upheld



People will feel supported by services who work together



People will feel listened to by services, and in control of their own support

Victims and survivors feel safer



[www.safercornwall.co.uk/VAWG](http://www.safercornwall.co.uk/VAWG)  
<https://ciossafeguarding.org.uk/sab>  
<https://ciossafeguarding.org.uk/scp>

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