

# DOES IT PASS THE TEST?

5 Key Tests for the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy



The 2025 violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy is the key strategic document for the government's pledge to halve VAWG over ten years – a necessary and urgent ambition. Building on our **VAWG manifesto**, this document sets out 5 key tests for the VAWG strategy to pass the test, and is produced by a coalition of VAWG organisations and experts. Together, we can create a world where women and girls can live and thrive free from violence and abuse.

## The 2025 VAWG strategy must commit to delivering on:

These 5 asks are not listed in order of importance and should be given equal weighting.



### Primary prevention

To lower the rates of men's abuse and violence against women and girls in the UK, the strategy should address its drivers across society: from the everyday societal norms and attitudes which underpin VAWG, to its institutional practices, and the structural inequalities which shape the distribution of power and resources in a way that disadvantages women and girls. We are looking for a public health approach to preventing VAWG, which covers:

- ▶ identifying and implementing interventions to prevent violence against women and girls from happening in the first place, including regulation of the online environment and funding women and girls' community-based specialist services
- ▶ strategic investment to prevent and respond to VAWG in all schools, colleges, further and higher education settings
- ▶ the delivery of multi-year public communication campaigns and community responses, co-produced with VAWG organisations, that challenge harmful social norms and perpetrator and bystander behaviour
- ▶ government departments and statutory agencies delivering change to create greater gender equality.



### All forms of VAWG

Women and girls' experiences of violence and abuse often happen across their lifetime – and also overlap with one another. For example, someone subjected to stalking and harassment within intimate partner abuse or to child sexual exploitation within a forced marriage. The Istanbul Convention, the gold-standard framework for tackling VAWG, also states that all forms of violence against women must be condemned by states, with a coordinated approach. However, vital specialist services, such as those supporting survivors of sexual violence, face a funding crisis. The strategy must set out plans to:

- ▶ address all forms of VAWG in an integrated way, spanning domestic abuse, sexual violence (including child sexual abuse and exploitation), forms of online VAWG, stalking, economic abuse and so-called honour based abuse
- ▶ Deliver sustainable funding for the full range of VAWG specialist services\*
- ▶ use **metrics** to measure impact that capture all forms of VAWG, with suitable analysis that combines prevalence with frequency, impact, and equalities data.

\* See 'Increased multi-year funding for specialist VAWG services'



## Inequalities and discrimination against marginalised survivors

The ambition to halve VAWG must apply to all survivors without discrimination. Women and girls' experiences of abuse are facilitated in part by structural inequalities and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or immigration status, as well as gender. It has long been treated as an inevitability that some women and girls will simply face higher rates of VAWG and greater barriers to support, but there are concrete actions that can be taken to uphold women and girls' human rights and reduce their risk of being harmed. The strategy should incorporate policies and targets to address the disproportionate victimisation of Black and minoritised, migrant and asylum-seeking, disabled and LGBT+ survivors. It should also aim to prevent the inappropriate criminalisation of survivors of VAWG, including its disproportionate impact on marginalised women and girls. At a minimum, the strategy should include:

- ▶ A monitoring and evaluation framework with an equalities lens which demonstrates the impact of interventions on marginalised survivors
- ▶ Requirements for government departments and statutory agencies to provide disaggregated data of protected characteristics in relation to funding decisions, needs assessments and evaluations of interventions
- ▶ The introduction of a firewall to stop data-sharing between statutory agencies and immigration enforcement
- ▶ Extending the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain (DVILR) and Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) model for those on partner/spousal visas to all migrant survivors regardless of their immigration status.
- ▶ Legislative and policy reforms to provide effective defences for survivors accused of offending and to ensure VAWG is properly considered in proceedings against survivor.



## Increased multi-year funding for specialist VAWG services

Reducing the prevalence of VAWG will rely on a national infrastructure of sustainably-funded, specialist VAWG organisations; resourced to provide the full scope of interventions and wraparound support that women and girls need. This should be accompanied by greater transparency about funding decisions, redressing long-standing funding inequities, and better serving marginalised and criminalised survivors. Sustainable funding should range from prevention and community outreach programmes to crisis support, stalking advocates and specialist mental health and counselling services. We expect the strategy to deliver:

- ▶ a secure, accessible national multi-year funding settlement for specialist VAWG organisations, in line with Council of Europe minimum recommendations and rising with inflation and population changes
- ▶ national ring-fenced funding for specialist services led 'by and for' Black, minoritised and migrant women, D/deaf and disabled women and LGBT+ survivors, administered in a way that sustains the autonomy and sustainability of this sector
- ▶ sustainable ring-fenced funding for specialist sexual violence and abuse services including appropriate contributions from Health and Education, and multi-year commissioning of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Fund beyond March 2026
- ▶ systematic reform of the current competitive funding and commissioning landscape, with an accountability mechanism for transparency about government and commissioners' funding decisions, and in line with the Public Sector Equality duty.



## Cross-departmental commitments with oversight and evaluation

For far too long, VAWG has been treated as the responsibility of only one or two government departments – with little input or accountability from across government. Every government department has a role and responsibility in reducing VAWG, and this should be represented in the VAWG strategy, with an **accountability framework**. We expect to see:

- ▶ funded commitments to prevent VAWG for each government department
- ▶ a clear and monitorable delivery plan and evaluation framework, with a human rights and equalities lens
- ▶ regular progress reporting incorporating different government departments, with independent oversight and meaningful survivor engagement.

