

# Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

## The Mayor's VAWG Strategy for London 2022-25

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# Key information

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# Foreword – Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London



Figure - *Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London*

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As Mayor, my priority is to build a better London for everyone – a city that is fairer, greener, more affordable and also safer for all of our communities. The sad truth, however, is that in recent years we have seen a national epidemic of misogyny and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Far too many women and girls now feel unsafe going about their daily lives in London and across our country.

In the UK, a violent man kills a woman every three days, while almost a quarter of women report having been a victim of sexual assault. **Research by UN Women UK** has also found that 71 per cent of women in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space, with this number rising sharply to 86 per cent among women aged 18–24. This is simply unacceptable and it is men who have a responsibility to step up and do more to tackle this scourge. Of course, not all men are violent towards women. But when **more than three-quarters of British women say men don't pull their weight in helping to keep women and girls safe**, we can't deny that this issue has become a cultural blindspot for us.

The appalling murders of Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sarah Everard, Maria Rawlings and Sabina Nessa by men on the streets of London have also

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sparked a national outpouring of grief and anger – grief for the women whose lives were so cruelly taken, and anger that violence remains a constant threat for women and girls. Regrettably, this problem has only got worse amid the pandemic, with domestic abuse one of the very few crimes to increase as calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline peaked during both the first and third lockdowns.

Charging and prosecution rates for domestic abuse and rape are simply not good enough adding to a deepening and widespread loss of confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS). There is a growing consensus that perpetrators are not being held to account, enabling them to escape justice. This is reflected in the consultation for London's Police and Crime Plan (PCP) 2022-25 and supported by the findings of a series of recent reviews by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Worryingly, women who have themselves been victims of multiple forms of VAWG are also over-represented in UK prison and mental health settings.

Everywhere and every day, we know that women and girls are actively modifying their behaviour across every aspect of their lives because of the

threat of VAWG – from what they say, to what they wear, to where they go and when. This happens at home, at work, online or out in public spaces. We have to be clear – these problems are caused by the unacceptable attitudes and behaviours of too many men. This is not just an issue with the minority of men who are violent, but also with men who are sexist; who continue to behave inappropriately around women; who perpetuate a toxic form of masculinity; or who just stand by silently when women feel threatened, or are being threatened.

As Mayor I am clear that we must not simply respond to VAWG, or police our way out of it – we must prevent it. My long-term ambition is to eradicate VAWG in our city, so that every woman and girl can participate fully in London life without experiencing or fearing harassment, abuse or violence from men. Building on the successes of my previous VAWG Strategy, we continue that work here and now, with a new emphasis in the form of a public health approach.

My refreshed Strategy brings together the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the GLA with the VAWG sector, local authorities, police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), National Probation Service (NPS) and the

NHS, working as equal partners across London to focus on those directly involved in the different crimes that comprise VAWG. It sets out a wide range of actions we will take in London over the coming years to tackle the perpetrators, to support victims and survivors and to rebuild the confidence of women and girls in the police and CJS. This will be supported by a further investment of £5m each year in MOPAC's commissioned services.

I am committed to doing everything I can to make London a safer city, and indeed the safest big city in the world, for every woman and girl. I invite all Londoners to join me in this vital mission.

## **Foreword - Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**



Figure - *Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime*

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VAWG is not inevitable, yet it remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the UK and the world. Violence and abuse shape the lives of too many women and girls in London. Most of us know someone who has been victimised. I, like most women and girls in our city, have changed my plans or

behaviours many times during my life because of the fear of violence or harassment.

The scale, complexity and impact of VAWG have made it a core priority for us throughout the Mayor's time in office. It is why we produced a specific VAWG Strategy for London in 2018, and why the Mayor committed to refreshing that Strategy for this term.

London is already leading the way in tackling VAWG. It was the first city in the UK to have a dedicated Victims' Commissioner, and the Mayor continues to provide significant investment from City Hall, and to bid for, secure and allocate additional Government funding to support London's response to VAWG. Combined, this funding has totalled over £112m for London since the Mayor was elected, with an additional £46m in City Hall and Government funding secured for 2022/23. But it is clear we need to go much further. With this refreshed Strategy we set out new commitments to deliver meaningful change for women and girls over the next three years, with a view to eradicating VAWG from our city in the long run.

This Strategy is about working together with the specialist VAWG sector, and all our partners, to tackle and prevent VAWG. It includes spearheading campaigns to confront and challenge misogynistic attitudes and behaviours within society, particularly amongst men and boys in London; improving safe accommodation provision for victims of domestic abuse and their families, and greater investment in services for victims and survivors of VAWG; strengthening our programmes to intervene and address the behaviour of perpetrators; and making fundamental change to the way the police investigate rape and sexual assault through Operation Soteria Bluestone.

We set about this work using all the resources and levers at our disposal in City Hall. We will build on our existing partnerships and community work, bolster our oversight of the work of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), and hold the next Commissioner to account for delivering the cultural change needed within the MPS to address the deeply concerning issues revealed by recent events and help restore the confidence of women and girls in the MPS.

We will also continue our commitment to keeping the voices of women and girls, and victims of crime, at the heart of our work. This Strategy has been informed by an extensive consultation with our partner agencies; community

and voluntary groups; activists; Londoners from all walks of life; and victims and survivors of different forms of VAWG. I am deeply grateful to everyone who took the time to take part and help guide us in developing this document – and we will continue in that spirit of collaboration with Londoners as we deliver this Strategy, and work towards our shared ambition of a London free from all forms of VAWG.

## **Our priorities**

VAWG is not inevitable, but sadly continues to be a part of everyday reality for women and girls in our city, causing enormous harm to victims, families, communities and our whole society. In the long term, the Mayor's ambition is to eradicate VAWG, so that every woman and girl can participate fully in London life without experiencing or fearing harassment, abuse or violence from men. Building on the successes of the Mayor's previous VAWG Strategy, we continue that work here and now with a new emphasis. In line with what the Mayor set out in his PCP, we want London to be a safe city for women and girls.

## **What do we mean by VAWG?**

Violence against women and girls, as set out by the United Nations, is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

That is not to say that men and boys, and others who may not identify as women or girls, do not similarly experience these types of abuse and violence. Accordingly, we recognise their specific needs in both the PCP and the services we commission. However, it is clear that women and girls are disproportionately affected by these offences, so a specific Strategy is needed to address them.

This Strategy will set us firmly on the right path to stopping VAWG with prevention at the centre of everything we do, and a greater focus on education and enhanced partnership working, not least with London's excellent VAWG sector. This partnership working will be embodied in a reshaped and reinvigorated London VAWG Board, chaired jointly by MOPAC and the sector itself.

We acknowledge this is not a problem we can 'police our way out of'. As such and building on the approach the Mayor has brought to bear on other violence affecting young people, we will adopt a public health approach to VAWG.

There are several key principles that underpin the public health approach we set out in this Strategy: we base our decisions on data and evidence; we prioritise early intervention and prevention; we place communities at the heart of change; we develop immediate and long-term solutions with partners; and we evaluate our activities to understand what works. This is the golden thread that unites all our work on violence and underpins this refreshed VAWG Strategy. Our work will be both evidence-based and innovative, not only building on best practice but also helping to create it.

