



The Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Contents

01	Foreword
02	Executive Summary
06	Introduction
12	Chapter 1 - Principles Underpinning the Review
19	Chapter 2 - Who We Spoke To and What They Told Us
39	Chapter 3 - Funding Problems Identified by the Review
44	Chapter 4 - Minimum Core Services
56	Chapter 5 - Preventing VAWG
59	Chapter 6 - Violence Against Women Partnerships
64	Chapter 7 - Service Standards
66	Chapter 8 - Governance
69	Chapter 9 - Budgeting for VAWG
75	Chapter 10 - Commissioning & Tendering
78	Chapter 11 - A New Model of Funding
88	List of Recommendations
93	ANNEX - Background Information About the Review

Foreword

When I was asked to chair the Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Services, I knew it would be a huge challenge. This has undoubtedly proved to be the case.

It has also been a huge pleasure, and such a wonderful opportunity to move us forward in how we respond to VAWG in Scotland: to improve sustainability for the vital local services which can transform and sometimes save lives. And even more importantly, both improve the lives of the many thousands of women, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced these terrible crimes and work to prevent them in the future.

I am grateful to everyone who responded to our Call for Evidence, all 475 of you, and to the many more who participated in our engagement events. Even if we came to a different conclusion, we did consider all views submitted to us.

I am also hugely grateful to the members of the Advisory Group, whose wisdom, knowledge and expertise are at the heart of this report. Thank you for giving your time so generously and making this challenging piece of work so collaborative and such a pleasure.

And of course, my thanks to the Secretariat without whom this really would not have been possible. Beth Busby, Eleanor Horne, Johanna Davidson and Rhona Gowans have all contributed over the course of the Review. Particular mention needs to go to Jane McAteer, who was there before the beginning, has kept us on track throughout, provided good advice endlessly, and made sure we met our impossible deadlines. I really could not have had better support.

This report belongs to the women, children and young people who shared their views and experiences with us – we heard what you told us and your stories are reflected in our recommendations.



Lesley Irving
June 2023

Executive Summary

The Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services was set up with a remit to develop a more consistent, coherent, collective and stable funding model that will ensure high quality, accessible specialist services across Scotland for women, children and young people experiencing any form of [VAWG](#).

The Istanbul Convention and other human rights instruments such as United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are at the heart of our proposed new model. After an extensive programme of evidence gathering, we have identified a number of ways in which change is required to deliver our remit and have made recommendations in several specific areas (see page 88 for full list of recommendations).

Legislation

We recommend that VAWG is put on a statutory footing. This will include: a right in law to our minimum core services; a public duty on service providers to ensure that the full range of minimum core services are provided, and a public duty on prevention identifying children and young people as co-victims in relation to domestic abuse; Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWPs), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAAC); and actioning the recommendation from the National Advisory Council for Women and Girls (NACWG) for a statutory underpinning for intersectional gender budget analysis.

Minimum Core Services

As a result of the evidence we have gathered, we have identified a range of services which are required to provide safety and support for women, children and young people wherever and whenever they need it (see Chapter 4, Minimum Core Services). These services are intended to be a floor not a ceiling – additional services can be provided but there should never be fewer than the minimum core.

Participation

Participation of women, children and young people and the needs of all victims/survivors of Violence Against Women Children and Young People (VAWCYP) should be included and resourced in the development and implementation of all aspects of the new model.

New Model of Funding

Providing these minimum core services as a right in law means that there will no longer be a competitive fund run by the Scottish Government. Funding for VAWG will be provided through collaborative commissioning arrangements as described in Chapter 9 and should be agreed for at least an initial three year period, with the option of two further years thereafter. The current national, competitive fund for essential services provided by the SG will be replaced by ring fenced, devolved funding for VAWCYP minimum core services to local authorities and their statutory partners. VAWCYP funding should increase in line with increased costs linked to the retail price index year on year.

The Scottish Government will continue to fund national work and services e.g. helpline/s and national offices and will run a competitive fund for innovation. The SG will also fund national prevention work, including campaigns and the establishment of the Istanbul Convention Implementation Observatory.

Prevention

Led by partners including the Observatory, Public Health, SG and COSLA, we recommend allocation of dedicated resources to develop a national programme on prevention that will identify the actions required at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal level. This should include national awareness raising campaigns by the Scottish Government itself and in partnership with others and a training programme for all professionals.

Budgeting for VAWG

Scotland should aim to work towards meeting Women Against Violence Europe's call for 10% of the annual cost of VAWG to be provided in funding for services to tackle it, from the Scottish budget as a whole, and develop an action plan towards achieving this as a baseline for funding commitments from the Scottish Government.

We also recommend that a gender analysis of Scottish Government spend is carried out, including intersectional data, local government and other public service spend in order to meet the reporting and timescale requirements of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO).

Mainstream Services

Mainstream services have a key role in responding to VAWCYP, and we are therefore recommending the development of a whole system, intersectional, gendered, child rights response to VAWCYP as a prerequisite to achieving the transformational shift required, including training for staff in mainstream services, delivered through a national training strategy. On the evidence gathered by the Review, specific attention needs to be given to training on advocacy for sheriffs, and on disability, particularly learning disability.

Violence Against Women Partnerships

As noted above, we recommend that VAWPs should be put on a statutory footing and included in Public Protection arrangements at local authority level. Investment in developing the infrastructure of VAWPs is essential and should include appropriate levels of resource for coordination and administration, and capacity building to support monitoring and evaluation. Resources should be provided to support VAWPs to undertake a strategic commissioning role within their local areas to meet local needs and circumstances and to carry out local needs assessments. VAWPs should also be resourced to ensure that the experience of women, children and young people informs their local strategy and that their work is grounded in an intersectional understanding of VAWG.

Standards and Regulation

A Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioner should be appointed, covering all aspects of VAWG, along with the establishment of an Istanbul Implementation Observatory which will assess progress against international standards set by GREVIO. Scottish Government oversight and drive for implementation should always sit at Cabinet Secretary level and not be delegated to ministers. The eradication of VAWCYP, as a transversal policy issue, is the responsibility of the full cabinet, and should be driven by a nominated Cabinet Secretary and visible across all portfolios. At civil service level, all Directors General should have an accountability and delivery responsibility for VAWG included in their role. The Scottish Government and COSLA should provide a report on implementation of the new model by December 2024 and annually thereafter.

Immediate Priorities for Action

We recognise that this is a challenging and ambitious programme for change, and will take some time to implement. Having been made aware of some of the most urgent needs for action and funding, we have identified the following immediate priorities:

- Address and reduce waiting lists for VAWCYP support services to ensure that victims/survivors can get help to recover when they need it. Different ways of managing waiting lists should be examined, which may include a trigger point mechanism whereby additional funds are released if waiting lists reach a certain point.
- Provide funding to support the development of VAWPs as a matter of urgency to create the infrastructure required to implement the new model and to enable them to undertake local needs assessments in partnership with Public Health. The SG and COSLA should work together to produce an accurate assessment of the current costs of VAWCYP nationally and locally (VAWPs should also be included in the local element).
- Provide funding to ensure CEDAR is available in every local authority. National co-ordination of CEDAR/MARACs/ MATAcs/MVP rollout and other national prevention work should be established.
- Develop a national VAWCYP core dataset and evaluation methodology.
- A standing committee for minority ethnic women and girls should be established to scrutinise, inform and advice on policies and practice on all matters relating to VAWG.
- The Scottish Government and COSLA should develop and publish by December 2023 a timeline for full implementation of our recommendations over a reasonable period, setting out short, medium and longer term goals and how survivors will be involved in the implementation process.

Conclusion

We believe that our new model of services and funding represents an opportunity for Scotland to fully integrate human rights conventions and protections on VAWCYP into our legislation, establishing us as an exemplar leader in this area.

We recognise that this is a stretching plan, and that it will have to be implemented over a number of years. It enables us to keep moving forward, and to avoid further regression.

We are currently failing, despite our significant efforts over the past 50 years, to properly support victims/survivors and provide them with the services they want and need.

This is our chance to do better.



It is time for change in how we address VAWG in Scotland. This issue cuts right to the core of who we want to be as a nation. The human rights of women, children and young people are being breached, day after day, and this cannot go on. We are still failing to protect some of the most vulnerable people in society, even though we now know so much about VAWG and what we need to do to prevent and eradicate it.

VAWG costs Scotland a lot, both economically because of the cost of the range of services victims/survivors need to access, and in personal terms for the women, children and young people whose lives are devastated by it. Some years ago, it was estimated that the [cost of VAWG in Scotland](#) was £4bn and costs have risen greatly since then. With the time available to the Review, it was not possible to make a more up to date calculation, but we recommend that this work should be carried out.

[The European Institute of Gender Equality \(EIGE\)](#) has estimated that the cost of gender-based violence across the EU is €366 billion a year, with VAWG making up 79% of this cost, amounting to €289 billion. Intimate partner violence (domestic abuse) against women makes up 87% of this sum (€151 billion).

EIGE's case study analysed three main types of costs:

- Lost economic output relating to a variety of costs associated with the work status and productivity of victims.
- Costs of public services covering health services, personal costs, criminal and civil justice systems, self-funded legal costs, housing aid and child protection costs as well as specialist services.
- Physical and emotional impact on the victims accounting for reduction in their quality of life as a consequence of violence.

EIGE's new study indicates that the biggest cost comes from physical and emotional impact (56%), followed by criminal justice services (21%) and lost economic output (14%). Other costs can include civil justice services (for divorces and child custody/contact proceedings for example), housing aid and child protection.

Costing studies create a better understanding of the extent and associated costs of gender based violence and support better resource allocation across different policy areas. However, to monitor the costs closely, better survey data on the prevalence of gender-based violence and administrative data on the costs and use of services are urgently needed.

[Women Against Violence Europe \(WAVE\)](#) recommend that states spend 10% of the cost of VAWG on services, and an accurate estimate of the costs in Scotland will provide a target for funding for VAWG to work towards in the longer term. We support WAVE's approach.

The effects of VAWG are lasting, and can be lifelong. Its impact on physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health, for example, can be profound and enduring. Loss of education, loss of employment opportunities, loss of contact with friends and family, loss of their home – there are many losses for victims/survivors of VAWG. And, of course, some lose their lives, either at the hands of their abuser, or by ending their own lives.

We have a VAWG strategy – [Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating VAWG](#) – which is rightly recognised as an international exemplar of good practice. And yet, services are not always available, or accessible, at the point of need. Where you live affects the support you can get. A service which produces good results one year may not be there the next. As our findings demonstrate, this insecurity is largely a result of an unstable and insufficient funding model.

There are also gaps in services for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and domestic abuse experienced in childhood.

We have had fifty years of work now to address VAWG in Scotland, since those early pioneering days when volunteers came together to form Women's Aid groups and Rape Crisis Centres to support women who had experienced domestic abuse or rape and sexual assault. Services have developed significantly since then, with the vital role of prevention being dramatically highlighted thirty years ago through Zero Tolerance's powerful images – still disappointingly as relevant today.

As the landscape of services and work developed, funding has become increasingly complicated and piecemeal. As a result, even though significant amounts of money for work in local areas have been provided from a range of funders including, since 2000, the Scottish Executive (later the Scottish Government), services remain patchy in availability and quality. The Independent Review of Funding and Commissioning of VAWG Services was set up to address this situation and make recommendations about how to resolve it.

We found that the historic focus on domestic abuse is still prevalent, and much of the evidence we gathered was related to this aspect of VAWG. Childhood sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation are comparatively less commonly funded.

Given the nature of our work, we were particularly conscious of the imbalances of power which affect relationships between groups in society, and can adversely impact on life chances and experiences. Not just between men and women or adults and children, but also between, for example, the Scottish Government and local government; national organisations and local groups; local authorities and service providers; people with different protected characteristics and socio-economic status; and experiences of different forms of VAWG.

Trust, or rather the lack of it, was also a recurring feature of our evidence gathering. Lack of trust between and within organisations, between national and local services and networks, between national and local government, between funders and funded organisations. Our recommendations, particularly around commissioning of services, will require much more trust and relationships built on respect if they are to succeed. We believe that this is possible, and found an example in Dundee (more details on page 61) where, as the Violence Against Women Partnership themselves put it, organisations and services put their egos aside allowing transparency in their approach (particularly to funding), supporting collaboration and creativity, and allowing them to hold each other accountable.

We need more of this approach in Scotland.

We were also very conscious that the Review was taking place shortly after Covid impacted on all our lives, exposing existing inequalities, particularly in relation to gender and ethnicity, and driving new ones. These impacts are ongoing and it is important to acknowledge and seek to address them. Rates of VAWG increased and services worked at pace to find new ways to deliver amid rising demand during lockdown and service shutdown. We wanted

to learn from those experiences and retain any developments which were beneficial.

There are strong foundations to build upon – we found a history of commitment and good will from a range of funders and a shared understanding about the important role of services.

However, we also heard about what is perceived as a drift towards the provision of universal services, and away from services tailored to the specific needs of women, children and young people. This is not a direction of travel that we support.

The Review provides an opportunity to ensure Scotland takes a significant step towards becoming genuinely Equally Safe, and to provide the level and type of support to women, children and young people who have experienced VAWG which they need to survive and thrive.

Our remit was to:

develop a more consistent, coherent, collective and stable funding model that will ensure high quality, accessible specialist services across Scotland for women, children and young people experiencing any form of [VAWG](#).

In order to achieve this, the Review has considered and made recommendations on:

- the development of a Scotland-wide framework which establishes a definition of the minimum level of trauma-informed, specialist service provision, tailored to Scottish demographics and geography, specifying minimum core support provision and essential services, and guided by progressive realisation
- the method of protection in Scottish law for services for women, children and young people, including domestic abuse refuges, advocacy, counselling, rape crisis centres
- a definition of specialist services as those provided by organisations that take a human-rights approach, have a commitment to intersectional gender competence across the workforce and work to a gendered analysis of VAWG grounded in intersectionality
- a Scotland-wide mechanism for the oversight and distribution of funding based on need at national and local levels which will explore how Local Authorities and Health & Social Care Partnerships can be supported to develop a strategic and collaborative commissioning and procurement framework, aligned robustly to the delivery of Equally Safe
- the optimum length of funding periods and streamlining application, monitoring and reporting processes
- opportunities for involving survivors in commissioning processes/evaluations
- the role, contribution and resourcing of local VAWPs

There were a number of stages in our evidence gathering:

- **A Call for Evidence**
- **An extensive engagement programme**
- **Commissioning research papers**
- **Reviewing previous research**

Further details about/links to the above are provided in the Annex.

As we went about the Review, many issues with the funding of VAWG services were raised with us. Some were not a surprise, such as the problems caused by short-term, competitive funding rounds.

Others were more surprising, although perhaps should not have been, for example the unsuitability of the current service offer for minority ethnic women, children and young people, and both older and younger women.

Our recommendations and our model of minimum core services are based closely on the Istanbul Convention and its four pillars of Provision, Protection, Prevention and Participation, the CRC, CEDAW, and ICESCR in particular.

The Review found a wider need for collaboration/collective leadership working across systems. We can put legislation, governance and frameworks in place but these need to be consistently applied and 'owned' and understood by all the key players. Organisational development support around implementing our recommendations is crucial and potentially connecting horizontally to share and grow good practice on the ground both strategically and operationally.

The Review sits within the wider context of public service reform and work on the Local Governance Review, all of which is highly topical.

There is a clear and pressing opportunity to consider the recommendations of this Review, particularly in relation to the allocation of resources from the Scottish Government to Violence against Women Partnerships underpinned by Equally Safe via local government budgetary settlements, within the current ongoing development of the renewed Partnership Agreement between Scottish Government and COSLA. This would lead to transparent and sustainable allocation of resources to VAWCYP locally and would afford the opportunity for Audit Scotland to fold in compliance on VAWG duties and activities and reporting on the utilisation of resources and subsequent outcomes as part of their planned inspection regime.

We noted with interest the three missions outlined by the First Minister on 18 April 2023, which centre on the principles of equality, opportunity and community and will be key over the next three years, to improving the lives of the people of Scotland. Tackling VAWCYP maps very precisely onto all three missions and therefore our recommendations for new models of services and funding are ideally suited to being placed at the heart of implementation of the FM's vision for Scotland.

Implementation of our recommendations will be challenging and require a great deal of development work in a phased approach. This is a very significant change programme and we recognise that it will take a number of years to achieve full implementation of our recommendations. We expect, and indeed recommend, that the Scottish Government and COSLA work closely in partnership to achieve this.

Terms used in report

In our report, we have used the term **VAWG** – although we have had some discussion about this and its limitations particularly in relation to boys and young men. We recognise them as victims in their own right while at the same time excluding them from the descriptor. Worldwide, it makes sense to speak about VAWG given the significant violence and abuse experienced by girls and young women because they are girls and young women. In Scotland, this is less the case, and the large numbers of boys and young men who experience childhood sexual abuse and domestic abuse present a rationale for their inclusion. However, other than suggesting that it may be helpful to revisit discussions about this term, and indeed others commonly used (for example domestic abuse with which we have heard both younger and older women do not identify) we have made no recommendations about this. We have used the term violence against women, children and young people (**VAWCYP**) on occasion throughout the text and also gender based violence (**GBV**).

Intersectional gendered analysis – we have worked to the gendered analysis, which underpins Equally Safe and locates the different forms of VAWG in the context of the differing gendered reality of men’s and women’s lives. Opportunities, status and power in society are distributed unevenly between men and women, and patriarchal institutional and organisational structures serve to enshrine the rights of men, and to some extent those of boy children, over those of women and girls. Women and girls are at an increased risk of violence and abuse throughout their lives because they are female. We have taken an intersectional gendered approach, which acknowledges wider structural inequality and layers in the impacts of different characteristics such as race, disability, sexual orientation, faith, age, gender reassignment, and economic status.

Women who sell and/or exchange sex – we have used this term as we understand that it is the one preferred by women engaged in commercial sexual exploitation.

Minority ethnic – there is a plethora of terms in current usage to describe women, children and young people with a range of ethnicities, and many of these terms are problematic in different ways. We have opted to use minority ethnic as it emphasises that everyone has an ethnicity, and indeed many minority ethnic communities in Scotland would be majority ethnic in other countries.

We have referred to **victims/survivors, victims, survivors and women, children and young people who have experienced VAWG** where it seemed appropriate to do so.

Minimum core – ‘[Minimum core](#)’, in the context of human rights, is intended to be a baseline of social, economic and cultural rights that every state should implement immediately. We have used this term to describe the model of services we have developed during the course of the Review. Our model is intended to be a floor, not a ceiling – other services can be made available but our minimum core services must be available.

Progressive realisation – we understand the current difficult fiscal context for local and national government and recognise not all our recommendations will be implemented immediately. We expect the Scottish Government and local authorities to work towards implementing our recommendations to a published timescale and to provide an initial progress report in 18 months.

Non regression – an equally important aspect of our recommendations is that they should establish that ‘floor’ of services mentioned above and that there should no longer be the regression in services which has characterised this sector for decades. Once a service which is included in our minimum core is established, it should continue to be available, at least until it is agreed that there is no further demand for it.

Targeted universalism – Targeted Universalism aims to achieve universal outcomes with targeted or tailored measures, programmes or interventions. This enables different approaches to be taken for people with different characteristics, experiences and service needs, rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

‘By and for’ services are provided by members of a minoritised group (including ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity, religion or age) for other members of that group. Such services are embedded in their communities and can therefore address victims/survivors intersecting needs more effectively.

Transversal policy making is based on the recognition that VAWG is a complex and cross cutting issue which is the responsibility of different policy domains (e.g. education, health, social work, justice, etc) and which requires the active engagement of all sectors.

Maximum available resources – Under Article 2 of the ICESCR states have a duty to use their maximum available resources for the progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. Even if a state clearly has inadequate resources at its disposal, it should still introduce low-cost and targeted programmes to assist those most in need so that limited resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Chapter 1 – Principles Underpinning the Review

In this chapter, we explain the principles which we worked to in the course of the Review, from gathering our evidence, to our engagement and finally to developing our recommendations.

We agreed early in the Review that we would work to a set of principles both for how we gathered our evidence and engaged with organisations and individuals, and for how we developed our recommendations. Much of the former was set out in our Terms of Reference and are set out below:

- we would be needs-led
- we would take a human rights approach based on Istanbul, UNCRC and other conventions whilst also ensuring that there is due recognition and respect for different worldviews and knowledge i.e. pluriversality
- we would consider children and young people as victims in their own right in relation to domestic abuse
- our recommendations would be based on progressive realisation of rights and non regression
- intersectionality including rurality would be a strong focus
- services should be provided to all women, children and young people who need them, without discrimination
- we would take a strengths-based approach
- we agreed that prevention would be included in our considerations and our recommendations

We were also clear that our recommendations would be aimed at ensuring women, children and young people experiencing VAWG would receive the dignity and respect from services to which they are entitled.

We wanted to embed intersectionality – the discrimination experienced through the interactive inequalities of race, class, gender and other characteristics – throughout our work and to recognise that rurality would be important to any consideration of service and funding models operating across Scotland's disparate geography and population. The following sections on those two issues have been given prominence in our report due to their significance for the Review.

Intersectionality and VAWG

Context

We were clear from the outset of the Review that intersectionality was a key principle of how we would gather our evidence and develop our recommendations.

To ensure that VAWG services meet the needs of all women across all life stages, it is essential that intersectionality is more than a tick box and is embedded throughout the system from policy making, to commissioning, funding, delivery of services and monitoring and evaluation. From the international to national, regional and local levels, it is widely acknowledged that women's experience of violence is shaped by a number of intersecting structural inequalities. These include, but are not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, migrant/refugees status, poverty, sexual orientation, transgender identity, social class, trafficked children, girls and women and geographical location (e.g. [Scottish Government 2022](#); [CoE 2012](#); [UN 2012](#)).

Intersectionality is also dynamic and contextually contingent i.e. differences between and within groups of women, children and young people and the axes of power and inequalities change over time and context, which VAWG services need to be aware of and responsive to.

Our starting point was [Crenshaw's](#) (1989) widely used concept of intersectionality which emphasises the ways in which race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics "intersect" with one another and overlap (see also [Ahmed, 2017](#); [Lorde, 2007](#)). She specifically challenged the 'erasure' of black women's experiences in feminist debates and explored the specific ways in which black women experienced abuse and violence which is not only different from white women, but also varies within and between minority ethnic groups ([Crenshaw, 1991](#)). It is important to distinguish between an approach based on 'protected characteristics' as defined in law, which lends itself to considering each category separately, and intersectionality. Furthermore, looking at inequality through the lens of protected characteristics, masks the real differences and disparities between each characteristic, and the fact that they all have different and unique histories of origin and as such require their own strategies and solutions. To fully challenge inequality in resource allocation and service provision it is imperative that power imbalances are seriously addressed.

