

BIRMINGHAM'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) STRATEGY

Our Strategy for a co-ordinated response

2025 - 2030



BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY
SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER CITY

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT	3
Foreword and Commitment	3
Introduction by Cllr Jamie Tennant	3
Vision Statement	3
Our Commitment	3
Strategic Drivers	4
The National Mandate for Change	4
Government Ambition	4
Scope and Diversity of VAWG	4
Relationship with the Domestic Abuse Strategy	5
Foundational Principles and Approach	6
Core Philosophy	6
Strategic Framework	6
Core Principles	7
2. THE EVIDENCE BASE AND STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT	8
National and International Evidence	8
The Scale and Impact of Violence	8
Evidence-Based Prevention and Global Best Practice	8
Birmingham's Strategic Assessment	9
Scale, Volume and Trend	9
Public Attitude Surveys and Community Insight	12
What do the Women of Birmingham tell us?	14
3. STRATEGIC PILLARS AND HIGH-LEVEL ACTION PLAN	15
4. DETAILED ACTIONS BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE	17
5. GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING	20
Governance and Partnership Structure	20
Strategic Oversight and Accountability	20
Relationship to Domestic Abuse (DA) Governance	20
Operational Delivery and Survivor Voice	21
Resourcing and Funding	22
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	23

1. INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

FOREWORD AND COMMITMENT

Introduction by Cllr Jamie Tennant

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains far too prevalent in our society and we are determined to change this in Birmingham.

Sexual Violence, Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and So-Called Honour Based Abuse, have no place in our communities. These forms of violence, directed at women because of their gender, and predominantly carried out by men, stem from deep-rooted gender inequality, which is unacceptable in Birmingham. It falls on all of us to step up and act.

Through the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, partners from all sectors have come together to create Birmingham City Council's VAWG strategy and commit to delivering it over the next 5 years. It will sit alongside a delivery plan that will ensure its successful execution, and we will hold partners accountable for action. VAWG is everybody's issue, and we can only combat it with a united front.

As a result of this strategy, we want to see an increase in reporting because of raised community awareness and victim confidence. We want to see an increase in prosecutions and convictions for offenders of these heinous crimes. We want to see early intervention and prevention, working with men and boys to tackle sexist and misogynistic attitudes and we will ultimately achieve the goal of the Women and Girls of Birmingham being and feeling safer.

Vision Statement

We want to support the development of a Birmingham where VAWG is never tolerated, everyone is equal, and survivors live free from fear.

Our Commitment

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is everybody's business. It requires a change in our society, our cultures, communities, and institutions to address the root causes – and the attitudes - that allow it to grow and maintain social power. This strategy aims to bring about a true trauma-informed, multi-agency approach towards ending VAWG.

VAWG is a profound violation of human rights, a pervasive societal issue and a significant barrier to achieving true gender equality. In Birmingham, a vibrant and diverse city, we are unwavering in our commitment to eradicate all forms of VAWG and ensure that every woman and girl can live free from fear, harassment, and abuse.



STRATEGIC DRIVERS

The National Mandate for Change

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is recognised as a priority area for the UK Government and requires profound societal and cultural change. Since 2010, the Home Office has published multiple strategies concerning VAWG, with the most recent being the *Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls. (Dec 2025)*. This strategy aims to reduce the prevalence of VAWG, increase support for victims and survivors, and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

VAWG has been recognised as a national threat, leading to its inclusion in the Strategic Policing Requirement since June 2023. Aligning with national legislation and the UK-wide movement will ensure Birmingham's response is coherent and effective.

Government Ambition

A significant driver for this strategy is the Government's recently declared ambition, part of its wider 'Safer Streets' mission, to **halve the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade**. This ambitious goal underscores the urgent need for a cohesive, whole-system, cross-governmental approach, encompassing prevention, support, and accountability. Achieving this objective requires that local authorities, like Birmingham City Council, actively contribute through evidence-based, measurable, and strategic interventions.

Scope and Diversity of VAWG

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is defined as a profound violation of human rights. It encompasses acts of gender-based violence that disproportionately affect women and girls and generally results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering. These crimes stem from the root causes of misogyny and gender inequality.

The scope of VAWG is broad and covers numerous distinct crime types. The strategy focuses on these crimes, acknowledging that they require varied and tailored approaches:

- **Sexual Violence** (including rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment).
- **Stalking and Harassment** (including online abuse and cyberstalking).
- **Harmful Practices** (including Female Genital Mutilation/FGM, Forced Marriage/FM, and So-called Honour-Based Violence/HBV).
- **Sexual Exploitation** (including sex work coercion and trafficking) and **Modern Slavery**.
- **Other related offences** such as Revenge Porn and Upskirting.

The strategy recognises that the work required to address these issues is diverse; for instance, specific prevention efforts focused on FGM will be inherently different from strategies designed to tackle stalking and harassment.

Relationship with the Domestic Abuse Strategy

This Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy operates as a sister strategy to the dedicated Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024–29.

While the Home Office broadly defines VAWG to include Domestic Abuse (DA), DA is recognised locally as a key priority that is governed by its own detailed framework. Domestic abuse is legally defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members.

Responsibility for tackling Domestic Abuse, including Coercive Control, will be primarily managed and detailed within the separate Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+, ensuring dedicated governance and resources are applied through that structure. This VAWG Strategy acknowledges the intersection between VAWG and DA, but focuses its strategic priorities and objectives on the types of violence distinct from, or complementary to, the specific intimate partner and family abuse covered by the dedicated DA Prevention Strategy.



FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

This strategy is built upon a philosophy rooted in human rights, evidence-based prevention, and shared accountability. It acknowledges that effective interventions must address the complex social and cultural factors that drive violence and misogyny, requiring a unified response across Birmingham.

Core Philosophy

The Birmingham Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy is grounded in the understanding that VAWG is a **profound violation of human rights** and a pervasive societal issue. VAWG is recognised as stemming from **gender inequality** and the misuse of **power and control**. The strategy is built on the firm belief that **violence is preventable**, and prevention requires challenging the attitudes and cultural norms that permit abuse.

Strategic Framework

The Ecological Model and Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

The strategy adopts a gendered and intersectional response based on the **Ecological Model of violence prevention**. This model recognises that VAWG occurs within a complex system and violence is influenced by factors operating across multiple interconnected levels:

- **Individual:** Focusing on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.
- **Relationship/Community:** Addressing dynamics between family, intimate partners, friends, and neighbours.
- **Institutional:** Targeting environments such as schools, workplaces, health services, and criminal justice settings.
- **Societal:** Addressing macro-level factors like laws, policies, cultural norms, and entrenched gender inequality. Applying the ecological model necessitates a whole-system, multi-agency approach. This forms the **Coordinated Community Response (CCR)**, ensuring that all partners (including statutory, voluntary, community, and private sectors) work collectively to respond effectively and sustainably. A key goal of this model is creating an enabling environment where VAWG is culturally unacceptable.



Core Principles

To ensure successful delivery and achieve systemic change, all partners and activities underpinning this strategy will adhere to the following core principles:

- 1. Survivor-Centred and Survivor-Led:** All interventions will be designed and delivered with the needs and voices of survivors at their core. This requires tailored, needs-led services and ensuring safety is paramount. Support must be trauma-informed, promoting safety, trustworthiness, and cultural sensitivity to mitigate the profound impact of abuse. This approach emphasises recognising the survivor's resilience and respecting their pace and choices throughout their journey ("going at her pace").
- 2. Intersectionality and Equity:** The strategy acknowledges that VAWG disproportionately affects marginalised communities. An intersectional approach will be employed to address the diverse experiences and multiple disadvantages faced by women and girls, ensuring equitable access to support for all groups, including those facing intersecting issues like mental health, substance misuse, or disability. Services must be culturally competent and sensitive.
- 3. Prevention First:** Proactive efforts to prevent VAWG before it occurs will be prioritised through education, challenging harmful norms (misogyny and sexism), and promoting healthy relationships. Prevention strategies must draw on evidence, such as demonstrating that combining gender training with economic empowerment works, and ensuring appropriate intervention starting in youth, particularly through school-based programs.
- 4. Perpetrator Accountability:** Abuse is a choice, and perpetrators are solely responsible for their behaviour. This principle demands a focus on holding abusers to account through a robust criminal justice response and reducing recidivism through targeted interventions. Accountability must be a whole-system responsibility, ensuring professionals safely challenge abusers and do not engage in victim-blaming.
- 5. Robust Partnership and Systemic Change:** The strategy emphasises the necessity of a seamless, coordinated approach across statutory and non-statutory partners. The system must be committed to continuous learning and moving beyond previous strategies that were often disproportionately justice-led, requiring genuine commitment from all partners (a truly multi-agency approach). This ensures resources are efficiently pooled and pathways are simple and strong, embodying the principle of "No Wrong Door".

2. THE EVIDENCE BASE AND STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is globally recognised as a profound violation of human rights and an unacceptable, preventable issue. Globally, VAWG is considered a critical health problem facing girls and women. The national and international evidence establishes the scale, pervasive nature, and financial impact of VAWG, while pointing toward evidence-based solutions for prevention.

The Scale and Impact of Violence

VAWG represents a significant proportion of recorded criminality in the UK and carries an enormous societal cost:

- **Prevalence:** The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) reported that VAWG accounted for 20% of all police-recorded crime nationally in 2022-23.
- **Victimisation:** It is estimated that over one in four women will be victims of sexual assault or attempted assault in their lifetime. At least one in 12 women are estimated to be victims of VAWG-related offences every year.
- **Trends:** Incidents of rape and sexual assault crimes against women and girls recorded by the police have increased by 264% since 2009-10. The prevalence of sexual assault against women aged 16 to 59 was higher in 2023-24 (4.3%) than in 2009-10 (3.4%).
- **Domestic Abuse:** In the year ending March 2023, 1.4 million women were subjected to domestic abuse. The police nationally receive a domestic abuse-related call on average every 30 seconds.
- **Cost:** The annual economic and social cost of domestic abuse alone is estimated to be £84 billion (in 2024–25 prices). VAWG can have long-term impacts on victims, affecting them physically, mentally, socially, and financially.

Evidence-Based Prevention and Global Best Practice

A comprehensive global evidence review affirms that violence is preventable. This strategy must incorporate effective, evidence-based approaches to stand the best chance of meeting the national ambition:

- **Feminist and Local Strategies:** This review affirms the effectiveness of feminist, locally led prevention strategies.
- **Scaling Up Proven Methods:** Successful interventions should be scaled up, particularly proven, evidence-based strategies that empower women and transform gender norms.
- **Systemic Integration:** Prevention must be integrated across sectors; including education, health, and humanitarian work.
- **Engaging Men and Boys:** Group education targeting men and boys is crucial for achieving change, as this approach demonstrably shifts harmful norms.
- **Evidence Gaps:** Despite significant investment, perpetrator programmes are failing. Major evidence gaps remain in tailored interventions for specific vulnerable communities, including adolescent girls, women with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ communities.