Despite the Mayor's ambition to eradicate VAWG in the longer term, we accept that ending VAWG isn't possible within the next three years, and we will need to deal with its terrible consequences. This Strategy will do that by placing victims and survivors at its heart, ensuring they get the tailored and effective support they need. Importantly we will also hold perpetrators to account, ensuring that we not only reduce their (re)offending and change their behaviour, but also that their vile actions have consequences. In order for this to happen we need more people to have trust and confidence in the MPS – we need to ensure that they feel confident in reporting crimes, and that they believe they will be treated fairly and with dignity when engaging with the police.

The Strategy therefore sets out four key priority areas for action:

**Preventing and reducing VAWG**

**Supporting all victims and survivors**

**Holding perpetrators to account**

**Building trust and confidence**

As we have noted, we cannot effectively police our way out of VAWG. Yet the MPS can police VAWG more effectively. That starts with reform of its own internal culture – and this is where the work of Dame Louise Casey, in her independent and far-reaching review of the MPS’s culture and standards, is so important in considering issues such as bias, sexism and misogyny - and extends to how the MPS investigates VAWG and treats victims and survivors. The MPS, through its VAWG Action Plan and its work to transform rape investigation (through the MOPAC hosted Operation Soteria Bluestone), is already taking steps to improve in a number of areas. The Mayor will hold the MPS to account for delivery of this work, as well as its contribution to the outcomes in this Strategy.



Figure - VAWG Strategy Outcomes Framework

The outcomes framework for this Strategy clearly sets out the changes we want to see over this Mayoral term. It is connected to a set of measurable indicators, enabling us to track our progress and ensure accountability for the commitments we make. We believe that the actions to which we have

committed will lead to these outcomes; and that, taken together, these actions lay the foundations for realising the Mayor's vision.

### **Who is this Strategy for?**

This Strategy is for women in all their diversity, recognising how the intersection of inequalities and differences combine to affect VAWG. Race and ethnicity, sexuality, age, class, faith, gender identity, immigration status and disabilities all affect the forms of violence victims may be subjected to; what VAWG means to them; how others respond; and the support victims and survivors are able to access. It is for anyone experiencing VAWG.

The Mayor is clear – trans women are women. This Strategy is for them, and for all victims and survivors who would need or want to use our VAWG services.

MOPAC commissions specialist providers to tailor services that support individuals, so that we have services that are suitable and safe for all. This includes 'by and for' organisations that are better equipped to cater to the

needs of minoritised and marginalised women and girls. Our services work on two key principles: safety and recovery.

Our role is to provide safe spaces for people seeking support. The Equality Act allows for the provision of separate or single sex services in certain circumstances, under 'exceptions' relating to sex, in order for some women and girls to address and heal from the trauma they have experienced. No agency we fund is obliged to act any differently from the requirements of equalities legislation. That is the way we will continue to operate until such time as legislation requires us to review practice.

Specialist services will assess the specific needs of each individual to inform the care they receive. This assessment may include the trauma they have experienced, alongside factors such as gender identity, religious beliefs and ethnicity. This is to ensure all service users receive the most appropriate care; feel safe, especially in group settings; and are able to focus on their recovery.

## **Supporting London's recovery from COVID-19**

The coronavirus pandemic brought inequalities in London into sharp focus - in particular, their impacts on some of the most marginalised, including victims and survivors of VAWG. This effect has been labelled a 'shadow pandemic' by the UN and the Domestic Abuse Learning Partnership/Women's Aid.

Under the 'shadow pandemic', victims experienced increased levels of violence and presented with multiple and complex needs, which led to longer waits for support. For VAWG sector providers and statutory services tackling VAWG, this has resulted in an increase in vicarious trauma experienced by staff and a workforce that has been stretched, traumatised and exhausted.

With hundreds of thousands of Londoners now being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and low-income families in the capital being hit hardest as food and energy bills rise, there is now a real risk of all these factors combining and contributing to an escalation of VAWG. This will be felt by the workforce tackling VAWG too, putting additional pressures on already stretched services.

The London Recovery programme is an ambitious initiative launched by the Mayor to restore confidence in London, minimise the impact of coronavirus on London's most vulnerable communities and rebuild the city's economy and communities. This new VAWG Strategy aligns with this work, including the recognition that treating everyone equally does not mean treating everyone

the same: victims and survivors are entitled to specialist support tailored to their specific needs.

# 1. Preventing and reducing VAWG

If our long-term ambition is to end VAWG, that means a key priority in this Strategy must be to prevent it from happening, using the public health approach outlined above and building on the multiple successes of the Mayor's previous Strategy. The Mayor has long been committed to taking a public health approach to tackling violence, which is why in 2018 he set up the first Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in England and Wales, which works with communities to design locally based, culturally aware interventions. This Strategy will build on that knowledge and expertise, with the VRU delivering VAWG specific interventions.

To be successful we must be clear that responsibility for VAWG lies with the perpetrators, not with the women and girls themselves. Overwhelmingly for VAWG, this means men and boys. The Mayor firmly believes this. In practice this means better educating everyone, but especially boys and men, about VAWG, its hidden nature (given so much of it happens in private spaces such as the home) and its consequences. Through this process we want more

Londoners, again especially boys and men, to challenge VAWG and the attitudes that enable it.

However, we need to go further. The Mayor will work to make public spaces, including online spaces, safer for women and girls. Only by doing that will women and girls feel safe to enjoy this great city.

Through the commitments in this chapter, we are working towards the following ambitions:

Londoners, and all of London's public sector agencies, have a greater understanding of VAWG and their role in tackling it at every level

Londoners, especially men, are more committed to challenging VAWG and the attitudes that enable it

All women and girls experience more equality and freedom in private, public and online spaces

## **1.1 Coming together as partners to prevent VAWG**

This Strategy seeks to shine a light on what VAWG is, and to increase the understanding and reporting of VAWG, so that it can be challenged and prevented more effectively by the whole of society through a public health

approach. This means bringing all London partners together to become active participants in eradicating VAWG. The specialist 'by and for' organisations in the VAWG sector, which support women and girls with different protected characteristics and from all marginalised groups, must be part of this effort. Some of the most innovative approaches are embedded in community-based specialist women's and grassroots organisations, which are already **building awareness and delivering innovative preventative work.**

Building on the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces accreditation which London achieved in 2018, the Mayor will explore the opportunity for London to become the first city in the world to adopt the principles of the Council of Europe's ground-breaking Istanbul Convention. The Convention is widely recognised as a gold standard framework for addressing VAWG and places prevention at its heart. This is a significant step towards eliminating VAWG in London. As part of this, MOPAC will explore the development of an international network of cities committed to tackling VAWG, sharing best practice and galvanising global action towards a VAWG-free world.

Building on the VRU's successful approach, MOPAC and all our partners will develop a longer-term prevention plan for ending VAWG in London. The first step will be establishing a task and finish group that will report into the VAWG Board and seek to agree a set of principles for all prevention initiatives in the city.

City Hall, with the support of the Mayor's Health Board will convene a round table discussion with partners to determine how the NHS and the health economy can tackle VAWG collectively. It will explore the possibility of a wider summit with NHS leaders, Directors of Public Health, the VAWG sector and other partners in order to move towards a pan-London approach to VAWG for the health sector, and the successful implementation of the statutory duty on integrated care boards to create strategies to address domestic and sexual violence. This will include working with borough Directors of Public Health to make VAWG a key priority locally including within Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

We also recognise the importance of a shared understanding across London as to what a public health approach means, how to use it, and the difference it makes to actions on VAWG. This includes a greater understanding of how differences in physical and mental health impact on - or can be caused by - experiences of VAWG. Our analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) showed some weakness in understanding of VAWG across the professional sphere.

