

Analysis of the Call for Evidence responses to the Violence Against Women and Girls Funding Review

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Executive summary

In 2014, the Scottish Government launched [Equally Safe¹](#), a strategy to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). In this context, an [Independent Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services in Scotland](#) (“the Review”) was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government. The Review will produce a report by June 2023, including the Chair’s recommendation to develop a funding model focused on services for women, children and young people experiencing any form of VAWG. In June 2022, the Review launched a [call for evidence](#) to inform the Chair’s recommendations on developing the new funding model.

The call for evidence was open from the 6th of June to the 15th of August and received 475 responses for at least one question, of which 393 responses were submitted by individuals and 82 by organisations. Among the responses received from organisations, 47 were from third sector organisations, 8 from local authorities/government, 4 from NHS Scotland and 23 from other types of organisations (partnerships and other types not specified). Additionally, the Review conducted 7 roundtable events with key stakeholders during the period in which the analysis was conducted, which also feed into this report.

Alma Economics was commissioned to provide independent analysis of the responses to the call for evidence and produce a comprehensive summary of individuals’ and organisations’ views. Responses were analysed using a mix of quantitative analysis (where summary statistics were calculated for closed-ended questions) and qualitative analysis (where open-text responses were read in full and analysed using thematic analysis).

¹ This strategy was originally published in 2014 and updated in 2018.

Key findings

The quantitative analysis of the responses to closed-ended questions showed that:

- 45% of respondents agreed that services for women and children experiencing VAWG should also be provided by other organisations in addition to third sector organisations, local authorities, the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland and Police Scotland².
- 84% of respondents believed that access to services for those experiencing VAWG should be a right in law for any woman who needs them, and 82% believed this is also necessary for children or young people.
- More than 70% of respondents believed that services for victims of VAWG should be based on need in their local area and 43% of respondents believed services should be the same in every local area.
- The preferred optimum length for funding services is 5-years (34% of responses), while 31% preferred a funding period of 10-years.

The qualitative analysis of 355 open-ended responses revealed a set of cross-cutting themes, including, in order of those most frequently cited, requests for:

Single-sex spaces and services

The most frequent cross-cutting theme concerned the need for single-sex services and female-only staff. Respondents highlighted that single-sex services should be made into law, widely available, clearly advertised and co-exist with non-single-sex options.

Responses suggested that single-sex spaces are vital to ensuring victims of VAWG feel safe and protected, otherwise women might self-exclude due to religious or cultural reasons.

² 11% of respondents believed that there are no other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG in addition to third sector organisations, local authorities, the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland and Police Scotland, while 44% of respondents did not know.

Interagency collaboration and holistic approach to service delivery

Respondents described a holistic approach to VAWG as the combination of healthcare, forensic services, mental health support, financial aid, legal advice and refuges delivered in an integrated and coordinated way. Answers emphasised that victims/survivors of VAWG have multiple and overlapping needs which can only be addressed by combining services through a flexible and case-specific referral pathway. This is especially the case for victims with complex needs, such as those with addictions or mental health issues.

Funding

According to respondents, the current level of funding for services to tackle VAWG results in limited capacity to help victims and creates long waiting lists. In this context, both local authorities and the Scottish Government should provide adequate, long-term funding to plan effectively, increase the range of services offered and improve accessibility. Additionally, sufficient long-term funding would also ensure the long-term sustainability of VAWG provision, particularly regarding services provided by third sector organisations.

Training

Respondents highlighted that the VAWG workforce should be specifically trained on issues related to VAWG and have a strong understanding of the complex needs of the people they will come into contact with. According to responses, a VAWG workforce possessing the aforementioned training would prevent survivors from experiencing further trauma as well as incentivise reporting as victims will feel confident that they will be adequately supported.

Refuge

Responses mentioned the need for safe spaces, shelters or refuges to support victims of VAWG. Respondents frequently described these refuges as emergency accommodations, easily accessible and widely available to women and children escaping violent situations. Responses also mentioned timing and availability of these services, stating that it is key to ensure rapid provision and wide geographic coverage.

Mental health support

Respondents highlighted that victims of violence should have access to mental health care focused on improving wellbeing and with a trauma-informed approach. Types of support mentioned by respondents comprised 1-to-1 therapy sessions, peer support, group sessions and play therapy. Some respondents highlighted the importance of mental health support concerning self-confidence building as this would help individuals experiencing VAWG to escape from abusive partners or environments, move on from trauma and make their own choices.

Legal aid

Respondents discussed the need for legal and financial support for victims of VAWG – for example, signposting and advocacy as well as support for accessing benefits and immigration advice. Respondents also highlighted that people working in courts should have specialised training on how to handle VAWG cases and that the stigma surrounding survivors needs to be removed.

Background

In 2018, the Scottish Government published the updated version of [Equally Safe](#)³, a country-wide strategy to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which aims to work collaboratively with key partners in the public, private and third sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. In this context, the Scottish Government has implemented several interventions in collaboration with local authorities, the Police, statutory services, third sector organisations and communities. A group of experts called the [Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board](#) oversees the strategy.

An [Independent Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services in Scotland](#) (“the Review”) was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government during the Scottish Parliament debate held on 25 November 2021 to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls. According to the [terms of reference](#), the Review aims to develop a more consistent, coherent, collective and stable funding model to ensure high-quality, accessible specialist services across Scotland for women, children and young people experiencing any form of VAWG. The Review will produce its recommendations for a new funding model by June 2023.

In June 2022, the Review launched a [call for evidence](#) to inform these recommendations. The call for evidence was open from the 6th of June to the 15th of August and sought views on several areas, including:

- The types of services that should be available for women, children and young people experiencing any form of VAWG, the role of different organisations in service provision, how barriers to services can be removed and whether access to such services should be a right in law.
- How to achieve good quality in services across Scotland and address unmet needs and regional disparities.

³ Initially launched in 2014.

- How to include those who have experienced VAWG in the co-design/evaluation of services.
- The funding application process and the optimum length of funding periods to ensure the sustainability of services.
- Actions that should be taken to reduce/mitigate the impact of VAWG in Scotland.

Alma Economics was commissioned to provide independent analysis of the responses to the call for evidence and produce a comprehensive summary of the views of individuals and organisations who participated. This report provides an overview of the key themes emerging from the responses to 28 questions (22 open-ended and 6 closed-ended questions). The call for evidence received 475 valid responses, with a majority (97%) of responses submitted through the online platform Citizen Space and the remaining via e-mail. Qualitative analysis of all non-standard campaign responses could not be accommodated within the contract terms so 101 out of 221 non-standard campaign responses were randomly selected to be included in the analysis. Scottish Government officials have informed us that they have read all responses and these will be published in accordance with preferences in the Respondent Information Form. Finally, notes from 7 roundtable events, which took place while the analysis was conducted, were shared with Alma Economics and were included in the analysis.

Overview of methods

Call for evidence structure and format

The Scottish Government's call for evidence on the Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of VAWG services was hosted on its Citizen Space portal and consisted of 6 closed-ended and 22 open-ended free-text questions (in addition to 4 background and demographics questions). Respondents were able to indicate whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation and, where relevant, the type of organisation.

An easy-read version of the call for evidence was also published. Responses could be submitted via the Scottish Government's online platform Citizen Space, by e-mail to a dedicated inbox or by post. A full list of the call for evidence questions is included in Annex A.

Data cleaning

Responses from Citizen Space and those sent by e-mail were merged into a single, anonymised and final dataset. Responses received by e-mail were reviewed, entered manually into the final dataset and analysed alongside responses submitted through the online platform. Finally, notes from 7 roundtable events were reviewed and analysed. All responses were treated equally.

Offensive responses

During the manual review of responses, the research team screened responses to identify those that were clearly intended as offensive, abusive or explicitly vulgar. No responses were removed as a result of this screening.

Respondent type

Fourteen respondents selected "individual" to the question "Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?" but also answered the set of questions about organisations (organisation sector and name). The research team analysed the text in these responses and concluded that the responses reflect the views of individuals, not the views of an organisation.

Campaign responses and duplicates

There is evidence of a campaign to encourage supporters to take part in the consultation. 276 responses to Question 1 have been identified as potentially driven by the campaign, and details of the campaign have been included in the findings of Question 1 and discussed separately from the main responses. Responses to questions other than Question 1 did not seem to be driven by any specific campaign.

No single cluster of highly similar responses was larger than 3% of the total responses received for each question. While it is not possible to rule out multiple responses submitted by the same individual or organisation, responses which were similar or close duplicates were not removed from the analysis presented in this report.

Approach to quantitative analysis

Responses to closed-ended questions were analysed by reporting frequencies.

Furthermore, segmentation analysis was conducted, where responses were grouped by respondent type to investigate how views varied between groups.

Descriptive analysis was conducted on the responses to the 6 closed-ended questions using the programming language Python. The main body of this report presents a breakdown of responses to each question by respondent type (individual or organisation).

Responses received were categorised into:

- structured according to the call for evidence questions: responses were submitted to the appropriate question by the respondent, in most cases through Citizen Space.
- not structured according to the call for evidence questions and long responses (e.g. received in PDF attachments): Alma Economics' researchers assigned responses to the appropriate call for evidence question to analyse them along with the structured responses.

Approach to qualitative analysis

A thematic analysis of responses was conducted, capturing the key themes expressed by the respondents to the call for evidence. Responses to the open-ended questions included in the analysis were read in full. In the main body of this report, we present the

key themes identified in responses and a selection of supplementary quotes to illustrate respondents' views on each theme. Verbatim quotes were extracted in some cases to highlight the main themes that emerged. Quotes have been included for illustrative purposes, but these are not intended to be representative of all respondents. Respondents to the call for evidence completed a Respondent Information Form (RIF) which allowed them to specify their publishing preferences. Only extracts where the respondent indicated that they were content for their response to be published were quoted.

Structure of the final report

This report is organised into chapters that mirror the structure of the call for evidence document and presents a summary of the qualitative and quantitative analysis for open-ended and close-ended questions respectively. For closed-ended questions that are followed by an open-ended question (e.g. questions stating “please give reasons for your answer”), their analysis has been combined into one chapter to facilitate ease in reading. This report also includes a section summarising key findings, which collects themes that were repeated across several questions.

The qualitative analysis describes the most prominent themes mentioned in the responses to each question and is presented from the most frequently mentioned theme to the least. The number of themes across responses may differ due to the degree of consistency between responses – some questions have fewer themes than average when respondents are generally consistent with their answers and vice-versa.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Findings: presents a summary of qualitative and quantitative analysis per question.
- Annex A: presents the list of call for evidence questions.
- Annex B: presents the technical approach to qualitative analysis.
- Annex C: presents response rates and demographics per question.

Findings

Responses and respondents

The call for evidence received 475 total responses for at least one question, of which 393 responses were submitted by individuals and 82 by organisations. Among the responses received from organisations, 47 were from third sector organisations, 8 from local authorities/government, 4 from NHS Scotland and 23 from other types of organisations (partnerships and other types not specified).

Among all responses, 199 were identified as substantive and 276 responses as potentially driven by the campaign, including both standard (13 responses) and non-standard campaign responses (263 responses). Substantive responses were received by 120 individuals (60%) and 79 organisations (40%). Campaign responses were largely submitted by individuals (99%) while only 3 organisations responded to this call for evidence by including campaign text in their answer.

The sections below present the results of the analysis of 355 responses to open-ended questions and 475 closed-ended responses. The key themes identified from the qualitative analysis are presented in order of how often they were raised by respondents. When interpreting the results, it should be taken into account that the responses to the call for evidence from individuals and organisations are not representative of the whole population of the country. Respondents who have a keen interest in the topic and have capacity to respond are more likely to take part.

Question 1

What do you consider to be the main function or purpose of services challenging violence against women and girls?

346 responses were analysed for this question, of which 270 were submitted by individuals and 76 by organisations. The respondents included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 44 third sector organisations and 20 classified as other or unspecified. Seven themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Campaign

276 responses to Question 1 have been identified as having been possibly coordinated by an organisation running a campaign. The campaign text quoted included variations of “Your definition of woman is unlawful and it should be changed to the biological definition ‘a female of any age’ as defined in the Equality Act”. This call for evidence included a definition for woman⁴ as a clarification for Question 1 and did not require respondents to give their views on the definition provided. While these views are presented here as a result of the responses received, Question 16 asked respondents to provide further comments regarding this call for evidence and respondents’ views regarding definitions is further discussed in the findings of that question.

The majority of respondents (95%) included their own views in addition to the campaign text. Their views were analysed along with the remaining substantial responses and were included in the thematic analysis presented below.

Theme 1: Single-sex spaces and services

Respondents suggested that the definition of women used in this call for evidence should be changed to the definition stated in the Equality Act 2010.⁵ The majority of responses raising this concern also suggested that services to support victims of VAWG should be single-sex spaces such as shelters, safe spaces or toilets, as well as mental health support and health care in single-sex spaces. A few respondents sharing this view explained that some victims of VAWG may self-exclude if no single-sex services are available or are not identified as such.

“The main function and purpose of services challenging violence against women and girls is to provide that support in an easily accessible manner, namely single-sex.” (Individual)

Theme 2: Prevention services and education

Prevention services were mentioned as one of the main functions or purposes of services challenging VAWG. These were frequently described as education, policies to tackle sexism, and training to police, health workers and civil servants in topics related to

⁴ “Women means anyone who defines themselves as a woman.”

⁵ “Woman” is defined as “a female of any age”.

VAWG. The most frequent sub-theme was a suggestion to provide education to the general public on acceptable ways to treat women and girls. Some respondents also mentioned the need to educate professionals who are in contact with women and girls to identify gender-based violence (GBV). Moreover, respondents frequently stated that education could be delivered to children from a very young age in school settings.

“[...] actions to bring about societal change are one of the main functions of services and may include early interventions; education and explorative sessions with young people in groups to examine grooming, the range of abusive behaviours directed at women and girls and how that may be eradicated in the future.” (Third sector organisation)

The last prevalent sub-theme referred to strategies aimed at reducing sexism, challenging stereotypes, tackling gender inequality and addressing misogyny. In this context, a few responses also suggested public campaigns addressing pornography and commercial sexual exploitation.

“Supporting efforts to change cultural norms and attitudes, particularly amongst adult male population. At a wider level, this includes addressing pornography and the spectrum of commercial sexual exploitation.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Mental and physical health care

The need for mental and physical health care was the third most common theme across responses to this question. Respondents most frequently highlighted that victims of violence should have access to mental health care focused on improving wellbeing and with a trauma-informed approach. Some responses also pointed out that physical care should be provided, although they did not describe this service further. Finally, a few responses highlighted the need for coordinated and holistic delivery of health and physical care across all stages of recovery, from crisis intervention to long-term support.

“[...] the main function or purpose of services challenging VAWG is to ensure that women and girls have access to stigma free psychological and physical care.”
(Individual)

“We believe that services should be in place that respond to all forms of VAWG and provide trauma-informed, gendered support at all stages of a survivor’s

journey from prevention/early intervention, to crisis intervention to longer-term recovery support.” (Multi-Agency Network)

Theme 4: Refuges and safe spaces

Responses mentioned the need for safe spaces, shelters or refuges to provide accommodation to victims of VAWG. Responses described these spaces as emergency accommodations, easily accessible and widely available to women and children escaping violent situations. A few respondents pointed out that these refuges should be single sex to ensure no women would self-exclude from the service. One response explained that, in some cases, women and children need to be escorted from the property to emergency accommodation.

“We consider a safe place to live is necessary for the woman and any children, of all genders up, to around 18 years of age. This may be refuge or other safe accommodation suited to the needs of the woman, any children and pets.” (Third sector organisation)

“To provide single sex safe spaces and support for women and girls who have experienced any form of violence as a consequence of being female.” (Individual)

Theme 5: Early intervention services

Another theme raised in this question was the importance of early intervention support to address the immediate risks of GBV and ensure survivors’ safety. Respondents frequently described early intervention services as front-line services, immediate support or crisis intervention services. A few responses also highlighted the need for early risk identification mechanisms, for example tools to identify risky relationships or “red flags” and exit the violent situation at early stages.