BIRMINGHAM'S STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

This strategy is fundamentally underpinned by a rigorous local evidence base, drawing primarily from the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2025 (SA). The data illustrates the specific scale, harm profile, location, and nature of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Birmingham, driving the definition of our priorities and informing resource allocation.

Scale, Volume, and Trend

VAWG remains a significant concern in Birmingham, although the city has seen a reduction in recorded incidents in the most recent assessment period:

- **Total Offences:** In the 12 months analysed (January – December 2024), there were 21,802 offences categorised as VAWG recorded in Birmingham.
- **Trend:** This volume constitutes a reduction of 13% in VAWG offences compared to 2023, indicating a general downward trend since 2021. However, nationally, VAWG is recognized as a serious and growing problem, with police-recorded incidents of rape and sexual assault against women and girls having increased by 264% since 2009–10 nationally.

Local Harm Profile (Cambridge Crime Harm Index – CCHI)

- The strategy adopts the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI) to ensure resources are targeted at the offences causing the most significant and lasting damage to victims and the community.
- VAWG emerges as a pressing concern in Birmingham due to the severity of these crimes and their cumulative harm score.
- When weighting crimes based on harm severity, the highest categories are clearly dominated by crimes against the person, which disproportionately affect women and girls:
 - › Rape accounts for 30% of total crime harm in Birmingham.
 - › Violence with Injury accounts for 38% of total crime harm.

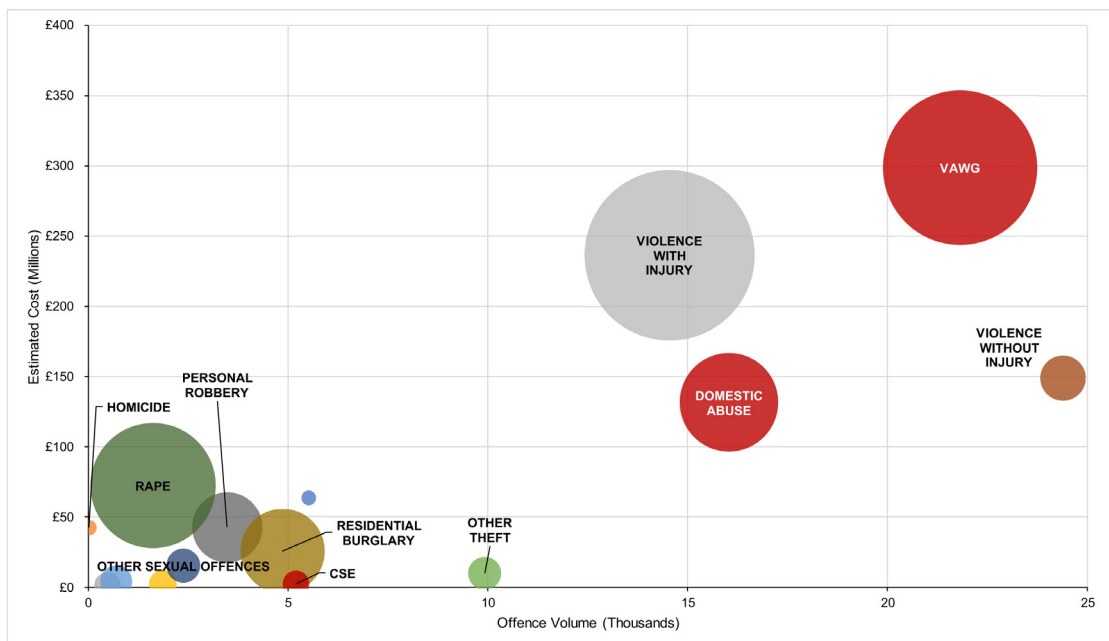


Figure 1.3 Birmingham Persistent Threats (Sub-Offence Class) and Cross-Cutting Crime Themes committed in 2024

The graph above shows the impact of VAWG on Birmingham. VAWG has the highest volume of crime types and the highest economic and social cost.

Victim Characteristics and Vulnerability

Understanding which women and girls are most vulnerable and disproportionately affected is key to tailoring prevention and support services, ensuring an intersectional approach.

- **Age Vulnerability:** Teenagers and young women are identified as particularly vulnerable to sexual offences. The age most frequently victimised for other sexual offences is 15, and the most frequent age for rape is 18.
- **Ethnicity and Disproportionality:** While women/girls from any white ethnic background were overrepresented as victims of overall VAWG victim data (in the 25% of cases where Self-Defined Ethnicity (SDE) was recorded), highly specific forms of abuse disproportionately target ethnic minority women. Specifically:
 - › Crimes such as honour-based abuse and FGM disproportionately affect ethnic minority women.
 - › Of the 18 recorded offences involving the keyword “honour-based abuse” in 2024 (where victim ethnicity was known), 13 concerned victims from backgrounds other than any white ethnic background.

Situational and Temporal Hotspots

Analysis of when and where VAWG offences occur highlights two distinct high-risk temporal periods in Birmingham:

- **Weekday Peak:** VAWG offences show a high volume between Monday and Friday, peaking between 15:00 and 17:00. This period aligns with post-school hours and rush hour, suggesting risks in public spaces and during transit.
- **Night-Time Economy (NTE) Peak:** There is a separate, significant spike in VAWG offences highly likely associated with the Night-Time Economy (NTE) times, particularly weekend evenings/early hours. This is often linked to alcohol-fuelled violence, sexual harassment, and spiking.