Intersectionality emphasises the importance of being sensitive and attentive to the particular structural circumstances of women which may include protected characteristics as well as other factors which are interlocking and are experienced simultaneously, putting children, girls and women at greater risk of experiencing violence. Applying an intersectional lens means acknowledging the co-existence of privilege and power among women as well as between men and women in relation to delivering VAWG services appropriately ([Crenshaw, 1991](#)). There is no one feminist perspective, voice and approach. The starting point has to be a commitment to 'feminisms' that is grounded

in intersectional and anti-oppressive practices and in particular anti-racist practices. The commitment to these principles underpins this report because, as Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman" - delivered at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851 reminds us - there is no equity in various struggles for equality. It is essential that these principles are made explicit and are fully embedded in any new model of funding VAWG services.

The funding of specific organisations targeted at particular groups of women (e.g. minority ethnic including Gypsy/Traveller, disabled, LGBTI, migrants, homeless, etc.) shows that some children, girls and women require provision where their specific circumstances are well understood and their needs are met appropriately. Organisations responding to the Review and people we met highlighted a wide range of complex intersecting factors that increase the risk of violence and abuse experienced by women e.g. poverty, ethnicity, sexual orientation, lack of access to housing, lack of recourse to public funds, mental health issues, immigrant status, etc. However, it is not clear how VAWG organisations understand and apply the concept of intersectionality. More importantly, it is difficult to assess the extent to which intersectionality is used as an approach and practice to provide VAWG services in ways that are 'by and for women' in all their circumstances and in particular in relation to minority ethnic women.

The intersections of ethnicity, racism, class, poverty, household structures, beliefs, etc, impact on women differently and the VAWG sector not only reflects but reinforces the inequalities (particularly in relation to racism) prevalent in society generally. Services led 'by and for' minority ethnic women are not currently a reality given the legal and policy frameworks where a recognition of racism and feminist approaches rooted in intersectionality are not embedded ([Imkaan,](#)

[2021](#)). Minority ethnic women's experiences of violence and abuse and the organisations that work with these women are shaped by institutional, structural and systemic racism. In addition, although minority ethnic groups in Scotland have increased (approximately 4.5%) with Asians being the largest group and mainly concentrated in the four main cities (Audit Scotland 2021), overall they continue to be small in number, culturally diverse and geographically dispersed. These and other issues tend to present challenges in relation to accessing and mobilising specific groups and the delivery of services including VAWG services and support which a VAWG funding model needs to take into consideration

Using an intersectional lens can highlight the ways in which women from some minority ethnic groups experience patriarchy and its manifestations differently from majority ethnic white women. For example, in some minority ethnic households, women not only experience intimate partner violence but also abuse from members of their extended household (parents and siblings of their partner). Indeed, in some cases the violence may not be perpetrated by the partner but by other household members.

The dominance of western definitions of violence leads to the lack of recognition of abuse and violence perpetrated by household members which results in minority ethnic women not being able to access the support they need. This was a common theme which arose in our lived experience engagements. A lack of recognition of domestic abuse perpetrated by someone other than an intimate partner not only increases the risk of some women experiencing violence but in some cases can lead to their death.

FGM and forced marriages among some minority ethnic communities are indeed serious issues which need to be addressed, and these points were made to us during our engagement with women from these communities. However, the tendency to essentialise these practices as 'cultural' or traditional, rather than treating them as systematic and located in particular patriarchal structures interacting with socio-economic and other factors fails to contextualise and address these issues effectively. For example, assumptions that forced marriages only affect Asian communities marginalises girls from African and other communities who are forced into child marriages. Similarly, the fact that most of the girls subject to FGM are African from certain tribes results in FGM not being challenged in other communities. It treats women as a culturally homogenous and static mass and ignores the changing nature of communities and societies across time and place. Delivery of services in this context marginalises the experiences and expertise of minority ethnic women in addressing these issues.

Minority ethnic women's organisations also face specific challenges. A combination of perceived economies of scale, competitive tendering, insecure funding and multiple funding streams creates an unfair playing field for 'by and for' organisations providing VAWG support and services for minority ethnic groups. In general the current funding model favours larger well-established organisations, and this view is shared by VAWG minoritised service organisations. Within this context it is important to acknowledge that the VAWG sector in Scotland, despite its commitment to intersectionality, operates in a context of systemic racism reinforced by dominance and privilege of white-led organisations who are in a position to shape the priorities and focus of VAWG services and establish the parameters of partnerships. This has the effect

of reinforcing 'the revolving door' of privilege that white-led organisations hold in being in a position financially and structurally to be the lead partners on bids ([Imkaan, 2021](#)). In addition, minority ethnic VAWG organisations experience a lack of recognition and respect for their specialist expertise and a tendency for appropriation when it supports /suits white-led VAWG organisations. The level of funding for minority ethnic organisations reflects their unequal status and highlights the vicious circle they are trapped in. We heard that inadequate funding puts organisations at risk of failure to deliver services effectively, which means that they do not qualify for future grants. Furthermore, for small minority groups, meeting the criteria for funding designed for the majority is extremely difficult and many give up before trying. The preference for funding large white-led organisations and universities to carry out research and develop training materials and programmes instead of funding organisations that have real life experience, is a case in point.

There is no one feminist perspective, voice, approach. Being sensitive to differences within and between women is core to providing appropriate VAWG services. For progress to be made with regard to providing equitable services to minoritised children, girls and women, the starting point has to be a commitment to a feminism that is meaningfully grounded in intersectional and anti-racist practices in policy making, budget allocations, funding, commissioning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services. There is a need to explore and undertake research on how best to embed intersectional feminist approaches and anti-racist practices in relation to VAWG support and services as well as ensuring funding models are fair and socially just and recognise that specialist services require to be funded well and consistently. This is critical if there is a commitment to stop and reverse the regrettable fact that generations of minority

ethnic women have internalised systemic oppression, which makes them uphold the status quo instead of demanding what they are worth.

We gave considerable thought to how to make visible the ways in which the structures of power and privilege impact differently among women as well as between men and women in relation to service delivery, as this is critical to providing appropriate VAWG services that are inclusive of women in all circumstances. Not all minority ethnic women may wish to access a service targeted at the specific ethnic group they identify with and some rural women may not wish to access local/regional VAWG services for a variety of reasons including issues of confidentiality. It is essential that every woman, child and young person should be able to access appropriate VAWG services no matter who they are and where they live, which is not the case at present.

We also gave considerable thought in relation to the visibility of all children and young people and how easily the VAWG agenda and focus becomes adult-centred (for, example during the Covid-19 pandemic, see [DAHLIA- 19](#)). Whilst intersectional frameworks provide an alternative to one-size-fits-all approaches to policy and practice, these frameworks themselves are often adult-centric; it is important we extend this intersectional feminist approach to include children and young people (see [McCabe, 2021](#)) and child rights. We note a distinct lack of evidence on children's intersectional experiences of VAWG, and the need to include relational experiences and rights ([Morrison and Houghton 2020](#)). Children and young people are a heterogeneous group, with complex and diverse identities, needs, and experiences. Gender-based violence policy and practice should reflect this diversity, capturing how intersecting structures of oppression (such as sexism, racism, ableism, heterosexism) shape

children and young people's vulnerability to violence, as well as how they make sense of, cope with and resist abuse, and the support mechanisms required (see [Etherington and Baker, 2018](#)).

We are acutely aware of the importance of being sensitive and attentive to the particular intersecting circumstances of women, children and young people that result in increasing their risk of experiencing violence and that this requires respect based on honest and genuine collaborative working. To provide services which are inclusive of all women's, children's and young people's experiences across different geographies, it is essential that flexible service delivery models are explored and developed with VAWG organisations working collaboratively. Also critical are staff with the relevant experience, skill, understanding and reflexivity to address the specific experiences of children, girls and women from different backgrounds experiencing violence and abuse. Within this context it is also essential that staff and policy makers working in the VAWG sector are committed to addressing their own privilege and power over other women which is critical to achieving a socially just and inclusive approach to funding and delivering VAWCYP services.

Rurality

Any new model of services to address VAWG in Scotland must include a focus on rurality. Seventeen percent of the Scottish population (5.46 million) are located on 98% of the land mass which is categorised as rural ([Scottish Government 2021](#)). Rural places and communities are diverse – physically, historically, socially, politically and economically – and a one size fits all approach in relation to VAWG services does not work. Urban tends to be the spatial norm in gender research, resulting in rural being rendered invisible in relation to gender issues generally and VAWG in particular ([McCarry and Williamson 2009](#))

is an exception. This makes it difficult to obtain information which reveals the extent and the scale of VAWG across ages in rural communities.

Those responding to the Review acknowledged that rural communities, compared to urban communities, face distinct challenges which makes the provision of, and access to, services difficult, if they are provided at all. There is little systematic research or evidence gathered in Scotland that has sought to address the gender and intersectionality specific impacts of these rural challenges which include:

- Demographic trends including an ageing population and high levels of out migration of youth/the economically active group
- Sparse population resulting in lack of economies of scale impacting on service provision. In this context, balancing provision based on 'service led' and 'service user led' was identified as a problem
- Distance from urban areas/local towns combined with limited and expensive public transport makes accessing services difficult
- People living in remote rural areas experienced the poorest internet connectivity. However, the Review also highlighted that digital technology is not the answer to everything and people may experience barriers or may not want to access VAWG services digitally for various reasons
- Reduced budgets have resulted in centralisation of services such as post offices, job centres banks and services provided by the public sector and third sector organisations

- Difficulties in staff recruitment in the VAWG third sector organisations across rural areas because of the short-term insecure nature of funding
- Lack of affordable (to rent or to buy) housing
- The labour market reflects the persistence of traditional gender roles and women experience lack of childcare. Inadequate transport facilities can also serve to isolate young people and women in particular
- Lack of children and young people's spaces and support

([Davis et al. 2022](#); [Generation Scotland 2021](#); [Glass 2021](#); [HIE, 2020](#); [2018](#); [2016](#); [de Lima and Copus 2013](#); [The Young Women's Movement, 2016](#)).

The combined impact of these trends has resulted in reduced access to services and support and a permanent loss of the only local spaces that may have been available for informal encounters and face to face conversations – reinforcing social isolation and creating additional barriers to accessing basic services in rural communities.

The size of some rural communities where everyone knows each other may result in women being reluctant to access local VAWG services as those working in these services may also be members of the same communities giving rise to concerns about lack of anonymity ([see also Sandberg, 2013](#)). Accessing support for victims in this context is rarely discussed or researched.

Despite the commitment to addressing inequalities espoused by agencies, the reality is that minority ethnic groups including international migrants and Gypsy Travellers; LGBTI and disabled people continue to have a lack of voice and are underserved both generally, and in relation to VAWG services in rural areas. Improving accessibility to VAWG services is not sufficient unless it is also accessible relative to all women across ages in all their different circumstances. 'Numbers over needs' based on economies of scale tends to be the normative position for budget allocation for services. The 'No One Left Behind' principle appears to be a symbolic gesture where in practice numbers are prioritised over needs.

If VAWG is to be inclusive of all women, children and young people across geographies, there is a need for more systematic research that ensures a sensitivity to differences within and between groups across rural and urban areas. More effort and investment are required to improve the evidence base on how and in what ways particular geographies/places shape the impact of intersections associated with gender, race, sex, class, disability, sexual orientation, faith, gender reassignment age, etc with a view to developing appropriate policies and service delivery.

A socially and spatially inclusive approach to policy and funding VAWG services requires to be based on reliable and consistent evidence which is currently lacking in rural contexts. Designing policies and allocating funding keeping in mind the most 'marginalised' in terms of their social and geographical locations may have the potential to go some way towards meeting the needs of all.



Chapter 2 - Who We Spoke To and What They Told Us

In this chapter, we set out what we were told as we gathered our evidence, and how this influenced our thinking. We show how intersectionality and lived experience were central to our engagement and have informed our recommendations.

Our engagement

The high prevalence of VAWG means it is experienced in every community and social group, with particularly high levels among for example D/deaf, disabled and learning disabled women. We wanted to engage as widely as we could in the time available, and also to ensure that we were speaking to women from as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible to support our intersectional approach. This depended on our being able to reach particular groups, often going through organisations to do so, and we are very grateful to all who arranged these meetings for us. We also provided an Easy Read version of our Call for Evidence.

Engagement with services for women with different characteristics in relation to VAWG has not historically been strong, although that is thankfully now changing, with the work of the Scottish Commission on Learning Disability (SCLD) among others being a welcome example.

Many people have engaged with the Review since January 2022 – from commenting on our Terms of Reference, to submitting responses to our [Call for Evidence](#), as 475 organisations and people did, to taking part in around 100 online and in person meetings.

We were very privileged to be able to speak to survivors of rape, domestic abuse and ‘so-called’ honour based violence, and to a small group of children and their mothers who had taken part in a CEDAR programme.

In relation to children and young people, we found the [Everyday Heroes](#) research highly relevant to our aims and we used this throughout our deliberations, alongside previous research with children, aware that 71+ young abuse survivors had contributed their views on services and collectively made recommendations. Our participatory ethical approach ([Houghton 2015, 2018](#)) meant that we prioritised established groups, with support, in our engagements and were disappointed at the lack of established participation groups for children across the range of VAWCYP, which meant we spoke to only a few children and young people. We note the need for resourcing of such participation.

Although, in some cases, we were only able to speak to small numbers, we also looked at research dating back to 2003 (see Annex) which included elements of participation by women, children and young people to add to our understanding. We were aware of so-called ‘research fatigue’ where some communities are asked for their views regularly, but nothing seems to change as a result. We did not want to

add unnecessarily to this phenomenon hence including previous research to supplement our engagement.

Our engagement programme is therefore limited in some aspects due to time and other constraints such as particular difficulties for organisations with which we were keen to partner. Overall however, we are very pleased with what we were able to achieve. Vouchers were provided to all survivors who spoke to us in that role, as a small thank you for sharing their experiences with us. We are very appreciative of the generous response, and want to thank everyone who took part – your contributions have all been carefully considered, even if we eventually came to different conclusions.

What you told us

We heard about a number of discrete issues from many of the groups we engaged with which have contributed to the development of our recommendations.

Some of those participants had not used specialist services and we were therefore able to gain an understanding of why that was. Among the reasons given were lack of accessibility i.e. no 24/7 availability, experiencing racism and worries about services not being culturally appropriate, feeling that services were not aimed at them (particularly older and younger women), and concerns about the possible involvement of statutory authorities for women with insecure immigration status. Gypsy/Traveller women were concerned about having to take their children away from onsite schooling. In addition, concerns from mothers about potentially having their children taken into care if they sought help were a significant issue.

Minority ethnic women, children and young people: racism and cultural sensitivities

We were aware that the current service offer for minority ethnic women, children and young people, including Gypsy/Travellers, was inadequate, particularly given that there are still only two Women's Aid groups providing services to these communities 30 years after they were both set up, in spite of the huge change in Scotland's demographics over that period.

However, this became even more stark when we spoke to women, including older women, from a range of minority ethnic and faith heritages. Meetings with women from a range of minority ethnic communities were arranged for us by Networking Key Services and Age Scotland.

We were told that very few women would consider seeking help outwith their own communities, and that this included the two specialist Women's Aid groups. This is obviously not a universal reaction given both of these groups receive many referrals, and are supporting women in a number of parts of Scotland out with their bases in Glasgow and Edinburgh, although this does not extend to remote, rural areas. There are a few minority ethnic women's organisations that campaign against VAWG including FGM and provide services such as referrals, sign posting and information to women and girls from their communities. However, there are currently no faith based Women's Aid services in Scotland, unlike in England, although we do have AMINA, the Muslim women's helpline, and have also already highlighted the precarity and limitations of funding for services for these communities.

Minority ethnic women, including women of faith, and organisations supporting them, told us about the racism and lack of cultural sensitivity they faced from mainstream services. Fears about insecure immigration status also hold women back from seeking help, particularly but not exclusively, from social work or the police. We heard that, for many minority ethnic communities, including Gypsy/Travellers, it was unthinkable to involve the police, and cultural norms prohibited seeking help outwith their own communities.

It was also strongly felt that there is a lack of recognition, as we have noted in Chapter 1, that the person who carries out abuse in some communities may be a woman – mother-in-law or sister-in-law of the victim. This reality does not conflict with an intersectional feminist analysis where it is recognised that women are not a homogenous group but have differential access to power which they may use to oppress other women; although there may be a misunderstanding that it does and therefore it remains unacknowledged. This apparent lack of acknowledgement puts women off seeking support as they feel they will not be believed or their experiences will not be viewed as VAWG.

As we have minority communities in all local authority areas, we need to have a national approach to services for women, children and young people from these minority communities across Scotland.

Some organisations supporting minority ethnic women reported that the funding criteria and the system adopted for funding VAWG in Scotland has resulted in these organisations being excluded from funding.

At one engagement event with minority ethnic women in Edinburgh, the suggestion of a 'soft landing' in their own communities was made – this would not be a specialist service based on the current model, but an organisation staffed by women who would understand them, their experiences and needs, on a deep and shared level. This stayed in our mind as we continued our engagement programme, and was reinforced by the voices of others.

D/deaf women: needs not being met

We heard from D/deaf women that services did not always work for them on the current model. Issues ranged from accessibility, to a lack of understanding about needs. The lack of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters is clearly a problem, and a lack of VAWG training for interpreters adds to the difficulties. An exception to this was a project bringing D/deaf Links together with Women's Aid groups in Dundee, Perth & Kinross and Angus which has resulted in D/deaf women being able to use refuge for the first time. Here, refuge workers are trained in BSL, and in turn, train the BSL interpreters in understanding VAWG. Training is also provided to mainstream services. We also heard of interesting pilots and approaches to increase access, such as D/D/deaf Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates in England, following evaluation, the potential for upscaling these innovative approaches across the country should be explored.

Disabled women: lack of access to services

We were keen to speak to disabled women across a range of disabilities, as it is well established that disabled women, including those with learning disabilities, experience high rates of VAWG. Disability Equality Scotland organised an online meeting for us which helped us to understand what they had gone through and what had and had not worked for them.

We heard that mainstream services often had been counterproductive rather than helpful and lack of accessible refuge provision had been a barrier to getting support. One of the participants lives on an island and told us that while her local Women's Aid and Rape Crisis services were helpful, although constrained in what they could offer her due to lack of adequate funding, other services were less accessible.

It was also mentioned that the women's mental health had been weaponised against them in court proceedings; their disability, or one of their disabilities, being used to the advantage of their abusers. Training for professionals, and for justice system professionals in particular, with an intersectional lens which includes disabled women's experiences of VAWG, is clearly required.

Learning disabled women: unheard and ignored

We had the privilege of being able to participate in a day-long workshop with learning disabled (LD) women who have experienced VAWG, organised for us by SCLD and Central Advocacy Partners - Survivors Project. This event took place a week after the launch of SCLD and People 1st's powerful report [Unequal, Unheard, Unjust: But Not Hidden Anymore, Women with Learning Disabilities Experience of Gender-Based Violence in Scotland](#).

During the session, we explored contrasting journeys through experiencing and reporting abuse, and what stood out was the importance of just one person believing survivors. It was clear that the women in the workshop had not been believed, in spite of telling many people, and it was a reminder of the many layers of longstanding discrimination experienced by LD women in relation to VAWG.

Working with an experienced facilitator, the women identified their top five asks:

1. To be listened to
2. To be believed
3. Education for people with learning disabilities about VAWG
4. Training about awareness of learning disabilities, delivered by women with LD for all professionals
5. Help to get justice, no matter how long it takes

All of this is achievable and needs to become standard practice. As SCLD's report title states, women with LD are not hidden anymore and we owe it to them to provide services and support which meet their needs.

Women offenders: marginalised and far from services

Our recommendations for the minimum core services specifically include women offenders.

It has long been known that there is a strong correlation between lifelong experiences of VAWG and women offenders. [Recent research](#) into undiagnosed brain injury among this population showed a very high number have such injuries, most likely as a result of abuse, which have been undiagnosed and which have impacted on their behaviour.

It can be challenging to provide services for women whose lives can be chaotic and who may have a range of support needs as a result of their experiences of VAWG.

We heard about effective work being carried out in Dundee, which is gender-informed and trauma-aware, and provides mentoring and after care for women offenders. Virtually all the women who use the service have a history of domestic abuse, including coercive control, difficult relationships with men and do not have care of their children. Substance and mental health issues are also common, as are learning disabilities. The aim is to reduce the use of custody and re-offending, and mentoring provides sheriffs with an option for a community based order. This project will form part of the Beyond Mentoring Project which will be located in a new Women's Hub in Dundee.

Women of faith: lack of understanding

Interfaith Scotland arranged an event for us to meet women of faith and discuss their experiences of using services. Women who attended represented Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Ba'hai faiths.

We heard about the issues women of faith have to contend with from others in their faith communities, who may support the abuser rather than them and the pressures put on them to stay with their abusers and cover up the abuse in the interests of family and community unity. Lack of understanding or faith awareness from services was also a powerful factor in preventing women of faith from seeking help.

Older and younger women: lack of identification

Older women often mentioned feeling services are not for them, or that they did not identify that they have experienced VAWG. This was particularly the case for older minority ethnic women. Looking back over their lives, older women told us that they wished there had been services for them when they were younger, but they were more likely to seek help from family or community sources.

We heard compelling evidence from young women and student survivors of the need to consider bespoke services for 16-25 year olds. We also heard that current terminology does not always resonate or reach out to young people, including survivors of abuse in relationships. Connected with this, they may feel services are not 'for them'. Pilots such as a young people's group jointly facilitated by adult

and child specialists (such as ASSIST) sound promising.

Young women are also experiencing huge levels of abuse and violence in further and higher education institutions. We were privileged to receive a presentation about as yet unpublished research in this area which was shocking in its revelations. After around 13 years of interventions tackling VAWG in this sector, the situation has got worse, not better.

Students, under stress and with a lot going on in their lives, did not tend to identify themselves as victims, though those from more privileged backgrounds were more likely to seek help than the more marginalised. Experiences of abuse on campus were similar to those in rural communities, with perpetrators embedded into tight knit communities.

This research also pointed to the increasing prevalence of selling and exchanging sex, particularly online, which increasing numbers of women students are engaging in for economic reasons. Understandably, they can find its inclusion as a form of VAWG challenging, though some accept that it is while still participating in it. All Universities/Colleges' should have specialist GBV resources and these should be expanded and developed, and there is a need to co-design services with a range of students.

Teenagers identified a lack of services suitable for them and expressed reluctance to access online services, despite their high levels of electronic literacy. This is a reminder not to make assumptions about how victims/survivors prefer to access services and to retain a range of options.

We were told, by a group of young women Mentors in Violence Prevention at a high school in Falkirk, about the horrifically high levels of sexual and misogynistic abuse they are experiencing on a daily basis, in school, in their communities and on social media. They referred to the malign influence of one individual 'influencer' in particular on the views of their male peers.

We are aware of work being developed by the Scottish Government looking at how to tackle extreme misogyny and there is clearly an urgent need for this to happen. In addition, as we set out in Chapter 5, Prevention, we need to establish and demonstrate unambiguously that VAWG is not tolerated in Scotland.

Lesbian and bisexual women: still not feeling included

Lesbian and bisexual women experiencing violence from same-sex partners may not feel that services meet their needs, in spite of much work over recent years to explicitly include them. This can be particularly the case in rural areas, where loss of anonymity is a key factor in preventing victims/survivors from seeking support. Greater visibility of lesbian and bisexual women and consideration of their specific needs, which is largely absent from the VAWG agenda currently, would be welcome.