MOPAC will develop an implementation plan to take forward the recommendations in the MOPAC-commissioned reviews of DHRs and MARACs. The plan will include a review of existing evidence and literature, a review of current interventions and "what might work", and possible future research to improve our understanding of familial abuse,

including adult family violence (AFV) and adult family homicide (AFH). This will be conducted with an intersectional lens, recognising that a person's individual characteristics such as ethnicity, sexual orientation and disabilities may have an impact on their experience of these types of VAWG.

MOPAC will lobby for more consistent training on VAWG in professional qualifications and Continuing Professional Development accreditation, in order to enable improved identification, assessment of need and response. As part of this, MOPAC and the wider GLA family will work together to include VAWG training for staff, including TfL frontline staff, on how to deal with sexual harassment reports sensitively and appropriately.

City Hall will continue to support London's business community, employers, professional bodies and government inspectorates to tackle VAWG. This includes the Mayor's Good Work Standard which provides guidance on best employment practice, and links to resources and support, so workplaces can better support victims of VAWG and domestic violence. It builds on the reinvigorated Ask for Angela campaign launch in 2021 by the Mayor, the MPS and the Safer Business Network. It also includes standards for responding to reports of VAWG in the workplace, such as abuse perpetrated by or against professionals working in the sector.

We know that for prevention messages to address all forms of VAWG and reach into all our communities, we need an intersectional lens to better understand and respond to the issues. This means we need to improve how we collect, analyse, and use data on VAWG in London, in order to track what is happening for all groups of women and girls across the range of protected characteristics.

MOPAC will work with all partners to explore how we can enhance our collection and use of data to improve our understanding of VAWG in London. Where possible, we would seek the publication of information across protected characteristics.

## **1.2 Tackling VAWG through better education**

Building on the successful pilot of our effective Whole School Approach - preventing abuse and tackling gender-based violence by promoting healthy, equal and respectful relationships between young people - we want to ensure London's educators are supported in delivering the curriculum, responding to disclosures and understanding the differences in what people may experience based on individual characteristics such as race, mental health and immigration status. This serves to protect all young Londoners from abuse and

sexual exploitation; and to support young people in standing up to, and calling out, inappropriate behaviour.

We want to ensure that boys and girls are empowered to treat each other with respect, and able to identify and call out the intrinsic misogyny that can contribute to involvement in gangs and associated behaviours. We need to ensure that girls in all their diversity, and the specific issues they face, are not forgotten in the overall approach to tackling gangs and youth violence in London. To supplement our targeted interventions, we will ensure that we proactively reach out to all schools to encourage them to join the drive to tackle misogyny at all levels and empower them to address any form of VAWG that they may encounter at their respective establishments.

The Mayor's VRU will continue to deliver an inclusive schools' programme - including teacher training - with an intersectional lens and a focus on healthy relationships, including online safety and an early intervention mentoring programme for girls and young women.

MOPAC and the VRU will continue to invest in support for young people impacted by violence. This investment aims to improve the gender responsive approach to addressing the often less-visible needs of young women and girls and ensure that women and girls impacted by violence and gang association are better identified and supported, with an understanding of the context of their individual characteristics.

TfL will continue to deliver its Project Guardian sessions - which aim to educate Year 9 boys and girls about sexual harassment on public transport - and look at options for expanding its reach.

We support the development of community-based education solutions to prevent harmful practices including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and child marriage. While these and other abuses have been classed as 'honour' based, there is no honour in them. These solutions will include challenging the acceptance of these actions by family and community members. Many barriers exist for women and girls reporting harmful practices; the Mayor remains committed to combating these, including through the innovative 'FGM stops here' campaign'.

MOPAC will commit investment and support for community-based education solutions for harmful practices in London, such as community champions, and work to strengthen community-based education responses where relevant across harmful practices.

## **1.3 A public challenge to the attitudes that enable VAWG so that Londoners, especially men, feel able to call it out**

We want to activate London and Londoners to disrupt the root causes of VAWG and for everyone, particularly men, to step up and call out misogyny, sexism and harassment when they see it. We want to support Londoners to identify and disrupt the spaces where misogyny and inequality thrive in our city, whether online or off, in our families, in our homes, on our streets, in schools, colleges and universities, in the workplace, in faith communities, at cultural venues or gyms.

The normalisation of VAWG has devastating consequences, making it harder for women and girls to recognise and name what is happening to them as violence. For example, Black girls are often adultified: seen as being less in need of support, nurture, and protection and seen as being more sexual. This influences the way they are seen and supported by services and society. Acceptability is what enables harmful behaviours to become norms, for people not to see them as a problem. Where sexism and disrespect for women and girls is tolerated, the ground is laid for more serious acts to be minimised and justified and it becomes harder for Londoners to intervene.

We know many Londoners are committed to ending VAWG but are unsure what steps they can take to do this. To address this, we need a public challenge to the normalisation of misogyny and VAWG.

The Mayor will support sustained multi-year, multi-channel communications and public engagement on VAWG, building on the

success of his new #HaveAWord campaign which asks all men to challenge problematic misogynistic attitudes and behaviour. This will include working with employers, TfL, faith communities, sports clubs and with schools, colleges and universities as well as the specialist VAWG sector to extend its reach.

Complementing this work, TfL and policing partners will continue to support sustained communications campaigns to encourage active bystander intervention across London's public transport system, in public places, at home, in the workplace, in educational establishments and in social settings.

The Mayor fully supports extending hate crime laws to that based on someone's gender — including misogyny — and for all hate crimes based on protected characteristics to be treated equally. While it is disappointing that the government has rejected making misogyny a hate crime in the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill we will continue to lobby for this to change.

## **1.4 Equality and freedom for women and girls in public and online spaces**

The responsibility for preventing or reducing VAWG should fall on everyone, not just women and girls who too often rely on strategies to reduce or resist sexual violence and harassment in public. This is a violation of women and girls' freedom and fundamental human rights. It is at odds with our desire to create a safe London for everyone.

MOPAC, working with TfL and other partners, will continue to implement the UN Safe City scoping report recommendations to support women and girls. This includes exploring and piloting night safety audits in town centres, transport hubs and other public spaces across London with an understanding of how these experiences may be different on the basis of individual characteristics such as disability, neuro-divergence and race.

The Mayor will continue to press all organisations that operate at night to design their public spaces and workplaces to make them safer for women at night as per his Women's Night Safety Charter (WNSC) which launched in 2018 to allow any organisation operating between 6pm and 6am to show their commitment to supporting women's safety. To date, over 700 organisations and venues from a range of sectors have signed up.

Supported by additional MOPAC funding, the Mayor is committed to increasing the number of signatories to the Charter.

MOPAC will work with partners to support a new campaign to encourage reporting of sexual harassment in public spaces in London. This work will build on the good practice established by the MPS, British Transport

Police (BTP) in partnership with the Rail Delivery Group and TfL in their recent campaigns and engagement activity to protect women and girls' right to public spaces free from sexual violence and harassment.

MOPAC will work with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APPC) to align work in London with national programmes and policies to improve the safety of women and girls.