“Immediate crisis and recovery support as well as other necessary provisions for women and girls who have experienced VAW&G” (Multi-agency partnership organisation)

Theme 6: Holistic approach to the provision of services

Respondents highlighted the need for a holistic approach to the provision of services supporting people experiencing VAWG. Respondents frequently described the holistic approach as a combination of different services working in a coordinated way to support

women and girls experiencing GBV, for example, by coordinating the referral to mental and physical health care through the staff providing emergency accommodation. Some responses also explained that a coordinated approach through different services is key to supporting victims with complex needs such as addictions, mental health issues, migration and financial issues.

“[...] a key function of VAWG services is also to work in partnership with other key services to ensure that services are easy to navigate and that women, children and young people receive the support they need at the times they need it. This includes organisations with expertise in addressing support needs such as complex trauma, mental health and wellbeing, homelessness and drug and alcohol use as well as equality-based organisations with expertise in supporting women, children and young people with protected characteristics who may face barriers in engaging with VAWG services.” (Multi-agency networks organisation)

Theme 7: Legal and financial support

Lastly, some respondents referred to legal and financial support. Responses frequently highlighted that services should be available to explain women’s and girls’ rights and help them bring perpetrators to justice. Some responses also mentioned the need for lobbying to support the increase of the rights of women. Finally, a few responses also described the importance of financial support in challenging VAWG, particularly to ensure women achieve financial independence and successfully escape violent situations.

“In addition to direct service provision to address the impact of trauma and transformation in how the wider policy and legal framework aligns and supports this delivery and intention, the function of organisations challenging VAWG should include: [...] Informing women and girls of their rights and options. [...] Lobbying to increase and progress rights of [women and girls] in legalisation and policy areas at parliamentary level.” (Third sector organisation)

Question 2

What services should be available for women experiencing any form of violence against women and girls?

285 responses were analysed for this question of which 211 were submitted by individuals and 74 by organisations. Of those organisations, 8 were local

authorities/governments, 4 were NHS organisations, 42 were third sector organisations, and 20 were classified as “other” or did not specify. Ten themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Single-sex spaces and female staff

The most frequent theme was the support for single-sex services and female-only staff. According to respondents, single-sex services should be widely available, clearly advertised and co-exist with gender-based service options. A few respondents suggested that single-sex spaces are key to ensuring women would not self-exclude due to religious or cultural reasons. Additionally, respondents who expressed the need for single-sex spaces, frequently mentioned that police and health workers should also be all female.

“Women and girls need single sex, female only services to heal from male violence. We need access to refuge, justice advocacy, initial crisis support, support groups and longer term trauma therapy. This has to be delivered by females for females which is a trauma informed way that had worked for decades.”
(Individual)

Theme 2: Mental health services

Responses frequently mentioned the need for public or private mental health care for women and girls experiencing violence. According to these responses, mental health services could be delivered through one-to-one counselling, therapy sessions, group sessions or peer support. A few respondents gave examples of alternative and less expensive treatments to provide mental health support such as offering reading material.

“Free therapy. Not everyone will feel comfortable going through the NHS when talking about rape etc. Sometimes the shame is such that they don't want it on their central record or fear their family finding out. They should be able to access private therapists too with subsidies of some sort to make it affordable.”
(Individual)

Moreover, responses suggested that mental health services should focus on trauma recovery and professionals should understand the challenges in providing mental health support to victims who also have additional vulnerabilities (e.g. addictions or disabilities). This could be achieved by, for example, integrating all services so that the person does not have to describe their experience to several professionals and re-live the trauma.

“It is also vital that the range of services in place locally have processes in place to identify and respond to the needs of women experiencing VAWG who have multiple and/ or complex support needs. This includes women in the criminal justice system and women affected by drug and alcohol use, mental health issues and/ or complex trauma.” (Multi-agency partnership organisation)

A few respondents pointed out that free mental health support services are now provided by NHS services which have long waiting lists and suggested offering interim mental health support while on the waiting list.

Theme 3: Refuges and safe spaces

Respondents requested free, local safe spaces for women and children who escape violent abusers, and a few responses also highlighted the need for single-sex shelters or special accommodations to assist women with complex needs. Most of the responses mentioning the need for refuges also considered that first-response services should be available on-site (e.g. forensic services, urgent healthcare treatment, emotional support and other crisis support services according to the needs and complexity of each case).

“In the crisis situation, somewhere safe for those experiencing domestic violence. In the first instance, that could be as simple as funded emergency hotel accommodation in a good quality hotel, followed by a reasonably quick (days) and effective investigation followed by the ability for the complainant to return to their home and the alleged perpetrator to be lawfully excluded from the address until a full, formal investigation can take place.” (Individual)

Theme 4: Legal and financial aid

Many respondents discussed the need for legal and financial support for victims of GBV – for example, signposting, advocacy to access benefits and immigration advice. A few respondents expressed that legal aid is essential for women without recourse to public funds due to their immigration status. Several respondents considered that to exit a violent abuser, women should have access to financial assistance and benefits, childcare support and access to affordable and adequate housing arrangements. Respondents agreeing with this statement mentioned that this is particularly important when women and children experiencing violence live in the same house as the perpetrator.

“I would put emphasis on more culturally sensitive interventions for migrant/refugee women and girls given the intersection of many other compounding variables. Prevention, counselling, forensic services are all crucial but so are services that are focused on helping women and girls financially - all too often when there is violence and the woman finally escapes, she ends up in poverty. Sadly, this can often be one of the main reasons that they stay (apart from fear of the perpetrator).” (Individual)

Theme 5: Prevention mechanisms

Many responses concerned prevention mechanisms, in particular the need to educate children and adults. For example, by delivering school workshops on consent, negotiation and boundaries in relationships. A few respondents proposed creating support groups to discuss the types of abusive actions and behaviours that are not always easily identifiable such as coercion and control.

“It seems that young women need validation that what they are experiencing is unhealthy or abusive, and that they are deserving of support before reaching out. This speaks to the need for better education about relationships in formal education settings.” (Third sector organisation)

“Really though we need to begin by educating girls and boys in schools. The seeds of violence and exploitation of females are worn early and currently absolutely nothing at all is done in schools to address sexism.” (Individual)

Theme 6: Skills training and employability

Some respondents suggested providing training and employment support services to women who experienced violence/abuse. Respondents raised concerns about the challenges they face in finding a suitable job and explained the need for skills development courses, volunteering and work experience placements that will allow them to gain transferable knowledge and assistance finding employment. In particular, one respondent highlighted that work skills training is especially needed for women escaping from human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

A few responses proposed granting employment opportunities in VAWG services to women who have experienced violence (see Theme 10 for further discussion of respondents' views on this topic) since such work placement would allow women to

gather further work experience and strengthen their skills, while supporting peers in the same situation.

Theme 7: Outreach and local services

Responses frequently suggested offering outreach services comprising in-school help, care workers to remain at home with women who cannot or do not want to leave, telephone-based support to engage with women who may face additional barriers to engaging with other support channels (e.g. those in rural areas). Some respondents also highlighted the need for local services (e.g. council level) stating that this will allow for better coordination with other local agencies such as police services or hospitals.

“Outreach service to reach those in rural areas with poor transport links.” (Third sector organisation)

“Outreach to include in schools-so people know where to seek help.” (Individual)

Theme 8: Health services

Respondents also discussed health service provision, with many of those respondents mentioning this service along with refuges, mental health services, financial assistance, prevention, among others. Some respondents highlighted the need for trauma-informed health support. While most responses did not describe the type of health services that should be available, some respondents mentioned mental health services, gynaecology services, forensic medical provision for rape and sexual assault and emergency contraception.

“Mental health support is vital, as is access to sexual health and maternity support for women who may need emergency contraception or who have been affected by an unwanted pregnancy, or sexually transmitted disease.” (Individual)

Theme 9: Holistic, flexible and specialised services

Respondents mentioned the need for holistic services, described as the combination of healthcare, forensic services, mental health support, financial aid, legal advice and refuges delivered in an integrated and coordinated way. Respondents frequently mentioned that a holistic service approach will ensure that the multiple and overlapping needs of women and girls experiencing violence are addressed and the pathway for each case is flexible to each person’s needs.

“In addition to thinking about the individual services that women experiencing VAWG may benefit from, there is also a need to consider the pathways of support that should be in place for women affected by VAWG within local communities. Rather than taking a siloed approach to service delivery, there is a need to adopt a joined-up, person-centred approach to supporting women who have experienced VAWG that recognises and responds to the different information and support that women may need from different services at different points in their recovery journeys.” (Multi Agency Network)

Theme 10: Trained specialist staff

Lastly, a few respondents discussed the need for staff being trained in trauma-informed support. Respondents addressing this theme highlighted that this approach would prevent survivors from experiencing further trauma, although those responses do not describe in more detail the type of training required and how it will lead to a better approach.

“Services need to provide a safe space and the people providing services need to be well trained and understand trauma and its effects.” (Third sector organisation)

Additionally, a few responses pointed out that women experiencing violence would benefit from interacting with staff they can relate to, such as people sharing similar cultural backgrounds, religion, as well as women who have gone through similar experiences. Finally, some respondents also highlighted the importance of having bilingual staff to interact with migrant communities.

Question 3

What services should be available for children and young people experiencing any form of violence against women and girls?

246 responses were analysed for this question of which 173 were submitted by individuals and 73 by organisations. Of those organisations, 8 were local authorities/governments, 4 were NHS organisations, 43 were third sector organisations, and 18 were classified as “other” or did not specify. The themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question are presented below.

Theme 1: Counselling and mental health services

Most frequently, respondents highlighted the importance of counselling and mental health support to children and young people experiencing any form of VAWG, including their families. This included 1-to-1 therapy sessions, peer support, group sessions, and play therapy.

Some responses highlighted the need for age-appropriate emotional and practical support as well as resources. Another issue brought was the need for language support to promote inclusivity, as well as removing barriers to access to services as a result of race, sexual orientation, and disabilities. Lastly, some responses expressed that people with complex needs may require specific support (e.g. disabled children).

“Services should be available and provide in-person contact post-pandemic as part of essential safeguarding. Services should provide information and training to professionals working with children about the impact of domestic abuse, how this can effect children and young people and to help prevent retraumatising children in thier daily environments.” (Third sector organisation)

“A quicker route to psychological therapies to address trauma as we have told by clients that current NHS waiting lists are 2-3 years long.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Prevention, advocacy and education

Responses also discussed the need for prevention and education on topics related to VAWG. This included preventative work in primary and secondary schools, emotional literacy, workshops, and teachers training. Additionally, risk assessment and safety planning were mentioned by respondents as a tool to help identify and respond to the needs of children and young people experiencing VAWG at an early stage and ensure they have a say in decisions made about their lives. A few responses called for advocacy around court hearings and court appointed services that will allow for a better representation of children and young people views.

“Young people should be given information about healthy relationships and tools to recognise unhealthy warning signs that are age and stage appropriate.” (Third sector organisation)

“Preventative work and awareness raising to allow young people to recognise when they’re in this situation [...] healthy relationships and expectations on how you should be treated and how to treat others.” (Local Authority)

Theme 3: Safe refuges and housing arrangements

The third most common response concerned the need for safe refuges, emergency housing and accommodation for victims and families experiencing any form of VAWG. Some respondents also mentioned that the perpetrator should be removed from the family home. A few responses highlighted that refuges and housing arrangements should be of high quality and staff working on refuges should be specially trained to support victims of VAWG.

“Support needs to be more comprehensive to assist non-violent partner to remain in their home; with perpetrator of violence the person who is removed from the property. This should be done so that non-violent parents are able to maintain their social supports, children can continue to attend their own schools and continue to maintain their activities and friendships. Where the above is not possible, emergency housing should be readily available and suitable to non-violent partner's needs. No traumatised woman or family should be moved into unsuitable housing.” (Individual)

Theme 4: Single-sex services and facilities

Respondents mentioned the need for provision of single-sex services and facilities for children and young people experiencing VAWG. Respondents frequently pointed out that such facilities and services are key to ensure safety of women and girls experiencing, or have experienced, violence. A few responses explained that single-sex services are needed for women and girls not to be further traumatised when receiving support.

“Single sex services should be available so that females are not further traumatised by dealing with men. However, men should not be present where the female victim has been the victim of male violence. It should not be on offer as a young and vulnerable girl or young woman may feel pressured into saying yes. It must be single sex.” (Individual)

“Girls are even more vulnerable than women. Forcing them to share these spaces with biological men and boys would be a massive and deliberate safeguarding failure.” (Individual)

Theme 5: Highly skilled personnel and sufficient funding

Responses requested highly skilled personnel and specialists to provide services challenging VAWG and highlighted that professionals should be trained on the subject and have a strong understanding of the needs of the people they come in contact with. In particular, respondents consider that staff should have an intersectional understanding of gender based violence (GBV) and how it affects different faith groups, the LGBT+ community, disabled people, and other groups with complex needs. Some respondents also highlighted the fact that personnel should be aware of the needs of children and young people, in particular, regarding how VAWG affects their development.

“Specialist support must be available to children and young people affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence, or other forms of trauma/ abuse. Staff should have a strong understanding of children’s rights and child development, and should be skilled in working specifically with children and young people.”
(Organisation)

“Services should ensure that staff supporting children and young people are different to those who support their parents to ensure children and young people’s voices are heard, their needs are met, and their rights are upheld. Staff in support services must have a strong intersectional understanding of GBV, and should be aware of the nuanced dynamics of abuse experienced by particular groups, including LGBT, BME, faith groups, neurodivergent and disabled people etc.”
(Third sector organisation)

Theme 6: Practical, legal and financial support

Some respondents discussed the types of practical support that should be provided. According to those respondents, the support could take the form of healthcare, financial support, social work, employment support, and legal information and advice so they are aware of their rights and able to navigate the criminal justice system. A few respondents stressed that measures against perpetrators should be stronger and more proactive, prohibiting them from contacting the non-violent parent and/or child.

“Many young women suggested that to leave an unhealthy or abusive relationship, financial support would be needed. Access to healthcare, navigating police support and social work support was also described, but that they would need to be supported to do this, either through a support worker or advocate. A few people said they wouldn't contact the police or social work, because of a lack of trust due to their own bad experiences, or perceptions of these services.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 7: Helplines, specialist forensic services and crisis support

The next most frequently mentioned theme was the availability of a helpline which children and young people needing support and advice could contact and receive crucial help and information. A few respondents mentioned the helpline could take the form of chat or message services, available 24/7. Additionally, respondents highlighted the need for specialist forensic services and crisis support where children and young people experiencing any form of violence against women and girls could get immediate expert advice and assessment.

“Single-sex advice lines, chat or message services, therapy, and refuges with help to set up on their own where required.” (Individual)

Other themes

Other themes that emerged from some responses comprised the importance of children and young people to have safe contact arrangements and confidential reporting networks, access to the same services as adults and support at school with an emphasis in preserving their social life.

Question 4.1

What role should third sector organisations play in the provision of specialist services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?

234 responses were analysed for this question of which 159 were submitted by individuals and 75 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 44 third sector organisations, and 19 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were eight themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question

Theme 1: Provision of mental health support

The most common theme was suggesting that third sector organisations should offer mental health support to women, children, and young people experiencing VAWG – particularly through crisis support services and help with the development of coping mechanisms. Respondents believed these provisions would offer immediate and impactful assistance to those currently in need of support.

Some responses highlighted the importance of mental health support concerning self-confidence building as this would help individuals experiencing VAWG to escape from abusive environments, move on from the trauma, and make their own choices. Lastly, some respondents suggested counselling and peer support groups, which were believed to allow survivors to openly express their feelings, come to terms with their trauma and find solidarity.

“The organisation should also support the service user by empowering them to make decisions regarding their own safety and experiences of violence/abuse.”
(Third Sector Organisation)

“They should give the person the feeling that they are in control, that they are heard and validated, and that they are safe.” (Individual)

Theme 2: Provision of single-sex spaces

Responses frequently highlighted the need for single-sex spaces and emphasised that the role of third sector organisations should be the provision of single-sex spaces, run by female personnel, allowing women and girls to feel safe.

“Ensure that traumatised or vulnerable women and girls are never pressured or coerced to share any accommodations, however minor, with male people.”
(Individual)

Theme 3: Working in close collaboration with statutory services

Respondents frequently shared the view that third sector organisations should have a complementary role along statutory services. Respondents believed that third sector organisations should not completely replace statutory services, rather that they should complement them with more specialist provision, working in close collaboration with the rest of the sector.