Trans survivors: need for development of services

It should go without saying that trans women who have experienced VAWG deserve to have high quality, accessible, appropriate services. In the current context, it perhaps does need to be stated unequivocally. We heard that some young trans women felt that existing services were not for them.

What we were told understandably reflected the wider debate on trans inclusion, and also reflected wider pressures to open up services which have traditionally been provided by women for women to both wider providers and wider users. The nature of the current debate has made it more difficult for service providers to respond practically and has contributed to silencing the needs of trans men. As a result it is more difficult to discuss, understand, evidence and respond to trans and non-binary survivors. It is important we build an evidence base and work with trans women and trans men on GBV and on what services will work for them, including who provides them and how they are provided.

Unwelcome and un-included?: ‘by and for’ services

All of this evidence led us to ‘by and for’ services and their wider applicability for the groups we engaged with.

‘By and for’ services are provided by members of a community or social group for other members of those communities or groups. It could include, for example, disabled women, children and young people, those with learning disabilities, LBT+ women and young people, Gypsy/Traveller women, children and young

people, D/deaf women, children and young people as well as Scotland’s range of minority ethnic and faith communities.

‘By and for’ services are well placed to respond to women, children and young people’s different characteristics and can therefore provide very tailored support which takes into account nuances in experiences and culture. As our understanding of minoritised children’s experiences and needs lags well behind that of women, it is therefore important that children and young people are included in designing tailored support.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales recommends the funding of ‘by and for’ services to ensure effective support across a range of groups in her [Mapping Study A Patchwork of Provision, published in November 2022](#).

The development of ‘by and for’ services for LBT women might be an example of services which are not available in every locality, but are targeted in areas of higher population, where demand is likely to be sustainably higher, but are open to LBT women from all parts of Scotland.

Taking all of the above into account, we recommend that a range of ‘by and for’ services are included into the mix of specialist women’s services. These organisations would need to meet all the tests for specialist women’s services as set out in Chapter 4, Minimum Core Services.

It is important, however, that innovative partnership approaches, for example the D/deaf Links project mentioned above, continue to be explored and supported to thrive. We need a multiplicity of approaches and service offers to address the needs of all Scotland’s victims/survivors of VAWG.

Mothers and children: support to recover and rebuild relationships

As made clear from the outset of the Review, we regard children and young people as victims in their own right. We were therefore keen to speak to children and young people and hear directly from them about their views. This proved challenging to arrange, however one of the undoubted highlights of our engagement was the session with mothers and children who had taken part in a Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery (CEDAR) programme. This event was both great fun (a bean bag-throwing warm up was involved) and extremely moving. Both groups had worked on their messages for us and the beautiful artwork produced from that is included on pages 36 - 38.

The children shared their thoughts about what was important for them about CEDAR. This included trust, shared experiences, feeling cared for (this was raised by their mothers too), it was challenging but FUN and that ending the group was tricky although they felt ready to move on. It had been very important for one girl's relationship with her mother and they were in a better place now.

The mothers told us getting access to CEDAR was complicated. One of the most striking revelations from this session was that often they had not been told about CEDAR – one in fact had to Google support for mothers and children – and this even included two women who had been supported by their local Women's Aid group/s.

Confidentiality and trust were very important as well as practical aspects like the building they met in being anonymous and therefore it was not obvious why they were going there. Other examples of feeling cared for included

being brought to sessions and returned home in taxis, preserving anonymity and also at no cost to the mothers, and simple things like staff remembering how they took their tea, and even the fact that tea and nice biscuits were always offered. The impact of feeling cared for and about cannot be underestimated for survivors of VAWG.

We have heard repeatedly over years that resourcing such key facets of safety and involvement such as transport, sustenance, nurture, childcare, time to care, new opportunities/memories, enjoyment, is essential. Being heard is a key component of women and children's engagement in such services and this needs to be built into budgets, as recommended in our minimum standards.

It was heart-warming to hear about the positive difference CEDAR had made to both mothers and children, particularly in relation to reshaping the bonds between them as well as their own recovery. Mothers gave examples of the emotional intelligence their children had developed and the closeness between them was clear to see.

For the women, keeping in touch after the programme ended had been important; this was not possible in the same way for the children. One to one support was also identified as helpful, both before and after the CEDAR programme itself but this is neither an intrinsic part of the programme nor always available. Further development of CEDAR, including extending the age range on either side (an early years version, Early Years Domestic Abuse Recovery (EYDAR), is now underway in Fife), involving all siblings in the family and considering what might come after CEDAR for children would help to maximise impact.

Work with children and young people and their mothers/non-abusing parent/s which supports recovery, increases understanding of abuse and its dynamics and repairs the bonds which can be impacted by abuse is essential. Facilitated peer support/recovery groups and work with individual families are important components of therapeutic support. Programmes to support the child/woman individually and to support the family and relationships are key aspects, we heard this particularly in relation to domestic abuse and childhood sexual abuse.

We believe that CEDAR should be reliably available in all areas, to all who would benefit from it. It can reduce the burden on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), thereby reducing waiting times for all young people in need of these services. Once EYDAR has been evaluated, if successful, it should also become part of the minimum core services.

Another example we heard about in relation to recovery is the Licketyspit art-based programme which was developed during lockdown for younger children and mothers who have experienced domestic abuse and can be delivered online. Women's Aid children's workers were trained to deliver the programme and it has been evaluated and achieved positive outcomes.

Scotland has developed innovative creative participatory elements and principles in research that have been found to play a key part in recovery of children and adults as well as influencing service/policy development (Houghton 2015, 2018). In a recent example, the [Justice Journeys](#) research participants said there was a sense of justice in recording their stories through art. Victim/survivors have reported that creative/arts-based programmes are key to many of them talking about and recovering from abuse, trauma and their experiences of the system response.

Children/young people from a range of age groups recommend the use of creative arts, multi-media work, play and art therapy in recovery and counselling work as a key aspect to consider in service design and commissioning. Another important aspect is to have fun and build new, positive memories, physical and mental health, including access to social, afterschool and peer group activities, as well as sports, outdoor opportunities and nature-based activities. We have included these activities in our minimum core services.

Research with children and young people spoke of the importance of support to talk to mothers and move on but also sibling relationship support, the need for individual, confidential, needs-based support that could be linked to that of siblings who might cope quite differently, as well as mothers. It would be helpful to learn more of approaches that focus on sibling relationships and further develop these services, with the potential to include them in the minimum core services at a future point.

Issues caused by current funding arrangements

It is probably true to say that none of what you told us about the issues and unintended consequences of the current funding landscape was a complete surprise. They are well known, and are, indeed, what drove the establishment of the Review.

As detailed in Chapter 3, Funding Problems Identified by the Review we heard a great deal about current problems with funding and how this affects the availability, provision and staffing of services. This was a strong thread both in our engagements and also in the Call for Evidence. Our recommendations therefore include a number relating to the

application process, length of funding period and retention/progression of staff.

Cost of living/leaving: financial support

This became a large part of what we were told as the Review developed. Increased costs have affected women, children and young people trying to leave abusers, and VAWG services which are struggling both to provide practical and financial support to victims/survivors and also continue to run their services when already small margins are being squeezed even further.

Of course, leaving abuse can also mean women, children and young people staying in their home and the abuser leaving. This can also have an adverse financial impact on victims/survivors. The inadequacies of Universal Credit are well established and result in financial struggle for many, including families with a working parent.

We heard about the Victims Support Scotland (VSS) Emergency Assistance Fund which last year provided 41% of its grants to women, children and young people fleeing domestic abuse and also supports women selling and exchanging sex. This fund pays for practical help, like changing locks, installing ring doorbells and other security measures, but will also pay for accommodation if there is an urgent need to leave or food/replacement clothing etc. Payments are made to the suppliers, so that benefits are not affected.

We also heard about AMINA's hardship fund, which relies on donations from the public and which supports women from Muslim and minority ethnic communities and there are many other examples of services fundraising to provide practical support.

Financial assistance for young people is included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as a core aspect of support for VAWG in the Istanbul Convention.

We are aware that a commitment was made by the Scottish Government to establish a fund to support women, children and young people leaving abuse, which has not as yet been implemented.

Rape and sexual assault: need for more services

We heard a lot of evidence about pressures on rape crisis support, including lengthy waiting lists. There are clearly not enough such centres to cope with current demand. Not all local authorities have a centre and resources are uneven e.g. Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis covers 6 local authorities areas with almost 1/4 of the Scottish population. A group of survivors we spoke to were very grateful for the support they had received from rape crisis locally and nationally and specifically mentioned the difficulties that lengthy waiting lists had caused for them in their recovery.

We heard that services for child and young adult survivors of rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse and exploitation need attention. There is a particular gap in specialist services for children (e.g. RCS support is for young women 13+) including advocacy, therapeutic recovery support and forensic services.

There is evidently not sufficient provision at present to either meet demand or ensure services are available for women who wish to access a different type of service. The extent of this demand, or lack of capacity to meet demand are not clear. Further expansion of services for victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault is urgently required. A 'mixed

model' of provision would provide a range of options to increase the likelihood of all victims/survivors being able to access services which meet their individual needs. This might include 'by and for' services as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter.

Issues with Legal Aid: need for a new approach

It has long been suggested that victims/survivors of VAWG should receive free legal aid. The Istanbul Convention requires this to be provided. We were also told that issues with Legal Aid, including eligibility and availability of Legal Aid solicitors, was severely impacting on women, children and young people's access to justice, representation and protection. This was particularly, but not exclusively, the case in rural areas and is also commonly found in relation to immigration advice, thus impacting doubly on women with insecure immigration status.

In [Everyday Heroes](#), children and young people asked for easy to understand, informal and confidential access to legal aid, legal advice and representation.

We were told about an interesting project whereby a solicitor has been embedded in Edinburgh Women's Aid to increase access to legal support and representation.

Need for a statutory footing: VAWPs/MARACs/MATACs

There was strong support, from the Call for Evidence and from other engagement, for the right to VAWG services to be put on a statutory footing (84% supported this for women, 82% for children and young people). There was some concern expressed that a statutory footing might be used to narrow the range of support provided. That is clearly not something that we would support, and our view is that the legislation should be drafted in such a way that this cannot happen.

We also heard that being on a statutory footing would enable VAWPs, MARACs) and MATACs to be delivered consistently across Scotland, which is not the case at present (see Chapter 6 for more detail on VAWPs).

National and local organisations: an imbalance

While direct services are generally, with the exception of the national helplines for domestic abuse and forced marriage and rape, provided by local organisations, the national tier has naturally tended to have closer ties to the Scottish Government. These relationships have developed over time and as a result of the national lobbying role carried out by Rape Crisis Scotland and Scottish Women's Aid in particular, and their involvement in policy development.

Both organisations exist to carry out functions which are challenging for their local networks to engage in, given the pressures of service provision. This is an important role, and has undoubtedly brought great benefits to national work to address VAWG.

We were told, however, that there were concerns from local services about what was perceived as an imbalance of power between them and their national organisations. There was a feeling that policy positions were being adopted which did not always reflect their views or experiences and that they felt they were being excluded from opportunities to contribute nationally to policy development. The allocation of funding to the national organisations for disbursement across their networks contributed to this imbalance.

We also heard about the importance of national leadership, coordination, standards, and training in relation to specific key elements of a local multi agency response such as MARACs, MATACs, CEDAR and advocacy. Support from the Improvement Service for VAWPs was also important and all of these should be considered as key components of national work.

Participation: at the core of services

All of the survivors we spoke to, without exception, said that they wanted to be included in service development. Young survivors have repeatedly asked for participation in service and policy development. There are now a number of survivors' panels, some of which we had the privilege of meeting and their contribution to making services better is extremely valuable. Although we heard of notable participation work locally with children, and national action research, there were fewer opportunities for children to participate in VAWCYP work and no national reference groups. This is despite clear recommendations from children for local and national involvement in GBV service and policy development, in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comments 9 and 13.

There are many opportunities to influence, and numerous methods to facilitate that. Participation needs to be undertaken with support and properly resourced. It should never be a tokenistic add-on to existing processes.

Mainstream services: a key role

The mainstream services such as police, health, social work, education, housing, have a key role in responding to VAWG and this has been on their collective agenda for many years. The majority of victims/survivors use these services rather than the specialist services and have had contact with them at different points in their lives and rightly expect them to be able to respond appropriately and effectively.

From survivors we heard about the shortcomings of services. A group of rape survivors had a lot to say about this and made a strong call for better training for doctors in particular. Children in the [Everyday Heroes](#) project/research identified training on GBV, recognising signs, appropriate responses, children's rights and signposting to services, as an urgent priority for education professionals and for police/justice system professionals, health and social workers.

Examples of good practice and helpful support were also provided, but we are a long way from all professionals being competent in trauma-informed practice and aware about the dynamics and effects of VAWCYP. Initial inappropriate, panicked and dangerous responses, especially to sexual abuse, were a particular concern for child and young survivors of abuse and others.

We also heard about the roll-out of the Safe & Together (S&T) approach across Scotland in relation to social work responses to domestic abuse. The three principles of S&T are keeping the child safe and together with the non-offending parent; partnering with the non-offending parent as the default; and intervening with the perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to

the child.¹ Although a programme of training is well underway, S&T is being implemented more comprehensively in some areas than in others.

S&T should be child rights-proofed and its strengths-based approach should include children's strengths and relational strengths, with children's participation integral.

From specialist VAWG services we heard of frustrations around siloed working, lack of collaboration and underfunding locally to support innovative practice. The interdependence between third and public sector services is particularly acute in this field so difficulties in accessing resources such as housing, legal protection or mental health services inevitably adversely impact the safety and wellbeing of survivors and can dilute the effectiveness of third sector input.

From mainstream services we heard of challenges relating to funding constraints, understaffing and difficulties in recruitment, particularly in social care, and constant firefighting that thwarted efforts to adopt a more upstream approach. We heard also of weariness about being asked to 'do more with less' and the demoralising impact of this on the workforce. The lack of priority and status accorded VAWG, dovetailed with spending pressures, were cited as obstacles to progress.

Training staff in these frontline services on VAWG is essential and has rightly been identified as such by survivors. However, in and of itself, training will not bring about the breadth and depth of change required. Mainstream agencies, COSLA and the National VAWP Network underlined the necessity of a clear strategic direction and coherent policy framework underpinned by an appropriate level of funding to fulfil their commitments to survivors of VAWG.

¹ This is copyrighted by S & T.

Single-sex spaces: a pragmatic approach

We heard a great deal, particularly but not exclusively in our Call for Evidence, about the strong feeling that single-sex spaces are an important aspect of VAWG services and should be protected/continue to be available. We were told that some women were self-excluding from services because of the potential inclusion of trans women, either as staff or as service users. The trauma experienced by women, children and young people as a result of VAWG is well recognised and can endure for a considerable time after they have left the abuser, affecting their interactions with other people and the level of threat they perceive around them. This was frequently cited as a strong rationale for single-sex spaces being guaranteed.

It was impossible to gain a full picture of the extent of this, evidence so far is relatively small scale and the prevailing climate around trans inclusion may prevent more women from speaking openly. We were able to speak to a small group of women who had self-excluded and we were aware of the Scottish Women's Convention's [report](#) into this issue. It should perhaps also be said for balance that trans inclusion was not raised by participants at any of our other lived experience engagement events.

We also heard a lot about the challenges for service managers of providing inclusive services and trying to maintain a balance between the rights and needs of different groups. We carefully considered the current legal position in relation to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. As we understand it, the law does not require identical services to be made available for those with different protected characteristics, (this has long been argued in relation to male victims of domestic abuse for

example) and it is within the law to provide different services if they are '[a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim](#)'.

This is happening in practice, and it has taken a great deal of consideration and careful thought to get to this point. The anxiety felt by managers trying to do their best in the current very difficult context was notable. It is possible, as one woman said to us, to be pro-women and not anti-anyone else.

This is, in essence, the position we have taken in this report. Trans women, and indeed trans men, who have experienced abuse require and deserve services that meet their needs. They are a highly stigmatised and discriminated against group. We are currently a long way from being a society which includes, understands and embraces trans people. Much more work needs to be done in this regard.

The main consideration needs to be what services are needed and who provides them. The above in no way reduces the need for single-sex provision for those women who want that option. We need both types of service to be available.

It is therefore our view that single-sex provision should remain, as part of a range of services. This can, as it is currently, be provided in some services alongside a different and equivalent service offer for trans women i.e. without access to shared refuge or groupwork, but with the possibility of access to stand alone refuge, that does not result in their disadvantage or further discrimination, and ensures no regression on secured rights and recognition of trans people. Alternatively, it could be provided as part of the menu of 'by and for' services.

Access to psychological therapies and mental health support: key to recovery

While mental health services fall within the remit of mainstream service roles and responsibilities in identifying and responding to VAWG, we have chosen to highlight it to reflect the emphasis it received during our evidence gathering, and to stress its centrality in promoting recovery from the harms of VAWG.

As noted in the introduction, the impact of VAWG on physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health can be profound and enduring. The well documented mental health consequences of abuse include an elevated risk of depression and anxiety, higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, eating disorders and substance misuse. The urgent need to address the current inadequate levels of mental health support for survivors was underscored by recent research and both the Call for Evidence responses and those given during our engagement sessions. This was the case for children and young people who have difficulty accessing CAMHS as well as for women with current or previous experience of abuse.

One of the consequences of dealing with Covid and its aftermath has been a [deterioration in mental health](#) across the country, and a [corresponding drastic increase in waiting times for mental health services, particularly for adults](#). The lack of access to appropriate support was cited repeatedly as a significant impediment to recovery for individuals, as well as a source of frustration for services who struggled to link effectively with mental health services to provide a coordinated response.

We were told of the need for collaborative practice to develop joined-up pathways for support that address the limitations of siloed service provision. We heard of good practice in some Women's Aid groups where there is a mental health specialist on the staff who can assess, refer and support women, children and young people experiencing mental health issues and some organisations that employed art/play therapists.

The specific actions identified for women and girls in the [SG Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan](#) were welcomed and we would like to see this included in a more comprehensive approach to improving the mental health of survivors of abuse.

While NHS mental health services are important in providing individual care they are not, and should not, be solely responsible for the provision of mental health support. Rather they are a key contributor to the development of a more holistic, trauma-informed approach across services that, coupled with increased availability of specialist psychological interventions, will strengthen and enhance responses to the mental health needs of survivors. Among promising developments to build capacity and capability at local level we would highlight [The Transforming Psychological Trauma: A Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish Workforce](#) produced by NHS Education for Scotland, and its accompanying [National Trauma Training Programme](#), which provide a solid foundation to progress such a model.

Recovery from trauma experienced as a result of VAWG is a key component of our model of minimum core services in Chapter 4. We heard of a lack of trauma recovery services across Scotland, in relation to different forms of VAWG and gaps for different populations e.g. for children who had experienced both childhood sexual abuse and domestic abuse, for adults experiencing abuse as children, for students.

We were pleased to see the publication of the [Trauma-informed Justice Framework](#), which has the potential to significantly reduce re-traumatisation of victims/survivors involved with the justice system.

We have included recovery support in our minimum core services.

Advocacy support: key to seeking justice and safety

Advocacy workers are key to reach the protection and support measures of Istanbul and child-friendly justice measures, such as: the right to be informed, information on rights and services, follow up, to ensure rights and interests are duly represented and taken into account at all stages in investigations and judicial proceedings.

We have heard from adult and child domestic abuse victims and witnesses (see Domestic Abuse Court Experience [DACE](#)) and rape/sexual assault victims (see [Justice Journeys](#)) of the importance of advocacy workers in criminal proceedings, and the need for advocacy in civil proceedings. Also of specific gaps in childhood sexual abuse cases (see [The right to recover](#)).

Advocacy workers were found by victim/survivors to be the most significant factor in increasing their sense of safety, confidence, being informed and any feelings of empowerment in a traumatising system. Specially trained workers on the justice system, rights including child rights and access to court records/information were particularly important, as were direct contact and good relationships with justice professionals.

Access and length of the service offered was an issue as was the need for services for further civil and criminal cases. The limits of the service, including immediate, short-term and longer-term support, were an issue for victims and child cited witnesses. Mental health support immediately, short and longer term was essential and a clear gap - from reporting to long after the court case closed. There were specific gaps in the children's services with fewer advocacy services across Scotland for younger age groups. It was felt that children who were not necessarily cited witnesses also

needed support from the point of reporting. A national D/D/deaf advocacy worker in England was a model worth considering in Scotland.

We were told that services are not currently able to fulfil these measures and good practice – victim-survivors want earlier access, longer-term support, support through different systems, support across Scotland.

We are aware of current development of standards for adult domestic abuse advocacy services. Standards also need to be developed for children and young people's VAWCYP advocacy services. Other gaps are for all forms of VAWG, and for advocacy across the justice system - criminal, civil, children's hearings, child protection. Currently, most services focus on the criminal system only but it is particularly important to consider the role of advocacy in contact and residence where the parent is an abuser (e.g. domestic abuse and familial childhood sexual abuse). We heard consistently and across services that women and children were experiencing further abuse through contact.

More widely, advocacy support fits with efforts to reduce the trauma involved in being in the justice systems and centre the rights, interests and needs of the victim-survivor; in domestic abuse this would be the non-abusing parent and child as co-victims. This identified the need to consider more holistic, one-stop shop services for children in relation to therapeutic support, evidence giving, support through court cases and beyond. These efforts need to be considered in relation to all forms of GBV, summary as well as solemn, adult victims as well as children. Victim/survivors spoke of the need to remove them from court altogether. [Everyday Heroes](#) and [Domestic Abuse Court Experiences Research \(DACE\) \(Domestic Abuse Court Experiences Research \(Houghton, Morrison, Warrington and Tisdall 2022\)\)](#) spoke of the need for women, children and young

people to be involved in the necessary changes to advocacy and the justice system.