The GLA regeneration team will engage the Mayor's Design Advocates (MDAs) in shaping public realm projects to create positive spaces that women and girls of all backgrounds, including disabled and non-disabled, are empowered to use, as is their right, without fears for their safety, through action research using live case studies. The MDAs will support the case study projects to explore how to use the design process to improve participation, design, occupation, and evaluation of spaces through this lens. This will feed into their longer-term research and design guidance in collaboration with TfL to support the design and delivery of a safe public realm.

The government has indicated that they are considering changing the law to make sexual harassment a specific criminal offence in public spaces. We welcome the government listening to the Mayor and other campaigners on this important issue and will continue to lobby to get this change enshrined in law.

The Mayor supports the right of women to choose to have an abortion free of intimidation. The Mayor will continue to oppose any harassment around clinics and will back buffer zones underpinned by Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to prevent threatening behaviour.

In addition, the Mayor is implementing world leading policies to improve air quality in London, including through the promotion of walking, cycling and use of public transport. For this to work for women and girls, public spaces need to be safer, and women and girls need to feel safe when using them.

Working with TfL, the MPS and other partners, MOPAC will ensure active travel policy and delivery is informed by an awareness of VAWG and the strategies women and girls with different characteristics use to keep safe.

Covid-19 has meant, more than ever, the boundary between the online and offline world has blurred. This has provided a new space for known and unknown perpetrators to target and harass women and girls, as well as for misogyny to flourish in online forums (such as those used by “incels<sup>1</sup>”), through pornography and child sexual exploitation. Online VAWG is a wide-ranging and growing area of abuse which causes significant and long-lasting harm. Beyond social media and email, it extends to gaming chats, image-based abuse such as upskirting, and the tracking of individuals with perpetrators exploiting these platforms to exhibit many forms of VAWG. Collaboration with multiple partners including tech companies is essential to

understand its extent, its intersectional nature, and tackle the problem effectively.

Holding perpetrators to account in online spaces is particularly difficult. For example, once private sexual images are shared without consent by a perpetrator they can be distributed by others across multiple sites, meaning that the platforms themselves become facilitators of harm to women and girls. To find a solution, we need to work together with the tech industry, alongside a need to upskill the police and CPS in how to respond effectively to VAWG in online spaces.

London is a world-leader in the tech industry and many creative solutions to the problems of VAWG online exist in the businesses that operate here. Londoners need them to do more to end VAWG online. We want to establish strategic partnerships in line with the Mayor's Smarter London Strategy including government, Big Tech, the CJS, the private sector, and NGOs, creating incentives and partnerships with social media companies to educate around online harm, and with the tech industry itself.

MOPAC will support meaningful regulation of online harms and monitor the progress of the Online Safety Bill. We will work with partners to apply an intersectional lens and ensure the safety of those using these online platforms; that they are empowered to report harmful content; and that

where offences are committed online, material is removed, victims and survivors are supported and offenders brought to justice.

With London's Chief Digital Officer, MOPAC will convene and maintain an Online Harms Working Group for London, co-ordinating GLA Group efforts and driving forward wider collaboration and innovation, ensuring that VAWG is central to its work in tackling online harms both internally and externally.

MOPAC will explore bringing together tech companies and civil society groups to collaboratively address online harms affecting women and girls and take greater responsibility in creating safer online spaces.

## **2. Supporting all victims and survivors**

We know that VAWG can have a devastating impact on victims and survivors, as well as their families and friends. That is why the Mayor is clear that all victims and survivors of VAWG in London should be supported and their rights should be protected and promoted regardless of expectations or stereotypes. This needs to be informed by those who have experienced trauma and recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach to London's diverse needs and the intersectional needs and nature of London's communities will not work.

Instead, we must ensure there is free, professional, specialist support and services from a range of providers, with a tailored approach to help all victims and survivors from London's diverse backgrounds rebuild their lives. Our public consultation on the PCP and this Strategy showed that Londoners overwhelmingly support this view.

We also know that victims and survivors of VAWG too often have a poor experience when reporting the crimes against them, and in their subsequent engagement with both the MPS and the whole CJS. That is not good enough; the Mayor is clear that, at all stages, victims and survivors in London must be treated with respect and dignity. He will hold the MPS to account for this and work with other statutory partners to improve victims' experience.

In accessing support services or dealing with the CJS, bias and unfairness has no place in the response to dealing with victims and survivors of VAWG. The Mayor is determined to identify it and root it out - whether this be the adultification of Black girls; the disdain for those who have a substance reliance, or are homeless; or focusing on victims over alleged perpetrators in rape cases.

Through the commitments in this chapter, we are working towards the following ambitions:

More victims and survivors can rebuild their lives through access to specialist support services and spaces that meet the needs of London's diverse communities

Victims and survivors are treated with care and respect by the MPS and all CJS agencies

There are better criminal justice responses and outcomes for all victims and survivors

Safe reporting and support are available for all victims and survivors

## **2.1 Helping more victims and survivors to rebuild their lives through access to specialist services**

The Mayor has already taken great steps to support specialist VAWG services, continuing to oversee a record investment of over £112m since 2016/17 to tackle VAWG and support victims and survivors. However, there remains a significant gap in capacity and funding, and the Mayor will continue lobbying the government to address this.

Services already commissioned by the Mayor include London's Rape Crisis Centres, which provided 16,057 hours of counselling and support to victims and survivors of rape and sexual assault in 2020-21; and piloting new schemes such as the London Survivors Gateway which handled more than 5,290 referrals in 2021-22. Funding from and through MOPAC supports this London hub for sexual violence services, including the Havens (Sexual Assault Referral Centres), and continues to provide Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs), Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), and caseworkers working across London to help victims navigate the process from 'report to court'. The independent advocates provide ongoing practical and wellbeing support.

Through the Mayor's VAWG Fund, £4.5m has been invested in specialist domestic abuse and stalking support services, including £1.9m in a programme to support migrant women with no recourse to public funds and £3m investment in 'by and for' organisations who provide specialist services for those with protected characteristics and/or those with insecure immigration status. From when these programmes started in 2019 to March 2022, 11,909 survivors have been referred to these services, with 8,580 direct beneficiaries and a further 90,111 indirect beneficiaries supported by Grassroots organisations.

MOPAC's commissioning is driven by the diverse needs of survivors in London and of marginalised communities - such as those from minority ethnic

backgrounds, migrant survivors, and those with other protected characteristics – as well as the intersections between them.

MOPAC will continue to support VAWG services in London during this Mayoral term, to ensure that victims and survivors can access the support that is right for them including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. As part of this, MOPAC will invest in specialist services to support individuals affected by harmful practices.

City Hall welcomes the recent government announcement on multi-year and additional funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence support services. It will work with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the VAWG sector to secure the maximum allocation for London. Nevertheless, more support is needed. MOPAC will continue to lobby the government to maintain and expand the highest quality of specialised tailored support for all victims and survivors in London.

We recognise that simply offering more funding for frontline staff, without growing the talent pool and workforce, will not yield the results we need. The VAWG sector has been stretched beyond its limits for too long. They have worked tirelessly to match the demands on the service, and yet demand continues to grow. Alongside service developments we need to ensure there is growth in a skilled workforce that would be able to deliver against our aims.

MOPAC will work with partners to support the development and resilience of the VAWG workforce. This will include work to attract more people to consider careers in supporting survivors of VAWG, encouraging professionals in statutory services to specialise in VAWG, and supporting increased diversity to improve victim and survivor choice.