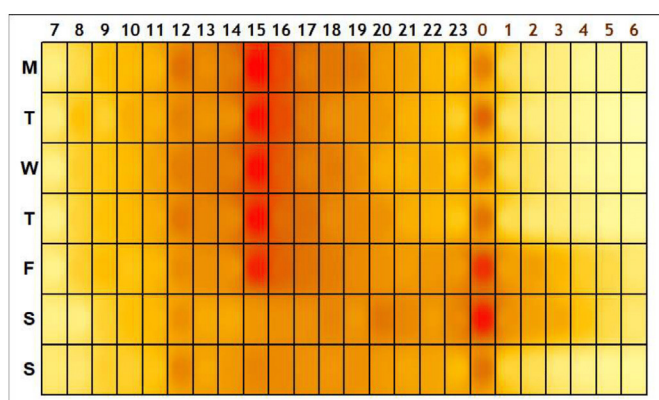


Figure 3.25 Birmingham VAWG offences 2021-2024

This temporal heatmap shows the key periods when VAWG offences are reported in Birmingham (2021-24)

In terms of location, VAWG offences are broadly distributed:

- **Residential Locations:** 29% of VAWG offences are recorded at some form of accommodation (e.g., house, hostel, flat, or hotel). For sexual offences specifically, residential locations were identified as the riskiest concerning sexual offences.
- **Public Spaces:** 21% of VAWG offences are described as outside/on street. High-volume crime occurs at late opening licensed venues within the NTE.



- **Specific High-Harm VAWG Practices**

Local data highlights the urgency of addressing specific high-harm practices prevalent in the region:

- **Modern Slavery and Exploitation:**
The West Midlands ranked as the second highest UK county for exploitation location in 2024, recording 842 modern slavery referrals. Birmingham itself has seen a 100% increase in recorded modern slavery instances in a previous year, underscoring the significant local challenge in tackling sexual exploitation and trafficking.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):**
The West Midlands has one of the highest prevalence rates of FGM outside of London, estimated at approximately 12 to 16 per 1,000 women experiencing FGM in their lifetime. Professionals have a mandatory reporting duty for FGM identified in girls under 18.

The localised data emphasises that the strategy must employ specific, differentiated action plans to effectively tackle distinct crime types, recognising that efforts focused on tackling exploitation and harmful practices (such as FGM) must differ significantly from those addressing general sexual violence or harassment in public spaces.



Public Attitude Surveys and Community Insight

This strategy is deeply rooted in the principle that our response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) must be Survivor-Centred. The voices of women, girls, victims, and survivors - often referred to as "experts by experience" - are integral to setting strategic priorities, designing effective pathways, and achieving systemic change. Hearing these voices ensures the strategy addresses lived realities, tackles barriers to reporting, and provides genuinely trauma-informed support. Incorporating Lived Experience.

Consultation ensures the approach is tailored to local needs and avoids system-level failings noted elsewhere, such as compounding a victim's trauma within the criminal justice process or limiting their confidence in seeking help. Key insights and feedback from survivor and community engagement emphasise several critical needs, aligning with national best practice:

- **Accountability and Blame:** Survivors emphasise that abuse is a choice made by perpetrators, who must be held fully accountable for their actions. Professionals need rigorous training to ensure they do not engage in victim-blaming and are competent in understanding concepts like coercive control.
- **Avoiding Re-Traumatisation:** We recognise the need to establish strong and simple pathways across the whole system (Health, Police, Housing, etc.) so that survivors do not have to repeat their story multiple times to different agencies to access support.
- **The Need for Awareness:** Survivors call for major campaigns to educate the public about the reality of abuse, challenge harmful myths, and stop the normalisation of violent behaviour in the community. They stress the need for professionals to be highly knowledgeable ("clued up") about all forms of VAWG.

The strategic objective of Collaboration to Create Change explicitly includes being informed by the experience of survivors. Birmingham's commitment to continuous learning and engagement ensures that the design and commissioning of support services reflect the unique perspectives of those most affected.

Findings from the Local Consultation

The evidence base incorporates findings from community engagement, notably the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Public Consultation Survey conducted between July and October 2024, which received responses from 2,575 Birmingham residents. The demographics of respondents - 50% female, spanning all age groups, and representing the city's diverse ethnic and religious composition - provide broad insight into local perceptions of safety and priorities.

The survey results confirm that VAWG is perceived as a primary concern by citizens:

- **Priority for Policing:** When asked about top police responsibilities, "Preventing violence against women and girls" was the fourth most-selected choice (58% of responses), ranking closely behind preventing knife crime (72%), investigating crimes (61%), and ensuring prompt response (60%).
- **Fear and Safety in Public Space:** Despite Birmingham showing overall decreases in Total Recorded Crime (TRC), perceptions of safety remain a significant challenge, particularly for women and girls.

Police Responsibility	Sections	Percentage of Responses (%)
Preventing knife crime	1,863	72
Investigating crimes and bringing offenders to justice	1,571	61
Prompt response to 999/01, getting to incidents quickly	1,558	60
Preventing violence against women and girls	1,511	58
Preventing anti-social behaviour	1,462	56

Responses to the OPCC survey 2024

What do the Women of Birmingham tell us?