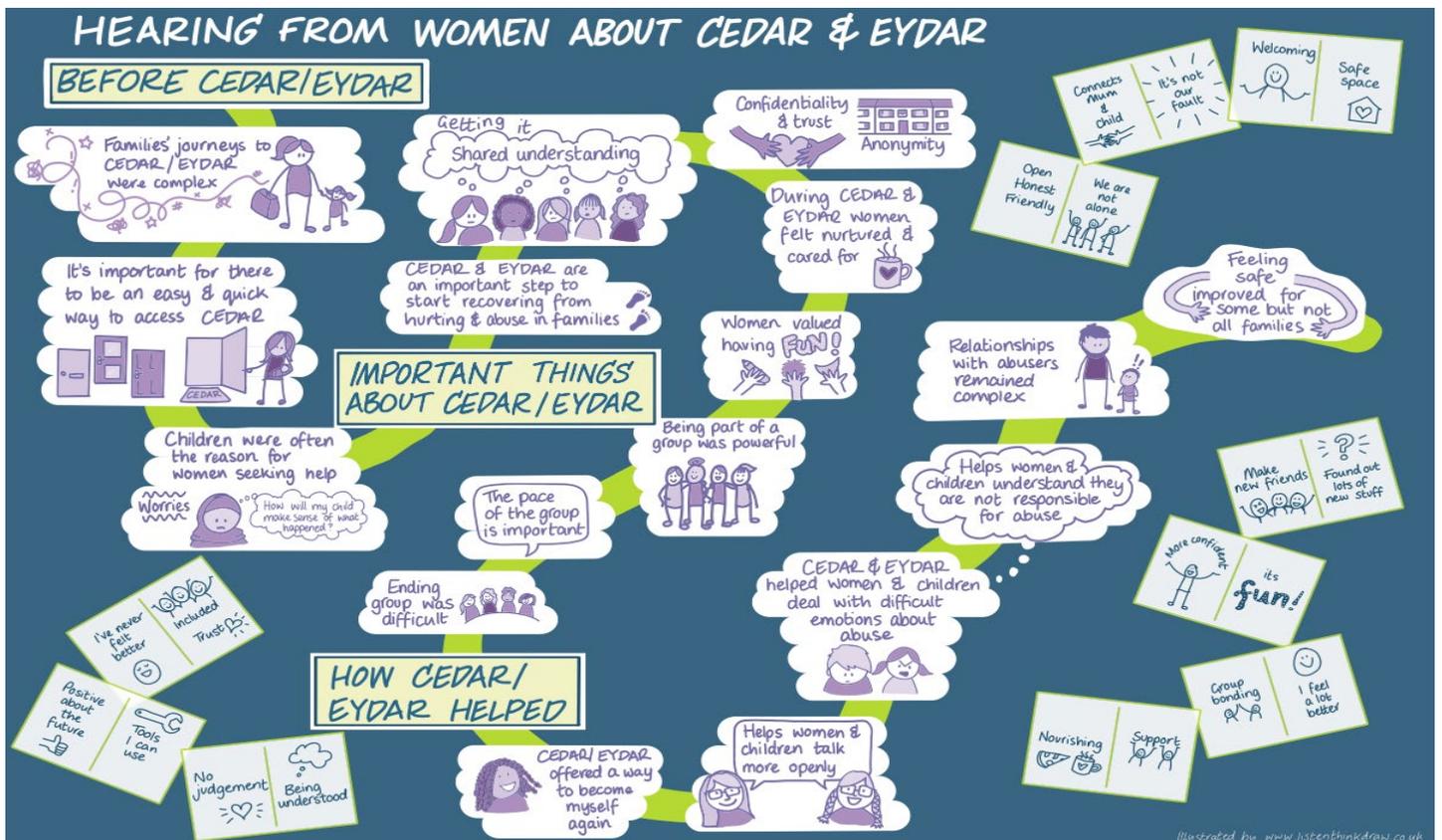
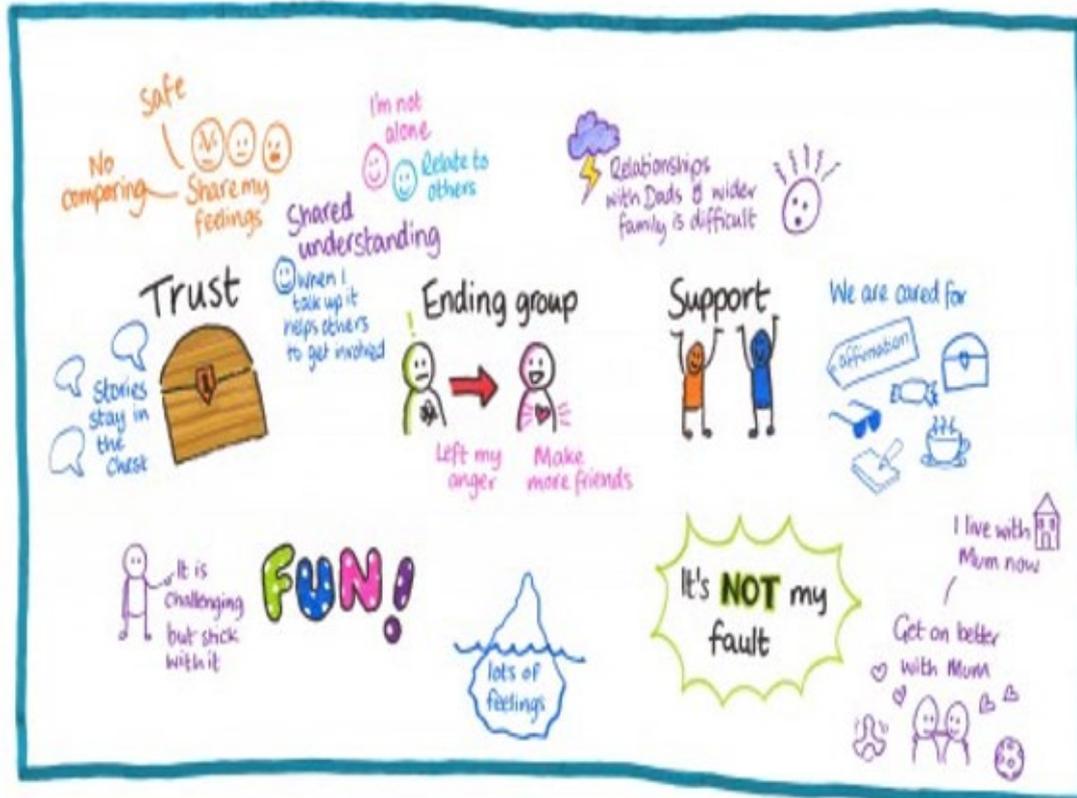
The status of advocacy workers in relation to VAWCYP, as key professionals acting to ensure justice for victims/survivors must be recognised. There is evidence that this is not always the case, and clearly this needs to change if we aspire to provide meaningful, effective advocacy services for all women, children and young people who want them. We were told that one sheriff refused to listen to what they described as 'biased' Women's Aid workers who were performing an advocacy role. It can never be seen as 'biased' to represent the views and wishes of victims/survivors, and indicates a need for training.

Co-location of services: simplifying pathways of support

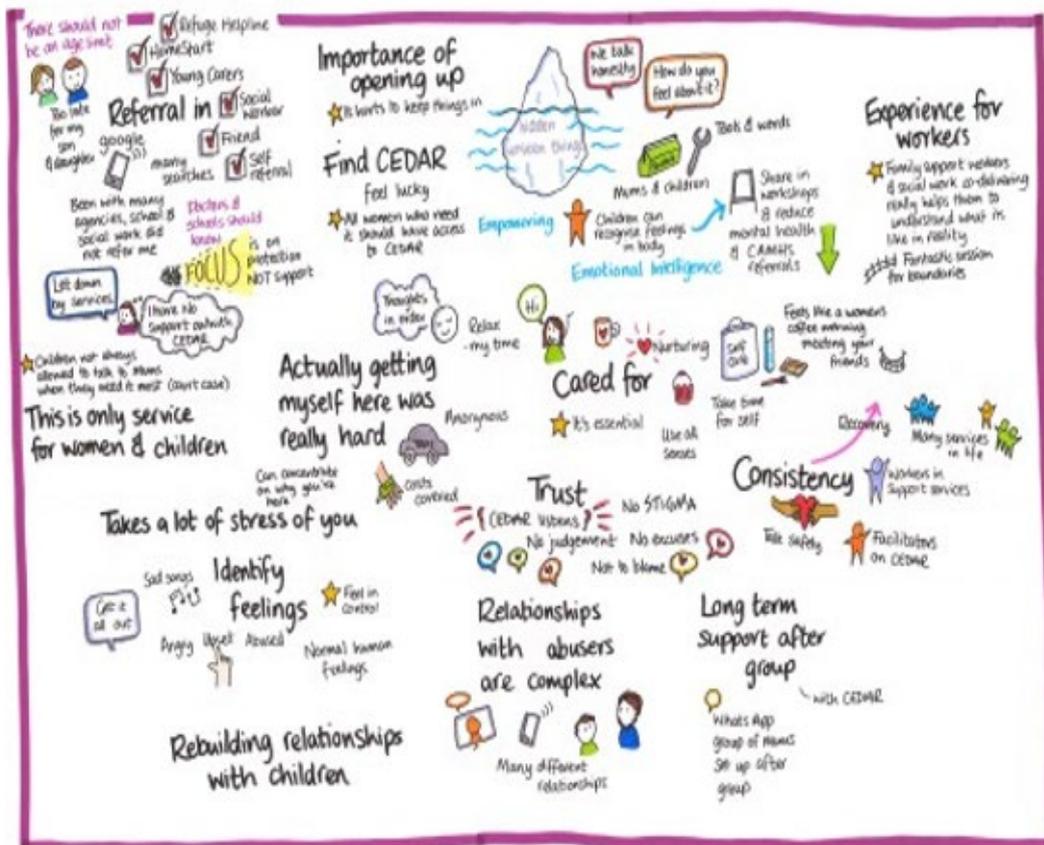
We believe that co-location of services can have significant benefits for victims/survivors, not least because so many women, children and young people experience a range of different forms of VAWG. The time and money cost of accessing different services and the increased stress of having to navigate and access multiple services and sites adds greatly to the difficulties experienced by victims/survivors when seeking help.

We heard about encouraging examples of where this has worked well e.g. in Hamilton with the Saoirse-Liber 8 project and in West Lothian's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Team. In Dundee, a Women's Hub is in development which will bring together key specialist services including, importantly, those supporting women who sell or exchange sex.

Children's discussion with the Review



Mothers' discussion with the Review



Chapter 3 – Funding Problems Identified by the Review

In this chapter we explain the history of VAWG funding in Scotland and the problems with current funding which we have sought to address in our recommendations for a new model of funding.

This is not just a ‘women’s problem’. We have heard that the current funding arrangements have detrimental impacts on access to services and women, children and young people’s life chances, mental and physical health and chances of recovery. But what about the wider societal implications around women’s inequality and the costs to society? VAWG bears costs for individuals, for families, for communities, for the economy, for all the institutions of the state, locally and nationally.

If addressing VAWG genuinely is a priority, we need to do things very differently.

Sustainable funding for core, specialist VAWG services is vital, but wider attention also needs to be given to funding through mainstream budget allocation and services. Most victims do not approach specialist VAWG services, so ensuring that mainstream services are fit for purpose in relation to VAWG is paramount.

The History of VAWG Funding in Scotland

Funding for local services was initially provided by a mix of grants from local authorities and trusts, although fundraising was always a feature of income generation. A number of UK Government funded job creation schemes were also used to help to move services from entirely run by volunteers to a mix of paid

and unpaid workers in the early years. Later, Supporting People funding helped to pay for refuge based support.

There is no doubt that local authorities carried the greater burden of funding for VAWG services initially, and indeed they still do contribute very significantly to this sector. Their contribution has never been quantified in the same way as that of the Scottish Government, but nevertheless it has been foundational in ensuring availability of services.

National Government Funding

Funding for VAWG services has been, in many ways, relatively generous in Scotland compared with other parts of the UK since 2000 and the advent of the £5m Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund (DASDF) established by the then Scottish Executive. This was the first time that central government had funded local services, with 50% of the costs coming from match funding from local partners. This was intentional, to ensure local responsibility, although in many cases the match funding was in kind rather than in cash. This fund was unique in VAWG funding history, in that it received fewer applications than it had resources to cover, and therefore all projects which applied were granted funding.

The sole focus of DASDF was, obviously, domestic abuse, and the funding was allocated in support of implementation of the National Strategy on Domestic Abuse.

Views about the DASDF differ, and we have been told that it may have provided more funding than some recipients were able to manage effectively. It certainly was not subject to the monitoring processes which have now been embedded. However, it did ensure local partners, often statutory services, were financially committed to supporting the work.

When the fund was changed to become the Violence Against Women Fund, it broadened the spectrum from domestic abuse to VAWG and the requirement for match funding was dropped. This was intended to open up the fund to a wider range of recipients, which indeed it did. However, an unintended consequence was that it also centralised the provision of funding for this sector and broke the previous link with local partners, resulting in a dilution of funding locally and a lack of local accountability. There has also been a reduction in strategic planning and commissioning of services in local areas.

The Rape Crisis Specific Fund was introduced at the same time, which supported the development of the helpline and an expansion of rape crisis centres. Each rape crisis centre was provided with £50,000 p.a. to ensure that they could continue to offer a service in the event of any local authority funding being removed. Over the period that this funding was provided, a number of new rape crisis centres were established, including on Orkney and Shetland.

Subsequent funding from the Scottish Government to date, including the [current Delivering Equally Safe \(DES\) fund](#), £19m per annum has continued in the same vein and therefore continues the unintended consequences noted above.

The main funding stream from the Scottish Government is the DES Fund mentioned above. It is administered by independent fund managers, commissioned by policy officials, as were several previous rounds of funding. The fund managers run an application process, and undertake the monitoring of the grants. Many of the issues raised with us in relation to funding processes, including by the fund managers themselves, concern the DES fund, in particular its competitive element.

We were able to identify a wide range of work on VAWG issues currently being funded by a variety of cross portfolio money streams within the Scottish Government. Each policy area tends to have its own application and monitoring regime which adds complications to the process for organisations.

Local Government

As noted above, local authorities have also provided funding to support the delivery of VAWG services, from the 1970s to date, well before the Scottish Executive established DASDF. Over time, and in response to funding constraints at local government level, this funding has reduced and local services have become more dependent on Scottish Government and other funding.

The ending of ring fencing as an accepted part of local government funding allocations further eroded funding at local authority level. This situation was exacerbated by the effects of the global economic crash in 2008 and the resulting period of austerity negatively affected the conditions for both spheres of government to work in tandem.

Other Funders

Alongside funding from the Scottish Government and local authorities, a range of other funders have supported work in this area over the years, from Children in Need who funded children's workers for Women's Aid groups in the 1990s to Comic Relief, Big Lottery, Robertson Trust and many others. The non-statutory contribution to VAWG funding has been considerable. We could see that there was deep gratitude for the support these funders had been able to provide, and that they had often made the difference between a service being able to continue and having to close their doors.

Services For Children

Since 2000, there has been little policy or funding attention to services for children in their own right, rather there has been a concentration on children and young people in domestic abuse situations e.g. providing groupwork. Scottish Government funding for work with children and young people has also focused largely on domestic abuse, with the Children's Services Women's Aid Fund (CSWAF), which was eventually subsumed into the VAWG Fund.

The CSWAF was separate and different from DASDF for several reasons: the concern that service providers, local authorities and Scottish Government had not hitherto seen specialist support to children experiencing domestic abuse as a core domestic abuse service; the fear that it would not be prioritised in relation to adult services in applications; concerns that LAs would not match fund this devalued service.

It was distributed to each local authority to ensure a (largely Women's Aid) refuge, follow on and outreach service to children; it did not

reach demand or need. Grant terms were specifically based on children/young people's recommendations from Listen Louder Research ([Houghton 2005, 2013](#)). Ultimately, CSWAF was subsumed into VAWG funding, although a number of projects supporting children and young people continued to be funded

Another issue we were aware of is the separation of childhood sexual abuse in programmes of work and in funding for VAWG. childhood sexual abuse is clearly part of the definition of VAWG used in Equally Safe and is common for both girls and boys – an [NSPCC report](#) published in March 2021 suggests that 1 in 20 young people in the UK will have experienced it - yet this has never been connected closely into the strategy. Children's organisations we spoke to felt that this aspect of VAWG had not been given the attention it deserved and children and young people were as a result not receiving the services they required. Provision of therapeutic recovery services remains patchy and insecure, hugely affecting children's 'right to recover'.

We know about the scale and impact of childhood sexual abuse and we cannot assume that VAWG services currently meet the needs of children. Although less common in Scotland than childhood sexual abuse, FGM and forced marriage affect girls in particular.

A Mosaic of Funding

The shift in funding from domestic abuse to VAWG was not accompanied by needs assessment at local, regional or national level. Scope for applications was widened and criteria changed in an attempt to be more inclusive, e.g. supporting projects that focused on learning disability or commercial sexual exploitation etc. This has resulted in a mosaic of funding which does not give a clear picture of what need exists and how well/poorly it is

being met. The funding landscape which has developed over the past 20 years has resulted in a lack of consistency of services, services of variable quality (about which we say more in Chapter 7, Service Standards) and unfairness in allocation; domestic abuse continues to absorb most of the attention and the funding. Children's services in some areas have declined.

Funding is short-term, sometimes from year to year, sometimes for up to three years. Good projects which deliver successful outcomes might not be continued, as some funders seek 'innovation' at the expense of delivering what is known to work. While there is clearly room for, and a need for, innovation to develop new services to meet emerging demands, if services have been shown to be working well, it is our strong view that organisations should be supported to build on this, albeit with clear monitoring and evaluation processes in place. There is also a need for balance between a minimum core level of services across all areas and variability in terms of local context and need. Funding criteria has not kept abreast of key changes such as development of MARACs and greater appreciation of trauma/need for trauma informed services.

We were also told that the competitive nature of the DES fund is unhelpful. Organisations in local areas are pitted against each other, rather than being encouraged to work collaboratively and assess what the greatest need is in their area. Organisations supporting minority ethnic women have told us that they face great difficulty in securing funding for their work and have stated that they believe this is happening because of racism, or a lack of understanding of their cultures and how they choose to operate. This does not help the development of joined up services to create a smooth service pathway for women, children and young people. If services are essential, they should not have to compete with other similar services for funding.

Local Outcome Improvement Plans from local authorities and their partners in Community Planning Partnerships need to engage more meaningfully in supporting and resourcing local VAWG services as integral to local planning and service design and provision that meets local needs.

With local authority funding, competitive tendering has caused significant difficulties for service delivery organisations, which are often small and focused naturally on service provision, and who struggle to compete with larger, generic organisations. We say more about Commissioning and Tendering in Chapter 9.

VAWPs, which are intended to be the key delivery mechanism for Equally Safe at local level do not at present receive much funding to enable them to fulfil that role as intended. Chapter 6 has more on VAWPs.

Recruitment and Retention

Current funding also affects staff turnover, as experienced high performing workers often choose to move on rather than wait to see if their post will be successful at the next competitive round of funding. We heard that it is difficult to recruit staff currently, and this may be driven by an understandable reluctance to commit to a job which may not last in the longer term, particularly if it requires relocation.

The patchwork nature of funding for many services also places significant burdens on them. Many have multiple sources of funding, all of which require different information and have different application and reporting schedules. Managers of services told us about the reality of this for them as a never-ending round of applications which are inordinately time consuming and which have no guarantee

of success. We heard from one service manager who had recently lost a member of staff to Amazon on the basis that it was better paid and more secure. The sector cannot continue this rate of attrition of experienced workers which traps service providers in a continuous cycle of recruiting and training which is time and resource intensive for small organisations, and takes away from delivering services to those who need them. Services in rural areas seem to be particularly badly affected, but it is happening across Scotland

Impact on Survivors

And of course, more importantly, short-term funding impacts negatively on the women, children and young people who need these services. We heard a lot from survivors about facing waiting lists for services at a time of huge crisis in their lives, because current funding cannot flex to meet need. They understood the pressures that services were experiencing, but made it very clear that they would have much preferred to be able to access a vital service immediately when they sought help. A snapshot of waiting times for rape crisis support ranged from 2–3 weeks to 12 months, with the lower figure very much an outlier.

The result of this is that women, children and young people who need services are not able to access them reliably. Services may be available in one local authority area and not the next. Services may be available for a period and then disappear. Just when someone has summoned up the incredible courage required to seek help, that service might not be there for them.

This is wrong, and it needs to change.



But the issues with current funding are much wider than services. As we were frequently told throughout the evidence gathering for the Review, we need to move to a more overt focus on prevention and we also have to start to seriously invest in the infrastructure needed to support the delivery of work to address VAWG. We are therefore making recommendations in both of these areas.

Chapter 4 – Minimum Core Services

In this chapter we set out our model for the minimum core services which, our evidence suggests, should be available to all women, children and young people who need them. The model represents a floor, not a ceiling – additional services can be provided, but there should never be fewer than those in the model.

The Model of Minimum Core Services

The first part of our remit was to develop an agreed model for services, in consultation with organisations and individuals. The evidence which fed into this included almost 100 meetings and engagement with organisations, individuals and survivors, previous research with survivors (women, children and young people), the Call for Evidence and the requirements of the Istanbul Convention and the UNCRC among other international human rights treaty requirements.

The model is intended to be a floor, not a ceiling, for services i.e. they may rise above it, but should not fall below it. Services should be appropriate for local authority areas (71% of Call for Evidence respondents agreed) and match local needs assessments which will be carried out by VAWPs (see Chapter 6 Violence Against Women’s Partnerships) and across public services. It is envisaged that a small number of services may be delivered on a regional basis e.g. some ‘by and for’ services, or services for women selling or exchanging sex, and that there will be flexibility for victims/survivors to move from one area to another to access services. There is a need for immediate, medium and longer term support, and each of these elements must be provided.

Our approach is one of targeted universalism i.e. that outcomes should be the same for all who receive services, but variations in delivery might be required to meet differing circumstances.

We envisage the implementation of the model to be based on progressive realisation of rights to services and, importantly, with no regression. In other words, we do not expect to reach the model in one step – there will be additional development work required in a number of areas and we are acutely aware of the current constraints in the public finance context. It is our strong belief, however, that we need to end the current situation within this sector where high quality services which were formerly available disappear when time limited funding comes to an end. Achieving a model based on the delivery of high quality services with sustained and appropriate levels and terms of funding should be a key deliverable for the Scottish Government and COSLA, and be integral to efforts to secure fiscally sustainable public services, through reform of service design and delivery that secures best outcomes for people across Scotland in line with the National Performance Framework and the aspirations of Scotland to be a human rights nation.

We have based our model of minimum core services on the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. Although this has been ratified by the UK Government, the services it outlines as essential are not at present universally available in any part of the UK. This is Scotland’s opportunity to fully implement the Istanbul Convention, taking into account other relevant human rights instruments, in particular the UNCRC, CEDAW and ICESCR. It will also align with the Human Rights Bill currently under development by the Scottish Government which will bring existing international human rights treaties into Scots Law.

The Istanbul Convention requires states to:

.....take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered (1). Parties shall provide or arrange for specialist women's support services to all women victims of violence and their children. (Article 22 (2))

The preamble to the Convention notes:

'Violence against women seriously violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment of women of their human rights, in particular fundamental rights to life, security, freedom, dignity and physical and emotional integrity... some groups of women e.g. with disabilities are at greater risk' (para 26).

'The forms of violence covered by the scope of the Convention can have devastating consequences on victims. It is necessary to design a comprehensive framework to not only ensure their further safety, re-establish their physical and psychological health but to also enable them to re-build their lives. This framework should be grounded in a human-rights based approach.' (Explanatory note 32 re para 1 (c) of Istanbul)

Furthermore, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child General Comment 13 asserts the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and states that 'no violence against children is justifiable' (3 (a)). It refers to the devastating impact of violence against children (III.15) including severe negative effects on children's survival and their "physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development" (CRC Article 27, para 1); 'the human, social and economic costs of denying children's right to protection are enormous and unacceptable (III.16).'