Victims and survivors can find it hard to know what specialist services exist, and sometimes may not identify themselves as someone for whom those services are intended. This means that disclosures of VAWG can come to any Londoner, including professionals based in a range of statutory agencies, such as health, education, housing, and social services.

City Hall will work with partners to promote good practice and ensure a consistent frontline response to all victims and survivors, through programmes such as IRIS, which trains GPs and healthcare staff to identify VAWG. These programmes must recognise an individual's experience of trauma; how individual circumstances (for example, ethnicity, substance use, mental health or any combination of these and/or many others), may lead to further disadvantage; and how these impact on disclosure.

MOPAC will work with partners towards the wider use of community touch points where victims can receive information about support/prepare to safely leave abusive homes or relationships, and without attracting suspicion from their abusers.

Disclosures can happen at any point after an incident – from immediately afterwards, to many years later. Without the appropriate support at an **early stage**, victims and survivors are also much more likely to experience issues such as poor relationship stability and interpersonal violence, as well a greater risk of revictimisation in later life.

MOPAC will work with partners including the NHS, the MPS, the voluntary and community sector and local authorities to continue to fund and extend support, applying an intersectional lens, for child victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation and adults who have been victims as children.

It is essential to ensure that health professionals, including GPs and mental health service professionals, are trained in identifying and responding to disclosures of VAWG sensitively and accurately. This includes creating better and more inclusive care pathways, as noted in NHS Sexual Assault and Abuse Services **priorities**, by appropriately funding specialist VAWG services in the long-term, complex and specialist work they are doing.

MOPAC will work with the NHS, and other statutory and non-statutory partners, to explore how to address the substantial waiting lists for counselling services, and enable more timely access.

City Hall will work with health and VAWG sector partners to develop information on support and referral pathways into specialist support and

training for health professionals.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Mayor invested in emergency specialist safe accommodation for victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This includes those who have experienced harmful practices; those with no recourse to public funds; and LGBTQ+ and male victims and survivors all of whom may have needed to flee their homes during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. **The Mayor's London Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy** builds on this investment, setting out how the Mayor is implementing the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse in safe accommodation.

MOPAC will work with partners to ensure that victims of domestic abuse – including migrant victims, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and other minoritised groups - can access help without fear, with safe and informal spaces for victims who need to seek support.

MOPAC will advocate for all housing agencies in London to sign up to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.

## **2.2 Improving the experience of victims and survivors through the CJS**

The Mayor and London's Victims' Commissioner have lobbied to secure better justice outcomes for all victims and survivors of VAWG who choose to engage with the CJS. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on victims and survivors. There have been significant delays across the CJS including increased backlogs in the courts and the huge increase of demand on services means many victims and survivors wait too long to receive vital practical, emotional, and therapeutic support as well as resolution and justice. This delay is retraumatising and can lead to secondary victimisation. The system is in crisis and the Mayor continues to press the government to urgently address the delays in victims getting justice.

The Mayor's powers over the CJS in London are limited, with large and important parts of the process still in the hands of the government, rather than under local leadership. The Mayor continues to press for further devolution.

Operation Soteria Bluestone is a major national programme that aims to drive up the volume of rape cases progressing through the CJS. It is led by the NPCC, funded by the Home Office and hosted within MOPAC. The second and final part of the joint Thematic HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPISI) inspection of the investigation and prosecution of rape cases in England and Wales, identified issues to address in order to improve the handling of rape cases. Operation Soteria Bluestone's objectives are to test a series of tools and techniques to increase rape cases progressing

through the CJS and to develop a national operating model to deliver better, faster rape investigations that can be taken up by forces and CPS areas from 2023. While still in its first year, the programme has already identified ways to test and improve police responses to the handling of rape cases. This ensures that more perpetrators are brought to justice, and that victims can have greater confidence in the police's ability to handle their cases effectively. The research so far has identified that there is limited information on the demographics of survivors and perpetrators, and future developments will be fully conscious of the need to improve the data and ultimately seek equality in the investigative process. The MPS are fully engaged with Operation Soteria Bluestone and are demonstrating their commitment to improving in this area.

More frequent, better communication from the police, the CPS and CJS agencies is essential in ensuring victims and survivors feel informed and cared for. The collection of mobile phone data, or the phones themselves, is intrusive and distressing for victims and survivors.

MOPAC will lobby the Home Office and the MOJ to implement and resource the recommendations from Operation Soteria Bluestone, the London Rape Review<sup>2</sup> and HMICFRS's thematic inspection of VAWG, specifically the recent HMICFRS and HMCPIS joint inspection of rape.

MOPAC and London's Victims' Commissioner will work with the MPS, the CPS and the VAWG sector to determine how the recommendations of these reviews can be implemented in London. As part of this, using our

oversight role, MOPAC will work with the MPS to ensure that the findings of Operation Soteria Bluestone in London are acted upon as urgently and effectively as possible; that the learning has an intersectional lens applied; and that learning is shared with relevant partners, including BTP and the City of London Police. With partners, we will also focus on decisions to take no further action; the recommendations on digital device disclosure in the London Rape Review<sup>3</sup>; and improving the experience of victims and survivors in the CJS.

MOPAC will continue to work with partners, including the VAWG sector, to review how sexual violence service provision can better serve victims and survivors from all backgrounds and with diverse experiences; and how it can reflect learning from the thematic reviews conducted by HMICFRS, the government's Rape Review, Operation Soteria Bluestone and London's Victims' Commissioner's Rape Review.

MOPAC will explore the feasibility of a local pilot scheme to provide free, independent legal advice for victims on issues of privacy and data in relation to mobile phones and other devices, in line with the national recommendations in the London Rape Reviews.

MOPAC and London's Victims' Commissioner will continue to work with the MPS, justice agencies and victims of crime to develop the concept of a Victim Care Hub to better join up and transform the way all victims receive support during their journey through the CJS.

MOPAC will work with the MPS to build on the success of 'DA Matters' training, and to ensure wider, ongoing, quality training across all forms of VAWG. This training is to be trauma-informed and culturally competent and is to recognise the intersectional experiences that the victim or survivor may have had.

The Mayor will lobby the government to ensure that the forthcoming Victims' Law provides victims and survivors with legally enforceable rights. MOPAC will use our oversight role of the MPS to ensure that the Victims Code of Practice is adhered to for all victims across VAWG investigations.

City Hall will work with the MPS to ensure an intersectional approach is applied to all investigations; and to demonstrate support for 'Valerie's Law', which seeks to improve the response for Black women affected by domestic abuse. MOPAC is committed to ensuring that agencies are better placed to understand and respond to the different cultural needs of survivors of this awful crime.

The Mayor and London's Victims' Commissioner, Claire Waxman, will continue to lobby for specialist Rape and Serious Sexual Offences courts, in line with the recommendation of the 2022 HMICFRS/HMCPSI inspection into the investigation of rape.

MOPAC and London's Victims' Commissioner will undertake work to develop a profile of stalking in London, to better understand the needs of victims, their interaction with the CJS, and the support available to them.

## 2.3 Safe reporting and support for all victims and survivors

Migrant victims and survivors might not report experiences of VAWG to the police, out of fear that the police will prioritise immigration control over the protection of victims. Victims and survivors with insecure immigration status and/or no recourse to public funds are also less likely to access support, including refuge accommodation. The Mayor and London's Victims' Commissioner have worked hard to resist discriminatory hostile environment immigration policies on Londoners.