“Close partnership working should ensure seamless provision of care across different sectors and organisations. Strong partnership working between local third sector organisations providing specialist VAWG services and local public sector organisations is key to seamless pathways of provision. Public sector partners provide universal services, but also provide very specialist resources such as eating disorders teams or female offenders peer support groups.” (NHS organisation)

Theme 4: Offer security and comfort to victims

The feeling of comfort and safety that victims experience in third sector organisations was the next topic discussed by respondents. Specifically, respondents believed that victims of VAWG often feel intimidated by statutory services, while third sector organisations are perceived as parts of the local community, and thus they are being considered more approachable. Many responses indicated that third sector organisations should act as a bridge between victims and the statutory services, encouraging reporting of VAWG incidents, especially among hard-to-reach groups.

“Third sector organisations should provide advocacy and support, immediate safety advice, partnership working and also raise awareness about GBV. They are unique in that they can bring the voice of the lived experience to the statutory sector. They can support the statutory sector with public protection duties by ensuring that the survivors voice is heard. Women experiencing GBV might not want to approach the statutory sector out of fear, nervousness, and a reluctance to engage with authority. The third sector is more approachable and can be more accessible to particular groups of women, i.e., BME women, women with disabilities, etc, and can offer specialist services to these particular groups.” (Organisation)

Theme 5: Legal aid and advocacy services

Respondents also discussed the role of third sector organisations in providing legal aid and advocacy. In particular, they highlighted that victims of VAWG may encounter difficulties navigating the legal system and may not be emotionally able to attend court proceedings. Some respondents suggested that third sector organisations should advocate both for the engagement with statutory services and the legal system.

“They [i.e. third sector organisations] can provide dedicated services to women, children and young people advocating on their behalf supporting them to engage with statutory agencies. They are able to adapt and tailor their support so the individual so that a positive outcome is achieved.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 6: Housing support and refuge

According to respondents to this question, third sector organisations should have a pivotal role in offering housing support and refuge. Respondents raised concerns about the timing and availability of these services, stating that it is key to ensure rapid allocation and wide geographic coverage. Some respondents further highlighted that refuges are also needed for children and young people, regardless of whether or not they are accompanied by an adult woman.

“[young women] understand the importance of financial support, refuge, and safe spaces, advocacy and legal support.” (Third sector organisation)

“Third sector organisations can and do provide; safe and secure accommodation, counselling, emotional and practical support in a non judgemental setting.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 7: Provision of assistance and training

Some respondents suggested that third sector organisations should provide assistance to non-specialists, as well as employees of statutory organisations. The main sub-theme was the provision of training to VAWG workers and volunteers regarding trauma-informed care, types of gender-based violence, and risk assessment. The second most common sub-theme was the provision of training to non-specialists, allowing them to also support VAWG victims.

“Third sector organisations should have a greater role in the delivery of training and improving learning and knowledge across the workforce landscape. Whilst specialist knowledge and skills are essential learning can be enhanced when framed by a whole family approach. This can promote improved assessment of need for all those affected by domestic abuse (those who experience domestic abuse against them and those that perpetrate it).” (Third sector organisation)

“Supporting non-specialist professionals to meet the needs of service users most effectively and understand the complexity of VAWG.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 8: Regulation and oversight

Lastly, respondents discussed the need for regulation and oversight. While the vast majority agreed that third sector organisations should have a significant role in supporting victims of VAWG, a considerable minority believed that this role should be subject to regulations, oversight, and scrutiny in order to ensure accountability and quality provision.

“Any third sector should be closely monitored to keep from having ideological barriers put up that might prevent women from seeking help.” (Individual)

Question 4.2

What role should local authorities play in the provision of services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?

238 responses were analysed for this question, consisting of 164 individual responses and 74 organisation responses. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 43 third sector organisations, and 19 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were seven themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question,

Theme 1: Leading role and funding

The most common theme in this question was an invitation to local authorities to play a leading role in the provision of services to women, children and young people experiencing VAWG. According to respondents, a major part of their role is to provide funding for crucial support, while respondents called for a wider range of services to be offered.

Local authorities’ general knowledge of their respective local area and its needs was deemed by many respondents to be highly important in the delivery of the required services to those experiencing VAWG. A sub-theme that also emerged was the need for local authorities to be the key point of initial contact for people to access services as they are aware of the services available within their locality and can better refer women to the closest service.

“Local authority can provide support through access teams and referrals on to associated services if required. LAs have a geographical awareness and scope which can assist mapping out services and availability to offer additional support to women and girls and can also link to school/education wellbeing resources.”
(Organisation)

Theme 2: Safe housing, refuge and emergency accommodation

Respondents frequently addressed the availability of safe refuge and housing accommodations for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG. Local authorities were asked by respondents to provide emergency housing and safe spaces for victims of VAWG, as this was important for them to feel safe and avoid abusers. This

includes potential relocation of the family and long-term housing arrangements if appropriate.

“Local authorities should be able to provide emergency safe housing for women fleeing domestic violence and abuse.” (Individual)

Theme 3: Signposting, coordinating services and organisations

Another point raised by many respondents was that local authorities should mainly play a leading role in bringing together and signposting organisations and services. According to respondents raising this point, local authorities should provide oversight and monitoring of the organisations operating in their area, helping people contact those services where needed. Some respondents also felt that it was important that local authorities promote the multi-agency response in their local area, and ensure organisations and services are performing well and are properly resourced with appropriate oversight and governance in place.

“Local authorities and other public sector agencies should be partners and enablers of the third sector VAWG organisations. They should take an overview of and review the needs of services, and support the third sector organisations, sharing information and knowledge, and if possible providing resources if necessary. This need not always be funding. I believe that funding for VAWG services should not only be managed locally. Local authorities have a difficult and complex role to play in their communities, with diminishing resources and challenging local politics. I don't believe that all local authorities have the resources, knowledge or expertise to manage the VAWG funding, nor the ability to implement national policy in this complex and sensitive area.” (Individual)

Theme 4: Single-sex services and facilities

The need for local authorities to provide single-sex services and facilities to women, children and young people experiencing VAWG was commonly raised by responses to this question. Many respondents stressed that the loss of single-sex services and facilities erodes female privacy and deprives women and girls from feelings of security and comfort, especially in a time when they need it most. A sub-theme brought up in a few answers was that these services should be delivered by female-only staff.

Theme 5: Trauma-informed specialists and training

Many respondents mentioned that it was very important for specialists to be trained specifically on gender based violence and trauma-informed approaches as well as provide them with a clear understanding of the impacts of violence against women and girls and how best to support survivors to avoid further trauma.

“Specialist training should be given to local authorities to help them to support victims. When I required housing I would have appreciated being looked after by staff who had some knowledge and empathy for what me and my daughter had been through.” (Individual)

The training should provide specialists and the wider workforce with a better understanding of the root causes and consequences of GBV. Additionally, it was mentioned that further training should be available to people already working in these services.

“What may be helpful, is for local authorities to participate in training and skills audits within their areas to ensure there is a connected and informed understanding of domestic abuse. We need to be able ask the question does knowledge and understanding link to providing safe and meaningful support for women and children. Strengthening confidence in practitioners is essential where they retain a questioning and curious mindset about their practice. Aligned with this is the assessment capabilities not to focus the blame and responsibility on the women. Our experience is that many women don’t always necessarily understand what is happening and their emotional resilience has been depleted by their experiences of domestic abuse.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 6: Education, prevention and advocacy

A number of responses focused on the importance of education and early intervention, to help prevent VAWG. This included curriculums and workshops at school to educate young children on healthy attitudes and relationships. A sub-theme that emerged in some answers included local authorities being asked to offer advocacy and counselling services as part of their effort to combat VAWG.

“[...] local authorities have a role in the prevention of VAWG through education. The use of early and effective interventions, when young people either commit

VAWG or are exposed to it through indirect means, could have a positive impact on and in reducing future violent behaviour.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 7: Social security and police protection

The last theme concerned the need for local authorities to offer support to women, children and young people experiencing VAWG in the form of social security, financial, legal, and healthcare support and advice. Finally, a few respondents highlighted that police services should be taking a more active approach to protect victims of VAWG, including escorting victims and stricter measures against perpetrators.

“The police should be able to escort victims to collect their personal items from their homes or the ability to detain perpetrators to allow victims to live in peace. I don’t think victims should have to leave their homes. I think perpetrators should lose more. It never seems fair that it’s the victim who has to seek refuge away from their familiar surroundings.” (Individual)

Question 4.3

What role should the Scottish Government play in the provision of services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?

258 responses were analysed for this question of which 183 were individuals and 75 were organisations. Of those organisations, 8 were local authorities/governments, 4 were NHS organisations, 44 were third sector organisations, and 19 were classified as “other” or did not specify. There were eight themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Provision of adequate long-term funding

The most prominent theme concerned the Scottish Government’s role in providing funding to organisations and services for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG. Respondents felt that the Scottish Government should provide long term funding to enable organisations to plan and evolve depending on local needs. Some respondents also highlighted the need for ring-fenced funding dedicated specifically to services for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG.

“The Scottish Government should ensure that fair provision and funding of services are available for when and where and for how long people require it.

There should be no postcode lotteries when it comes to access support. If a local authority area is experiencing a shortfall in funding to meet local demand when it comes to support provision for women and girls, it should step in with additional funding. The Government should coordinate maximising funding, so that it isn't salami sliced or placed in funding pot silos which often result in a failure to create a greater impact. This also needs to be led by supply and demand, the Government should empower women and girls so that the funding follows them instead of the other way around.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Single-sex services/facilities

Responses to this question frequently discussed the Scottish Government's role in ensuring the provision and availability of single-sex services and facilities to women, children and young people experiencing VAWG. Some respondents proposed to also have services available to trans individuals only and consider their particular needs when designing service provision.

“Protect the legal rights of women to single-sex spaces in order to be able to target support at victims of MVAWG⁶. Recognise how women who have been victims of MVAWG can be retraumatised by the presence of male bodies/voices, and uphold their rights to female spaces, support, carers, medical treatment.”
(Individual)

Theme 3: Leadership and development of policy and guidelines

A large number of respondents urged the Scottish Government to take a leading role, setting the policy agenda and raising the profile of the issue of VAWG. According to the respondents the Scottish Government should provide the overall national strategy and delivery plan, ensure the right allocation of resources, develop evidence-based policy and guidelines for local authorities, and set targets for local authorities that incentivise progress towards elimination of VAWG. A few respondents also mentioned that access to services for all ages is important and should be part of the policy agenda.

Some respondents also mentioned that the Scottish Government should have in place a robust scheme for monitoring and evaluating services and should ensure that

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local authorities and agencies use best practice and detailed data in their decision-making process.

“The Scottish Government should set the policy agenda, then legislation if it is needed to deliver on this, however the right local resources and funding needs to be put in place to deliver on policy and legislation (not only national resources and funding).” (Gender Based Violence Partnership organisation)

Theme 4: Legislation and justice

Respondents highlighted Scottish Government’s ability to legislate accordingly in order to further protect women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls. Under this theme, the Scottish Government is urged by respondents to review the legal framework regarding women, children and young people experiencing VAWG and implement changes to further promote their safety and wellbeing.

“There should be policies in relation to zero tolerance of GBV with employees across the public sector but this needs to be driven by legislation from the Scottish Government.” (Third sector organisation)

“The Scottish Government needs to include the right communities when planning new legislation and policies, ensuring that a person-centred, gendered and trauma-informed approach is promoted, and there needs to be protection for particular communities so they can come forward to report abuse.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 5: Education and advocacy

The next most frequent theme focused on the importance of relevant education and its role in promoting a cultural shift away from VAWG. This included educational campaigns and curriculums that focus on early intervention and teaching people at a young age about relationships and domestic abuse, while being inclusive. Some respondents also felt that women’s and girls’ voices should be heard more and taken into account regarding the provision of services survivors of VAWG, especially individuals with relevant lived experiences.

“There is a need for more and better education about unhealthy relationships and domestic abuse which is preventative and starts early in formal education settings. The Scottish Government should ensure that Education should start early and

focus on dismantling the root causes of abuse, supporting young people to recognise the signs of unhealthy relationships and supports that are available. They should be expansive and inclusive, ensuring young people with varied experiences are represented and LGBTQ+ relationships are included.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 6: Definition of women based on sex

Some responses to this question discussed the difference between sex and gender and mentioned that services should be available for female victims. Respondents stated that policy design should use the definition of women stated in the Equality Act 2010.

“The Scottish Government also needs to change its definition of what a woman is to "biological adult female human" - not anyone who defines themselves as a woman - as that is not lawful in the UK.” (Individual)

“They must provide single sex services as provided for under the Equality Act 2010.” (Individual)

Theme 7: Appointment of trained specialists

The next theme concerned the need for trained specialists. Respondents suggested that the Scottish Government should appoint people who are trained and experienced in the field of GBV service delivery, trauma-informed approaches, GBV issues and challenges at a macro and micro level.

“Vulnerable people should only be served by those with appropriate and up-to-date knowledge and training.” (Individual)

Theme 8: Safe housing

Lastly, a few respondents suggested that the Scottish Government should ensure social housing and housing arrangements should be available for victims of VAWG. Respondents described safe housing as refuge and emergency accommodations.

“More laws that all councils must have plans in place for women and girls of all ages are fast tracked for accommodation in their own town/city or to move to another area still be a priority. Children of all ages need support either in or out of school to help them settle and process what has happened and that all agencies work together with, and I mean with that person needing the support.” (Individual)

Question 4.4

What role should the NHS play in the provision of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?

229 responses were analysed for this question, consisting of 158 individual responses and 71 organisation responses. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 40 third sector organisations, and 19 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were six themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question,

Theme 1: Single-sex spaces

The most frequently mentioned theme in this question was the need for single-sex spaces. Respondents believed that the NHS should have a major role in providing services for females by female nurses as victims of VAWG would feel safer in single-sex spaces. Some respondents suggested that services for other individuals identifying as women should be offered separately.

“There should be specialised training for NHS staff who may be dealing with traumatised victims as there is a lot of misunderstanding about the effects of trauma and how they present in different people. This support should always be single sex wherever required so recruitment drives in this sector should be aimed at attracting more females specifically for this role.” (Individual)

Theme 2: Mental health support

Respondents frequently mentioned the need for provision of mental health support. The majority of respondents highlighted that NHS Scotland should have a pivotal role in offering mental health services to victims of VAWG. Respondents described mental health support as counselling, encouragement and empowerment sessions. A few responses mentioned a holistic approach, consisting of physical health, and forensic examination offerings.

“Women told us that they felt there had to be better provisions for counselling and for waiting lists to be reduced for mental health support for both them and their children.” (Third sector organisation)

“The NHS should provide the expertise for counselling and medical support. Ensuring that any counselling accessed is of high quality and professionally competent.” (Individual)

Theme 3: Interagency collaboration and signposting

Responses frequently asked for close interagency collaboration such as the complementarity of provision by third sector organisations, local governments and the police. Respondents explained that each service has a different set of experiences and expertise, thus by working together victims of VAWG would benefit the most. Some responses highlighted the role of the NHS in signposting. For example, when the NHS practitioner does not have the capacity or expertise to treat a case, they should direct the individual to the appropriate service, and proactively engage with the police and other statutory bodies.

“NHS should continue to play a pivotal role in supporting and referring women, children and young people experiencing, having experienced or at risk of experiencing GBV. Expectation of true partnership working with specialist organisations should be standard across all areas in Scotland ensuring women, children and young people get access to all requisite services at any and all points of need. Partnership working should be embedded into daily practice between NHS and the local GBV specialist service providers. NHS should be represented at all GBV partnership meetings, requisite forums and steering groups” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 4: Additional training

The need for further training was frequently mentioned as one of the key roles the NHS should play in the provision these services. Respondents said that NHS staff should be adequately trained to treat the most severe cases of VAWG and be aware of practices for identifying early signs of abuse. Some respondents also mentioned the need for trauma-informed care. Lastly, a few responses suggested that the NHS should also have a role in training non-specialists and volunteers in the VAWG space.