89% of women felt that VAWG should be a top priority and 78% of women felt that misogyny should be considered a hate crime

Women felt safest from violence and abuse in their own homes (72%) and in their workplace (48%)

Women felt least safe from violence and abuse when walking down a quiet street (5%), in local bars and pubs (10%), and at local bus and train stations (12%)

65% of women reported that they had been subjected to catcalling and verbal sexual harassment in public spaces

47% of women reported that they had been 'flashed' by a male in public

43% of women reported that they had been sexually assaulted or raped

44% of women reported that they had been subject to domestic abuse or physical assaults

Only 16% of women reported that they had not been subjected to any form of violence or abuse

6% of women reported that they had been subjected to abuse in the name of honour, or due to bringing shame

47% of women reported being subjected to misogynistic behaviours

Only 47% of women had ever told anyone about what had happened to them

Only 11% of women had ever reported the violence or abuse to the police

Women trust specialist sexual violence and domestic abuse services more than any other service in Birmingham to deal with VAWG

Women have the least trust in social services, family courts and mental health teams when it comes to dealing with VAWG

3. STRATEGIC PILLARS AND HIGH-LEVEL ACTION PLAN

The strategy is organised around four core strategic pillars, reflecting a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) approach, with commitments defined by type of violence.

Strategic Pillar	Objective	High-Level Actions (The Commitment)
Pillar 1: Prevention and Cultural Change	To address the root causes of VAWG, challenge harmful attitudes, and promote healthy relationships and gender equality.	<p>Scale up proven, evidence-based strategies to empower women and transform gender norms.</p> <p>Implement Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) programs in schools and educational settings to promote healthy relationships and consent.</p> <p>Launch a communications campaign (e.g., referencing the UK government's "Enough" campaign model) focused on raising public awareness, challenging misogynistic attitudes, and promoting behaviour change.</p>
Pillar 2: Protection and Support	To ensure all victims and survivors receive accessible, high-quality, trauma-informed, and needs-led support, focused on recovery and resilience.	<p>Ensure specialist, culturally sensitive, and intersectional services are sustainably funded and available for all marginalised groups.</p> <p>Strengthen multi-agency referral pathways (Police, NHS, Housing, VCS) to ensure survivors do not have to repeat their story.</p> <p>Provide access to high-quality trauma-informed support, including Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and specialised counselling.</p>
Pillar 3: Pursue Perpetrators and Accountability	To hold perpetrators to account, reduce recidivism, and ensure a robust criminal justice response.	<p>Develop strategies to identify and disrupt repeat and high-harm offenders.</p> <p>Collaborate closely with West Midlands Police (WMP) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to enhance investigations and prosecutions.</p> <p>Promote the effective use of protection orders (e.g., Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs), Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders (FGMPOs)).</p> <p>Invest in and rigorously evaluate perpetrator behaviour change programmes to reduce reoffending.</p>
Pillar 4: Systemic Coordination and Partnership	To build a connected, capable, and resilient system through robust multi-agency governance and collaboration (Coordinated Community Response/CCR).	<p>Embed strong governance and oversight under the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) structure.</p> <p>Commit to robust data collection and information sharing across partners (Police, Health, Housing) to improve understanding and monitoring of VAWG.</p> <p>Ensure alignment with other local frameworks, including the Housing Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy.</p>



Building awareness of VAWG across women and girls



Achieve trauma-informed whole-system support for women and girls in need



Protect women and girls from further systemic harm, oppression, and discrimination when they seek help



Holding perpetrators of VAWG accountable and taking early action to disrupt and protect



Preventing VAWG perpetrators - education and cultural change in our children and young people



Early intervention and wrap around support in VAWG cases



Improve criminal and family justice systems for women and girls



Commissioning of effective VAWG services



Developing a coordinated community response to VAWG

4. DETAILED ACTIONS BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE

Type of Violence	Description	Key Actions and Commitments
A. Sexual Violence and Rape	<p>Sexual violence constitutes any sexual act committed without consent. This encompasses rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment.</p>	<p>Improve Victim Confidence and Support:</p> <p>1. Support Services: Ensure accessible, high-quality, and trauma-informed support services, including Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and counselling services, are available to survivors.</p> <p>2. Criminal Justice Response: Improve victim confidence in reporting sexual violence and engaging with the criminal justice system.</p> <p>Collaborate closely with partners, including West Midlands Police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), to enhance investigations and prosecutions of sexual offences.</p> <p>3. Prevention Campaigns: Implement public awareness campaigns to challenge rape culture, promote consent, and address harmful attitudes towards sexual violence.</p>
B. Stalking and Harassment	<p>Defined as a pattern of fixated, obsessive, and unwanted behaviour, which is persistent, intrusive, and causes fear of violence, alarm, or distress in the victim. This can include following, loitering, unwanted contact, or monitoring.</p>	<p>Enhance Identification and Protection:</p> <p>1. Professional Training: Enhance training for frontline professionals (e.g., healthcare, education, housing) to better identify and respond to stalking, ensuring appropriate referrals to specialist services.</p> <p>2. Protective Orders: Promote the effective use of Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) by police, courts, and specialist services to provide immediate and ongoing protection to victims.</p> <p>3. Victim Pathways: Develop and deliver comprehensive victim support pathways, including robust safety planning, mental health support, and advocacy for those experiencing stalking and harassment.</p>