Londoners need a reporting system where victims and survivors do not feel that they will be treated as criminals.

MOPAC will work with the MPS to ensure that migrant victims and survivors of VAWG are protected and use MOPAC's oversight mechanism to support the MPS in delivering on HMICFRS recommendations made in response to the Super-Complaint by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters. This will include overseeing the effective implementation of clear policies and processes on data sharing that create a safer environment for all victims and survivors to report to the police should they choose to.

The Mayor will continue to lobby the Home Office to implement the recommendations made in HMICFRS's response to the Super-Complaint

by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters. He will lobby the government to introduce a 'firewall' between policing and immigration enforcement in the forthcoming Victims' Law.

We recognise the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls victimised by modern slavery, and the intersection of these crimes with other issues such as sexual exploitation. MOPAC will continue to support the Modern Slavery Helpline, an independent and confidential service assisting those in need and supporting the police in tackling these crimes.

London's Victims' Commissioner will undertake work to better understand victims' experiences of the police response to modern slavery, and to identify how it can be improved. MOPAC will also engage with the Home Office on modern slavery and continued reform of the national referral mechanism to ensure that it is as efficient and effective as possible for victims and survivors.

MOPAC will explore how to improve the availability of appropriate interpretation services, including within the MPS, so that language or any other communication differences are not a barrier to accessing support and justice.

Victims and survivors who have newly arrived in the UK often do not know where to get help or even the number for emergency services. This often leaves them powerless and vulnerable to perpetrators. London's Victims' Commissioner has recommended further exploration of the role that airports,

airline providers, and staff can play in identifying and safeguarding victims and survivors.

MOPAC will advocate for all new arrivals to the UK to be given VAWG support and reporting information. This advocacy includes writing to the Home Office to suggest that they provide all new migrant women and girls with information on support and how to report VAWG.

Women and girls in prison, or subject to probation services, are often forgotten as victims and survivors of VAWG and are likely to have experienced multiple disadvantages. Instead of experiencing support, they are criminalised as a result of their experiences. Specific steps are needed to deliver equal protection for women and girls who are currently barred from accessing their rights<sup>4</sup>, including victims and survivors in prison and those held in detention. Since 2018, the Mayor has commissioned a holistic support service for London women and girls who are in the CJS and at risk of reoffending. This service includes specialist support and safeguarding for victims and survivors of VAWG, including domestic and sexual abuse; coercion; and sex trafficking.

MOPAC will work with the MOJ to apply an intersectional lens and continue to co-commission comprehensive support services for London women in prison; on remand; on probation supervision; and at risk of being in contact with the CJS or identified as at risk of offending by local partners.

MOPAC will continue to work with the Prison Reform Trust, the MPS, the NHS, London Probation, London Councils, Lambeth Council and Women in Prison to deliver London's Blueprint for a Whole System Approach to Women in Contact with the CJS. This aims to tackle the root causes of offending, prevent reoffending and ensure that women and girls have the support they need after leaving prison. This also includes working with partners, including the MPS and where appropriate diverting women into community support and away from the CJS.

We recognise the high level of vulnerability that comes with prostitution and continue to work to help individuals exit where possible and keep safe where it is not. In February 2022, the MPS launched Project Evergreen to enhance their strategic response to prostitution, ensuring alignment where possible with **National Police Chiefs' Council's objectives**.

MOPAC will work closely with the MPS through our oversight function, to ensure that a consistent policing response to women involved in prostitution is in place for the whole of London. This approach must address the harm associated with prostitution; and be balanced with recognising the importance of understanding an individual's experience of trauma and how individual circumstances - for example ethnicity, substance use, mental health or any combination of these and/or other factors may lead to further disadvantage.

As part of the Mayor's commitment to support the most marginalised groups, MOPAC has funded a unique programme that supports women and girls to safely exit sex work/prostitution when is it appropriate for them to do so. We must not underestimate the impact of both Brexit and the pandemic on this group; what was difficult before has become even more challenging today.

MOPAC will continue to support those involved in prostitution, exploring options from harm minimisation to safe exit should they choose to do so. It is essential to understand the complex needs likely to be present, and to work patiently with them on this journey.

We need more recognition of the links between VAWG and housing, and more action in London to understand housing insecurity and homelessness as a VAWG issue. We are aware that landlords can register their properties as 'exempt accommodation' and run unregulated domestic abuse accommodation. This potentially enables landlords to make excessive profits and for survivors to be unsupported at this time of crisis. Our commissioning approach is mindful of these risks.

City Hall will work to deliver the Mayor's Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy. MOPAC will raise awareness of the potential risks of unregulated domestic abuse accommodation with local authorities. We will lobby the Department for Work and Pensions to encourage local

authorities to use their landlord licensing schemes to monitor exempt accommodation that is being used for survivors of domestic abuse.

MOPAC and the GLA will work to ensure London's policies, practices and support services on reducing rough sleeping and homelessness are informed by an understanding of housing insecurity as a cause and consequence of VAWG.

### **3. Holding perpetrators to account**

The Mayor is clear that whilst we cannot effectively police our way out of VAWG, we can - and must - police VAWG more effectively. For example, the current rates of detection<sup>5</sup> and successful prosecutions in rape cases simply aren't good enough and the Mayor wants to see a significant improvement. However, the response across all VAWG offences needs to improve. The MPS will, rightly, play a central role in this – and the Mayor will hold them to account for their work in that regard - but all criminal justice agencies will need to play their full part in identifying, sanctioning, and managing perpetrators to prevent further reoffending. For example, the work of the Probation Service in managing offenders must be done with victims and survivors at its core and must treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve. As part of this, all

forms of bias, racism and misogyny, and any form of prejudice, from the CJS must be challenged and addressed - as set out in **the Mayor's Action Plan for Transparency, Accountability and Trust**.

At a basic level we believe that the perpetrators of all forms of VAWG should be held to account by the CJS and face the consequences of their actions. This requires a two-pronged approach. First, we must be able to identify those at risk - those demonstrating concerning behaviours - and guide them away from offending. In terms of preventing VAWG, this will (as noted earlier) require the help of individuals, families, work colleagues and many other groups. But where people do commit offences, we must do more to achieve successful criminal justice outcomes and reduce the likelihood of them reoffending, particularly amongst those known to be the most dangerous and violent. Doing this will not only hold perpetrators to account but should increase confidence in both the MPS and the CJS more generally.

Through the commitments in this chapter, we are working towards the following ambitions:

Perpetrators across all forms of VAWG are identified and abuse is disrupted

Potentially harmful attitudes and behaviours are identified earlier; and individuals are supported to recognise and change this behaviour in themselves

Reoffending is reduced including in the most harmful and violent cohorts

Perpetrators of all forms of VAWG are effectively managed and supervised by police, probation services, and the wider CJS through the appropriate tools and processes at their disposal

## **3.1 Perpetrators across all forms of VAWG are identified and pathways for abuse are disrupted**

Charging and prosecution rates for domestic abuse and sexual violence are simply not good enough. The PCP consultation showed public confidence in policing was lowest with respect to VAWG. The Mayor is committed to working with all criminal justice agencies to reverse these trends. He recognises the priority Londoners give to increasing prosecution rates for both sexual and domestic abuse, and the continued need for a better policing response to online forms of VAWG.