It outlines a 'child's rights approach' as fundamental in responses...[that] requires ... **respecting and promoting the human dignity and the physical and psychological integrity of children as rights-bearing individuals** rather than perceiving them primarily as "victims" (I. 3 (b)); the concept of dignity requires that every child is recognised, respected and protected as a rights holder and as a unique and valuable human being with an individual personality, distinct needs, interests and privacy (I.3(c)); the **right to be heard and their views given full weight** must be respected systematically in all decision-making processes and **their empowerment and participation** should be central to child caregiving and protection strategies and programmes (I.3 (e).') [our emphasis]

Minimum core elements

1 Legal right to services

General support services. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence. These measures should include, when necessary, services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment. (Article 20 (1))

3 Mainstream Services

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them to the appropriate services. (Istanbul Article 20 (2)). All who come into contact with children are aware of risk factors and indicators of all forms of violence, have received guidance on how to interpret such indicators and have the necessary knowledge, willingness and ability to take appropriate action (UNCRC Article 19, General Comment 13. 48)

2 Specialist Support Services

Specialist support services. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered (1). Parties shall provide or arrange for specialist women's support services to all women victims of violence and their children. (Article 22 (2))

4 No Recourse to Public Funds

The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties, in particular measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, **migrant or refugee status**, or other status. [our emphasis] (Article 4 Istanbul Convention)

While we aspire to achieving a model of services which will be widely accessible and appropriate, we understand that there is no 'one size fits all' and that some women, children and young people will prefer to make other choices than seeking help from e.g. Women's Aid or Rape Crisis. This has always been the case and it is therefore vital that mainstream and other community based services are able to provide suitable support and that their staff are trained in, and practice, trauma-informed, rights-based, risk aware, strengths-based (including children and young people), VAWCYP competent, approach.

We want to see a Scotland where the safety and needs of victims/survivors, and witnesses, including children, are central to all forms of protection provided. This includes all elements of the rights to protection and support enshrined in the Istanbul and Children's Rights Conventions, as discussed below.

1 Legal Right to Services

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence. These measures should include, when necessary, services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment. (Article 20 (1))

We asked in the Call for Evidence if there should be a legal right for women, children and young people to access services for VAWG. 84% of respondents agreed that there should be for women, and 82% for children and young people. We heard also that some people were worried that making access to services a legal right would end up restricting those services more narrowly than at present. This is

obviously not an outcome we would support.

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 established a right in law to services, and therefore provides a precedent for this approach. The Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Act 2021 also established right to forensic medical and support services following sexual assault without having to report to police. Trafficking act also establishes right to services without having to report.

At present, services are different across Scotland and where you live or seek services affects access. There is no redress if you cannot receive a service which others in other areas can. This needs to change, and establishing a legal right to the full range of the minimum core services is the way to achieve this.

Children and young people as victims in their own right

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that in the provision of protection and support services to victims, due account is taken of the rights and needs of child witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention. (Istanbul Article 26 (1))

Article 19 of the UNCRC states that parties should take all appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of violence and protective measures should include social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and their carer/s. CRC General Comment 13 states that strategies and systems to respond to violence must adopt a child rights approach (III.13) and 'Respect for the dignity, life, survival, well-being, health, development, participation and non-discrimination of the child as a rights-bearing person should be established and championed as the pre-eminent goal of state policies'... (V. 59)

A child-rights approach respects children as rights holders, is holistic and places emphasis on supporting the strengths and resources of the child her/himself and all social systems of which the child is a part. In VAWCYP, this means integrated services for the child/ren and the non-abusing parent/s as a primary consideration (CRC Gen Comment 13), and an understanding that children are victims in their own right in relation to VAWGCYP.

In the case of domestic abuse, for both girls and boys, being a victim in their own right can be as co-victims of domestic abuse with the non-abusing parent and siblings. This is not currently the case in Scots law in relation to the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, but our recommendations are based on that premise. Other forms of VAWG, such as childhood sexual abuse in particular, impact on both boys and girls (as noted in Chapter 3) and the needs and rights of boys and young men to services are unequivocally upheld in all of our recommendations.

In this report, we speak of women, children and young people throughout, where appropriate. We included in our Terms of Reference that

we regarded children and young people experiencing VAWG to be victims in their own right, not simply witnesses. We know that this will require a change in the domestic abuse legislation.

2 Specialist Support Services

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered (1). Parties shall provide or arrange for specialist women's support services to all women victims of violence and their children. (Article 22 (2))

We have defined specialist women's and children and young people's support services as:

- Using an intersectional gendered analysis, grounded in anti-oppressive, in particular anti-racist, practices
- Having a human rights, including child rights, approach
- Consistent with Equally Safe in terms of outcomes
- Having knowledge and understanding about VAWCYP
- Having a track record of providing high quality services
- Based on an empowerment model
- Using trauma-enhanced skills

Minimum core for services: women experiencing VAWG

Our model of services is a minimum core model, i.e. all of these services should be available on the basis of need, as required by the Istanbul Convention. We are aware that there is a wide range of service providers involved in the provision of these services.

Article 23 – Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children.

Article 25 – Support for victims of sexual violence Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting up of appropriate, easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for victims.

Article 57 – Legal aid Parties shall provide for the right to legal assistance and to free legal aid for victims under the conditions provided by their internal law.

The minimum core services are:

Safe accommodation

Centres where services can be accessed
Support (practical/emotional/trauma/counselling/drug and alcohol support) including 1:1

Psychological therapies and interventions
Support to report, including for adult survivors of CSA

Awareness of rights, consistent with obligations to ensure knowledge of human

rights and create a human rights culture

Support with medical and forensic examination

Support to leave (including financial) or to stay in their own home with the abuser removed

Support to recover including CEDAR/ EYDAR (for women with children who have experienced domestic abuse)

Groupwork and peer support to be available.
Support to maintain/rebuild relationships with child/ren and social networks e.g. family, friends

Support to participate in service design, commissioning and monitoring

Support to be provided both online/using chat/telephone and face to face.

Specialist court advocacy (in any civil or criminal court processes)

Advocacy in interactions with housing/ benefits

Specialist sources of support and advice including legal; financial advice; support with employment, training or education

Resources/budget to empower women to access support services that are safe, nurturing, enjoyable, creative, trauma-informed are key to involvement - including transport, equipment, sustenance, creative resources/art collaborations, social activities and childcare and other services such as arts based therapies

Free legal aid for victims/survivors of VAWG to be a statutory right included in the legislation placing VAWG on a statutory footing

Minimum core services: children and young people experiencing VAWG

Safe accommodation

Centres where services can be accessed

**1:1 Support (practical/emotional/trauma/ counselling/mental health/drug and alcohol)
Age and developmentally appropriate psychosocial counselling, therapies and interventions including creative, arts and play therapy/approaches
Support to report**

**Awareness of rights, consistent with obligations to ensure knowledge of human rights and create a human rights culture
Support with medical and forensic examination**

**Support to leave, including educational support, financial support eg for clothes, toys, clubs etc. or stay in own home
Support to recover including CEDAR/EYDAR (for children experiencing domestic abuse)
Integrated support to build/maintain relationships with mother/carer and siblings, wider networks of family and friends, father if safe to do so
Groupwork and peer support to be available for all age groups
Empowering opportunities in the wider social environment and community, including play, fun, nature, leisure/sport, recreational, educational, cultural and artistic opportunities
Support to participate in service design, commissioning and monitoring**

**Specialist court/child protection advocacy (in any civil or criminal court processes, children's hearing or/and child protection processes)
Access to legal aid, legal advice and representation**

Support to be provided both online/using chat/telephone and face to face. Face to face contact to be prioritised.

Resources to empower children to access safe, nurturing, enjoyable, creative,

trauma-informed support services are key to involvement - including transport, equipment, sustenance, creative resources/ art collaborations, social, purposeful and play activities.

To support the delivery of the above services for women, children and young people, and provide evidence that they are being provided, planning, needs assessments, monitoring, data and standards will be required, (see Chapter 7 Service Standards) as will taking action to address deficits. In addition to the minimum core services, our model includes a range of further elements.

Helplines

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up state-wide round-the clock (24/7) telephone helplines free of charge to provide advice to callers, confidentially or with due regard for their anonymity, in relation to all forms of violence. (Article 24)

UNCRC recommends 24-hour toll-free child helplines with trained personnel (General Comment 13. Right to live free from violence. 43 (b) (i))

We do have a 24/7 helpline in Scotland, the National Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage (NDAFM) helpline run by Scottish Women's Aid. The Rape Crisis helpline, run by Rape Crisis Scotland, is available 7/7. They also have different models of service provision so there is no consistency in approach, which represents a significant disparity in this type of support for rape victims and should be remedied. A new 24/7 rape helpline for England and Wales was announced by the UK Government in December 2022 and NHS24 provides the helpline for recent victims of sexual assault.

In relation to children and young people, the [‘That’s not OK’](#) website resource was co-developed with young survivors as a result of Everyday Heroes research. ChildLine has been promoted in previous awareness campaigns to some success and the NDAFM helpline piloted national webchat for child DA victims, as recommended by young people, but this had limited use. None of these resources provide an interactive specialist resource linked to local specialist children and young people’s GBV workers called for in the Review and previous research. We heard engagement in online/ phone support was difficult in lockdown for many children and young people and we have not been able to hear from a range of children e.g. with English as second language, disabled children, BSL users etc.

Accessing information

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims receive adequate and timely information on available support services and legal measures in a language they understand. ([Istanbul Article 19](#))

CRC stresses the importance of increased public information programmes (IV. 44) awareness of violence against children, including its gendered nature, and the involvement of children in production and transmission of information on programmes and as reporters, analysts and commentators. (IV. 43)

Disappointingly, in spite of now 50 years of VAWG services being provided in Scotland, starting with the formation of Edinburgh and Glasgow Women’s Aid in 1973, we heard often from victims/survivors that they had not known where to go for help. This was especially, but not exclusively, an experience for minority ethnic women. Children and young people

said they need information about their right to protection from abuse, how to speak out and report abuse, and be reassured they will be listened to, believed and supported. More work clearly needs to be done to ensure that all who need services are aware of them, are clear what type of help is offered and how to contact them.

Adult and child victim/survivors involved in the justice system have said they and the public are not aware that some abusive behaviour is a crime, particularly in relation to the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 which criminalises a course of abusive behaviour including psychological abuse but also, for example, the sexual harassment girls experience in school. Public awareness of childhood sexual abuse was noted to be low. More needs to be done to educate about abuse, the law and associated rights, including to support.

We heard of some local and national co-produced information with young people, for example the ‘That’s Not OK!’ web resource mentioned above and an animation on GBV for children and young people in South Lanarkshire. We also heard that children would like online resources to offer support as well as information and link directly to local face to face support.

Rape and sexual assault centres

Provide for the setting up of appropriate, easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for victims. ([Article 25](#))

We heard a lot of evidence about pressures on rape crisis support, including lengthy waiting lists.

There is evidently not sufficient provision at present to either meet demand or ensure services are available for women who do not wish to access a different service offer. Further expansion of services for victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault is urgently required and should include diverse providers to ensure different needs are met.

We heard that services for child and young adult survivors of rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse and exploitation needed attention. As noted above, there is a particular gap in specialist services for children (e.g. RCS support is for young women 13+) including advocacy, therapeutic recovery support and forensic services, and services for childhood sexual abuse.

Safe accommodation

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children. (Article 23)

Safe accommodation/refuges have been part of the model of services for women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse for 50 years in Scotland. There has been little such provision for those experiencing other forms of VAWG, a notable exception being SAY Women, who provide semi-supported accommodation for young women 16–25 who have experienced sexual abuse, rape or sexual assault and are at risk of homelessness.

The preferred model of refuge provision for women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse involved in the refuge provision research carried out by Fitzpatrick et al. in 2003 was for self-contained

flats alongside rooms for peer support and in-house WA specialist support (1:1 and group). Peer support amongst residents was very important and this included age appropriate rooms for children and young people. However, the investment of £12m in a refuge development programme only updated half the refuges and we remain in the position that the other half still include elements of sharing e.g. kitchens, bathrooms. This needs to be rectified urgently and 20 years on from this study, we still have not achieved that.

Refuge provision is not the only type of safe accommodation that addresses the needs of women, children and young people. Moving on accommodation, separate flats with support for families with additional needs/or older males all need to be part of the provision. Shared refuge does not lend itself to accommodating women, children and young people presenting with complex support needs, as we heard is increasingly the case.

Questions were raised with us about the purpose of refuge fifty years on from when it was originally established, and we are aware of research looking at different models. Other options now exist in relation to housing which were not the case 50 years ago. In the light of these questions, we did not feel that it was appropriate for us to suggest targets for refuge provision, as its purpose will obviously have an impact on demand and supply. We are aware that the Istanbul Convention suggests a target of 1 refuge space per 20,000 of the population, which may have been met in some areas, but not in all and does not necessarily fit with the preferred model.

We are also aware that there are waiting lists for refuge which are preventing some who could benefit from this service from being able to access it.

Support and safety are the most crucial elements, and we would not support any moves to reduce either of these. We feel that further scrutiny/exploration of a new model for refuge is now called for, including how safety and support can be ensured, and in the meantime, a new refuge development programme is urgently required to bring all refuge accommodation up to the preferred, i.e. self-contained, model.

In addition, the role of housing more generally in providing safety for women, children and young people should be considered, see next section on Mainstream Services. It was disappointing to read the [Policies not Promises report](#) by Scottish Women's Aid and the Chartered Institute of Housing into the response by registered social landlords to domestic abuse. Providing options for families to stay in their homes rather than leave to escape abuse will not be effective unless appropriate support is also in place.

3 Mainstream Services

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them to the appropriate services. (Istanbul Article 20 (2))

All who come into contact with children are aware of risk factors and indicators of all forms of violence, have received guidance on how to interpret such indicators and have the necessary knowledge, willingness and ability to take appropriate action. (UNCRC Article 19, General Comment 13. 48)

The majority of victims and survivors of VAWCYP do not use specialist third sector organisations. Rather they interact with mainstream services

seeking access to a range of support including, but not limited to, accommodation, health, criminal justice, social care, education, financial assistance, and legal advice.

Much of the focus on addressing VAWG has understandably been on the urgent need for sufficient, sustainable funding to support the function of specialist VAWG services struggling to cope with high levels of demand that outstrip their capacity to deliver. Their symbiotic relationship with mainstream services, however, is often overlooked, which reflects not only a funding deficit but also a failure to position these services within a collaborative, multi-layered, whole systems approach to VAWG.

We have noted elsewhere the considerable costs of VAWG to the public purse that remain largely invisible in public accounting and financial allocations. This invisibility is replicated in the extent to which VAWG is absent or minimised in planning mechanisms both nationally and locally. Many respondents, for example, highlighted Community Planning as one of a number of local partnerships that do not recognise the significance of this issue in their area.

The hidden burden of VAWG on public services, *inter alia*, is a major impediment to realising the ambitions of Equally Safe. Upstream early engagement and intervention through universal services can prevent the entrenchment of serious harms that require complex and resource intensive intervention. The disproportionate level of presentations related to VAWG in Child Protection and Adult Support & Protection systems, Alcohol and Drug Support Services, Housing and Homelessness Support Services, Mental Health Services and Community Justice Services demands a more coherent approach to early identification and intervention that recognises the complexity of support required.

We heard a lot of evidence about inappropriate or damaging responses to presentations of VAWG and this must be addressed. We also heard examples of helpful responses, and there are clearly many professionals doing their best to offer support. That should be the default experience and it is not currently.

Workforce training and development is essential to ensure a trauma-informed, person-centred response to VAWG. However, in isolation this is insufficient to bring about the transformation that is clearly needed. Rather, it must sit within an overall strategic and policy framework that provides a comprehensive approach to equipping the respective public services to fulfil their obligations as service providers, partners, and employers.

There are many examples of good practice across the country within and across agencies, but there was widespread recognition in the Call for Evidence that we need to focus on wider systems to embed and share good practice and to make long-term meaningful change. Two examples are offered by way of illustration:

Housing

The Domestic Abuse (Protection)(Scotland) Act 2021 has been welcomed for the way in which it has connected domestic abuse and housing policy, offering important protections to victims of such abuse. A recent [report](#), however, highlighted a number of concerns expressed by stakeholders that may with limit its positive impact. These included the need for training police and housing staff on the implementation of the legislation, its effectiveness in relation to the private rental sector, the requirement for victims to present as homeless to secure long-term housing and the shortage of good quality, long-term, affordable housing. All of these underscore the imperative of having a coherent, resourced and collaborative approach to local implementation if the legislation is to have the desired impact.

NHS

The health service has a pivotal role in tackling VAWG. As a universal service provided from conception to grave, it is accessed by virtually all survivors of VAWG at some point. A recent [report](#) by SafeLives suggested that 80% of women experiencing domestic abuse reported seeking help from health services, usually GPs, at least once and this may be their first or only contact with professionals. It also highlighted that 30% of domestic abuse begins or escalates during pregnancy, underlining the case for a focus on existing priority settings of midwifery and health visiting. A [UK cross-government report](#) some years ago suggested that 50-60% of inpatients and 40-60% of outpatients in mental health services have been victims of sexual violence and/or childhood sexual abuse.

The creation of a dedicated programme of work on VAWG within NHS Scotland in 2009 introduced routine enquiry of abuse in a number of priority services to support early identification and response to domestic and sexual abuse. It also established strategic and operational leads with a responsibility for gender-based violence in each NHS Board. This infrastructure has endured, but there is disparity across the country in terms of resource allocation. The lack of reaffirmation of the programme has also led to attrition in rates of routine enquiry within some areas as well as difficulties in accessing data on VAWG related presentations.

Developing a policy and practice response that will build on this previous commitment, ensuring that there is national leadership and governance, and strengthening the capacity of NHS staff and services to respond to VAWG would be both an efficient and effective approach to support the NHS to deliver on Equally Safe. Maximising the public health expertise in relation to prevention, data collection and analysis, and evidence-based interventions requires additional resources

but would be cost effective and fruitful for individual agencies and partnerships.

A whole-system, gendered response to VAWG is a prerequisite to achieving the transformational shift required. At a local level, there needs to be investment to support the shift from crisis management and reactive service provision to prevention and early intervention. Universal, mainstream services are at the heart of this transformation.

4 No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPf)

Article 4 Istanbul Convention: The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties, in particular measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, **migrant or refugee status**, or other status. [our emphasis]

In her report [Safety before Status: the Solutions](#), published in December 2022, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales sets out options for the Home Office to end the current practice of denying support to women with No Recourse to Public Funds. We support her call to the UK Government to make this change, which, as she demonstrates, has implications for individual wellbeing in ratio to the costs to public finance.

Given that this might take some time, and is not within the competence of the Scottish Government, we are suggesting an interim approach for Scotland. Part of our task is to learn lessons from Covid, and one of the most compelling is that a way was found, during lockdown, to circumvent the NRPf regulations and provide services to those in need, regardless of their immigration status. Although the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession for domestic abuse survivors has been in place for many years, this is restricted to women who arrive in the UK on spousal visas.

During lockdown, NRPf was circumvented by using public health legislation, which is not likely to be appropriate in the longer term. As an alternative, given that women with children should at present receive support from local authorities under their duties to children and young people (although we have heard that this has needed to be argued by support organisations), we suggest that single women who have experienced VAWG should be automatically classed as 'vulnerable', which enables them to receive support.

In its [response](#) to the Work and Pensions Select Committee's report and recommendations on Children in Poverty: No Recourse to Public Funds, the UK Government asserted that "The Government is committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. Anyone who has suffered domestic abuse must be treated as a victim first and foremost, regardless of immigration status."

Furthermore it committed "£1.4 million in 2022–23 to continue to fund support for migrant victims of domestic abuse, while we take on board vital lessons learned from the pilot to inform our future policy decisions". We are interested to know what portion of that additional funding has come to Scotland under fiscal arrangements and how it has been allocated within the Scottish Budget.

Chapter 5 - Preventing VAWG

This chapter looks at the vital role of prevention, and demonstrates why there needs to be a significant shift towards funding of prevention work in order to move us towards reducing and ultimately eradicating VAWG.

The need for a concerted, robust and evidence based programme on primary prevention of VAWG was raised throughout the Call for Evidence process and in our engagement. Prevention is a key feature of [Equally Safe](#) and is one of the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention. It also echoes the call within the [Christie Commission](#) for a repurposing of resources to address upstream causes of inequality.

While there is consensus on taking a prevention focus, the evidence on what works to do so is somewhat equivocal. Underpinning all efforts to address this is the recognition that it is indivisible from action to end sex discrimination and inequality. UN Women in collaboration with World Health Organisation (WHO) and others published a framework to support the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions promoting prevention of VAWG. [RESPECT Women: Preventing violence against women](#) notes the following prerequisites to achieving success:

- political commitment and leadership
- implementing laws and policies that promote gender equality
- investing in women's and children's organisations
- allocating resources to prevention
- addressing the multiple forms of discrimination women face daily

The framework outlines seven inter-related intervention strategies derived from the word "respect":

- Relationships skills strengthened
- Empowerment of women and children
- Services ensured
- Poverty reduced
- Environments made safe
- Child and adolescent abuse prevented
- Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms

The framework underscores the need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach that works at individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels as key points of prevention. As noted elsewhere in this report, reducing the risk factors for VAWG is essential to both protect women, children and young people from abuse and prevent it. Policies to tackle poverty, improve mental health, reduce alcohol abuse etc. are key to developing an effective prevention strategy. A good example is Close the Gap's initiative [Equally Safe at Work](#) – an employer accreditation scheme funded by Scottish Government to encourage employers to support prevention, and directly support workers experiencing GBV.

What Is Prevention?

- **Primary prevention** – approaches that aim to prevent violence before it occurs
- **Secondary prevention** – approaches that focus on the more immediate responses to violence, such as pre-hospital care, emergency services or treatment for sexually transmitted diseases following a rape. Secondary prevention also seeks to prevent further acts of violence
- **Tertiary prevention** – approaches that focus on long-term care in the wake of violence, such as rehabilitation and reintegration, and attempts to lessen trauma or reduce the long-term disability associated with violence. Tertiary prevention also seeks to prevent further acts of violence.

World Health Organisation

Other important and welcome recent developments in this area are [Police Scotland's new VAWG Strategy](#), published on 21 April 2023, and Baroness Kennedy's report [Misogyny: a Human Rights Issue](#), published on 8 March 2022.

Equally Safe outlines steps towards realising gender equality and a programme of specific interventions focused on prevention. [Everyday Heroes](#) young people made a series of recommendations on tackling gender inequality in homes, schools, media, workplace and politics. Current efforts largely centre on the education sector. Initiatives such as the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), including Bystander approaches, have been rolled out in schools across the country.

As noted in Chapter 2, Who We Spoke To and What They Told Us, we spoke to a group of young women mentors in a Falkirk high school, who reflected that the success of their project was largely due to buy-in from senior staff. We were also told that schools are increasingly expected to be responsible for multiple initiatives around Personal & Social Education without being adequately resourced or funded to do so, which is not sustainable.

Rape Crisis Scotland also has a prevention package for schools and its pilot 'Whole Schools' approach is being evaluated. An 'Equally Safe in Higher Education' toolkit has been developed for universities.