Type of Violence	Description	Key Actions and Commitments
<p>C. Online Harms / Online Abuse</p>	<p>Abuse and violence perpetrated or facilitated through digital means. This includes online harassment, threats, cyberstalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images (e.g., revenge porn, deepfakes), and digital grooming. The rapid increase in online and 'online facilitated' VAWG is a concern.</p>	<p>Prevention and Systemic Digital Safety:</p> <p>1. Awareness and Education: Develop and deliver targeted public awareness campaigns focused on online safety, digital consent, and the legal consequences of online abuse. Promote digital literacy and critical thinking skills in schools and communities to build resilience against online harm.</p> <p>2. Legal and Systemic Accountability: Note that the Online Safety Act 2023 has strengthened laws around image-based sexual abuse and made coercive control a 'priority offence'. Work collaboratively with West Midlands Police and tech companies (where applicable) to improve responses to online crimes and bring perpetrators to justice.</p> <p>3. Victim Support: Enhance support services for victims of online abuse, providing guidance on reporting, evidence collection, and emotional support.</p>
<p>D. Harmful Practices: (Female Genital Mutilation - FGM, Forced Marriage - FM, and So-called Honour-Based Violence)</p>	<p>These practices are 'hidden' crimes and are severe forms of violence against women and girls involving coercion and abuse, often justified under the perceived "honour" of a family or community.</p>	<p>Targeted Community Engagement and Safeguarding:</p> <p>1. FGM Action: Continue developing the work done by the existing Birmingham Against FGM Group. Strengthen training for professionals (health visitors, midwives, GPs, etc.) on identifying signs of FGM and using FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs).</p> <p>2. Awareness and Dialogue: Deliver targeted community-based awareness campaigns, working with faith leaders and community groups to educate about the illegality and harms of FGM and to challenge harmful practices like Honour-Based Violence and Abuse (HBVA).</p> <p>3. Forced Marriage Prevention: Ensure safe refuge and accommodation options for individuals fleeing forced marriages. Promote the use of Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs).</p>

Type of Violence	Description	Key Actions and Commitments
<p>E. Sexual Exploitation and Modern Slavery</p>	<p>Modern slavery is an umbrella term encompassing human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced labour. Sexual exploitation, involving coercion, deception, or force into sex work, is a significant form of modern slavery.</p>	<p>Disrupting Exploitation and Providing Outreach:</p> <p>1. Collaboration: Strengthen multi-agency collaboration to identify, disrupt, and prosecute individuals and organised crime groups involved in sexual exploitation and modern slavery. Birmingham is an active member of the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network.</p> <p>2. Outreach and Support: Develop and strengthen outreach services to identify and engage with individuals involved in sex work or at risk of modern slavery, offering pathways to safety and support.</p> <p>3. Challenging Demand: Raise public and professional awareness of the signs of modern slavery and sexual exploitation, promoting reporting mechanisms and challenging demand for exploitative services.</p>



5. GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND MONITORING

GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Effective delivery of the Birmingham Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy demands a Coordinated Community Response (CCR). This requires a whole-system, partnership approach that spans statutory and non-statutory organisations.

Strategic Oversight and Accountability

Governance for this strategy will be managed through the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) structure. The BCSP, mandated under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, functions as the strategic oversight body, comprising senior leaders from statutory agencies who hold ultimate responsibility for setting the overarching strategic direction and ensuring effective resource allocation for safety objectives.

The day-to-day strategic management and delivery assurance of this VAWG strategy will be overseen by the **Violence Against Women and Girls Board**. This board ensures robust multi-agency governance, delivery, and oversight, and is committed to continuous monitoring and learning.

Relationship to Domestic Abuse (DA) Governance

The VAWG Strategy operates alongside its sister strategy, the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024–29. Consistent with the strategic distinction necessary due to the scale and legislative requirements of domestic abuse, governance for Domestic Abuse (DA) is discharged through the Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership Board.

This VAWG strategy will align closely with the DA Partnership Board, ensuring that the VAWG priority area within the broader BCSP framework supports the objectives defined in the dedicated DA Prevention Strategy.