Building trust and confidence in the CJS is central to this Strategy.

MOPAC will work with MPS, the CPS, the Probation Service and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) to improve investigation, detection, charging, prosecution rates and sentencing outcomes. Using

existing and emerging evidence and recommendations we will identify the key barriers to change - and with partners, develop actions to address them.

MOPAC will use all its powers to support policing and public-sector partners to build stronger collaborative working with the Probation Service and prisons in London. This includes building on existing co-commissioning, to ensure that its management of perpetrators is working to protect all women and girls from further violence and abuse.

MOPAC, through work led by the VRU, has joined with local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to deliver local violence and vulnerability plans across the city. During this Strategy period, MOPAC will consult with local CSPs, and social care and housing leaders, to explore replicating this approach for VAWG and advising that an intersectional lens is applied.

MOPAC will continue to use its lobbying power to close gaps in legislation that are allowing perpetrators to evade justice. We will lobby for the Online Safety Bill to include misogyny and tighter restrictions on pornography platforms.

MOPAC will proactively engage with London's VAWG sector, including specialist 'by and for' agencies, to amplify relevant and compatible campaigns directed at legislative reform. This includes reform relating to child marriage, vaginoplasty under the age of 18, and virginity testing.

MOPAC will work with the MPS and VAWG sector partners to improve the effectiveness of investigations and increase prosecutions for FGM and other harmful practices.

London has a range of specialist units and multi-agency partnerships that work to manage the risk of high harm VAWG offenders. These include MPS Predatory Offender Units, MARACs, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements and the use of MPS Jigsaw teams and the Violent and Sexual Offender Register (ViSOR) as part of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Effectively tackling perpetrators requires a clear understanding of their collective impact on London, and specifically, the success of managing them. MOPAC's Evidence and Insight Team will undertake an assessment of the MPS approach to high harm offenders, to inform MOPAC's future oversight of their management. The research will identify best practice; any potential concerns in relation to safeguarding and disproportionality; and establish how the MPS has operationalised multiple recommendations (including those from the College of Policing and HMICFRS reports), with specific regard to the perpetrator identification and management. Findings from this research will inform how London's collective approach can be improved.

MOPAC will continue to work alongside the MPS, the Probation Service, the CPS, and victims and survivor services to ensure that the identification

of, and response to stalking in London is improved; and that all agencies meet the diverse needs of Londoners resulting from increases in stalking reports to police. This will include a reappraisal of the merits of implementing or developing a register for managing serial perpetrators alongside the work the Home Office has committed to undertake as part of its domestic abuse plan.

MOPAC will continue to use our oversight function to understand how the MPS is identifying and managing offenders across VAWG. This includes understanding the impact of Predatory Offender Units, which were introduced in November 2020. We will make the case to partners that, even in instances where the victim or survivor is not able to support an investigation, intelligence should still be gathered and acted upon while always considering the safety of the victim.

MOPAC will support the MPS in its work to disrupt organised crime groups involved in modern slavery by developing intelligence, prosecuting offenders and seizing their assets - protecting the vulnerable and reducing repeat victimisation by targeting those offenders who do most harm.

There is a need to improve our understanding of what works to change the behaviour of perpetrators beyond domestic abuse. To inform future commissioning, MOPAC will analyse demographics, risks and needs of VAWG perpetrators through close collaboration and insight and evidence sharing with London Probation. While convicted perpetrators only make up a small proportion of VAWG offenders, this knowledge will help to build a

wider evidence base, and provide a starting point to build a more comprehensive picture about the successful management of VAWG perpetrators and what works to change their harmful behaviours.

MOPAC will commission research to understand more about provision and interventions for all VAWG perpetrators across London - including online contexts, and the response of the CJS to different perpetrators so we can better understand what works. We need to know more about intersectionality and disproportionality in relation to perpetrator interventions, and will ensure this is prioritised in the research.

MOPAC will convene a task and finish group to explore how to work with perpetrators of harmful practices, a gap highlighted in our survivor consultation. To begin, the group will meet for six months to explore what we know; and to hear the challenges and opportunities that could provide a roadmap for developing policy and practice in this area. This will be shared with Police and Crime Commissioners and other agencies nationally.

The Mayor will continue to lobby for a national perpetrator Strategy across VAWG. While we support the call for a national domestic abuse perpetrator Strategy, this does not go far enough. We need to understand perpetration across all forms of VAWG and how they intersect.

## 3.2 Early intervention for individuals displaying potentially harmful attitudes and behaviours

We also prioritise early intervention for perpetrators whose behaviour may not yet meet criminal thresholds. Holding perpetrators of VAWG to account is not only the responsibility of the CJS. We know that most perpetrators will never come to the attention of the CJS; therefore, we need to improve the ability of agencies and professionals in London to identify, challenge and refer perpetrators appropriately.

To support early identification and intervention for perpetrators of all forms of VAWG, MOPAC will develop, with partners, a protocol for professions coming into contact with perpetrators of VAWG including within social care, housing, health, education, children's services, probation and the CJS.

MOPAC will continue to pilot early intervention projects in children's social care, using the Safe and Together™ programme, which frames domestic abuse as a harmful parenting practice and seeks to enable social workers to focus on perpetrators' behaviour.

## 3.3 Perpetrators are effectively managed and reoffending is reduced

The Mayor has been building London's response to perpetrators over successive strategies, by funding interventions and behaviour change work across London with perpetrators of domestic abuse and stalking.

To reduce delays, and improve the safeguarding of victims and survivors and the management of VAWG perpetrators, the Mayor supports ongoing efforts to streamline and improve information sharing processes between London Probation and the MPS.

MOPAC will continue working towards a whole-system approach to offender management, bringing the CJS together with housing, education and social care to deliver prevention, diversion, disruption and/or enforcement tactics. Where possible, a combination of appropriate tools should be used to disrupt escalation or track offenders; these tools may include GPS or sobriety tagging. As part of this, we will continue to pilot GPS tagging for domestic abuse perpetrators, leaving custody for serious offences. To date, over 180 tags have been successfully imposed.

MOPAC will work with the MPS and VAWG sector partners to establish how the use of protective orders, such as stalking protection orders, can

be improved, and breaches dealt with more effectively, so they better protect victims. We will also work with the MPS to make best use of all available legislative options including the use of antisocial behaviour measures.

MOPAC will work with the MPS and the MOJ to make the most of the opportunities provided by the new two-tier framework for Out of Court Disposals; and ensure their introduction is used to encourage behaviour change and prevent escalation to serious harm.

We understand that pursuing a criminal justice outcome is not always what victims and survivors want. We encourage behaviour change interventions for perpetrators, regardless of police, probation or court involvement. However currently less than 1 per cent of domestic abuse perpetrators receive an intervention<sup>6</sup>, and some interventions continue to be neither quality assured nor safe.

The Mayor will build on the successful expansion of the Drive programme to disrupt more serial, high risk perpetrators of domestic abuse, and on our work with partners to invest in London's Stalking Threat Assessment Centre, by continuing to invest in programmes to change the behaviour of perpetrators. In 2021-22 more than 200 high risk perpetrators were referred to the Drive programme.

MOPAC will continue to work with London Probation and other partners to improve the quality and impact of behaviour change work as well as increase its reach.