“The NHS, while it is a fantastic service and so, nurses need to be trained, if they wish, to be a point of contact for someone who may be needing help. They need to be trained in order to see and listen in case they or another person things that

women or child needs help. A lot of the nhs staff would love to assist but unfortunately do not have the training in order to approach the person concerned. All nhs staff, from porters to reception need to have at least one person who has the training to approach the person they think needs help.” (Individual)

Theme 5: Additional specialist teams

The next most common theme was the need for additional specialist teams within the NHS. Respondents explained that this would reduce the need for signposting to other organisations and would also ensure faster and better treatment.

“Appropriate care and clear pathways for support within both universal and specialist services are core business for NHS Scotland. The role of Mental Health and Psychological Trauma Services are crucial in supporting all survivors of GBV to recover to the fullest. Further specialist services which NHS Scotland are ideally placed to provide and/or maintain include Sexual Assault Referral Services and also FGM revision surgery.” (Local Authority)

Theme 6: Routine enquires

Lastly, some respondents suggested that the NHS should have a key role in conducting routine enquires about VAWG. This theme was commonly associated with the importance of prevention and early intervention, as the NHS could improve victims’ outcomes, as well as save money, through timely identification and treatment of cases. Some respondents recognised that the NHS is already conducting routine enquires to an extent but felt that this needs to be further escalated.

“Despite routine enquiry being recommended in many health settings, the National Survivor Survey in Scotland shows than in reality, the right questions are not being consistently asked. Survivors believe this is in part due to health staff not having sufficient information about domestic abuse, including an understanding of coercive control and power dynamics, and therefore lack confidence in making enquiries. This may also indicate the need for a more ingrained and wide-scale cultural-shift to create an enabling environment for routine enquiry to be as effective as possible across all the many forms of health services.” (Multi-agency partnership)

Question 4.5

What role should Police Scotland play in the provision of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?

218 responses were analysed for this question, consisting of 149 individuals and 69 organisations. These organisations were 8 local authorities/governments, 3 NHS organisations, 41 third sector organisations, and 17 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were five themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Promote cultural and behavioural change within the organisation

The most common theme was the respondents’ suggestion for a cultural change in Police Scotland. In particular, respondents raised concerns about police officers’ attitude towards VAWG reports and highlighted that the allegations of women were not taken seriously by the police and were often dismissed without investigating. According to some respondents, police officers are sometimes biased in favour of the perpetrator. Responses also voiced the need for a cultural change resulting in officers not blaming the victim and listening to their side of the story.

A few responses pointed out that women and girls do not feel comfortable reaching out to the police as the public perception is that there is significant institutional bias and sexism, and police should take proactive action to change this perception. Another aspect of cultural change emerging from the responses was the need for Police Scotland to raise awareness around VAWG and promote a zero-tolerance culture.

“When we spoke to women, they informed us of the misogynistic attitudes they faced when reporting their experiences. They felt they were often not believed or felt pressured into not reporting the event to save the paperwork for the police.”
(Third sector organisation)

[...] we would note that some groups of women are more likely to distrust the police and justice system than others on account of other characteristics (e.g. women of colour, disabled women). The Police should take this into consideration

in their efforts to provide services - they need to firstly, build trust. More focus needs to be put on tackling the root cause of women feeling unsafe in their interactions with the police service and in society more widely.” (Public sector/ Higher and Further education organisation)

Theme 2: Additional training to be offered to officers

Numerous responses suggested to provide training to officers as they stated that police officers lack the appropriate preparation to identify and address VAWG. A few responses also highlighted the need for trauma-informed practices and training.

“Likewise, just as the NHS can train their staff on VAWG this should be the same for Police Scotland. This training could also include how police can identifying at an early stage when someone could benefit from VAWG support.” (Third sector organisation)

“Frequently they are first responders to an incident and, as such, it is essential that officers are fully trained (mandatory training) so that they provide a sensitive, trauma-informed response to survivors. This response includes making the survivor feel that they are believed.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Appropriate punishment of perpetrators

The need for appropriate and swift punishment of offenders was the third most frequently mentioned theme. Responses indicated that offenders were often not punished, or the punishment was significantly delayed and inadequate. The appropriate punishment related both to a sense of justice, but also of safety, as perpetrators released early could pose a danger again. Finally, some respondents were concerned that rapists and abusers could end up in female prisons or in women-only services and spaces based on a gender approach.

“The perpetrators of domestic violence must be detained immediately. There must be provision for arrested alleged perpetrators to be removed from the home and kept in custody pending investigations. Police must play a more significant role in alerting family courts as to the danger of awarding access to perpetrators of male violence.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 4: More female police officers

Another suggestion by the respondents was the recruitment of more female police officers. The responses highlighted that women and girls would feel considerably more comfortable around women officers and it would increase their trust in the system and reduce trauma. A relevant theme was the creation of a dedicated, specialised unit that would deal exclusively with cases of VAWG. The respondents that suggested this unit often combined it with the need for women police officers.

“Police Scotland should have dedicated women and girls protection officers in each Health Board/Local Authority area whose sole focus is to support victims and bring perpetrators to justice.” (NHS organisation)

“There should be special task forces and specialised training for officers who may be dealing with traumatised victims as there is a lot of misunderstanding about the effects of trauma and how they present in different people. This support should always be single sex wherever required so recruitment drives in this sector should be aimed at attracting more females specifically for this role.” (Individual)

Theme 5: Interagency collaboration and signposting

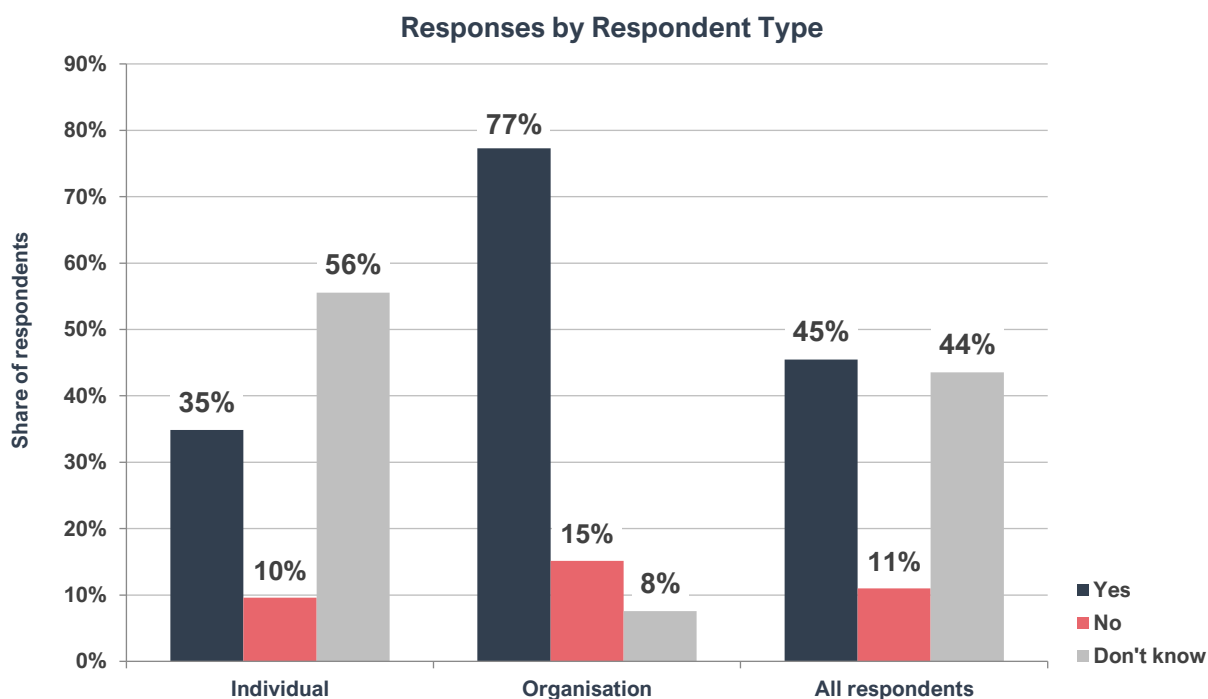
The last theme was the importance of interagency collaboration. Respondents emphasised that Police Scotland cannot and should not offer holistic support to victims. Instead, according to the respondents, the police should focus on identifying and apprehending the perpetrators. However, these responses also emphasised the signposting role of the police, referring victims to the appropriate services through seamless and efficient interagency collaboration.

“Activities in support of eliminating VAWG could also fall within the public health approach to policing, building upon recent developments such as the collaboration between Police Scotland and PHS to take a population health and wellbeing approach to inequalities, addressing the root causes of crime, and safeguarding vulnerable people in our communities. Close partnership working should ensure seamless provision of care across different sectors and organisations.” (NHS organisation)

Questions 4.6 and 4.7

Are there any other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? If yes, which organisations? Please explain your answer.

Almost half of all respondents (45%) agreed that there are other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls. Agreement was substantially higher (77%) among organisations than among individuals (35%). While the proportion of those who disagreed with this statement was similar between individuals and organisations (10% and 15% respectively), there were many more individuals (56%) who did not know whether there are other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG than organisations (7%).



The free-text part of this question comprised 126 responses from 68 individuals and 58 organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 7 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 30 third sector organisations, and 17 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were four themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Tackling VAWG is everyone's responsibility

Respondents stated that many different organisations, including private, public and third sector, are important in providing support for those experiencing VAWG. Some respondents agreed that everyone has a responsibility to do their part and can provide preventative and/or supportive services. Some respondents also suggested that organisations should receive training to be able to do so.

“[...] all services should consider what they can do to help prevent male violence and support those affected. This may not involve providing services directly, but, for example, including brief information on VAWG in staff induction training, having a poster on display and ensuring that staff members have basic knowledge of specialist services so that they could signpost women, would make a difference.”

(Third sector organisation)

Conversely, some respondents mentioned specific types of organisations and public sector organisations were the most frequently mentioned. Many respondents did not elaborate on the reasons for their choice; however, social, mental health and emergency services were identified as important for providing support. Third sector organisations were the second most frequently mentioned type of organisation, examples comprised social landlords and housing associations, faith groups, and community centres. Lastly, some respondents also stated that private sector organisations are key, in particular night-time economy organisations such as pubs, clubs and taxis.

“In Scotland we have lots of great services to choose from, and to me just about all should be there from the start to assist and support. Support services and support groups should be first on the agenda, and should be encouraged to be there straight away to make sure they are doing all they can to support these vulnerable victims and to help reassure them that they are now safe and out of harm.” (Individual)

“Church based and other religious organisations; these are sometimes the only safe places for some women, this can be the case in rural communities where fear of exposure and retribution can be greater.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Education institutions

Schools, colleges, and universities were seen as important actors in providing services for those experiencing VAWG. According to respondents, such institutions can teach young people the characteristics of healthy relationships, how to recognise signs of abuse and where to get help if and when needed. Moreover, respondents explained that student support services, such as counselling services, need to be in place for young people experiencing abuse since these are important places where cases of abuse can be identified. Finally, some responses highlighted that teachers and other staff should be trained to recognise the signs of abuse and be able to refer them where appropriate.

“We need to educate children from a young age in a stage appropriate way to understand that violence in any form is unacceptable. We need to tell them how and where they can get help. As they go on to develop intimate relationships, we need to educate them on what is a mutually healthy relationship.” (Third sector organisation)

“Teachers need a realistic understanding of VAWG, and time and resources to offer support. A dedicated School Counselling Service would be a start.”
(Individual)

Theme 3: The justice system and legal aid agencies

Some responses related to need for legal and financial advice agencies, as well as the justice system. These respondents suggested that people providing legal and financial advice should be trained to be able to provide support to victims of VAWG, highlight that people working in courts should have specialised training on how to handle VAWG cases and that the stigma surrounding survivors needs to be removed. A few respondents suggest that survivors need to have faith in the court system. Finally, some respondents also mentioned the role of independent legal and financial advice agencies, such as the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, which can help inform survivors of their legal rights.

“Judiciary of Scotland – judges receive appropriate training in VAWG matters and issues that arise for victims of VAW.” (Multi agency partnership)

“Yes, Independent advocacy services, for survivors scared to engage with statutory bodies.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 4: Single-sex services

Lastly, a few respondents shared the view that services should be single sex.

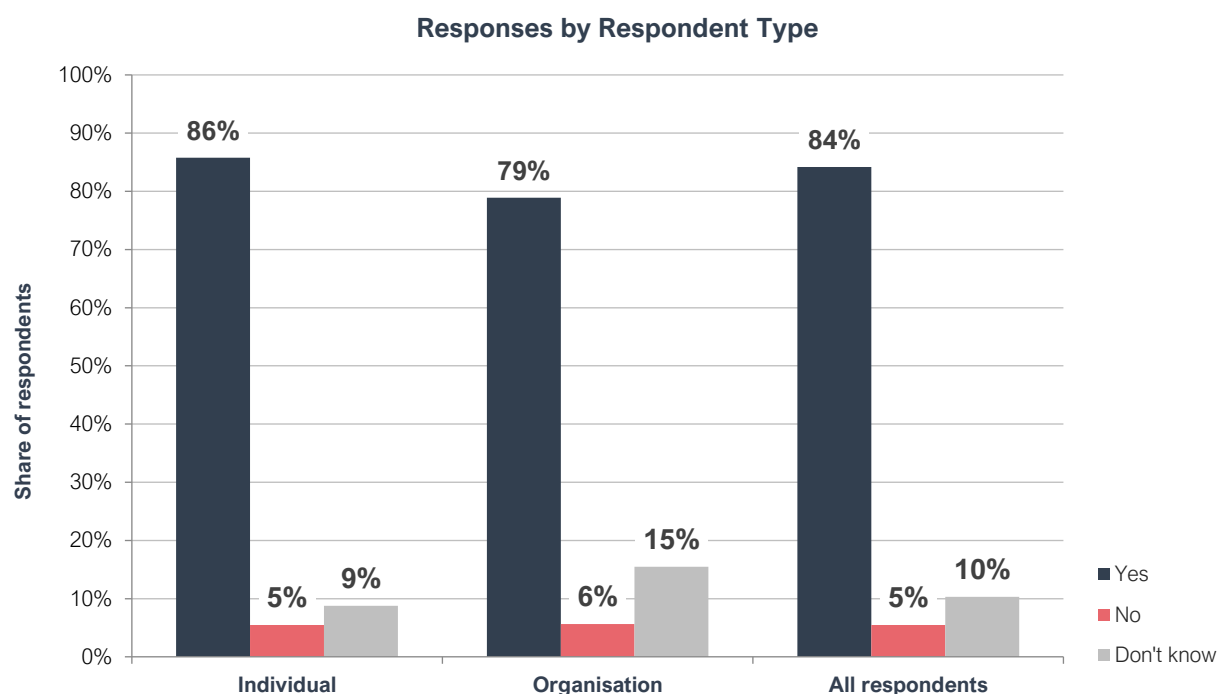
Respondents suggest that some women are self-excluding from support because many services do not guarantee single-sex spaces. Some respondents also highlighted that services should be provided by female staff.

“Any organisation that the women or child is first met with female staff who can then refer to a male counterpart if so desired The default needs to be female first or at request of the person to have an option.” (Individual)

Questions 5.1 and 5.2

Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any woman who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection? Please give reasons for your answer.

The majority of respondents (84%) believed that access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls should be a right in law for any woman who needs them. Agreement rates did not differ substantially among respondent groups as 79% of organisations agreed, and 86% of individuals.



The free-text part of this question comprised 215 responses, consisting of 141 individual responses and 74 organisation responses. The organisations that answered this question

included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 41 third sector organisations, and 21 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were seven themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question,

Theme 1: Ensuring provision of and access to services and specialists

The most recurring theme in respondents’ answers to this question was that access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls should be a right in law for any woman who needs them. Most respondents considered this essential to ensure provision of and access to services and specialists, as well as promote continuity of practice. Many respondents also mentioned access to services should be equal across all areas, and it should also be offered to those with no recourse to public funds.

“Access to the necessary medical, psychological, financial and social services should not be based on circumstances. Only by codifying the right to such services and by government then being held to account for implementation can services reach all who need them.” (Individual)

“Because it is so hard for survivors to access services - partly because of a lack of adequate services and also because of the effects of shame. Making services available by law may help break down some of the barriers for survivors and help them feel it is their right (and society’s responsibility) to have support.” (Individual)

Theme 2: A fundamental human right

Respondents frequently stressed that access to services for those experiencing VAWG should be a right in law for any woman who needs them, in order to uphold fundamental human rights. Many respondents felt that VAWG is a human rights issue, and it should be regarded as equal to any other threat to human safety and wellbeing.