The Coordinated Partnership Network

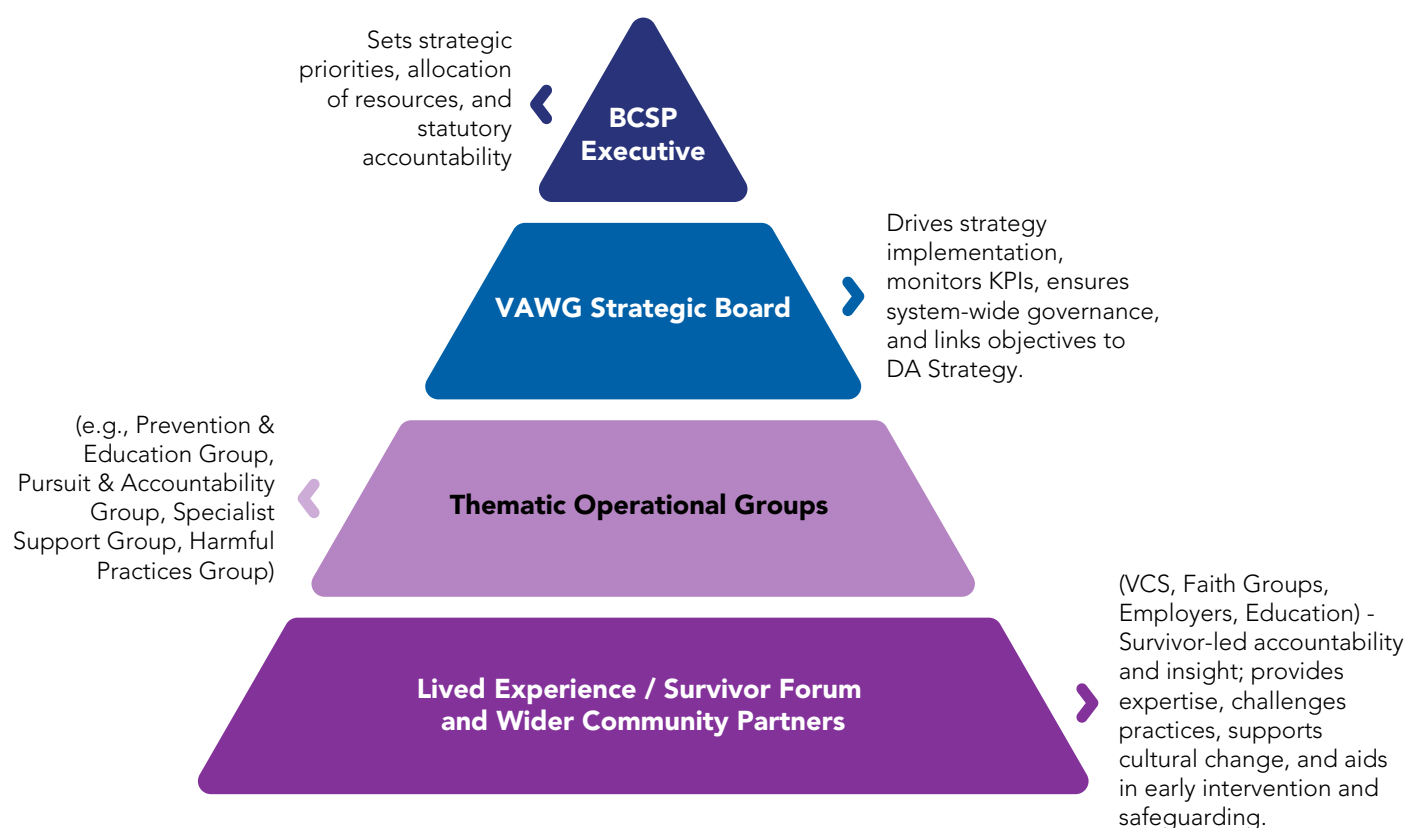
Delivery of the strategy's priorities hinges on strong, collaborative partnerships. The primary partners within the CCR structure include:

- **West Midlands Police (WMP):** A critical statutory partner responsible for law enforcement, investigation, and perpetrator accountability. Their commitment includes aligning with their own VAWG pledges and ensuring effective intelligence sharing.
- **NHS Birmingham and Solihull:** Essential partners for victim identification, health screening, mental health support, and providing trauma-informed care.
- **Birmingham Children's Trust and Adult Social Care:** Key agencies responsible for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults affected by VAWG.
- **Specialist VAWG Organisations (VCS):** These organisations (e.g., Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid) play a vital role, and the strategy commits to advocating for sustainable funding, commissioning services, and ensuring robust referral pathways.
- **Education Sector (Schools and Colleges):** Key partners for prevention education, early identification, and safeguarding.
- **Housing Services:** Important for providing safe and appropriate accommodation for survivors.
- **Criminal Justice Partners (CPS and Courts):** Essential for working closely to improve outcomes for victims and ensure justice.
- **Community and Faith Leaders:** Have a key role in promoting positive cultural change and building trust within communities.

Operational Delivery and Survivor Voice

To translate strategic objectives into action, the structure incorporates operational groups and formal mechanisms for involving lived experience:

- 1. Thematic and Operational Groups:** Operational work will be coordinated through established BCSP Thematic Priority Groups and specific task-and-finish groups, often drawing on models used elsewhere. These groups focus on translating strategic objectives (e.g., Prevention, Pursuit) into actionable plans.
- 1. Survivor-Led Design:** Reflecting the principle that all interventions must be survivor-centred, the strategy requires dedicated engagement mechanisms. Survivors with lived experience are recognised as a key partner in developing the response to end VAWG. Mechanisms such as an Expert by Experience Panel or Survivors' Forum (similar to those implemented in other strategies) must be formalised to ensure the victims' needs and voices are integral to service design, monitoring, and holding the partnership to account.



Birmingham CSP VAWG Governance Structure

Resourcing and Funding

Effective delivery of Birmingham's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy requires a firm commitment to sustainable, coordinated, and transparent resourcing, recognising that inadequate funding hinders the efficacy of prevention, support, and accountability mechanisms.

The complexity and scale of VAWG, coupled with existing local financial challenges, necessitate the collaborative pooling of resources across the entire partnership to ensure every survivor is supported.

Sustainable Funding and Local Investment

Birmingham City Council (BCC) and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) commit to utilising local funds strategically and sustainably:

- **Local Ring-Fenced Funds:** The strategy allocates the Birmingham Community Safety Grant to provide ring-fenced funding for VAWG initiatives, awareness-raising activities, and essential training.
- **Partnership Contributions and Statutory Duties:** The effectiveness of the strategy relies on maximising Partner contributions (including the NHS and community initiatives). Collaboration among partners, including local policing bodies, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), and local authorities, is mandated under the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 for providing victim support services.
- **Part 4 Domestic Abuse (DA) Duty:** BCC receives a specific grant to discharge the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 4 Safe Accommodation Duty, which ensures sufficient provision for survivors and children, particularly minoritised groups. This dedicated funding stream supports accommodation provision that operates alongside this VAWG Strategy.

- **Grassroots Support:** BCC will continue to advocate for and support specialist VAWG organisations, including those within the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), and ensure that funding is used to commission services and establish robust referral pathways. BCC has utilised Community Grants to support grassroots organisations providing specialised support for survivors from marginalised communities, such as the South Asian, Black, and Chinese communities.