The Scottish Government reviewed these interventions as part of its 2020 [Preventing Violence against Women and Girls – what works: evidence summary](#), concluding there was some 'promising' evidence for their effectiveness. The [Erase the Grey](#) campaign – launched by Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) – has key messages which challenge stereotypical attitudes and behaviours and reiterates a zero-tolerance policy towards GBV.

The NACWG in its first phase commissioned research to look at models to develop a 'What Works? Institute' to "develop and test robust, evidence-led, inclusive and representative approaches to changing public attitudes in Scotland to girls' and women's equality and rights, including dismantling stereotypes about what girls and women should study, work at, and be" (NACWG 2019). The resulting [report](#) made series of recommendations primarily focusing on work to challenge and change prevailing beliefs, attitudes and values on

VAWG.

The reports referred to above highlight the limitations of existing research that centres on attitudinal change as an outcome. Evidence on how attitudinal change impacts on long-term behavioural changes is 'sparse'. The need for longitudinal studies, and research tailored to the Scottish context were recommended alongside more community based interventions. Across both the Evidence Summary and the NACWG research, the lack of studies adopting an intersectional approach was noted as a significant limitation. Most studies do not consider the impact on different populations.

Contributors to the Call for Evidence also highlighted the following issues they consider to be obstacles to progressing work on prevention:

- Despite the need for significant investment to make lasting impact there is no agreed commissioning model or framework for local authorities (LAs) or partnerships to follow
- Current SG funding is focused on acute and downstream need
- The lack of demonstrable short-term outcomes coupled with the lack of a clear strategic focus on prevention
- The lack of cross-policy initiatives e.g. with portfolios on children and young people, or working with young men and boys in communities
- The lack of coherence and leadership across the prevention agenda; particularly the roles of LAs, NHS, Police and other actors who are key to taking this forward

There is widespread agreement that primary prevention of VAWG is urgently required. Challenging the attitudes, norms and structures that give rise to and sustain gender inequality and VAWG demands a comprehensive, coordinated approach across all levels of society.

We agree with the call for strengthening existing work on primary prevention in Scotland.

Chapter 6 - Violence Against Women Partnerships

This chapter sets out the role of VAWPs in our proposed new model of funding and provides a good practice example.

The task of addressing VAWG cannot be undertaken by one single body and demands a cross sectoral response. Realising the wider vision and ambitions of Equally Safe requires the implementation of a coherent and effective partnership approach across and within the public and third sector as well as civic society. As the nexus between specialist agencies, the wider policy environment and public sector agencies within a local area, Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWPs) are the multi-agency mechanism designed to ensure delivery on these strategic priorities.

[Guidance](#) on the structure and roles of VAWPs was issued in 2016, and provides the framework within which they operate. All partnerships are required to meet minimum standards, such as developing a strategic plan, and have to report on local progress against the national outcomes using the [Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework](#). A national VAWP forum, supported by the Improvement Service, works to maximise the impact of local partnerships through coordination, collaboration and providing a collective voice.

We are aware of the concerted effort by VAWPs over many years to bring about meaningful change on VAWG. We also know of many examples of good practice, innovation, and creativity that have made a visible and significant impact on the lives of women, children and young people affected by abuse. The drive, energy, and commitment of those involved in VAWPs are to be celebrated and

commended. (See good practice example (Dundee) at the end of the chapter.)

What we have also heard, however, are frustrations about the pace of change and the inadequate level of resource allocated to address a problem of this magnitude, both of which have been amplified by the deepening of gender inequalities and increase in VAWG resulting from the Covid pandemic. In the [Call for Evidence](#) responses and the engagement sessions we have undertaken there were repeated references to the difficulty in overcoming siloed working, constraints in inter- and multi-agency collaboration and a concern that pathways of support were not joined up effectively.

Another issue raised with us was the lack of respect some smaller service provision organisations felt they experienced from other partners in their VAWPs. This needs to change. No one sector or organisation can provide a comprehensive response to VAWCYP and the contribution of all is essential.

The lack of status accorded VAWPs, and by extension the lack of perceived importance of VAWG, was highlighted as a key factor that dilutes the effectiveness of VAWPs and the drive for collaborative leadership locally. The absence of a statutory requirement to deliver and report on work in this area, which exists for Child Protection (CP) and Adult Support & Protection (ASP), was seen as instrumental in creating this disparity. We heard frequently of the need to strengthen the role of VAWPs by

putting VAWG on equal footing with other areas of Public Protection. The integration of VAWG into Public Protection processes and aligned reporting through Chief Officers Groups that has been progressed in some areas has been a welcome development for VAWPs. This is not uniform across the country, however, and the lack of comparable resource allocation with CP and ASP continues to disadvantage work on VAWG. The relative standing of VAWG varies across local authority areas; for example, some VAWPs have had success engaging with key strategic partners particularly in Community Planning and Health & Social Care Partnerships while this is fairly limited in others. In their self-reports on progress around implementation of Equally Safe most VAWPs note that they have some engagement but this is not quantified or elaborated upon. The extent to which they can do so is partly a reflection of how much importance the issue has locally.

Investment in the infrastructure required to support effective partnership working is essential but this too varies across the country; for example, not all partnerships have a full-time coordinator. Additionally, the resource deficit hinders their capacity to undertake a range of work such as local needs assessments, and the collection and analysis of data. The benefits for a VAWP where there has been investment are noticeable; for example, the appointment of an Independent Chair to the Dundee VAWP has strengthened the partnership, creating space for partners to engage productively with each other free from tensions around respective roles.

Local ownership, autonomy and decision making are central to the work of VAWPs who are charged with reflecting the needs of their areas and engaging with their local communities. Unlike other partnerships, VAWPs do not have a strategic commissioning role which limits the development of a response tailored to local needs and circumstances.

Given the breadth of work required across a complex policy landscape, the need to develop a more explicitly intersectional approach and the growing demands for more specialised services this is a significant impediment to delivering the outcomes of Equally Safe.

With the centralisation of funding on VAWG, primarily through the DES budget, decisions on the funding of local specialist services are largely divorced from their local area, which has implications for accountability as well as planning and sustainability. As noted in Chapter 3, Funding Problems Identified by the Review, this centralisation has also shifted perceptions of responsibility for funding, removing it from a primarily local authority duty to a central government one, resulting in a disconnect between local strategic priorities and service provision.

VAWG is not an individual problem but one which demands a public health and human rights approach. A collective effort is required to achieve the goals of Equally Safe and VAWPs should be at the heart of this endeavour. Throughout the consultation we have heard a genuine desire and drive to make these partnerships effective, and thoughtful reflections on how to strengthen the role of VAWPs within communities.

The ability of VAWPs to translate the ambitions of Equally Safe into effective action will require investment to strengthen their reach and impact, and to build capacity across their local areas. The principle of subsidiarity i.e. that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level, is an important aspect of this. Decisions about funding being made closer to where services will be delivered will enable local needs to be better met.

Dundee VAWP – A Good Practice Example

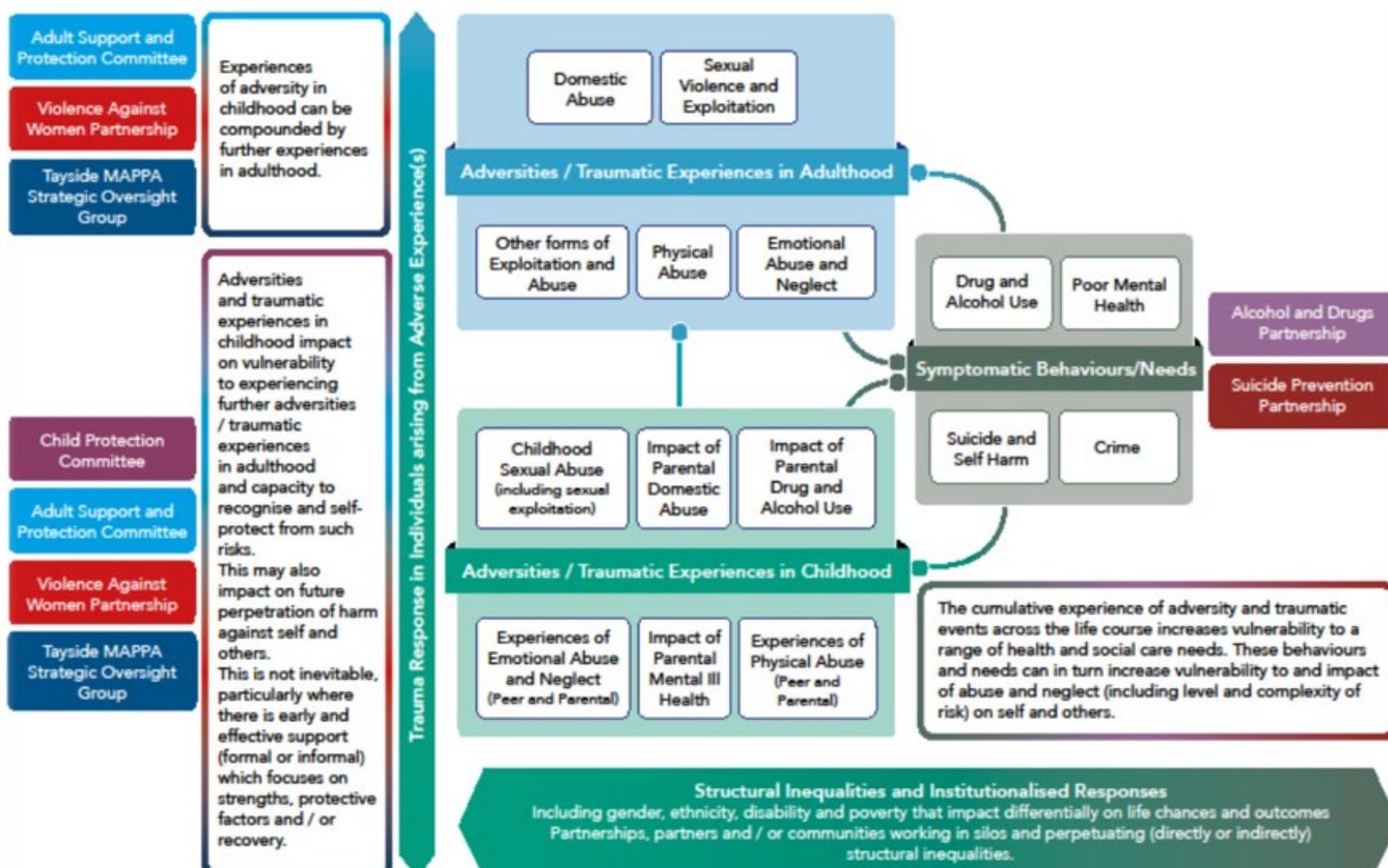
Overview

Dundee has a history of very high rates of domestic abuse and sexual crimes, alongside many complexities such as substance misuse and deprivation. There had been an issue with demand for specialist services versus their capacity, an over reliance on third sector specialist agencies, and a lack of capacity to upskill non-specialist services.

Now, however, training for non-specialist services is well underway and a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to funding has helped specialist services to meet demand.

The current structure, (see below) which locates the VAWP within the protecting people structure in Dundee, is a key factor in their progress. The Dundee VAWP reports directly to the Chief Officers' Group (COG), and has equal footing and direct links with the Child Protection and Adult Protection Committees, the Alcohol & Drugs Partnership (ADP), and the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The strategic support team for these partnerships and committees is located together as one team. This has huge benefits for communication, a cross cutting approach, and sharing of developments and ideas. There has been strong commitment and support for this over a number of years.

Dundee's Protecting People Structure



Foundations for success

- The VAWP has an independent Chair, who as a member of the COG, is therefore linked in to the key decision making groups
- Work was undertaken to make the risks and harms that VAWG was causing in Dundee visible to senior leaders and operational managers, and the impact of risk management in relation to this was demonstrated to organisations. The development of an integrated protecting people risk register has enabled the understanding of the shared risks across the protecting people committees and allowed for collective work on responses to these risks
- They also focussed on proving the value of moving to a mainstream approach. By building in evaluation from the very start of new projects, from both service user and organisational perspectives, the value of mainstreaming was demonstrated and a move to this approach was made possible
- A gendered services group was established which reports directly to the VAWP and the ADP and aims to support services to become more gendered in their design, delivery, and ethos, engaging women with lived experience to ensure services are getting it right and ensure they are able to influence design and delivery

The persistence and goodwill of many people, in particular from the operational staff who were working to support new projects, was also a key component of laying the foundations for success.

A partnership approach was also taken to DES and other bids in recent applications and focused on capacity building as well as service provision.

The VAWP has established a training consortium and a VAWG Overview training day was rolled out online during 2020-2022. A coordinated multi-level VAWG training programme is a priority for the future.

A GBV advisor post, a partnership with Dundee & Angus Women's Rape & Sexual Assault Centre (WRASAC), and Dundee City Council (DCC), ensures a co-ordinated approach to GBV learning, training and development across DCC and their partners, and the multi-agency workforce in Dundee. By improving the understanding of GBV and practical application of trauma-informed, survivor focused, gendered approaches, the hope is that survivors in Dundee will have consistently positive interactions with all services.

What has worked well?

Some key highlights illustrating the success of Dundee's collaborative/collective leadership to VAWG include:

- Dundee VAWP members feel they have created a safe space within the VAWP where egos are not at play and this enables them to have transparency in their approach (particularly to funding), enables collaboration and creativity, and allows them to hold each other accountable
- Collaborative approach to development of the Women's Hub, co-locating Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, support for women selling and exchanging sex, and support for women offenders
- Ownership and leadership around VAWG from education, housing, community learning and development, health and social care partnership and many others

- In light of challenges around funding, the VAWP took a paper to the COG in late 2020, clearly linking to the risk register, which resulted in chief officers making a number of commitments to reallocating capacity within mainstream services and a commitment to upskilling mainstream services to effectively tackle VAWG
- A COG VAWG funding group was established. The focus this brought, alongside the risk register, enabled Covid recovery funding from DCC to be secured for Dundee WA and WRASAC. Both services used the additional funds to address waiting times
- The collective leadership flowing from the VAWP and the ADP expanded the ability to tackle the issues faced by the most vulnerable women in Dundee and opened up huge possibilities for collaborative working at a strategic and operational level
- A Scrutiny Group contributes to the delivery of continuous improvement of key processes and practice. One direct action has been addressing the lack of young women accessing services for support with domestic abuse within their own relationships. This was clear from few referrals being for women under 26. The VAWP now operates a Young People and VAWG Intel Group to gather information on issues facing young people and how to appropriately address and support such concerns

Quotes From Partners

“We’ve been really open on what we receive, where there are gaps and what the gaps are. It’s no longer a service issue, it’s a community in Dundee issue. We have supported each other to go for funding and made it a coordinated approach.”

“Getting rid of those egos and fear about things, it’s no longer my service, my service, its Dundee services.”

“It’s about not being as competitive with each other, it’s a true partnership.”

Chapter 7 - Service Standards

In this chapter, we describe how service standards will be ensured.

Ensuring high quality services are available across Scotland, accessible to all who require them, was a key part of our remit. Currently, there is much variation in the quality of services and in how they are delivered. Some of this may be appropriate, and cater to local needs and we want this to continue, reflecting what we heard from our engagement. Significant work to develop standards for organisations providing services for women, children and young people who have experienced violence and abuse needs to be undertaken, if we are going to achieve the aspirations of the Review. This work must be collaborative and include participation of victims/survivors.

Funders are entitled to expect, and indeed require, their money to be used to deliver high quality services, and to be able to make different decisions about what to fund if this proves not to be the case.

We have more to say about commissioning services elsewhere in this report. This section is focussed on what we need to do to move towards a position where the same quality of services is available everywhere.

Standards and Performance

Both Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland have national service standards, in the former case recently updated and significantly improved. These standards should be used to form the initial basis of ensuring a consistent quality of services throughout Scotland.

We have said a lot in this report about the accessibility of services and therefore recommend that standards around accessibility should also be developed.

The Improvement Service Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework for VAWPs are an important step in working towards consistency of approach across Scotland and establishing agreed standards. As we recommend that VAWPs are put on a statutory footing, the standards and performance framework will have to be reviewed and amended to take the new circumstances into account.

Standards for domestic abuse court advocacy for women are in development by ASSIST and SafeLives. This will be an important step forward in ensuring consistent, high quality services and should also be carried out for court advocacy for children and young people.

Standards for MARACs and MATACs will also help to drive consistency. We heard about differences in how these operate and are co-ordinated and chaired across the country. Agreed national standards for MARACs and MATACs will be needed alongside their inclusion in the statutory footing for VAWG we recommend.

One suggestion, which came from Women's Aid managers, was that there should be a bespoke inspection regime for their refuge services. Currently, they are inspected by the Care Inspectorate as a housing service which is not an exact fit for them. We agree that this would be a helpful development.

We also note that the current regime of standards does not take cognisance of other models of training, definitions, measurement or monitoring. For example, training on FGM in Scotland still focuses on cultural and traditional values as the main pillars of harmful traditional practices. While these may have been the common reasons in the past, FGM was driven by patriarchal interests which treated girls as commodities to be traded for dowry in marriage. In recent years, African feminists have argued that harmful practices are about economic, social and sometimes political systems and structures which are about power and dominance. Additionally, there are examples of successful community engagement and interventions which show that more and more parents stop cutting their daughters and forcing them into early marriages when they learn that, as doctors, teachers and other professionals, the daughter can contribute more money to the family than dowry.

We therefore recommend that a standing committee for minority ethnic women and girls should be established to scrutinise, inform and advice on policies and practice on all matters relating to VAWG.

As noted in Chapter 10, Commissioning & Tendering, a focus on the lived experience of those affected by violence against women and girls should be central for monitoring and evaluation as well as the design of services and appropriately resourced.

Chapter 8 - Governance

In this chapter we set out the arrangements for oversight and implementation of our new models of services and funding.

The Istanbul Convention requires that “one or more official bodies responsible for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by this Convention” be established and this was also argued for in our Call for Evidence.

Having had the opportunity to consider the role played by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, we have recommended that a similar role is created for Scotland, extended to cover all aspects of VAWG.

In line with the very welcome current development of the Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland, we have recommended that an Istanbul Implementation Observatory be established, including the Office of the Commissioner. The Commissioner will also have a role in ensuring that the Scottish Government and Local Authorities set out, and keep to, a timetable for implementing the recommendations in this report.

The German Government has recently established an Istanbul Observatory and this will ensure Scotland is in line with best practice developments at European level.

A key role of the Observatory will be data collection and research on all forms of violence (Article 11 of Istanbul) and addressing data gaps identified by the UN and in this report, in particular disaggregated intersectional data and research with minoritised groups. In addition, UNCRC Gen Comment 13. III. 12 states that the

“impact of measures taken is limited by a lack of knowledge, data and understanding of violence against children and its root causes”.

Ultimately, putting VAWG on a statutory footing will include the method for ensuring chains of accountability and details of how continuous improvement will be built in. As with any effective standards regime, sanctions for those who consistently fail to meet them will also be included, and we envisage these being part also of the new commissioning process (see below) as well as of the role of the VAWG Commissioner.

Scottish Government Visible Commitment

Accountability at Scottish Government level will also be key to the successful implementation of the new funding and services models. Recognising that a significant commitment to making the changes we recommend will be required from the Scottish Government, we recommend that oversight and drive for implementation always sits at Cabinet Secretary level and is not delegated to ministers. The

eradication of VAWCYP as a transversal policy issue is the responsibility of the full cabinet, and should be driven by a nominated Cabinet Secretary and visible across all portfolios. This is no reflection on how that responsibility has been undertaken in recent years, but simply provides a visible demonstration of the Scottish Government's understanding of the level of commitment which will be required to carry out these changes.

Part of this visible commitment will be adequately resourcing the work to deliver the recommendations of the Review. A significant increase in staffing will be required to enable this ambitious change programme to be implemented - the recent example of the Warm Welcome for refugees from Ukraine demonstrates this it is possible to achieve this, even in difficult financial circumstances. This increase in staffing will also be required in COSLA and the Improvement Service.

Additionally, [the NACWG has recommended](#) clear actions to improve access to justice for women and girls experiencing men's violence by:

- Creating a world-leading process for complainers of sexual violence
- Criminalise serious misogynistic harassment, filling gaps in existing laws
- Create a consistent and inclusive model to ensure that women experiencing domestic abuse have sufficient access to expert legal advice and legal aid

Meeting International Standards

In addition to the clear requirements of the Istanbul Convention, Scotland and its public agencies must look to the achievement of the targets within the National Performance Framework, and to compliance with international standards.

The GREVIO process for oversight on implementation of the Istanbul Convention requires states to provide an account of the financial resources allocated under Article 8 (see Chapter 9 Budgeting for VAWG), and details on the bodies established to oversee the implementation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Convention.

The next evaluation in the GREVIO review cycle that will require a baseline assessment of the UK government is live, and the thematic review falls due in 2026. We are interested to know whether the Scottish Government will be able to confirm that it has met the institutional and resourcing requirements by that time.

The international human rights treaties include clear obligations in relation to elimination of gender-based violence and the maximisation of resources to secure the realisation of rights. These obligations are further reflected in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include within SDG 5 on gender equality these targets:

Target 5.2

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Indicators 5.2.1

Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

5.2.2

Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.

Target 5.c

Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Indicator 5.c.1

Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The achievement of SDG 5 at the national level is integral to the human rights outcomes in Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#).

Chapter 9 - Budgeting for VAWG

In this chapter, we set out the huge financial costs of VAWG and the issues we encountered in terms of how spend on VAWG is reported in the Scottish Budget. We identify some areas for improvement in financial reporting.

VAWG: Scottish Government Funding Provision

Costs of VAWG

As mentioned above, violence against women and girls represents a huge personal cost to all those affected. Furthermore, VAWG costs the UK an estimated £40bn each year.

Domestic violence and abuse alone cost the UK an estimated £15.7 billion in 2008. This included:

- more than £3.9 billion for the criminal justice system, civil legal services, healthcare, social services, housing and refuges
- more than £1.9 billion for the economy (based on time off work because of injuries)
- over £9.9 billion in 'human and emotional' costs, for example, the cost of domestic murders and attempted murders, threatening behaviour and the subsequent pain, suffering and fear caused

The cost of sexual offences in a year is estimated to be £8.46bn, with each rape costing an estimated £96,000. [Surviving Economic Abuse \(SEA\)](#) also report that 1 in 10 women has had debts put in her name and was afraid to say no, and that coerced debt is even more common among those who have experienced other forms of domestic abuse.

Further, in 2013, the European Parliament estimated the total costs of violence against women and domestic violence in the EU to be about €228 billion in 2011 (1.8% of EU GDP). This amounts to about €450 per European citizen per year. In 2022, the Scottish Women's Budget Group produced a [briefing for elected members](#) for the Improvement Service that highlighted:

“There are some core areas where specific spending on women’s services is necessary to tackle other outcomes of inequality in our society. It requires the same kind of gender budget analysis to ensure the services are working to support women and tackle inequality. Violence against women (VAW) services is a primary example of this. Public spending decisions that do not recognise the different needs of women, men and nonbinary people in domestic abuse and other specialist VAW services fail to recognise the link between violence against women as a consequence of gender inequality.”