“DA has lifelong implications for victims and as such should be a human right to access women's aid services.” (Individual)

“Any violence has consequences; emotional, physical, spiritual and social consequences. Many women find themselves bereft of friends and family when they escape or reject their abuser. Children may not be believed. So the wider community must step up to adequately support survivors and the loved ones of the bereaved.” (Third sector organisation)

“We do this through adopting the rule of law. The personal experience of those

directly impacted becomes the social fabric of Scotland. We must prioritise eradicating violence against women and girls, and rid our communities of it.”

(Third sector organisation)

“We do this through adopting the rule of law. The personal experience of those directly impacted becomes the social fabric of Scotland. We must prioritise eradicating violence against women and girls, and rid our communities of it.”

(Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Single-sex services and separation of gender and sex in law

Respondents to this question frequently believe that single-sex services should be a fundamental criterion if access to services should be passed as a right in law. Many answers highlighted that females have specific needs and issues that need to be treated by single-sex services and supporting them with services that are not single-sex is a breach of their rights.

A number of respondents also mentioned the separation of gender and sex in law stating that sex is a protected characteristic in law, and any legislation should refer to that. A few respondents referenced the Equality Act 2010 and the legal right to single sex services.

“This should be a legal right but further to this we already have a legal right to single sex services under the Equality Act 2010 but the Scottish government’s funding criteria prevents MVAWG⁷ services operating on a female only basis. As a female survivor of extreme male violence I currently cannot access a female only rape crisis service, I have no possibility of securing justice and have been massively financially and psychologically impacted.” (Individual)

Theme 4: Securing funding and ensuring planning of services

The next most mentioned theme focused on recognising that access to services for those experiencing VAWG as a right in law for any woman who needs them, would ensure funding for services as support would legally have to be funded. Additionally, respondents mentioned that this would make it easier to hold local authorities and organisations accountable and promote development of plans and operational frameworks for these services.

⁷ Male Violence Against Women and Girls

“This puts a statutory responsibility in place for various organisations to develop operational frameworks and processes to comply with this statutory obligation. It gives confidence to victims and a means of recourse when matters dealt with badly by involved agencies. It further creates accountability and clear guidelines as to what each agencies responsibilities are.” (Individual)

Theme 5: A strategy to change society’s perception and promote advocacy and safety

Some respondents discussed that making services for women experiencing VAWG a right in law can also be seen as a strategy to change society’s perception of VAWG and to model socially acceptable behaviour. Respondents stated that legislation against committing GBV and penalties for breaching such a law would send a strong message to both society and perpetrators as well as promote advocacy on the VAWG issues.

“The very fact it is a right in law can help to raise confidence that they have a right to be supported and heard.” (Individual)

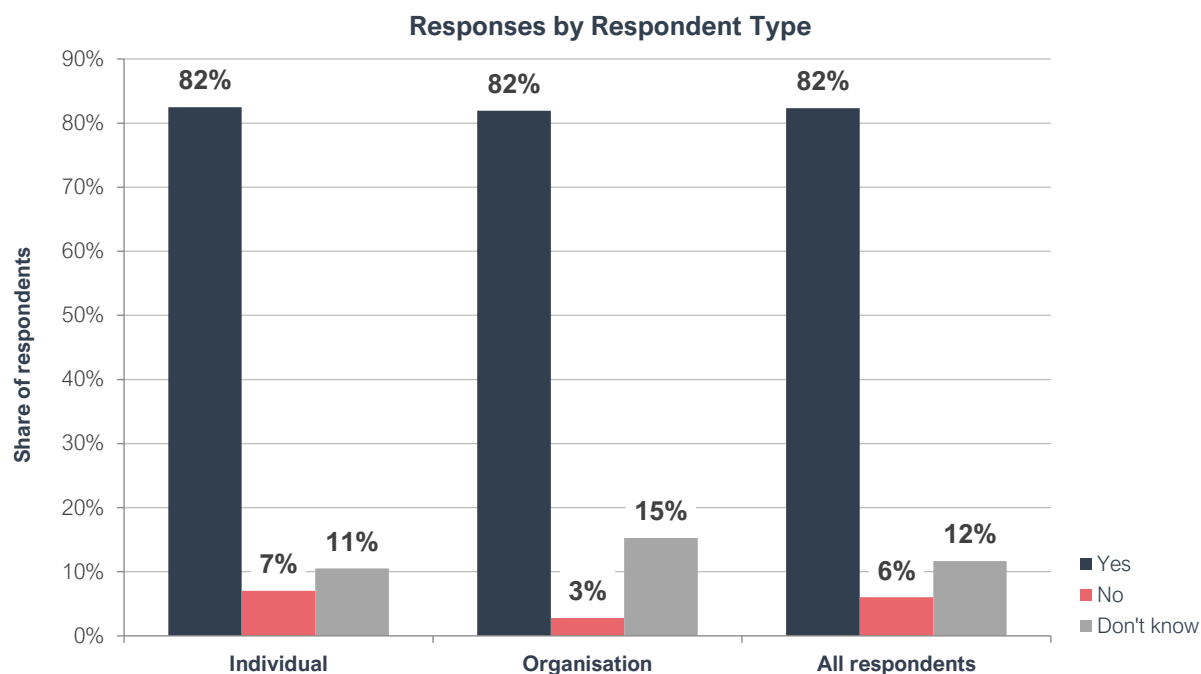
Theme 7: Unintended consequences and alternatives to new legislation

Lastly, the final topic discussed by respondents was focused on the fact that excluding male victims would translate to unfavourable treatment. Respondents also highlighted that a right in law only for women could also result in services becoming narrower and possibly a shift towards statutory services, which may reduce the provision of services from third sector organisations that are not only focused on women. A few respondents also highlighted the challenges in implementing the current policy and legislation in Scotland, suggesting that further legislation may not translate into better services. Instead, they proposed to reform, implement and monitor the enforcement of existing legislation.

“The above exclusionary proposal would be a human rights act violation on gender equality.” (Individual)

Questions 6.1 and 6.2

Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any child or young person who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection? Please give reasons for your answer.



The majority of respondents (82%) agreed that access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls should be a right in law for any child or young person who needs them. Agreement rates were identical among individual and organisation respondents (82% in both cases).

This free-text part of the question comprised 192 respondents, of which 123 were individuals and 69 organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 3 NHS organisations, 39 third sector organisations, and 19 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were five themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Acknowledging the impact of VAWG on children and raising awareness

Respondents frequently agreed on the fact that access to services for those experiencing VAWG should be a right in law because of the profound impact that witnessing or experiencing VAWG can have on children’s wellbeing – in some cases lasting for the rest of their lives. They explained that victims can experience a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health, as well as on their education and employment outcomes. Therefore, by making access to the appropriate services a right, the government would acknowledge that children can also be victims and raise public awareness regarding the seriousness of VAWG.

“Children are too often ‘hidden victims’ of domestic abuse, which has devastating effects on their wellbeing (mental and physical), social, and educational outcomes. There is evidence from research into children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, including domestic abuse, that shows they are more likely to become a victim of abuse in adulthood.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Consistency with other regulations and equality in treatment for children and adults

The second most frequently mentioned theme was that making access to services a right in law for those experiencing VAWG would be consistent with other international and government regulations, frameworks, and practices. Respondents believed that children and young people should be treated similarly with adults, specifically, having formally recognised rights, be given choice of provision, and having equal access to the appropriate services. As a result, respondents felt that the aforementioned commonalities between the rights of children and adults should be reflected in the law.

“Access to specialist services is a right under international law for survivors, including child survivors, of GBV. Incorporating this as a right into domestic law will help ensure that child survivors are able to exercise their rights to access services. It would also provide additional opportunities for redress in situations where they have been denied the services they are entitled to.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Ensuring accessibility and consistency of high-quality services

Some respondents believe that making access to services a right in law for those experiencing VAWG would improve accessibility and ensure consistency in service provision across all areas and local authorities. They highlighted that, although there are cases of high-quality support services, and adequate access to them, these are not widespread and consistent. A few responses also indicated that vulnerable groups and minorities (e.g. children in foster care, individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds) are usually overlooked, which can be improved by making access to services a right in law.

“Girls, children and young people are particularly under-served in terms of available support for experiences of domestic abuse and VAWG. (...) we recommend a statutory obligation for local authorities to provide services addressing VAWG, including appropriate specialist services for girls, children and

young people - with adequate funding attached. A statutory duty to provide support services to children would end the 'postcode lottery' for support."

(Organisation)

Theme 4: Importance of single-sex spaces

Responses frequently mentioned that single-sex spaces should be required by law. This theme was brought up particularly by respondents who believed that access to services for those experiencing VAWG should not be a right in law for any child or young person who needs them. Respondents emphasised single-sex services would reinforce a sense of safety and promote recovery among the victims.

"Any child experiencing violence should have a legal right to appropriate services. Regardless of their sex or the sex of the perpetrator. In some cases separate services should be available to children, depending on their sex and that of the perpetrator. In order to avoid exacerbating trauma." (Individual)

Theme 5: Legislation on its own is not enough

A few respondents pointed out that, even if the proposed right is made into law, more would need to be done to ensure accessible and quality support for victims of VAWG. Respondents also mentioned the need for more funding in addition to changes in the legislation. Specifically, according to those respondents, the funding should be ring-fenced for children and young people, while adult services should have separate budgets. Other respondents highlighted the need for a clear pathway for victims to access support and more specialist services.

"Creating a legal right to access VAWG services will not in itself improve outcomes for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG within local communities. Adequate resources will need to be made available nationally to ensure that local services are delivered in a high quality, trauma informed way and that robust quality assurance and reporting processes in place to monitor progress and performance. At a minimum, these processes must ensure that there are meaningful mechanisms in place to ensure that women, children and young people with lived experience of VAWG are able to provide regular feedback on whether their needs are being addressed through these services and to work

with service providers to implement continuous improvements where required.”
(Organisation)

Question 7

How can barriers to services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be removed across Scotland?

232 responses were analysed for this question of which 157 were submitted by individuals and 75 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 43 third sector organisations, and 20 classified as “other”. There were eight themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Provision single-sex spaces

The most common theme was the need for single-sex spaces. Respondents indicated that women and girls could be self-excluding from VAWG services because of the lack of single-sex spaces.

“Barriers can be removed by ensuring that 'Single Sex Spaces' are provided. It is extremely important for female victims of trauma, rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence to have single sex spaces for many reasons; privacy, dignity and safety.”
(Individual)

Theme 2: Increase funding

Responses frequently mentioned the need for increased funding in VAWG services since the current level of funding results in limited capacity to help victims and creates long waiting lists. Respondents stated that increasing the funding for VAWG services would improve accessibility as there would be more services in rural areas. Some respondents raised concern about the long-term sustainability of VAWG provision, particularly regarding services provided by third sector organisations, and suggested increasing funding to ensure all organisations are financially viable.

“Sufficient, appropriate and sustainable funding allows services to plan for the long term. There was an expectation that with strong leadership from The Scottish

Government the VAWG sector could successfully move to supportive sustainable pathways for funding vital services. Specifically, this leadership should formally recognise the continued need for funding frontline crisis services within local authority areas, while ensuring there is increased focus placed on prevention and early intervention with additional budgets made available to support this work.”
(Multi-agency network)

“Adequate and long term funding will help reduce a lot of barriers. Services need to be open at times that people can access them, not just Monday to Friday 9-5, this costs money for salaries and office overheads. More outreach services are required to that services need to be accessible to those living in rural areas, BME communities and the LGBTQA+ community.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Improve accessibility

Accessibility and inclusivity in VAWG services was a frequent answer to this question. Respondents highlighted that services for survivors of VAWG should be available in more places and also in more rural areas, ensuring geographical consistency across the country. Furthermore, provisions should be made to ensure equal access opportunities for people of different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities. For instance, some respondents suggested offering translation services to ensure accessibility of migrant women.

“Services should have disabled access, be fully inclusive, have their LGBT Charter, Care Inspectorate scores etc.” (Individual)

“Services should be accessible and barriers removed in relation to: proximity and distance; local provision; immediate/emergency access; disability access; inclusive culturally; faith and belief; inclusive in language; race and ethnicity; nationality; financially.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 4: Raise awareness

Respondents frequently stated that raising awareness among the general public would contribute significantly towards removing barriers. In particular, respondents mentioned that often people who experience VAWG are not aware of the support available, what they should do, and how to ask for help. To address these obstacles, several respondents proposed awareness raising campaigns and targeted outreach activities,

especially among under reached groups. Raising awareness would also help signal that Scotland does not tolerate VAWG and all perpetrators will be punished, while also teaching the community to identify the signs of VAWG.

“Supports available and what to expect should be clearly explained in any promotional materials. For example, who they will talk to, what type of support is offered, confidentiality and information relating to escalation, Who support is for should also be explained clearly, for example, non-binary young people or self-identifying young women including trans women. Awareness raising campaigns about unhealthy relationships, domestic abuse and support services should be targeted at trusted adults, such as parents, teachers your youth work professionals, as well as young women themselves.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 5: Provide training to VAWG workforce

Some respondents raised concerns about the lack of appropriate training among VAWG workforce and considers this is one of the main barriers facing women and girls as they feel they will not receive the help they need and therefore avoid reaching out to the appropriate services. In particular, respondents raising this theme believed that more training is required on trauma informed care, gender-sensitivity, and ensuring equal treatment of people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

“Ensuring that professionals across a wide range of agencies have the knowledge and skills they need to identify and respond to women, children and young people experiencing VAWG in a way that is appropriate to their role, is critical in removing the barriers currently experienced by women, children and young people. [...] A national approach to training and workforce development (with the opportunity for training models to be adapted to respond to local need, priorities and infrastructure) was highlighted as a positive approach to make best use resources and expertise as well as ensuring consistency of skills across the country.” (Multi-agency network)

Theme 6: Improve signposting and inter-organisational cooperation

The next most common theme was the need for greater cooperation among organisations providing services for VAWG, both statutory and third sector. Answers indicated that one of the barriers facing women and girls is identifying the appropriate

services and transitioning across them. As a result, a more integrated system would allow organisations to work seamlessly and signpost efficiently to each other.

“They should be provided centrally, there should be a national helpline/site available in multiple languages and joined up services clearly accessible to all women free from judgement and of a guaranteed standard regardless of postcode. Schools, hospitals, community services should be able to clearly signpost the route to help for women and girls experiencing violence.” (Individual)

Theme 7: Improve the relationship between support services and people experiencing VAWG

A number of responses suggested improving the relationship between support services and people experiencing VAWG. Respondents highlighted that women and girls are self-excluding from VAWG services because they feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Some answers indicated that women and girls are reluctant to use VAWG services because they do not feel they will be taken seriously. Other respondents stated that there have been cases where reports of domestic abuse have been dismissed or placed on secondary priority. Moreover, other groups of respondents considered that statutory services often take the side of the perpetrator.

Most responses highlighted that a cultural change is needed within the VAWG workforce to improve public perception and confidence in these services. Moreover, responses stated that this could be achieved through appropriate training and then reinforced through public awareness campaigns.

“Attitudinal barriers (such as victim blaming) can be addressed through training and awareness about VAWG particularly in public services where they may be less specialist knowledge and expertise. Strong leadership from the Scottish Government to increase public awareness about VAWG could support an increased awareness in society and help support a change in attitudes.” (Organisation)

“Unfortunately, many woman and girls believe that they will receive discrimination and ‘labelling’ because they have experienced violence, they fear acknowledging their experience and seeking support might bring them isolation and shame.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 8: Involve victims of VAWG

Lastly, respondents believed that in order to remove barriers from accessing VAWG services, it is vital to involve women who experienced VAWG in the design of the services and listen to their feedback. In particular, service co-design would ensure that lessons learned and best practice are integrated in the services, as well as help victims of VAWG feel included.

“There needs to be employment pathways into VAWG's services to increase representation - this way staff will understand survivors' perspectives but also survivors will see someone who looks/is like them within the services, which might encourage them to trust and try the services.” (Third sector organisation)

Question 8

How can a consistent quality of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be ensured across Scotland?