Leveraging External Funds and National Grants

- To meet the government's ambitious goal of halving VAWG within a decade, Birmingham will proactively seek and utilise external funding streams:
- **External Grants:** The strategy will actively access Home Office Safer Streets and innovation funds. Nationally, the government has provided record investment, including more than £300 million in victim and survivor support funding in a single year.
- **Targeted Funding:** This includes securing funding to advance specific initiatives, such as the Safety of Women at Night Fund, which focuses on preventing violence in public spaces at night.



Ensuring Investment Parity and Sustainability

The strategy recognises critical national challenges concerning the allocation and continuity of funding that must be addressed locally:

- **Need for Sustainable Funding:** The specialised support sector, particularly 'by and for' services that support marginalised groups, relies heavily on funding, often operating in a state of existential crisis due to short-term commissioning. This strategy commits to advocating for the sustainable funding of the specialist support sector.
- **Matching Prevention and Support Investment:** While prevention and perpetrator work are significant focuses, the strategy acknowledges that investment in prevention must be matched by equivalent funding for victim and survivor support.
- **Commissioning Practices:** To avoid inconsistent service provision - often described as a 'postcode lottery' - the strategy will strive for long-term commissioning models, recognising that uncertain funding makes it difficult for organisations to recruit and retain specialist staff.
- **Accountability:** The governance structure commits to ensuring resources are efficiently utilised, acknowledging criticisms raised by the National Audit Office (NAO) regarding previous VAWG strategies, including the Home Office underspending its designated VAWG budget. Unlike some national efforts which failed to produce a joint spending review bid, Birmingham commits to ensuring funding is collaboratively coordinated among its partners.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

A robust framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning is essential to ensure the Birmingham VAWG Strategy delivers measurable outcomes and achieves the ambitious national goal of halving violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade. Learning from national reviews, this framework moves beyond simply tracking activities and inputs (a criticism levelled at previous national strategies) to focusing explicitly on outcomes that demonstrate reduced harm and improved safety for women and girls.

Accountability and Governance

The responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this strategy and holding partners accountable rests with the high-level governance structure.

- **Oversight:** The strategy's progress will be continuously monitored via the Violence Against Women and Girls Board and reported to the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Executive Board.
- **Survivor-Led Accountability:** Consistent with the survivor-centred approach, the formal integration of Lived Experience Panels and Survivor Forums will ensure that feedback, experiences, and perspectives are used to challenge practices and inform monitoring. This ensures support services are effective and empowering, and that the outcomes measured reflect improvements in survivors' quality of life.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Outcome Measurement

Measuring Success is structured around quantifiable indicators linked to the core strategic pillars, assessing both system function and resulting societal outcomes.

Pillar	Measurement Focus	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Supporting Evidence/Rationale
Prevention	Reduction of Harm/Prevalence	Reduction in Rape and Sexual Offences. Reduction in Violence with Injury (VWI) offences (high-harm indicators).	Measures progress towards the fundamental ambition of reducing the prevalence of VAWG.
Protection & Support	Victim Access, Safety, and Satisfaction	Number of referrals to support services (SARC, Police, NHS, FMU, NRM). Improvement in the feelings of safety among women/girls in the Night-Time Economy (NTE) and hotspots. Increase in the percentage of victims who feel safer or satisfied because of support received.	Measures the effectiveness of holistic, trauma-informed services. Addresses the goal of increasing support for victims and survivors.
Pursue Perpetrators	Accountability and Justice System Efficacy	Conviction/prosecution rates and use of protective orders (e.g., Stalking Protection Orders, FGM Protection Orders).	Measures the ambition to increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice and victim engagement/confidence in the CJS.
Systemic Coordination	Systemic Efficiency and Learning	Compliance with Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) publication rates. Percentage increase in organisations reporting improved confidence and knowledge in tackling VAWG.	Ensures statutory compliance and confirms that learning from reviews (DARDRs, Safeguarding Reviews) has been embedded and is sustainable across the system.

Evaluation and Learning

This strategy commits to embedding learning and evaluation across the partnership, recognising that evaluation is critical for making informed decisions and learning what works.

- **Long-Term Evaluation Plan:** This strategy embeds a long-term evaluation plan backed by appropriate resources, which is essential given that previous national strategies lacked sufficient allocation of funds for robust evaluation.
- **Adapting to Evidence:** The strategy mandates an Annual Review to adapt the strategic approach in response to performance data, local learning, and emerging threats or new statutory obligations placed by the Government. This commitment ensures the strategy remains flexible and adaptive, recognising that the landscape of violence (including online-facilitated VAWG) is constantly changing.
- **Integrating Lived Experience:** The monitoring process will formally incorporate victim-survivors' feedback into all aspects of work at regular intervals, ensuring their voices guide service improvement.
- **Scaling Up Local Innovation:** The partnership will proactively encourage and learn from local innovation, particularly concerning prevention efforts, to identify and scale up effective interventions across the city.



Data and Evidence Improvement

To support high-quality evaluation, the strategy commits to improving the consistency and breadth of data collection:

- **Consistency and Definition:** The partnership must agree on a common definition of VAWG across all partners, addressing the identified lack of a consistent definition for VAWG which previously made measuring progress challenging.
- **Addressing Data Gaps:** Efforts will be made to improve data availability, especially concerning hidden crimes, by exploring options to better understand the prevalence of FGM and forced marriage.
- **Utilising Non-CJS Data:** Recognising that most survivors do not engage with the criminal justice system (CJS), the strategy commits to collecting and utilising data held by support services to build an accurate picture of the scale of the problem and understand the barriers marginalised groups face in accessing help.