(Scottish Women’s Budget Group 2022).

[Women Against Violence Europe \(WAVE\)](#), advocate a funding model of 10% of the costs of violence to be allocated in appropriate financial and human resources as an appropriate level of funding. According to WAVE:

“Given the high costs of violence against women it can be argued that it would be appropriate to spend at least the equivalent of 10% of the costs of violence against women on measures to prevent violence and to protect and support survivors...this simple calculation reveals the necessity to enhance efforts to secure adequate funding for the elimination of violence against women and domestic violence. Alternative methods and models of costing are not currently known or available.”

WAVE, 2017: 23)

Financing for prevention and support services across the range of VAWG provision is complex and multi-layered. The multi-faceted nature of service and resource requirements across multiple agencies in public, third and community sectors, and several layers and functions of government all create and augment the complexity of allocating, following, and evaluating outcomes from public finances.

Throughout the Review, it proved difficult to identify specific allocations within the Scottish Budget and their distribution across spending and service providers due to a lack of clarity within the Scottish budget documentation, and a lack of specificity in budget lines and programme spending.

While there is no suggestion that the resultant difficulties in accessing and identifying spend and the lack of transparency in “following the money” are intentional, they certainly serve to obscure funding pathways and render the process less transparent. This has the effect of making it more difficult for funders, service providers, partners across agencies, to have a clear understanding of the levels of resourcing and spend, and therefore more difficult to identify outcomes.

Visibility and clarity on the resource allocation process, following spend, and attributing outcomes from public finances have been identified throughout the Review as key issues requiring attention and improvement.

In relation to service providers an additional set of complexities and challenges arise. These include:

- separately identifying spending by local authorities
- commissioning and grant funding of services and special projects
- complexity of funding application processes with no agreed commissioning model or framework for local authorities or partnerships to follow
- timescales and duration of funding allocations

From the evidence generated through the Review, it is clear that while centralised funding is insecure given the vagaries of Scottish Government budgets, local authority budgets are also insufficient and councils look to Scottish Government to make up shortfalls.

Areas for Improvement

There are four areas for improvement, with specific objectives for changes in allocation and evaluation processes at levels of the Scottish Government and Scottish budget, providers, stakeholders, and accountability.

1. Scottish Budget and Scottish Government

Among the principal findings from the Review are concerning issues around the visibility, transparency, and consistency of allocation through the Scottish Budget which are discussed in this section.

Analysing the Scottish Government Draft Budget 2022-23 as an example, the Review considered how funding allocations were set out in budgetary documentation, the levels of funding published, and the consistency in the presentation of allocations. Amongst the findings of concern were the difficulties in identifying spending totals and the specific allocations across portfolios due to repetition of the same information. For example, £44.98 million was cited as a budgeting line within Promoting Equality and Human Rights. In the Draft Budget, this amount was described as:

“an increase of 39% – demonstrating the Scottish Government’s commitment to promoting equality and realising human rights for the people of Scotland. This will enable continued funding to organisations supporting some of the most vulnerable in society, through Delivering Equally Safe and Embedding Equality and Human Rights funds. It also delivers on a range of Programme for Government commitments in equality, inclusion and human rights, including support to front-line organisations that work to tackle gender-based violence or deliver Equally Safe.”

(Scottish Government, 2021:13)

Earlier in the Draft Budget, it was stated that “Over **£23 million** support to front-line organisations that help eradicate and prevent Violence Against Women and Girls, and £4 million in additional funding to improve victim-centred support.” (Scottish Government, 2021: 12). It is not clear from the remainder of the Draft Budget document how the £44.98m is allocated across portfolios as the same figure is repeated across other portfolios, without detail on the specifics.

For example, under Justice and Veterans, the Draft Budget states:

- “This budget supports the equality and human rights infrastructure across Scotland. Investing in the capacity of equality organisations; Strategic Interventions to support key equality outcomes; and specific funds to support frontline activity to address violence against women and to support activities to promote equality and human rights.”

- “New funding commitments arising from the manifesto and Programme for Government including the government’s commitment to additional support for specialist services that tackle gender-based violence and support delivery of the Equally Safe strategy.”

Under Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, the sum presented is the same and the repeated text is equally unspecific:

- “This budget supports the equality and human rights infrastructure across Scotland. Investing in the capacity of equality organisations; Strategic Interventions to support key equality outcomes; and specific funds to support frontline activity to address violence against women and to support activities to promote equality and human rights.”
- “New funding commitments arising from the manifesto and PfG including the government’s commitment to additional support for specialist services that tackle gender-based violence and support delivery of the Equally Safe strategy.”

There were further statements of commitment expressed as:

“The 2022-23 Justice budget will address many of the Criminal Justice Committee’s recommendations. It includes additional funding to ensure the substantial activity on Justice recovery, renewal and transformation continues to address the courts backlog, and provides additional funding for community justice services. Additional funding will also be invested to improve victim-centred support, including for victims of violence against women and girls.”

(Scottish Government, 2021: 27)

“The portfolio (Social Justice, Housing & Local Government Portfolio) supports a wide range of work to prevent discrimination and promote equality, inclusion and human rights creating the conditions for cohesive, resilient and safe communities. We support the Equality and Human Rights infrastructure across Scotland to address systemic inequality, tackle hate crime and address violence against women and girls.”

(Scottish Government, 2021: 38)

It is not clear what the separately mentioned £23m was intended to support. Elsewhere in relation to funding VAWG services, the Review was given evidence about funding supporting DES. In December 2020, the DES Fund opened for applications with a series of deadlines in March, April and May 2021. Funding decisions were announced in August 2021, and the first payments were made to successful organisations in October 2021. The evidence provided to the Review detailed an overall DES budget of £38m over three years. This budget was to fund over 90 organisations ‘delivering front line’ services, and allocations included £15.4m to 41 Women’s Aid Centres, and £7.7m to Rape Crisis Centres, with £5.2m invested in ‘prevention focused activity’ over 2 years, with 17 organisations in receipt of funds.

In additional evidence, the value of the DES budget was given as £38m for which there were 163 applications with an average allocation of £469k.

The UK government budget in 2021 announced additional funding bringing UK Ministry of Justice support services to over £185million by 2024/25. According to the UK Women’s Budget Group this still falls significantly short of the estimated £409 million that is needed for specialist domestic abuse services across England. It is not clear what the consequential

allocations to the Scottish Budget were from this additional allocation of resource.

Implications

There are inconsistencies across the presentation of budgets for DES and VAWG services, with different sums being stated across different documentation. The Review sought to identify clear budget lines from the Scottish Government. Using Scottish Draft Budget documentation it was not possible to ascertain total values of assigned funds, impeding clear transparency in tracking spend and evaluating outcomes.

This lack of specificity undermines the principles of transparency recommended in a gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting approach to which the Scottish Government has repeatedly committed. It also means that currently, the Scottish Government is not compliant with the Istanbul Convention as it is not possible to identify the specific breakdown of public finance allocated through the Scottish Budget.

2. Service Providers and Partnerships

Evidence from SG officials described the funding landscape as varied, unstable, and lacking sustainability for services. The Review was given information about an online conference in December 2020, organised by the Improvement Service and COSLA which identified a number of issues in relation to the provision, sustainability and range of sources of funding including:

- Dedicated funding is required to support local multi-agency partnership working, specifically to support both VAWG agencies and wider stakeholders to identify and progress actions to support a more joined-

up, person-centred approach to working with women and children experiencing VAWG.

- Long-term, sustainable funding is needed for specialist VAWG services to enable them both to deliver high quality support to women and children within local communities and to engage with wider strategic work.
- There is an unacceptable postcode lottery of support across Scotland.
- A minimum level of specialist provision should be available in all local authority areas for women and children experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG.
- Competitive funding models undermine partnership working and put additional pressure on specialist services at a time when capacity is already limited.
- Funders require more comprehensive evaluation of their activities which third sector organisations may lack resources and skills to undertake.
- Short-term funding and complex tender documentation can have a negative impact on service users if the organisation is not in a position to shield service users from cuts in service provision.
- Overly prescriptive funding formulas can also have a negative impact on service users because it restricts agencies' ability to respond to individual need.

One issue identified was the potential for greater introduction of market approaches within public sector provision resulting in charitable organisations having to compete within the sector in order to attract and secure funding. This has included the concept of "hybridity" which refers to the extent to which an individual organisation draws upon a plurality of financial sources including

government, public, charitable and private sources. This has been mooted as a possible funding model in England and Wales, according to Scottish Government officials. There is some suggestion that such diversity and spread of funding might be a model that would travel to Scotland. Such a model, it has been suggested, mitigates the usual risks of uncertainty and lack of sustainability as it provides a mixed resource base supporting organisational growth.

Currently in Scotland, there are a considerable number of funders who distribute relatively small amounts of funding through smaller grants of less than £10,000 per year to VAWG organisations, which taken together can add up to a large amount of funding for VAWG organisations, particularly for small to medium sized ones. These mixed funding models are not inherently secure, and still require sustained effort in sourcing and sustaining funds, further undermining the stability of services.

3. Accountability and Stakeholder Scrutiny

International standards on gender budgeting and gender budget analysis suggest that all stages of the budget process – overall process; preparation and approval; execution, reporting, and monitoring; audit and oversight, should be able to be scrutinised and subject to accountability. On the basis of the 2022-23 Draft Budget as an example of the presentation of budgetary information in core budget documents, there is limited opportunity for effective accountability of government and scrutiny by external stakeholders.

4. Quantifying Spend in Relation to International Commitments

The Scottish Government is committed to implementing the Istanbul Convention. Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention sets out the requirement that parties need to provide appropriate financial and human resources for the implementation of policies, measures and programmes to prevent violence against women and domestic violence:

Parties shall allocate appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including those carried out by non-governmental organisations and civil society.

Article 2, Part II of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights requires state parties as duty bears to **“take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.”** Our emphasis added here highlights that our recommendations for resourcing, and securing a legislative underpinning for VAWG services are in line with the key principles of international human rights, including that the implementation of obligations should ensure non-discrimination, and non-regression of existing rights.

Further scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s allocation of resources on the basis of international human rights standards, is significantly impeded by the limited and inconsistent presentation of public finance information.

Chapter 10 - Commissioning & Tendering

In this chapter we compare commissioning of VAWG services with tendering and provide a model of collaborative commissioning.

A significant concern during the call for evidence was that there is no agreed commissioning framework for local authorities or partnerships to follow. There was also concern about some of what is happening in practice. For example, in many local authorities commissioning sits in housing departments and there is little engagement with specialist violence against women and girls organisations or with the women, children and young people who use their services. Women's Aid organisations often felt the commissioning team did not understand domestic abuse and that local authorities were trying inappropriately to make Women's Aid services fit a housing support model. There was also concern about procurement, especially when price became the overriding factor in a tendering process and contracts were awarded to large generalist organisations rather than specialist, often local, organisations with a gendered understanding of violence against women and girls. It is therefore necessary to take a close look at commissioning and procurement with a view to improvement and reform.

Firstly, however we must be clear about the legislative situation. Tendering for social care contracts, including violence against women and girls services, is only required for contracts valued above £663,540. That figure is specified in the latest regulations, the [Public Procurement etc\(EU Exit\)\(Scotland\) \(Amended\)regulations 2020](#). Those regulations result from the primary legislation, the Procurement (Reform) Scotland Act 2014. There is also Statutory Guidance on the Act which indicates that, when procuring Health

and Social Care services, account can be taken of quality, continuity, affordability, availability, comprehensiveness, accessibility, innovation and the needs and involvement of different types of service users. In addition, there are Procurement Equality duties including a duty to report every other year on how procurement policy and activity contributed to achieving the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

For social care, including violence against women and girls services, anything below the figure of £663,540 can be awarded on a different basis without advertisement and tendering although some local authorities opt to tender even though not required to do so. Moreover some local authorities break down the overall amount for violence against women and girls services into smaller lots, Edinburgh is one example, and put the lots out to tender even though the value of each is below the threshold. Overall the vast majority of violence against women and girls services can be awarded without going out to tender and the requirement to do so only affects a small number of local authorities. That number could be reduced further by amending the Regulations to raise the threshold value. Abolishing the requirement altogether would require amendment to primary legislation, to section 12 of the 2014 Act, to be precise.

For an example of how commissioning can be done in a radically different way without recourse to tendering, it is worth looking at what has been achieved in [East Ayrshire local authority](#), where one member of the Advisory Group was until recently Depute Chief Executive. The local authority believed that it was necessary to use the expertise of the local Women's Aid organisation, and the women who accessed that vital service, in order to build a commissioning framework. The service specification was scrutinised line by line, with East Ayrshire Women's Aid taking a lead role in advising what the service could or could not do. This was then provided to a focus group of women who use the service and considerable time was taken to ensure their views were captured in the service specification. All of the women's views were built into the new contract and work began on responding to their needs even before the new contract had been established. An agreement was made to offer a contract of 3+1+1 years giving five years in total for the service to experience security and continuity. The contract was awarded in April 2022 and is already experiencing tangible results. Testimonials from women and children consistently emphasise the significant impact the service is having in helping them rebuild their lives.

The process demonstrated a real co-productive approach in every aspect of design and delivery and local authority officials fully embraced it. They are confident that the women who use the service and East Ayrshire Women's Aid are driving the service delivery they want and need and that trusted providers can achieve very significant positive change. The local authority has also pointed out alignment of its approach with the findings of the Feeley report around ethical commissioning. Feeley in the [Review of Adult Social Care](#) wanted the emphasis to shift from price and competition to collaboration and co-production with commissioners and providers working together along with wider

participation of those using the service. We strongly recommend this approach for violence against women and girls services.

One option for [collaborative commissioning](#), practiced to a limited extent already in various local authority areas, is a public social partnership which in this case could involve other specialist organisations as well as Women's Aid and the local authority. The specialist designation is important, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention which distinguishes between general and specialist services and highlights the need for specialist services underpinned by a gendered understanding of violence against women and girls. Such a partnership could comprise members of the Violence against Women Partnership that exists in every local authority area and this could become the commissioning body with full involvement of specialist providers. Putting VAWPs on a statutory footing, as we recommend, would lend weight to such an enhanced role.

In return for a seat at the commissioning table, providers would of course have to be accountable for the quality of their service. Standards are a very important means of ensuring such accountability as well as contributing to consistency, equity and service improvement. There are already various relevant national quality standards (see Chapter 7, Service Standards) and they should be developed further to encompass more service aspects. A focus on the lived experience of those affected by violence against women and girls should be central for monitoring and evaluation as well as the design of services. Exploring different mechanisms of evaluation would also be useful and possibly a programme to help commissioners assess and measure the impact of services. Consideration should also be given to what external checks and possible inspection would be most appropriate for violence against women and girls services, including a Commissioner.

It is not necessary or desirable to be prescriptive in detail here about a new commissioning regime, provided the general direction of travel is clear. Varying local approaches can be tried and tested so that lessons can be learned and best practice disseminated, in line with [Christie principles](#) and the focus on place-based policy making. It is in that spirit that we have showcased the good practice in East Ayrshire Council. Similarly it is not necessary to be entirely prescriptive about length of contract here although there are many advantages in having longer contracts than has been traditional, the five years from the City of Edinburgh Council for Edinburgh Women's Aid, renewable for a further five, being an interesting case in point.

It is essential to resource the primary prevention of violence against women and girls and, while action at national level is absolutely indispensable for that, it should also be an integral part of the local commissioning process. As noted in Chapter 6, Prevention, well established prevention programmes such as that of Rape Crisis Scotland should be supported and expanded to involve every secondary school but there also needs to be development and testing of new interventions with rigorous evaluation. As with the commissioning of services, this requires experts in the field to be at the commissioning table and women more widely to be involved in the design and development of interventions.



Chapter 11 - A New Model of Funding

In this chapter we set out our proposed new model of funding, which flows from the evidence we collected, and which will deliver on the aims of the Review.

The principal aim of the [Review](#) was to develop a more consistent, coherent, collective and stable funding model that will ensure high quality, accessible specialist services across Scotland for women, children and young people experiencing any form of VAWG.

As set out in our Terms of Reference, we wanted the Review to be consistent with other key strategies and developments already agreed by the Scottish Government such as the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, Baroness Kennedy's report *Misogyny - a Human Rights Issue*; the recommendations in [the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership's report](#); the principles to inform a [Framework on Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#); the [Scottish National Action Plan on Human Rights \(SNAP\) 2](#); and the [Review of Adult Social Care](#).

A highly relevant and encouraging example of a thorough change programme of the scale that we are calling for, including support for organisations' 'scaffolding', was found in [The Promise](#). Scaffolding, for both *The Promise* and our new model, means making sure that the organisations providing services have all the help they need to do the best job they can. Our vision, too, is complex and will be similarly implemented over the longer term.

The Scottish Government's forthcoming Human Rights Bill was also in our thoughts, potentially world leading legislation which will elevate Scotland's standing internationally as a human rights integrated nation. The key actions set out in the second Scotland's National Action

Plan on Human Rights (SNAP 2) are also wholly consistent with our recommendations and there is significant read across the two sets of recommendations, reinforcing the need for alignment and resourcing in the delivery plans for SNAP 2 and acting on the direction from this Review. As set out in earlier chapters, we have developed a model of services, based on evidence provided to us throughout the Review process and aimed at ensuring consistency and increasing accessibility. We have sought also to address the current problems with VAWG funding described in Chapter 3.

This aspect of the Review was particularly challenging to develop given the current lack of reliable information about either the costs of VAWG or the amount spent on it in Scotland. Addressing this knowledge/data gap must be prioritised as part of the work towards implementing our proposed new model of funding. Many jurisdictions in Europe and further afield are also grappling with this problem and recommendations flowing from GREVIO (the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention) show that countries generally need to do better in terms of clear allocations across budget lines and multi-level governance arrangements, including different levels of government and funding of different types of organisations, in relation to VAWG.

It was clear, however, from our scrutiny of the Scottish budget (see Chapter 9, Budgeting for VAWG), that Scotland is not allocating as much as it might think it is, never mind anywhere close to what is needed. We were able to

find useful examples of how close and similar neighbours are engaging and creating new models of funding and oversight.

[Ireland](#), for example, is proposing establishing a central agency to oversee implementation of the Istanbul Convention and funding for VAWG up to 60bn Euros by 2026.

And in [Spain](#), ministerial departments allocated the sum of €340 million in 2017, mainly for awareness-raising activities, research, prevention campaigns and the telephone helpline. Spain's Budget Act for 2018 included an additional €200 million to finance measures to be taken under the State Pact against Gender-based Violence.

Scotland is not an outlier in relation to the cluttered funding landscape and burden on civil society/NGOs to find and access funds while still maintaining services. There is also a consistent emphasis internationally on the need for clear data on need and provision. [The NACWG recommendations](#) on VAWG, data and on intersectional gender budgeting are fully consistent with our recommendations.

It is, however, very clear that there is a significant gap between the current funding and the funding which will be required to provide our minimum core services to all who need them. If we are truly committed to living up to the necessary demands on governments of the Istanbul Convention, UNCRC, CEDAW, ICESCR, and other human rights instruments, and to act meaningfully to eradicate VAWG, that gap will need to be filled.

A Future Funding Model: Key Components

A future funding model must ensure that:

- services are informed by need and experience, and locally responsive to the range of needs, funding a diversity of provision across VAWP and relations across multiple local partnerships and providers;
- human rights standards and principles are met, and allocation and spending decisions are structured in line with the Istanbul Convention requirements, and the direction set by SNAP2 in relation to human rights budgeting, the UNCRC and ICESCR;
- resource allocation is clearly identified across spending lines in Scottish Government, local authority and other provider budgets so that spending on prevention and services for women, children and young people across all policy and service areas, e.g. health, education, justice, housing and accommodation, prevention, advice and helplines, and other forms of support is demonstrated; and
- gender analysis is embedded in resource allocation, spending decisions, service design and evaluation of outcomes, and that the starting point for resource allocation is prevention of violence and the provision of appropriate services for women, children and young people.

These principles outline a framework for a future funding model which the Scottish Government and partners should commit to as underpinning the recommendations of this Review. **They do not remove the need for immediate review of funding allocations and an uplift in public resources allocated to VAWG.** In

addition to the need for immediate resourcing, there must also be a commitment to revisiting mechanisms such as ring fencing and top slicing which previously protected designated funds for VAWG services. The removal of these protections for designated funds has had a significantly detrimental effect on local service funding, especially in rural areas and in relation to specialist services. It has also increased the lack of transparency of resources allocated to VAWG services, which contributes to under-funding and poorer scrutiny.

Our proposed model of funding returns the primary responsibility for funding VAWG services to local areas, closer to where the impact of funding decisions will be felt and regaining local accountability. There are a number of constituent parts in our model, and different roles for the Scottish Government, local authorities and their statutory partners, and the third sector, as detailed below:

Scottish Government

There will be no national, competitive fund for essential services, as currently in place provided by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government will continue to fund national work and services e.g. helpline/s and will run a competitive fund for innovation. This fund will be open to a wider range of organisations than the minimum core services, but applicants will require to demonstrate that they work to a gendered analysis and their proposed project is consistent with Equally Safe. In addition, the Scottish Government will fund national prevention work, including campaigns and the establishment of the Istanbul Convention Implementation Observatory (see Chapter 8), which will have a role in providing leadership around data, research and evaluation to inform and drive prevention activity, some of which may be regionally based or bespoke for particular areas.

The Scottish Government will have responsibilities to provide funding for a range of national work including national co-ordination of CEDAR, MVP, MARAC, MATAAC and VAWP (with the Improvement Service), and of ASSIST/court advocacy services as well as the national offices of Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland.

They will also lead and fund the work to develop 'by and for' services and continue their role in the development of services for women selling and exchanging sex.

Local Authorities and Their Statutory Partners

Local authorities and their statutory partners will receive funding for local VAWG services from the Scottish Government through their grant, ring-fenced to be spent to deliver the minimum core services, with a requirement to report on spend and impact. Part of the role of the Istanbul Convention Implementation Observatory will be to monitor this spend and ensure it is being used for the purposes for which it is granted.

Services to be funded include all those identified in Chapter 4, Minimum Core Services, which are all required to meet the standards set by the Istanbul Convention and UNCRC in particular. Funding will be provided through collaborative commissioning arrangements as described in Chapter 10 Commissioning & Tendering. Underpinning this distribution of funding will be local needs assessments, carried out by VAWPs (who will receive early resources from Scottish Government to enable them to develop into fulfilling this enhanced role). Survivors will be involved in these local needs assessments.

As part of strategic engagement through VAWPs there is focus on developing / committing to whole systems, collaborative approach. Funding shouldn't be limited to ring fenced allocation from Scottish Government.

VAWG Services

Services will be provided by organisations which meet our definition of specialist services in Chapter 4, Minimum Core Services, to meet local demand identified in needs assessments. Funding will be provided through collaborative commissioning arrangements as described in Chapter 10, Commissioning and Tendering.

Immediate Priorities for Funding

We recognise that our recommendations will take some time to be implemented. DES funding will remain in place until March 2025, providing much needed security for third sector services in particular. However, urgent action is required to establish the foundations for this new model of funding now, including funding for VAWPs to enable the development of the infrastructure which we will need to have in place during the process of development towards the new model of funding. Included in this should be funding to support the development of local needs assessments, in which Public Health should have a role.