This question comprised 202 responses, consisting of 130 responses by individuals and 72 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 40 third sector organisations, and 20 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were six themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Nationwide minimum standards

The most common theme was the need for nationwide minimum standards to ensure a consistent quality of VAWG services across Scotland. Respondents believed that the consistency of quality would only be ensured if service providers had a legal duty to meet predefined minimum standards that would be implemented in a national level. The responses indicated that while minimum standards would still allow for differences in quality across regions, it would at least guarantee a certain level of quality deemed acceptable. Some respondents highlighted that similar frameworks and regulations already exist, but they would need to be updated and implemented on a wider scale.

“The continuation and development of the existing Women's Aid network of services across Scotland (under Scottish Women's Aid) is absolutely essential to

ensure the future consistency and quality of DA services.” (Third sector organisation)

“Minimum standards (like UNs' The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards) to ensure the same practice is applied across the board and support the grassroots organisations where there is a capacity issue in incorporating these.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Consistent funding

The second most common theme was the need for long term funding of VAWG services. Specifically, respondents highlighted that significant regional differences come from budget constraints. As a result, the provision of long-term funding that is consistent across regions would contribute towards minimising the differences in service provision and would allow providers to develop quality services.

“Adequate long-term funding that allows agencies to design, deliver and evaluate services that work.” (Third sector organisation)

“There needs to be consistency in funding, evaluation, and evidencing of support provided and the impact this is having on those most affected by domestic abuse.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Monitoring and supervision

The next most frequent theme was the need for monitoring and supervision of VAWG services. The answers emphasised that robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be in place to ensure consistency of quality across regions. Some respondents believed that appropriate monitoring mechanisms are required to ensure compliance with the national minimum standards, while others suggested that these mechanisms could also be used to evaluate the use of the increased funding and whether it has contributed to increased quality of services.

“Every organisation that receives funding from the public purse should be required to show how they monitor and evaluate the services provided by that funding. There should be a set criteria that is used across all services and the reporting needs to be made public.” (Individual)

Theme 4: Listen to service users and survivors

The next most common theme was the suggestion to incentivise and consider more carefully the feedback of those receiving or having received VAWG support. Respondents indicated that, in order to have a consistent standard of quality across each region, it is vital to understand the current shortfalls. Respondents emphasised the importance of seeking feedback from service users and survivors of VAWG on what worked well and what needs to be improved. Some also proposed involving survivors in the design and delivery of services.

“The Government should ask recipients of care one year later to rate services provided and act upon the womens’ feedback.” (Individual)

“Meaningful inclusion of people with lived experience of VAWG (including those not currently accessing services) in the design and delivery of service monitoring and evaluation. This could include ensuring people with lived experience of VAWG are actively involved in developing national standards/ principles to design and evaluation future models of service delivery [...]” (Local authority/government)

Theme 5: Single-sex spaces

The next most common theme was the need for single-sex spaces. Specifically, respondents believed that a consistent quality of VAWG services across Scotland could be ensured by offering single-sex spaces in VAWG services, provided by females for females.

“There needs to be a single Scotland wide set of minimum statutory standards [...] that must include the right to female only single sex services as described in the single sex exemption in the equality act 2010.” (Individual)

Theme 6: Workforce training

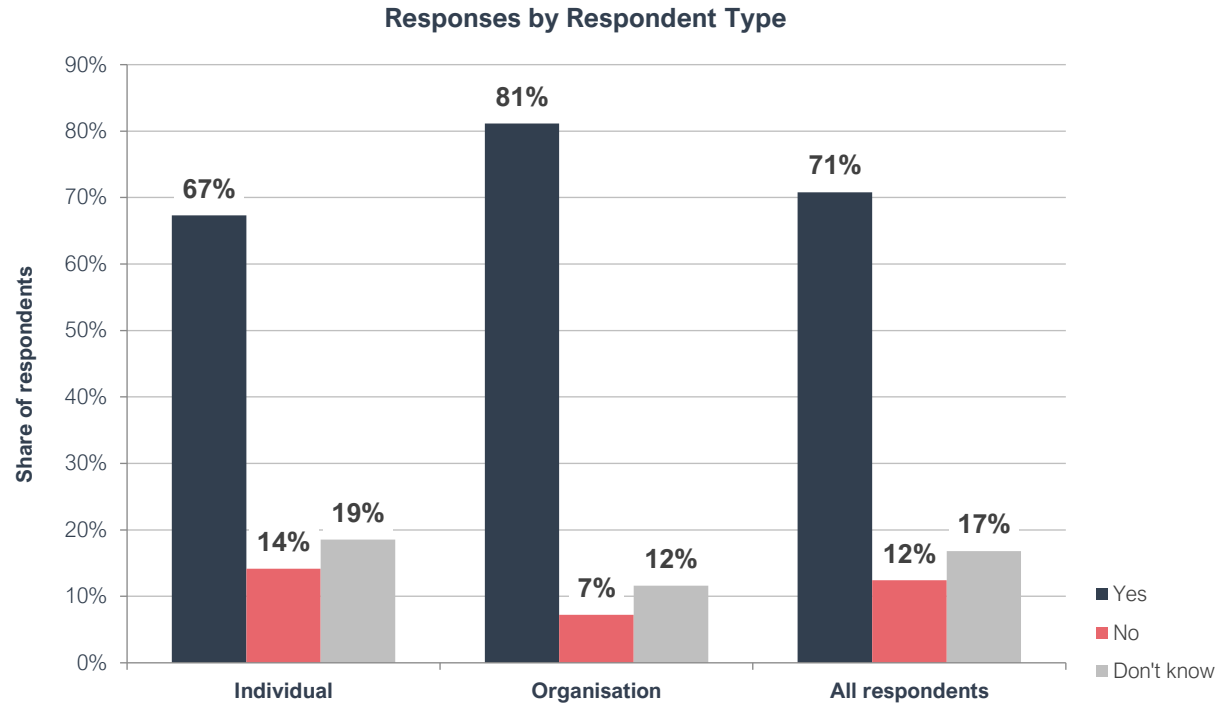
The last prevalent theme was the need for additional training among the VAWG workforce. Respondents believed that one of the main issues in the quality of provision is the inadequate training in VAWG workforce. Consequently, implementing mandatory high-quality training would increase the level of quality nationwide. A relevant sub-theme was the creation of new accreditations that would signify high-level provision.

“Ensure that staff are adequately trained and hold recognised qualification that are easily affordable and easy to access.” (Third sector organisation)

Questions 9.1 and 9.2

Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be based on need in their local area? Please give reasons for your answer.

71% of the respondents believed that services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG should be based on local area needs. Agreement rates were higher among organisations (81%) than among individuals (67%).



The free-text part of this question comprised 172 responses, consisting of 105 responses by individuals and 67 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 7 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 38 third sector organisations, and 18 classified as “other” or did not specify.

The section below presents the most frequent themes emerging from the qualitative in order of how frequently were brought up by respondents to the question. These themes were predominantly mentioned by respondents who believed that services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG should be based on need in their local area.

Theme 1: Regional and temporal differences

The most common theme was that providers and services for victims of VAWG should be based on need in their local area because this would account for regional and temporal differences. Specifically, respondents believed that there are differences across regions in terms of demographics, socio-economic characteristics, and incidence of VAWG, thus each region should have services tailored to its needs. Some respondents highlighted that regional needs also vary over years within the same area, so a frequent assessment of needs would ensure the right level and type of provision.

“Yes, funding should be provided and based on demand for the service in the local area and statistics in that area, it should not be a postcode lottery, the size of the services will vary across Scotland and should be looked at for each local authority individually based on the evidence from Police/MARAC/Women’s Aid etc.”

(Individual)

Theme 2: Minimum level of provision

The second most frequently mentioned theme was the need for at least a minimum level of VAWG provision across all regions. Respondents indicated that, regardless of the level of needs in the local area, there should be a national standard of minimum provision, ensuring a basic coverage of needs. Nevertheless, some respondents indicated that while every area should meet the minimum level of provision, there should also be scope to account for regional differences.

“Whilst a national minimum would help to create a baseline, third sector and other partners can respond to complex themes within an area - for example, prevalence of trafficking may be linked to some areas more than others hence a local response should be sought.” (Third sector organisation)

“There should be consistent services, providing an agreed minimum level of provision, but with the flexibility to amend provision and means of delivery to reflect local need.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Challenges in assessing local needs

The third most common theme was concern about the challenges in assessing local needs since reporting rates vary across local authorities and not necessarily reflect the real number of cases. Conversely, low reporting rates could be correlated with a lack of

awareness and support rather than a lower crime rate. Some answers indicated that the level of local needs could be accurately estimated by local providers offering services near the communities, thus local provision was believed to be essential in collecting the data needed to assess whether local provision is required.

“Nevertheless it is challenging to determine what local need is when it comes to VAWG - in some areas of Scotland there will be less understanding of VAWG and therefore potentially less reporting of it. It might therefore be thought that fewer services were required, when in fact even more resource is required to both raise awareness and provide support.” (Public sector/ Higher and further education)

Theme 4: Accessibility

The next most common theme was the importance of access to VAWG services.

Responses stated that provision of VAWG services should be based on local needs and placed as close to the community as possible, in order to facilitate access. This was believed to be especially important in rural areas, where women and girls experiencing VAWG might need to travel considerable distances to find appropriate support.

“These services must be available locally, perhaps using GP premises. Currently the more rural you are the less access to these services you have.” (Individual)

Theme 5: Equal provision

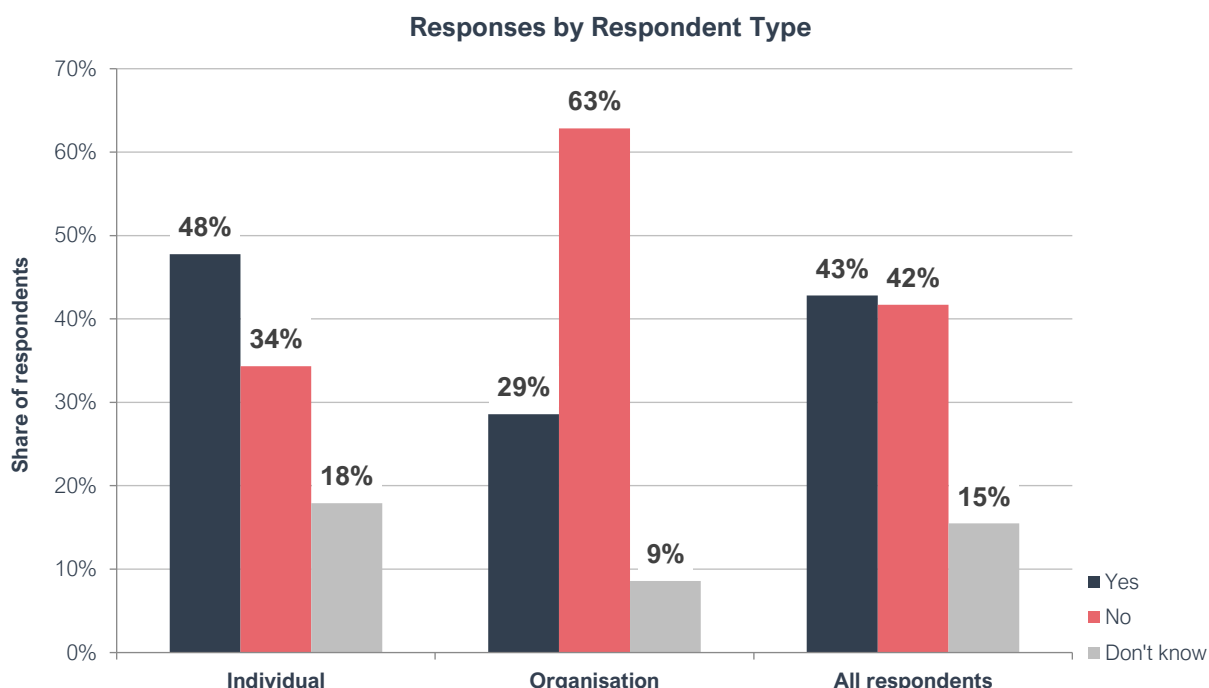
The last prevalent theme was the need for equal provision. In particular, some respondents believed that there should be an international level of VAWG provision regardless of the characteristics of each area. This suggestion was often associated with fairness and consistency, as respondents believed that all victims should have equal access to services of similar quality, instead of these being dependent on where they happened to live.

“All women and girls should have equal access to services but at present these only exist in highly populated areas such as large towns or cities. Rural areas also need adequate access to services and provision and women deserve more than a post code lottery response.” (Individual)

Questions 10.1 and 10.2

Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be the same in every local area?

Respondents were almost equally split between those believing services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing VAWG should be the same in every local area (43%) and those disagreeing (42%), while 15% did not have an opinion on the subject. However, organisation respondents were clearly against the proposal (63%), as opposed to almost half of individual respondents (48%) that were in favour.



The free-text part of this question comprised 181 respondents, of which 112 were individuals and 69 organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 40 third sector organisations, and 17 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were three themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Baseline service provision with scope to adapt

The most common theme in this question was the provision of baseline services with scope to adapt in the local context. This theme was more frequent among respondents who selected “no” in the quantitative part of this question. The majority of respondents

believed that there should be a minimum national standard of provision and common core services across the country, however, these should be adapted and built upon based on the level of local needs.

“The services need to be tailored to the population, considering cultural, religious, linguistic needs, different groups being BME, LGBT, travelling communities, people with disabilities, etc. However, the same basic safeguarding services should be provided but supported by specialist services tailored to the local area depending on demographics and needs.” (Organisation)

Theme 2: Tailored services

The second most commonly mentioned theme was the belief that services should be tailored to each local area. Specifically, respondents answered “no” to question 10.1 as they believed that the services and providers cannot be the same nationally, given each area has different needs and socio-economic characteristics. As a result, services should be adapted to address these differences.

“Services and providers should be tailored for the specific locations. The quality of the service and funding per head of population should be the same no matter if the service provision is in Glasgow, Inverness, Dumfries or Lerwick as should the monitoring and evaluation.” (Individual)

“Each local authority area will have a variety of unique challenges and opportunities. For example, the needs of remote and rural and island communities will be different to those living in densely populated cities. Services should be developed alongside the communities that need them.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Consistency and equality

The third most common theme was the belief that providers and services should be consistent across the country. The respondents frequently responded “yes” to question 10.1 as they believed that providers and services should be the same nationwide to help victims of VAWG get a consistently high level of treatment. This was often associated with promoting fairness and equality as everyone would receive the same service regardless of location and contextual factors.

“Yes they need to be broadly similar so that women / CYP in all areas get access to relatively consistent standards of support.” (Third sector organisation)

“It should not be a postcode lottery, every single woman, girl, child or young person should have access to the same services across Scotland. Consistency is needed, everyone should have access to a VAWG support service like Women’s Aid.” (Individual)

Question 11

What action should be taken to ensure unmet need is met and regional disparities are addressed?

187 responses were analysed for this question of which 121 responses were submitted by individuals and 66 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 3 NHS organisations, 38 third sector organisations, and 17 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were eight themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Increase funding

The most common theme regarding actions to address unmet need and regional disparities was funding. Specifically, respondents highlighted that the current funding is not enough to meet all needs, and the additional funds should be ring-fenced and delivered through new funding models. Some respondents believed that the funding should be proportionate to the level of needs and the size of the population in each urban or rural community. Finally, a few respondents suggested that local authorities should have autonomy in the distribution of their funding.

“Funding structures were cited as being difficult to navigate and this impacts upon the perception of parity/ equality between areas.” (Organisation)

“Strategic Assessments are part of any funding or commissioning strategy: a baseline needs to be established: population based funding may alleviate any disparity with a calculation included for rural/island communities. There must be other models developed eg ADP funding model that are tried and tested that could be adopted?” (Individual)

Theme 2: Focus on local needs

The second most frequently mentioned theme was ensuring that VAWG services are focused on local needs. In particular, it was suggested that the services should be tailored to the needs of each area as there is no universal approach in dealing with VAWG. This was often mentioned alongside the lack of services in rural areas, where respondents felt that more resources need to be diverted. Respondents also indicated that each local authority should develop and implement its own action plan and framework.