In addition, urgent priority for funding should be given to reducing waiting lists for VAWG support services to ensure that victims/survivors can get help to recover when they need it and to ensuring CEDAR is available in every local authority.

A national VAWCYP core dataset and evaluation methodology should be developed.

Statutory Underpinning

Our model of funding rests on our recommendation that VAWG is placed on a statutory footing, as is the case with Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection. This will ensure all the parts of our model work together effectively and will drive consistency and high standards across service delivery in every part of Scotland.

We envisage this new legislation as distinct from, but closely related to, current statutory frameworks as referred to above. It will:

- establish access to our minimum core services as a right in law for women, children and young people (as called for by over 80% of respondents to our Call for Evidence). Drafting of the legislation will ensure that there is no scope for narrowing the minimum core services offer
- place VAWPs on a statutory footing, with standards relating to membership, a prominent location in local planning structures and processes, resourcing for full time staffing and an independent chair. VAWPs will also have a role in commissioning of services locally alongside other partners, including victims/survivors, and be responsible for carrying out local needs assessments to determine the range and balance of services required in their local area. Moving into this new role may be a phased approach as some areas already meet these standards and others will require time to develop before they are ready to assume these responsibilities

- place MARACs and MATACs on a statutory footing too, with standards for operation, resourcing and chairing which will apply consistently across all local authorities. Differences in operational practices between MARACs and MATACs at present mean that some are functioning more effectively than others.

Taken together, we are confident that the above recommendations will return the local accountability which, we were frequently told, has been lost over the years of VAWG funding since 2000 (see Chapter 3). Local authorities, and their partners in the statutory and third sectors, and the key services they fund or provide, are all partners in the delivery of Equally Safe and vital to its success. Decision making at a level closer to where services are accessed should be better fitted to local circumstances and more able to respond flexibly to local variations in demographics and other needs – the well-established principle of subsidiarity. This links to the community empowerment agenda, actively involving people in decision making rather than having decisions made for them, and the current SG priority of ‘place’ in policy making and service design. A further important benefit is that this changes the dynamic for survivors of VAWG, who may have had little agency over their own lives.

Rights in law are worthless if funding is not provided to ensure they are realisable, including for monitoring and evaluation, and maximising available resources is an express requirement of international human rights treaties.

We note with concern the [Scottish Parliament’s Criminal Justice Committee’s scrutiny of the Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) in which experiences of women and children in criminal proceedings in domestic abuse cases were described as “unremittingly grim.”

A further example of this is the recent [report](#) by the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation National Expert Steering Group that the duty placed on local authorities in England under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to provide safe accommodation to victims/survivors is not working in practice.

Application and Monitoring Processes

We were provided with a great deal of evidence during the Review of the difficulties caused by current application and monitoring processes. To some extent, this will reduce over time as organisations receive funding to deliver the minimum core services through collaborative commissioning (see Chapter 10).

An application process will still be required once funding for services has moved to a collaborative commissioning model, as will monitoring to ensure that funding is being used appropriately and is delivering best value.

Monitoring processes will become simpler and less onerous and time consuming for organisations, as they will no longer be dependent on funding from a patchwork of providers, all with different monitoring regimes and timescales, to fund their core services. Other funders in this area such as Trusts, Comic Relief etc will continue to have their own processes, but specialist organisations will be able to choose whether or not to seek additional funding from these sources.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

We heard from service managers about current difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Much of this can no doubt be attributed to the current short-term nature of funding and the lack of career progression opportunities. Pay scales which offer progression and are matched with the responsibilities of each post, should be established across VAWG funding, and work undertaken to ensure that experienced staff have opportunities to progress to jobs with higher skills without having to leave and take their skills, knowledge and experience out with the sector.

Increases in Funding/ Waiting Lists

Many years of at best flat-level VAWG funding have hollowed out the sector and left it compromised in its ability to respond effectively at a time of rapidly increasing costs and demand for services. We recommend that, following the fundamental uplift we are proposing, funding should increase in line with increased costs linked to the retail price index year on year.

Waiting lists for vital services seriously impact on women, children and young people seeking help and support. We were told that there were differing approaches to waiting lists by VAWG organisations and that some had used SG funding creatively to develop different models of support as a way of dealing with increases in demand for their services. We recommend that different ways of managing waiting lists are examined, which may include a trigger point mechanism whereby additional funds are released if waiting lists reach a certain point.

Length of Funding Periods

As might have been expected, there was strong support for funding periods being longer than at present, to provide security for staff and opportunities for service planning and development. We understand the difficulties in achieving this caused by the Scottish Government's allocation of funds from the UK Government's Treasury on an annual basis. However, we consider that this issue needs to be addressed urgently and that future funding for VAWG minimum core services, allocated by local authorities through collaborative commissioning, should be agreed for at least an initial three year period, with the option of two further years thereafter. This is intended not to be prescriptive, and longer term arrangements might be suitable in some areas e.g. as in the example of City of Edinburgh Council referred to in Chapter 10 on Commissioning & Tendering, which has provided funding for five years with an option of a further five.

Self-Directed Support

Having been encouraged to be as creative as possible in carrying out the Review, we discussed the possibility of moving in time to a model of funding for VAWG services based on self-directed support (SDS) i.e. where a victim/survivor would be provided with funding to enable them to have choice and control over what kind of support they get, instead of having to accept what was generally on offer.

Self-directed support has been available for disabled people for some time and we are aware that there are significant issues around the management and delivery of resources, and of relationships between local authorities and beneficiaries. Nevertheless, we look to the aspiration of SDS as empowering individuals and so we are interested in the possibilities

it could potentially open up to give women, children and young people much more agency in choosing support which is the best fit for them. In the longer term, this could be considered as one of a range of alternative means of funding VAWG services.

Prevention

The importance of a strong focus on prevention was made clear to us throughout the Review. We entirely agree with all those who said that to us, and have given that a significant amount of thought. This includes what we learned about the work to challenge men's demand for commercial sexual exploitation and the six principles developed by the Scottish Government in relation to this area of VAWG.

As noted in Chapter 5, Prevention, we have been talking about the need for prevention for many years in Scotland. It is a key concept of the Christie Commission which reported in 2011, and yet we have never quite managed to move the dial on the funding balance with front line/crisis services. There has always been a sense that these two vital aspects of work to tackle VAWG are somehow in competition with each other, and that therefore spending more on prevention will mean cutting back on crisis services.

This is understandable, we are surrounded by evidence of the inadequacy of current funding to meet service demands. Waiting lists for essential services are one very pertinent example. Moving to a guaranteed offer of minimum core services should address lack of capacity issues and ensure services are there when they are needed, in addition to ensuring organisations have sufficient capacity through decent wages and career progression opportunities so they can maintain an experienced workforce and avoid the constant recruitment and training cycles which are

currently such a drain on resources. But we will never achieve our ambition of a VAWG-free Scotland without doing a lot more than we are currently doing about prevention. We are therefore recommending that a significant programme of prevention activity is established, with roles for the Scottish Government, local authorities and local services. This work has to build on existing knowledge around what works but recognise the limitations of current evidence. There should be commitment to commissioning pilots, robust monitoring and evaluation. This is the essence of a public health approach and therefore there will be a key role for Public Health.

This should include national awareness raising campaigns by the Scottish Government and in partnership with others, returning to ground which was so successful in the past, and making very visible the commitment to ensuring that Scotland ultimately becomes a VAWG free nation. As part of improving our human rights education, building a human rights culture is also how we envisage a future Scotland in which we can take pride.

It should also include a reinvigorated training programme for all professionals. We heard a lot of evidence about inappropriate or damaging responses to presentations of VAWG and this must be addressed. We also heard examples of helpful responses, and there are clearly many professionals doing their best to offer support. That should be the default experience and it is not currently.

Work in schools, colleges and universities is also required as part of the prevention package, however we were told by a number of people we spoke to that one off sessions delivered by third sector organisations were of limited value in terms of changing attitudes and behaviour. MVP is now in over 50% of high schools and should be rolled out at pace to the others. As noted in Chapter 5, Prevention, Rape

Crisis Scotland also has a prevention package for schools and its pilot 'Whole Schools' approach is being evaluated. An 'Equally Safe in Higher Education' toolkit has also been developed for universities. Rolling out effective resources nationally should be prioritised in the implementation of the Review's recommendations.

Perpetrator Programmes

Prevention should include a particular focus on boys and men. Although we were not charged with looking at perpetrator programmes, they are an important part of the VAWG landscape and should be included in funding discussions and arrangements, and available in every area to a consistent model and standard.

As this work is difficult and highly specialised, and carries a high level of risk for the women, children and young people who were abused by the perpetrators, it is very important that the highest quality programmes are delivered, with all of their essential components. We have been told that this is now not always the case, which is concerning.

How Is This to Be Paid For?

As noted above, we are also acutely aware of the current financial landscape and the pressures on the Scottish Government and local authorities. COSLA provided us with a [list of emerging workstreams and legislative developments](#) being driven by the Scottish Government or the UK Government which are currently unfunded and will impact on VAWG services.

We know that there will be an increase in cost involved in reaching this level of service. We believe that there may be some savings to be made in current spend by better joining up across different policy areas.

Increased transparency around budgets and spending by the Scottish Government will also help to manage costs. And over the longer term, the significantly increased focus on prevention that we are calling for will work through into reducing costs as incidence reduces. All of which elements are consistent with current deliberations on public service reform and fiscal sustainability.

In the here and now, however, we anticipate that a phased approach will be taken, and that the journey from where we are now to where we need to be will not be made in one, albeit large, step. There will be a number of stages involved in the transition from national to local funding.

The question of what is reasonable in this context will be a balance between redistributing current resources in a period of fiscal difficulty and the requirement to move with pace to make the lives of women, children and young people experiencing VAWG safer and changed for the better. In other words, we do not expect implementation of our model to be 'kicked into the long grass' and to become ensnared in a web of exploratory pilots. We recommend that the Scottish Government and COSLA develop and publish a timeline for full implementation of our recommendations over a reasonable period, setting out short, medium and longer term goals. We also recommend that survivors are involved in the implementation process. We do expect to see the requirements of the international human rights treaties applied and to see government taking reasonable steps towards securing the maximum available resources for the progressive realisation of rights.

We anticipate being asked ‘How can we afford this?’ Our response is ‘How can we afford not to do this, given the economic, personal and social costs, most of which are being borne by women, children and young people who are not in any way responsible for being abused?’ This echoes the point made in the report on Adult Social Care and, as in that case, is truly a question of what kind of Scotland do we want to be?

There are recent examples of where resources have been rapidly found to respond to critical situations e.g. Covid and refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. This requires political will and all partners working collaboratively together. This is what we expect to see in Scotland’s response to VAWGCYP.

Similarly, the financial and political commitment that Scotland has, quite rightly, given to ending poverty, and supporting care experienced young people, needs to be applied to VAWCYP .

Clearly, our minimum core services model includes many aspects which are not universally available at present. As stated earlier in this chapter, we are confident both that savings can be made by focusing on the services we have viewed as essential and that prevention activity will, over time, reduce the financial costs of VAWG. In the meantime, however, a clearer position on funding is required.

VAWG costs Scotland a lot, as set out above. It is a transversal policy area and therefore costs fall on a number of areas of Scottish Government spend, including Health, Justice, Housing, Children & Families and Education. These areas all have an interest in VAWG, yet we found that there seems to be limited joined up working between them, and the work that they fund is somewhat ad hoc.

If, as we recommend, Scotland aims to work towards meeting Women Against Violence Europe’s call, referred to in Chapter 9 Budgeting for VAWG, for 10% of the annual cost of VAWG to be provided in funding for services to tackle it, from the Scottish budget as a whole, a consistent approach to gender budgeting will be required, and will illustrate the funding deficit. Current financial circumstances may preclude reaching this funding level at this point, but this is a target that must be worked towards over the longer term. Ultimately, we want all women, children and young people experiencing VAWG to be able to access the full range of services we believe will make a difference, as set out in Chapter 4 on Minimum Core Services.

Conclusion

We believe that this proposed new model of funding will deliver on the remit of the Review. More importantly, it will provide stability to this vital sector and ensure services are available for all women, children and young people who need them, anywhere in Scotland. It will reset the focus on prevention and enable us to achieve the outcomes of Equally Safe.

This represents an opportunity for Scotland to fully integrate human rights conventions and protections on VAWG into our legislation, establishing us as an exemplar in this area.

We recognise that this is a stretching plan, and that it will have to be implemented over a number of years. It enables us to keep moving forward, and to avoid further regression.

There will be benefits for individuals, communities, services and the economy, as the damaging effects of VAWG are reduced and economic participation and contribution becomes possible for victims/survivors.

We are currently failing, despite our significant efforts over the past 50 years, to properly support victims/survivors and provide them with the services they want.

Our ambition, as set out in Equally Safe, is for nothing less than a Scotland where VAWG has ultimately been eradicated and where no-one has to live through these terrible experiences.

This is our chance to do better.

List of Recommendations

1. Legislation

Meeting the needs of women, children and young people in relation to VAWG requires legislative change that encompasses:

- The rights of women, children and young people to the full range of services set out in Chapter 4 of this report. This should include public duties on service providers to ensure that the full range of minimum core services are provided, and on prevention which could be included in the new suite of public sector equality duties developed as a result of the current review.
- Identifying children and young people experiencing domestic abuse as co-victims in relation to domestic abuse.
- Placing Violence Against Women Partnerships on a statutory footing, included in Public Protection arrangements at local authority level.
- Placing Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences and Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination on a statutory footing.
- Actioning the recommendation from the NACWG for a statutory underpinning for intersectional gender budget analysis, which could be secured through ensuring a commitment to human rights budgeting (as recommended in SNAP 2) through the forthcoming Human Rights Incorporation Bill.

2. Minimum core services to be funded

Chapter 4 sets out the minimum core services which must be funded for all women, children and young people who require them. The following specific recommendations are in addition to the above.

For women

3. Access to services should not be place or demand based, but rather provision made to ensure women can access services beyond their own local authority area if none are available locally.
4. 'By and for' services should be developed for women with a range of protected characteristics, prioritising minority ethnic women.
5. Women subject to NRPF who do not fall under the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession, should automatically be regarded as vulnerable if they have experienced any form of VAWG.
6. For women who sell or exchange sex, there may be other services required, and there is a need to progress work on a Scottish model to identify the range of responses.
7. Ensure the Istanbul Convention requirements for a 24/7 helpline for victims/survivors of all forms of VAWG are met, starting with a review of both national helplines and the development of single provision.
8. Services to support victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault, of any age, should be available in every local authority in Scotland, to meet different needs, while remaining driven by an intersectional gendered analysis and consistent with the aims of Equally Safe and service standards.

This should be needs-led, and the provision should be structured in such a way as to meet the needs appropriately in different areas reflecting local needs and population/demographics. It could include co-location to improve signposting to services.

9. Develop a new model for refuge provision and safe accommodation, including a new programme of refuge development/upgrading to ensure the replacement of shared refuge provision and to meet the current target of 1 refuge space per 20,000 of the population.

For children and young people

10. Review with children and young people how to ensure we meet Istanbul and CRC requirements for 24/7 online/telephone help for child victims of VAWG.
11. Provision for children and young people experiencing rape and sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse should be reviewed by the Scottish Government and identified gaps addressed.

Immediate priorities

We have identified a small number of priorities which should be addressed immediately in order to establish the conditions for the new models of services and funding to be implemented.

12. Address and reduce waiting lists for VAWG support services to ensure that victims/survivors can get help to recover when they need it.
13. Different ways of managing waiting lists should be examined, which may include a trigger point mechanism whereby additional funds are released if waiting lists reach a certain point.

14. The Scottish Government and COSLA should develop and publish by December 2023 a timeline for full implementation of our recommendations over a reasonable period, setting out short, medium and longer term goals and setting out how survivors will be involved in the implementation process.

15. The SG and COSLA should work together to produce an accurate assessment of the current costs of VAWCYP nationally and locally (VAWPs should also be included in the local element).

16. Funding should be provided to support the development of VAWPs as a matter of urgency to create the infrastructure required to implement the new model and to enable them to undertake local needs assessments in partnership with Public Health.

17. Funding should be provided to ensure CEDAR is available in every local authority.

18. National co-ordination of CEDAR/MARACs/MATACs/MVP rollout and other national prevention work should be established.

19. A national VAWCYP core dataset and evaluation methodology should be developed.

20. A standing committee for minority ethnic women and girls should be established to scrutinise, inform and advise on policies and practice on all matters relating to VAWG.

Participation

All of the participants in our engagement events wanted an opportunity to participate. This needs to be adequately resourced to ensure it is done meaningfully and respectfully.

21. Include participation of women, children and young people in the development and implementation of the new model and the needs of all victims/survivors of VAWGCYP.

Mainstream services

As only a minority of victims/survivors use specialist services, mainstream services have a crucial role to play to responding to VAWCYP.

22. Develop a whole system, intersectional, gendered, child rights response to VAWGCYP as a prerequisite to achieving the transformational shift required, including training for staff in mainstream services, delivered through a national training strategy. On the evidence gathered by the Review, specific attention needs to be given to training on advocacy for sheriffs, and on disability, particularly learning disability.
23. Safe & Together training should be mandatory for all staff working with children and families.
24. Local investment in leadership and management to support a whole systems approach to VAWG.

Proposed model of funding

Our proposed model of funding restores decision making about local services to local authorities and their local partners.

25. There will be no national, competitive fund for essential services, as currently in place provided by the SG. Funding for VAWG will be provided through collaborative commissioning arrangements as described in Chapter 10. The current national, competitive fund for essential services provided by the SG will be replaced by ring fenced, devolved funding for VAWG minimum core services to local authorities and their statutory partners.
26. VAWG services should be agreed for at least an initial three year period, with the option of two further years thereafter.

27. Local investment is required to support the shift from crisis services to prevention and early intervention.
28. VAWG funding should increase in line with increased costs linked to the retail price index year on year.

Note - Longer term recommendations on sustainable funding, embedded into the structure of spend across government will take some time to realise. In the interim, we recommend that specific VAWG funding is identified across key portfolios of health, education, justice etc. We also recommend that there are resources identified to support the development of a whole systems approach, service improvement and workforce development.

29. The Scottish Government will continue to fund national work and services eg helpline/s and will run a competitive fund for innovation.
30. The SG will fund national prevention work, including campaigns and the establishment of the Istanbul Convention Implementation Observatory and a VAWG Commissioner.

Future funding

Issues with recruitment and retention of experienced staff were raised with us frequently. We also gave thought to how funding might be provided in the much longer term.

31. Pay scales which offer progression and are matched with the responsibilities of each post, should be established across VAWG funding, and work undertaken to ensure that experienced staff have opportunities to progress to jobs with higher skills. Starting salaries should be commensurate with the skilled nature of the posts, and match relevant local authority pay scales.

32. In the longer term, self-directed support could be explored as an alternative or complementary means of funding VAWG services.

Budgeting for VAWG

We found significant difficulties in trying to establish how much is being spent at present on VAWCYP in Scotland and the following recommendations are aimed at addressing that.

33. Scotland should aim to work towards meeting Women Against Violence Europe's call for 10% of the annual cost of VAWG to be provided in funding for services to tackle it, from the Scottish budget as a whole, and should develop an action plan towards a minimum of 10% of estimated costs of VAWG as a baseline for funding commitments from the Scottish Government.
34. A gender analysis of Scottish Government spend should be conducted including intersectional data, local government and other public service spend in order to meet reporting and timescale requirements of GREVIO.
35. Map spending on prevention and support for VAWG on to international human rights conventions: CRC; CEDAW; ICESCR; Istanbul Convention.
36. Conduct analysis to assess whether the rights of women, children and young people are being respected, protected and fulfilled in the spending commitments, allocations, and spend of public finance in Scotland and identify key next steps.
37. Improve transparency of allocations, spend, and outcomes in relation to VAWG in Scottish budget documentation, evaluation of outcomes, and indicators informing National Performance Framework.

Violence against women partnerships

VAWPs should have a key role in the new model of funding and we have therefore made a number of recommendations to ensure they are supported and developed to rise to that challenge.

38. Investment in developing the infrastructure of VAWPs is essential and should include appropriate levels of resource for coordination and administration, and capacity building to support monitoring and evaluation.
39. VAWPs should have an independent Chair.
40. Resources should be provided to support VAWPs to undertake a strategic commissioning role within their local areas to meet local needs and circumstances and to carry out local needs assessments.
41. VAWPs should be resourced to ensure that the experience of women, children and young people informs their local strategy and that their work and is informed by and grounded in an intersectional understanding of VAWG.

Governance and Standards

Governance will be an important aspect of ensuring that our recommendations are implemented and progress is maintained. Ensuring high quality services are available in every part of Scotland was part of our remit, and our recommendations on standards will support this.

42. A Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioner should be appointed covering all aspects of VAWCYP, along with the establishment of an Istanbul Implementation Observatory which will assess progress against international standards set by GREVIO.

43. Scottish Government oversight and drive for implementation should always sit at Cabinet Secretary level and not be delegated to ministers. The eradication of VAWCYP, as a transversal policy issue, is the responsibility of the full cabinet, and should be driven by a nominated Cabinet Secretary and visible across all portfolios. At civil service level, all Directors General should have an accountability and delivery responsibility for VAWG included in their role.
44. Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland's national service standards should be used to form the initial basis of ensuring a consistent quality of services throughout Scotland.
45. Standards for specialist services should include training on e.g. intersectional approaches and disability/learning disability.
46. Standards around accessibility should also be developed.
47. The Improvement Service Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework for VAWS should be reviewed and amended to take the new statutory footing circumstances into account.
48. Standards for domestic abuse court advocacy for children and young people should be developed.
49. A bespoke inspection regime for Women's Aid refuge services should be developed and implemented.
50. The Scottish Government and COSLA should provide a report to the Scottish Parliament on implementation of the new model by December 2024 and annually thereafter.

Prevention

A major increase in our support for prevention will be required to enable us to meet the aspirations of Equally Safe.

51. Led by partners including the Observatory, Public Health, SG and COSLA, there should be allocation of dedicated resources to develop a national programme on prevention that will identify the actions required at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal level as set out in the UN framework. This should include national awareness raising campaigns by the Scottish Government and in partnership with others and a training programme for all professionals.
52. A public health model should be utilised to identify, test and upscale interventions that address the limitations to progressing work on prevention, and that adopts an explicitly intersectional approach.
53. The national rollout of MVP, alongside other schools based prevention approaches, should continue until it is available in every high school.

ANNEX – Background Information About the Review

[Background information](#) about this independent Review, including details of meetings, our engagement programme, submissions made to the call for evidence, research sources and evidence papers is available.

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- Professor Angela O'Hagan, Professor of Equalities and Public Policy at Glasgow Caledonian University and Depute Director, WISE Centre for Economic Justice
- Dr Claire Houghton, Lecturer in Social Policy and Qualitative Research at the University of Edinburgh
- Katie Cosgrove, Former Gender Based Violence Programme Lead at Public Health Scotland
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