“To assess unmet needs, robust data needs to be collected resources should be flexed where possible, but it is for each organisation and local authority area to ensure that they have provision available to meet demand. We would expect to see local plans predicting demand and making contingency arrangements.” (Third sector organisation)

“Local VAWPs strengthened in order to set strategic priorities in their areas; [...] Local VAWPs [are] responsible for any additional or new projects and services to ensure in line with local priorities.” (Multi-agency partnership)

Theme 3: Conduct needs assessments

The third most frequently mentioned theme was the need to understand the current level of needs. Respondents indicated that there is a lack of relevant data, particularly at a national level, which limits the understanding of the extent and type of needs in each area. To address this, respondents proposed conducting needs assessment and data gathering exercises in each area.

“Gaps exist in coordinated and resourced qualitative and quantitative data in relation to VAWG. Thus it is difficult to understand the nature of the problem and people's experiences and thereby have the correct information in order to effectively commission and develop interventions for the benefit for women and children. Carrying out a Strategic needs assessment may help to ensure that survivors' needs are identified and will support the design and delivery of services to meet those needs.” (Organisation)

Theme 4: Inter-organisational collaboration

The next most frequent theme was the importance of collaboration among different organisations in the VAWG sector. Responses suggested that collaboration could take the form of partnerships or coproduction agreements, ensuring an appropriate level and quality of provision, and emphasised that cooperation should be implemented both at the local and national level in order to address disparities.

“Community Planning Partnerships could be a vital role in address these needs. As mentioned earlier giving people a voice and a say in how and what services should be provided will be vital in ensuing services meet people’s needs. Having this co-production may take time to lay the foundations, to (1) build trust and confidence and (2) build individual capacities and strengthens.” (Third sector organisation)

“Improve communication between government and local authorities so that issues can be dealt with from the top down. Put systems in place that ensure regional areas are communicating and sharing information and resources.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 5: Nationwide policy and framework

The next most common theme was the need for a nationwide policy and framework that would regulate the provision of VAWG across the nation, thus eliminating disparities across regions. This theme was often combined with the suggestion to focus on local needs. Some respondents proposed that the nationwide framework should ensure a minimum standard of provision in all areas, but each local authority would have the ability to adapt its provision to address its unique needs.

“In a perfect world there should be core services (refuge, advocacy, children's services, women's service, group work, outreach). there should however we scope to provide for local context, money maximization, baby banks, food and fuel banks etc. A recognition of core funds that are generic and reflect commonalities. However, scope that would allow responsivity to individuals and individual community context.” (Third sector organisation)

“We think that robust, collaborative local commissioning structures, supported by a national framework, would be best placed to identify and address new/emerging

or unmet need in local areas. We also think that national support and oversight to ensure unmet need is met would be welcome where this is evidenced locally through well-established processes.” (Local authority/ government)

Theme 6: Monitoring and accountability

The next theme most commonly raised by respondents concerned the implementation of monitoring mechanisms. Specifically, respondents indicated that a robust monitoring mechanism should be implemented to ensure a consistent and high-quality provision across regions. Some respondents highlighted the need for a nationwide framework, where it was suggested that monitoring provisions should be planned within the framework in order to ensure accountability.

“[We] believe that national support and oversight to ensure unmet need is met would be welcome. In exploring the levers for change in this area it was suggested that a stronger focus on the impact of equalities could enhance action, for example focusing on the importance of sex as a protected characteristic and collaborating with those delivering on equalities focused work could add strength to understanding disparities. There is a need to understand the differences between the needs of a city [...] and more rural and island communities.”
(Organisation)

Theme 7: Single-sex spaces

The next most common theme was the need for single-sex spaces. Respondents believed that to address unmet needs and eliminate regional disparities all providers of VAWG services should offer single-sex spaces by female workers.

“Ensure provision for women only spaces, as defined by law.” (Individual)

“Extra funding should be provided for existing and/or new services which are single sex only.” (Individual)

Theme 8: Involve people who experienced VAWG

The next most frequent theme was the suggestion to involve people having experienced VAWG in the design and delivery of VAWG services. Some respondents also suggested extending the scope of this engagement to include all women in each area in order to learn how to increase reporting rates and engagement with the services.

“Further equality impacts may be illuminated through engagement with communities utilising a Human Rights Based approach and the PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality). This ensures that communities who are currently more distant from services and the required information to have confidence in using those services can be supported to have their voices heard. This allows for communication plans around the availability of VAWG services to consider both targeted information relevant to protected characteristics and also wider socio-economic determinants including social class and stigma.” (NHS organisation)

“You should be led by the women in the know in the locality with the experience and knowledge of the issues of that particular area.” (Individual)

Question 12

How can women, children and young people who have experienced violence against women and girls be meaningfully included in the co-design/evaluation of services?

196 responses were analysed for this question of which 125 responses were submitted by individuals and 71 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 3 NHS organisations, 41 third sector organisations, and 19 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were four themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Sharing experiences and consulting

The most common theme in this question was the belief that survivors of VAWG should be included in the co-design and evaluation of services by sharing their experiences. In particular, answers emphasised that only those who have experienced VAWG can understand what works and what needs to be improved in the design of services for individuals experiencing VAWG. Consequently, respondents believed that survivors should play a critical role in the evaluation of services, both during and after their use. To incentivise survivors to share their stories, some respondents suggested the use of monetary incentives, while others proposed informing survivors that their opinion will be used for the future improvement of the service.

“We need to develop systems which survivors can access and dip into, but also inform. Women want to tell their stories but need the assurance they will be listened to and heard. Ensuring an ongoing open conversation on VAWG in all areas of society should be everyone’s responsibility.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Focus groups and survivor panels

The second most frequently mentioned theme concerned the means of engagement and collecting the feedback from survivors. The most common suggestions were focus groups and panels such as an Authentic Voice Panel. Respondents considered this could be an appropriate way for survivors to provide useful information regarding service delivery, unmet needs and good practices. Other suggestions included surveys and consultations.

“Steering groups for each organisation made up of survivors, with actual structural power - eg voting rights on the Boards.” (Third sector organisation)

“Range of ways that consultation can be carried out. Internal audits in services; surveys of service users; focus groups etc.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Single-sex spaces

The third most common theme was the need for single-sex spaces. Respondents mentioned that victims of VAWG would feel significantly safer and encouraged to seek help if all services were single sex.

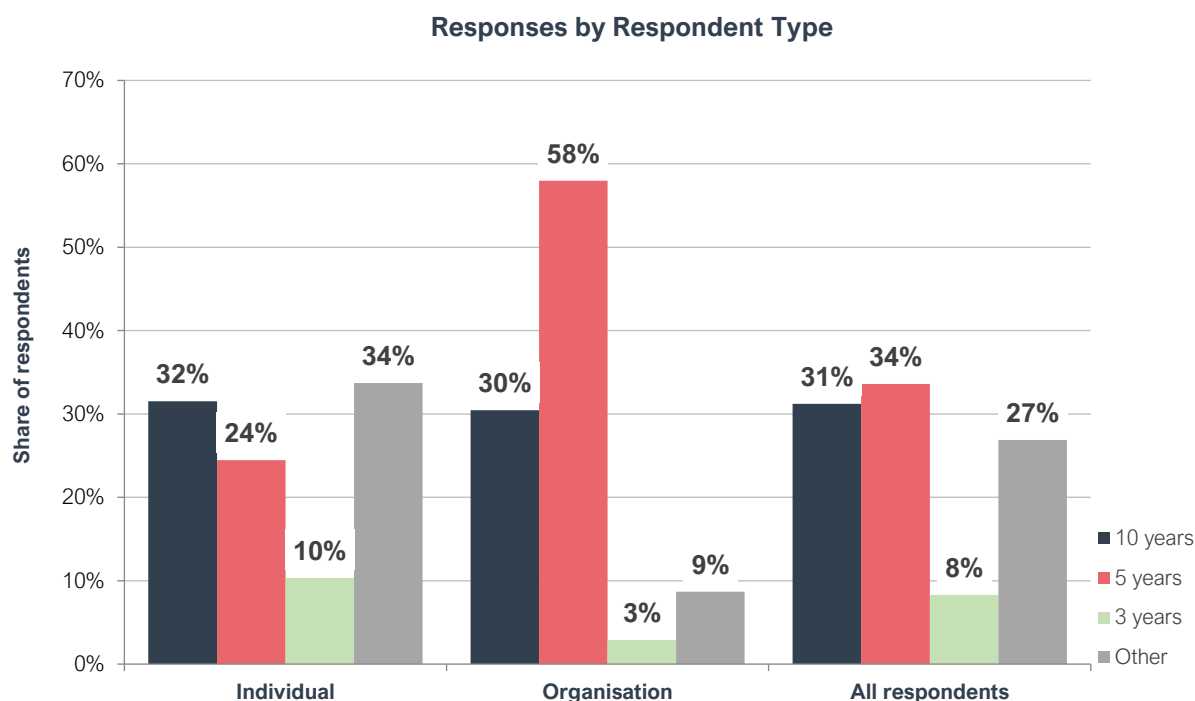
Theme 4: Recruitment and training

The next most frequent theme was involving survivors in the recruitment and training of workers. Specifically, some respondents believed that survivors of VAWG have first-hand experiences of the current services, as a result they should be involved not only in the design of services but also in their delivery. Respondents believed this could be achieved by involving survivors in the recruitment and training of workers, thus allowing them to share best practice with workers and selecting the most appropriate ones.

“Involved in staff recruitment, awareness raising and training.” (Third sector organisation)

Questions 13.1 and 13.2

For services receiving funding, what would be the optimum length of funding period to ensure they are able to continue to provide services effectively for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? Please give reasons for your answer.



The most popular optimum length of funding among all respondents was 5-years (34%), with a small margin over the 10-years length (31%). Only 8% of all respondents selected the 3-years length, while 27% selected “other” and specified a length of their choosing.

Among organisational respondents, 58% selected 5 years as the optimum length and 30% chose 10 years. A third of the individual respondents (34%) proposed their own through the “other” option and the majority of them stated that funding should be continuous. Finally, the 10-years length was selected by 32% of individual respondents and 24% selected 5-year.

The free-text part of this question comprised 171 responses, consisting of 101 responses by individuals and 70 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 7 local authorities/governments, 3 NHS organisations, 42 third sector organisations, and 18 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were nine themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Reasons listed to support 5 years funding length

Respondents preferring a 5-year period stated that it allows organisations to create long-term plans that create meaningful changes in attitudes, behaviours, and services. Some respondents believe that this length is ideal for designing, promoting, and delivering innovative, and effective services that create value for users. The third most frequently cited reason for choosing this length was its impact on recruitment and retention of VAWG workforce since it would allow organisations to invest in training and education of their workforce, while also having the appropriate funds to attract and retain the most talented professionals. Lastly, a 5-year length was believed to be appropriate for monitoring and evaluating performance of services, in order to assess whether the funding has contributed to the quality and quantity of services.

Some respondents highlighted that 5 years is a middle solution between a 3-year period- which would be too short to create meaningful changes- and a 10-year period- which would be too inflexible to adapt to a continuously changing landscape and inflation.

“A 5-year funding cycle would be most appropriate as it allows time for services to involve those with lived experience in service design, policy development, campaign work etc. in a meaningful timeframe [...]. In shorter funding cycles, it can be difficult to measure the impact of work, particularly prevention focused work. Having a 5-year funding cycle would allow time for services to track impact, changes in attitudes, changes in behaviour etc resulting from prevention interventions. Another benefit of a 5-year funding cycle would be increased job security for staff working in VAWG services; ensuring those with the relevant skills and experience can remain in the sector.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Reasons listed to support 10 years funding length

The most frequent reason to choose a 10-year funding length was regarding recruitment and retention. In particular, respondents believed that workers would be incentivised to choose VAWG services as a career path if there was security in funding and investment in training, which would be provided in a 10-year funding period. The second most frequently used explanation was that the quality and scope of planning is proportional to the length of the funding period. As a result, the longer the funding period, the better and more extensive the planning could be. However, some respondents recognised the need for monitoring and evaluation to ensure an appropriate level of services and an efficient

use of funding. A few respondents proposed funding to be conditional on annual reviews of performance.

“There can still be accountability with SLAs, terms and conditions, regular reporting and reviews. Longer term funding would allow extra monitoring and the implementation of improvement plans where issues arise but have the potential to be solved given a bit of time and effort - that's really difficult with funding deadlines looming. Longer funding terms also support better partnership and collaboration work - it's hard for any centralised databases of services to be kept up to date when services pop in and out of existence quite frequently.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Reasons listed to support other funding length

The third most frequently selected funding length was none of the provided options, as respondents opted for specifying their own preferred length. In almost all cases that respondents proposed a length of their choosing, they advocated for perpetual funding. The vast majority of respondents in this sub-theme believed that VAWG is a continuous problem that has existed for many years, it has been exacerbated in recent years, and will continue to exist in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, respondents stated that a perpetual problem cannot be solved by short-term solutions, consequently the funding should be continuous until VAWG has been eradicated. A less common justification for continuous funding was that organisations waste significant resources and time in preparing and applying for funding every few years, instead of devoting these to their service users.

“There is never been a time in the past or current times when VAWG has not been endemic in society and as it's getting worse and not better, its reasonable to conclude that they will be even more essential in the future.” (Individual)

“To change a deep-rooted idea in a society takes many, many years, so the problem will persist for decades if not longer. Hence the funding should remain for the foreseeable future.” (Individual)

“For years we have lurched from one funding redirection to another. this coupled with external threats and cuts has made it impossible to fully utilize our potential to grow and develop. Sustainable and secured funding would allow us to focus on

the work, invest in innovation and fully focus on the needs of our service users.”
(Third sector organisation).

Theme 4: Reasons listed to support 3 years funding length

The funding length most seldomly selected was that of 3 years. Respondents in this theme supported a funding length of 3-years as they believed this is the optimal length for accurate monitoring and consistent evaluation. Some respondents also proposed annual reviews, to further guarantee that progress is being made and adapt the level of funding to the changing needs.

“Three years allows services to run and review service need, allowing for increase of funding/service provision for the next 3-year cycle where necessary. If the need for the service drops, existing staff can support organisations in areas where need has increased.” (Individual)

Question 14

Should funding application processes remain ‘lighter touch’ as was the case at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, or revert to a higher level of scrutiny as previously? - Please give reasons for your answer.

183 responses were analysed for this question, consisting of 111 responses by individuals and 72 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 7 local authorities/governments, 3 NHS organisations, 44 third sector organisations, and 18 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were five themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question.

Theme 1: Quality of provision and accountability

The most common theme was the belief that a higher level of scrutiny is required in the funding application. Respondents in this theme believed that increased scrutiny would result in better quality of provision, accountability, and value for money for public funding. Others believed that scrutiny is required because VAWG services concern vulnerable groups, and as a result all organisations involved should be carefully vetted.

“revert to higher level of scrutiny - due diligence must be paid to providers as service users are particularly vulnerable.” (Individual)

“There needs to be scrutiny for every application to ensure high quality services where the legislation is applied as it should be. Scrutiny must revert to a higher level to ensure value is being delivered from the public purse.” (Individual)

Theme 2: Reduce paperwork and administrative burden

The second most frequently mentioned theme was concern about the level of paperwork required for the funding applications. Specifically, there was concern that a higher level of scrutiny would result in unmanageable administrative burden, especially for small third sector organisations with limited funding. Moreover, some answers highlighted that higher scrutiny would result in resources being diverted from service provision to administration, thus lowering the quality of services. Lastly, some respondents questioned whether there was actually a lighter touch approach during the pandemic.

“Feedback from specialist services has highlighted that recent funding processes felt unhelpful and numerous concerns were raised at the conflict the processes created between national and local organisations.” (Local authority/ government)

“We support efforts to make funding application processes as accessible as possible. Whilst we understand the need for scrutiny of public funds, we must work to find a better balance for meeting public need and providing stability for vital third sector services which can often be victim to short-term and resource intensive funding cycles.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 3: Light touch with better monitoring

The third most prevalent theme was the need for a light touch approach combined with better monitoring. Respondents in this theme suggested a light touch approach on funding application processes, as this was believed to reduce administrative burden and facilitate appropriate funding for VAWG services. However, it was recognised that any services involving vulnerable groups and making use of public funds should be subject to robust and transparent monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, the responses in this theme suggested keeping the funding application process as during the pandemic but improve the monitoring requirements through collecting more accurate and useful information.

“The 'lighter touch' approach can and did work throughout the pandemic. What this approach conveyed was that 'less can be more' and that organisations could

demonstrate impact through a range of various ways (rather than standard lengthy monitoring forms) e.g. case studies, feedback from families, professionals. However it is important that scrutiny takes place in respect of accountability. This can enable higher level of information sharing which may allow improved outcomes to be met in terms of funding for new services.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 4: Leverage existing relationships

The next most frequently emerging theme was the suggestion to leverage existing long-standing relationships with VAWG organisations. Specifically, respondents in this theme believed that there should be a light touch approach regarding providers that have been receiving funding for several years and have demonstrated quality services, while more scrutiny should be used for providers that are applying for the first time or do not have a good track record.

This theme was often combined with the need for light touch approach with improving monitoring. In particular, being in close contact with providers and better monitoring organisations that do not have a good track record will reduce low-quality services while keeping a low administrative burden for the rest.

“Lighter touch for well established services, and heavy scrutiny for first time applicants or services branching out into a new area.” (Individual)

“The knowledge and evidence based on VAWG is already well established; Organisations have already submitted numerous applications which suggest a track record which should be taken into account.; [...] The relationship between funder and organisation should be collaborative and based on mutual respect, resource sharing and open dialogue.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 5: Application assistance

The last prevalent theme was the need for assistance in the funding application process. Respondents believed that the current process creates significant administrative burden and more should be done to facilitate this process for organisations. This could be achieved, for example, with clear guidelines about the application.

“The funding application process should be appropriately robust for the purposes of credibility and governance. Such processes should be accompanied by clear

guidelines for completion, and as articulated in question 13, should provide detail on the strategic aims to be delivered and the information and data requirements to be provided for assurance.” (Organisation)

Question 15

What is the single most important thing that can be done to reduce/mitigate the impact of violence against women and girls?

This question comprised 237 responses, consisting of 164 responses by individuals and 73 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 4 NHS organisations, 43 third sector organisations, and 18 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were six themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question

Theme 1: Early education

The most commonly mentioned theme in this question was the need for early education. Respondents in this theme emphasised the importance of educating men, as young as possible, on the rights of women, the concept of consent, the importance of boundaries, and how to treat other people respectfully.

“Education has a strong part to play in reducing the impact of VAWG. Educating people around issues relating to VAWG will bring home the profound effects such violence has on the lives of victims and survivors and help to make it socially unacceptable in Scottish society.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 2: Awareness raising and societal change

The second most frequent theme was the need for societal change through awareness raising. In particular, respondents in this theme believed that there needs to be a broader change in society around gender roles and stereotypes, the place of women in society, and public perception of VAWG. Specifically, respondents wished a change in society and public perception under which VAWG would be deemed completely unacceptable. This theme was often combined with the need for early education, as education was believed to be one of the main drivers of cultural change.

“This is a complex issue to boil down to a single component but tackling the issue at source should be a focus. In other words, ensuring that men don't perpetrate

the violence in the first place by challenging patriarchal societal hegemony. This is a matter of combatting deep rooted inequality and misogynistic mentalities. On a wider level, continuing to increase women's participation and influence in all areas of society is important to overcome systemic misogyny.” (individual)

Theme 3: Single-sex spaces

The third most frequently mentioned theme was the need for single-sex spaces. Respondents in this theme believed that the most important thing that can be done to mitigate the impact of VAWG is to ensure the provision of single-sex spaces, thus making victims feel safe.

“Remove and exclude men from female spaces across the board. Single sex spaces will ensure higher uptake of services by females.” (Individual)

Theme 4: Funding

The next factor most commonly cited was funding. Specifically, that the current level of service provision could be significantly increased with the appropriate level of funding.

“Adequately fund services to ensure the delivery of meaningful services to women children and young people, to work within our communities, to challenge damaging patriarchal norms, to raise awareness, to work with all ages in schools and in communities, to work within professional equitable working environments, to provide safe specialist support for all women, children and young people.” (Organisation)

Theme 5: Early intervention and prevention

The next most common theme was the importance of early intervention and prevention. In particular, answers in this theme indicated that the most impactful change that could be made in VAWG would be prevention and early interventions. These actions were believed to address the problem early and thus minimise its impact.

“We recognise that domestic abuse is preventable. The Scottish Government must invest in the specialist services who have expertise to deliver prevention work. This must include early years, primary/secondary schools, higher education and wider community settings. Investment in primary prevention as well as the systems that protect women from further harm is crucial, and we believe the

Scottish Government has an opportunity to create a model to address this within the funding review.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 6: Punish perpetrators

The last prevalent theme in this question was the need for timely and proportionate punishment of perpetrators. In particular, it was believed that appropriate punishment (such as tougher sentences or increasing imprisonment time) would discourage future offences and also help in the recovery of the victims.

“Perpetrator Intervention - it is their violence and negative choices that has created the harm and trauma women and girls experience and it is them who need to change their behaviour. [...]. Perpetrators who don't accept responsibility for their behaviour or recognise the impact of their harm and violence always continue to perpetrate harm - whether that is on the immediate non-violent partner and children or future partners and children; if their behaviour is not addressed they continue to cause a ripple effect of harm.” (Third sector organisation)

Question 16

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

This question comprised 169 responses, consisting of 115 responses by individuals and 54 by organisations. The organisations that answered this question included 8 local authorities/governments, 1 NHS organisation, 32 third sector organisations, and 13 classified as “other” or did not specify. There were five themes emerging from the qualitative analysis of the free-text responses to this question

Theme 1: Definition of women based on sex

The most common theme in this question was disagreement over the definition of women as per the call for evidence document. Specifically, respondents believed that the definition used is unlawful and the correct definition should exclude trans women and men who identify as women.

“You can not begin to seriously help women until you acknowledge our existence and treat single sex women as a protected group. This is not to diminish the rights of anyone else but it should not be done to the detriment of single sex women.”
(Individual)

Theme 2: Single-sex spaces

The second most common theme was the need for single sex spaces. In particular, respondents in this theme emphasised that victims of VAWG feel safe only in single-sex spaces and when the support is offered by women workers. This theme was often linked with the disagreement over the definition of women, as some respondents believed that trans women and men identifying as women should be excluded from single-sex spaces.

“This exercise is pointless while the Scottish Government operates under the legal fiction of self-identification of sex and ignores its obligations under the Equality Act to protect the single-sex spaces and services needed by females of all ages. Anything less is to force women and girls to self-exclude, and make them even more vulnerable.” (Individual)

Theme 3: Funding

The third most frequently mentioned theme was the need for further funding. Respondents used this question to reiterate the importance of adequate funding regarding the quality and consistency of VAWG services.

“There is some fantastic work being undertaken by VAWG partnerships across the country who are all working together with specialised third sector organisations such as Sacro. It is essential that these are adequately and realistically funded. Those receiving funding should be scrutinised and evaluated to ensure they are providing gold standard services and achieving their stated outcomes.” (Third sector organisation)

Theme 4: Partnerships and collaboration

The next most common theme was the importance of partnerships and collaboration. According to the respondents, VAWG is a multi-faceted problem which cannot be addressed by a single organisation or with a single intervention. As a result, it was believed that close collaboration between public and third sector organisations is required in order to improve the quality of services.

“Finally, there needs to be more strategic alignment, collaboration and discussion in ensuring that the services funded through the SG directly are meeting the needs of universities and colleges for those services. We recognise the role universities and some colleges can play in resourcing the services directly, but a more joined

up approach across Scotland is required in order to ensure the needs of all women and girls are met.” (Organisation)

Theme 5: Listen to victims

The last prominent theme was the need to collect and take into account feedback from victims and survivors of VAWG. This was primarily mentioned in relation to coproduction, and evaluation of services.

“[...] believe that a key element of tackling VAWG is the partnership between local authorities key public and third sector organisations. Working in collaboratively to design services to meet the local need. These discussions should also include survivors themselves who know best what survivors both need and would like to see to assist them in dealing with violence and sexual abuse. This was a key priority during the lockdown period and specific guidance (Coronavirus (COVID-19) Supplementary National Violence Against Women Guidance) was produced we would like to see a similar approach for the longer term.” (Third sector organisation)

Annex A: List of call for evidence questions

Questions about the respondent

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation? If you are responding as an organisation: What is your organisation? Which sector is your organisation in?

Call for evidence questions

Q1. What do you consider to be the main function or purpose of services challenging violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q2. What services should be available for women experiencing any form of violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q3. What services should be available for children and young people experiencing any form of violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q4.1. What role should third sector organisations play in the provision of specialist services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q4.2. What role should local authorities play in the provision of services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q4.3. What role should the Scottish Government play in the provision of services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q4.4. What role should the NHS play in the provision of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q4.5. What role should Police Scotland play in the provision of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q4.6. Are there any other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please select your response from the drop-down menu

Q4.7. Are there any other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - If yes, which organisations? Please explain your answer.

Q5.1. Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any woman who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection? - Please select your response from the drop down menu

Q5.2. Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any woman who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q6.1. Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any child or young person who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection? - Please select your response from the drop down menu

Q6.2. Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any child or young person who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection? - Please give reasons for your answers.

Q7. How can barriers to services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be removed across Scotland? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q8. How can a consistent quality of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be ensured across Scotland? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q9.1. Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls and providers be based on need in their local area? - Please select your response from the drop down menu

Q9.2. Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls and providers be based on need in their local area? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q10.1. Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be the same in every local area? - Please select your response from the drop down menu

Q10.2. Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be the same in every local area? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q11. What action should be taken to ensure unmet need is met and regional disparities are addressed? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q12. How can women, children and young people who have experienced violence against women and girls be meaningfully included in the co-design/evaluation of services? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q13.1. For services receiving funding, what would be the optimum length of funding period to ensure they are able to continue to provide services effectively for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please select your response from the drop down menu

Q13.1. For services receiving funding, what would be the optimum length of funding period to ensure they are able to continue to provide services effectively for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - If other, how long?

Q13.2. For services receiving funding, what would be the optimum length of funding period to ensure they are able to continue to provide services effectively for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q14. Should funding application processes remain 'lighter touch' as was the case at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, or revert to a higher level of scrutiny as previously? - Please give reasons for your answer.

Q15. What is the single most important thing that can be done to reduce/mitigate the impact of violence against women and girls? - Please add your response in the text box.

Q16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us? - Please add your response in the text box.

Questions related to privacy

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference: Do not publish response/ Publish response with name/ Publish response only (without name)

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission. I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

Annex B: Technical approach to qualitative analysis

The call for evidence included 22 open-ended questions with free-text fields. To analyse these responses, the research team followed the following approach:

Developing an initial codebook of themes

Following the approach developed by [Fereday and Muir-Cochrane \(2007\)](#), the team created an initial set of themes and ideas based on the call for evidence and wording of specific questions (the deductive phase), with further themes added as part of the review process (the inductive phase). This set of themes formed the basis of a codebook to ensure consistency across members of the research team, with each theme in the codebook reviewed until the team agreed criteria and examples of the theme.

Reading and coding

Free-text responses for each open-ended question were read, reviewed and coded into themes, with team members adding to the codebook as needed. A set of 12 organisational responses submitted via email were manually reviewed in their entirety, in addition to all responses submitted via Citizen Space. Additionally, notes from 7 roundtable events were read, analysed and reviewed after finalising the analysis of call for evidence responses. When new opinions or themes emerged, they were incorporated into the analysis of the call for evidence question that most closely matches the topic discussed.

For each open-ended question, a descriptive summary has been presented of key themes emerging from the text analysis. While it is difficult to provide accurate counts of responses allocated to each theme, in general themes are presented in approximate order of the number of corresponding responses. Individual quotes have been included where appropriate to illustrate the narrative around specific themes, and quotes were only selected from respondents who provided permission for their views to be published and with any potential identifiers (such as the name of a specific organisation) removed.

Annex C: Response rates and demographics

Responses received (% of total 475)

Num.	Question	Type	Responses	Percentage of total (475)
Q1	What do you consider to be the main function or purpose of services challenging violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	464	97.68%
Q2	What services should be available for women experiencing any form of violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	372	78.32%
Q3	What services should be available for children and young people experiencing any form of violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	311	65.47%
Q4.1	What role should third sector organisations play in the provision of specialist services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	299	62.95%
Q4.2	What role should local authorities play in the provision	Qualitative	304	64.00%

	of services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?			
Q4.3	What role should the Scottish Government play in the provision of services to women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	331	69.68%
Q4.4	What role should the NHS play in the provision of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	291	61.26%
Q4.5	What role should Police Scotland play in the provision of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	291	61.26%
Q4.6	Are there any other organisations that should provide services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?	Quantitative	264	55.58%
Q4.7	If yes, which organisations? Please explain your answer.	Qualitative	149	31.37%

Q5.1	Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any woman who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection?	Quantitative	312	65.68%
Q5.2	Please give reasons for your answer.	Qualitative	272	57.26%
Q6.1	Should access to services for those experiencing violence against women and girls be a right in law for any child or young person who needs them e.g. like child/adult protection?	Quantitative	301	63.37%
Q6.2	Please give reasons for your answers.	Qualitative	239	50.32%
Q7	How can barriers to services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be removed across Scotland?	Qualitative	301	63.37%
Q8	How can a consistent quality of services for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be ensured across Scotland?	Qualitative	249	52.42%
Q9.1	Should services and providers for women, children and young	Quantitative	276	58.11%

	people experiencing violence against women and girls and providers be based on need in their local area?			
Q9.2	Please give reasons for your answer.	Qualitative	214	45.05%
Q10.1	Should services and providers for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls be the same in every local area?	Quantitative	271	57.05%
Q10.2	Please give reasons for your answer.	Qualitative	224	47.16%
Q11	What action should be taken to ensure unmet need is met and regional disparities are addressed? - Please give reasons for your answer.	Qualitative	229	48.21%
Q12	How can women, children and young people who have experienced violence against women and girls be meaningfully included in the co-design/evaluation of services?	Qualitative	243	51.16%
Q13.1	For services receiving funding, what would be the optimum length of funding period to ensure they are able to continue to provide services effectively	Quantitative	253	53.26%

	for women, children and young people experiencing violence against women and girls?			
Q13.1	If other, how long?	Qualitative	67	14.11%
Q13.2	Please give reasons for your answer.	Qualitative	213	44.84%
Q14	Should funding application processes remain 'lighter touch' as was the case at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, or revert to a higher level of scrutiny as previously? - Please give reasons for your answer.	Qualitative	229	48.21%
Q15	What is the single most important thing that can be done to reduce/mitigate the impact of violence against women and girls?	Qualitative	304	64.00%
Q16	Is there anything else you would like to tell us?	Qualitative	219	46.11%

Qualitative responses analysed per type of respondent (individual and organisation)

Question Number	Individuals	Organisations	Total
Q1	270	76	346
Q2	211	74	285
Q3	173	73	246
Q4.1	159	75	234
Q4.2	164	74	238
Q4.3	183	75	258
Q4.4	158	71	229
Q4.5	149	69	218
Q4.7	68	58	126
Q5.2	141	74	215
Q6.2	123	69	192
Q7	157	75	232
Q8	130	72	202
Q9.2	105	67	172
Q10.2	112	69	181
Q11	121	66	187
Q12	125	71	196
Q13.2	101	70	171
Q14	111	72	183
Q15	164	73	237
Q16	115	54	169

Qualitative responses analysed per type of organisation

Question Number	Third sector organisations	Local authority/ government	NHS	Other	No organisation type	Total org. responses
Q1	44	8	4	10	10	76
Q2	42	8	4	10	10	74
Q3	43	8	4	9	9	73
Q4.1	44	8	4	10	9	75
Q4.2	43	8	4	10	9	74
Q4.3	44	8	4	10	9	75
Q4.4	40	8	4	10	9	71
Q4.5	41	8	3	9	8	69
Q4.7	30	7	4	9	8	58
Q5.2	41	8	4	10	11	74
Q6.2	39	8	3	10	9	69
Q7	43	8	4	9	11	75
Q8	40	8	4	9	11	72
Q9.2	38	7	4	10	8	67
Q10.2	40	8	4	10	7	69
Q11	38	8	3	8	9	66
Q12	41	8	3	10	9	71
Q13.2	42	7	3	8	10	70
Q14	44	7	3	9	9	72
Q15	43	8	4	9	9	73
Q16	32	8	1	5	8	54



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