There has been national investment in perpetrator work over the last couple of years, but this needs to increase; and commissioning for perpetrator interventions needs to work for London. Akin to victim's services, perpetrator programmes cannot be designed with a 'one size fits all' approach, and must be tailored with an intersectional lens to specific needs and demographics.

MOPAC will lobby the Home Office for multi-year settlements for perpetrator intervention provision across all forms of VAWG, that is adequate to meet all of London's needs. This includes lobbying for investment in behaviour change programmes that reflect the diversity of London in who delivers them and how.

MOPAC will continue working to ensure that victim and survivor support is integrated, or provided in partnership, with perpetrator intervention programmes in London and nationally. There should be no assumption of existing capacity in victim and survivor support services to provide this, and funding will need to be built in it.

MOPAC will work with partners to develop behaviour change programmes for perpetrators who are not in the CJS.

## 4. Building trust and confidence

The trust and consent of the public is the foundation of policing in this country. Without it, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the whole system is undermined. We know that many factors contribute to the trust and confidence of citizens in policing. This includes being able to rely on the police to be there when you need them; to treat everyone fairly; and to listen to, and take action on, the concerns and priorities of the public, as well as ensuring that local police – and the work they are doing – are known to residents. As part of our oversight of the MPS, MOPAC uses its Public Attitude Survey (PAS)<sup>7</sup> to ask thousands of Londoners each year about all of these things.

Trust and confidence in policing has been declining for several years. In the most recent data from the PAS, 49 per cent of Londoners said they think the police did an excellent or good job locally in the 12 months to March 2022 - the lowest recorded level ever measured via the PAS<sup>8</sup>. In December 2017, the figure was at 68 per cent. Londoners' trust in the police has also declined, from 88 per cent in the rolling 12 months to June 2017 to 73 per cent in the rolling 12 months to March 2022. This is a critical issue, and in his PCP 2022-25, the Mayor has made increasing trust and confidence in policing a core priority. The PCP sets out a wide range of commitments and actions to

address issues affecting the main drivers of confidence across all of London's communities.

Every woman and girl should feel they can rely on the police to protect them; treat them respectfully and sensitively; and effectively investigate and take forward cases. In this Strategy, we build on the PCP's commitments, with additional measures to improve the police's preventative activities, its investigation of VAWG offences and its treatment of all victims.

Yet instances where a police officer or staff member has failed to abide by the standards expected of the MPS have undermined trust and confidence in the MPS in relation to VAWG. These instances include the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer; appalling criminal behaviour by officers at the scene of the murder of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry; the mishandling and treatment of Child Q; and revelations of discrimination, misogyny, harassment and bullying by officers at Charing Cross Police Station identified in the Operation Hotton IOPC report. In this chapter, we focus on addressing the serious issues of professional standards and culture within the MPS that these incidents – and others – have brought to light.

This work is vital. The safety of women and girls is something we cannot – and must not – ever compromise on. But the reality is trust in the MPS amongst women has fallen by 15 percentage points - from 88 per cent in the 12 months

to March 2017 to 73 per cent in the 12 months to March 2022, and confidence (agreement that the police do a good job in the local area) fell by 19 percentage points over the same period<sup>9</sup>. Young people, and Black and mixed ethnicity groups, have even less confidence in the MPS<sup>10</sup>. Findings from the 2021-22 MOPAC Youth Voice survey of Londoners aged 11-16 show that young women/girls were less likely to say they had a 'good overall opinion' of the police (38%) than young men/boys (48%)<sup>11</sup>.

That fall in trust and confidence has consequences. It means women, from a wide range of backgrounds, are less likely to report crime, and therefore more likely to remain at risk of harm.

We also recognise the impact of wider trust and confidence issues on the safety of women and girls. Consultation for the Mayor's 2020 Action Plan for Transparency, Accountability and Trust in policing highlighted, for example, that some Black female victims of sexual violence and/or domestic abuse where the perpetrator was also Black chose not to report out of fear that the perpetrator – often a member of their family – would not be treated fairly by the police – putting them at additional risk of future harm.

The MPS must do everything in its power to raise standards and become a service that all women and girls feel able to put their trust in. This begins with the MPS identifying and rooting out bias, sexism and misogyny in its ranks. The MPS has stated it is committed to doing this. Dame Louise Casey's

review into the MPS culture, and how to improve it, will consider this issue. The Mayor will hold the new Commissioner to account for delivering on its recommendations.

This is particularly important where levels are at their lowest, such as with young Black women. Improving their response to VAWG and making sure perpetrators are fully held to account is one way the Mayor believes the MPS can begin to do this.

Cultural competence is also essential for MPS officers and staff dealing with VAWG offences – for example, understanding how the identifiers of harm can differ for different people – such as the ways bruising and physical injury show on darker skin. We welcome the efforts made by the MPS to expand its cultural and community training offer and will continue to support this work during the period of this Strategy.

The Mayor recognises that the demands placed on MPS officers and staff, and the things they are exposed to, are often challenging. These difficulties should never be an excuse, but if they are not addressed by strong leadership, they can foster a harmful culture. MOPAC has a role to play not only in supporting and guiding the MPS, but also in providing clear oversight and lines of accountability to the public.

Through the commitments in this Strategy, and the work of the MPS, the Mayor expects to see:

An MPS culture in which misogynistic, racist and any other discriminatory behaviour is not only called out as unacceptable, but truly driven out of the service;

The MPS engage constructively and respectfully with all groups of women and girls;

Women and girls' trust and confidence in the MPS increase;

The record and response of the MPS on VAWG improve.

## **4.1 Taking action to build trust and confidence**

During the period of this Strategy, the following steps will be taken to achieve these outcomes:

The Mayor supports the MPS VAWG Action Plan, which is a strong first step towards change. It is supported by the MPS Rebuilding Trust Plans which set out 20 priorities to rebuild trust. The MPS has appointed an additional Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) for operational

standards, increasing capacity to enable the DAC for Professional Standards to focus exclusively on that work.

We also recognise the work the MPS has done in response to the Mayor's Action Plan, to improve transparency, accountability and trust. This work aims to ensure we have a police service that has the confidence of all of London's Black communities. MOPAC will use our oversight function to ensure that the MPS delivers against the commitments included in all of these Plans.

The Mayor will work with the Home Secretary to appoint a new Commissioner for the MPS who recognises the scale of the challenges ahead to restore public confidence. This Commissioner must be fully aware of the complexities and diversity in London. We will work with them to lead from the front in driving the changes necessary to achieve both the culture change and the improvements in justice outcomes we need for women and girls.

The Mayor supports the forthcoming review by Baroness Casey into culture and standards of behaviour in the MPS and the inquiry led by Dame Eilish Angiolini focusing on establishing a comprehensive account of the police career of Sarah Everard's killer, in order to identify any missed opportunities to prevent any such incidents happening again. The Mayor will hold the new Commissioner to account and use MOPAC's oversight role to ensure that the recommendations and findings from both the Casey Review and the Angiolini Inquiry are fully addressed. MOPAC

will also consider how it can support any findings that require change at a national level.

London's Victims' Commissioner is currently working with the Casey Review to ensure victims' experiences are directly reflected in its work. This will include facilitating a session with a number of victims with direct experience of cultural issues in the MPS and their complaints procedures.

City Hall welcomes the consultative approach the MPS has taken to seek views from communities and reflect them in their work. MOPAC will use its convening role to bring VAWG sector experts together with the MPS, in order to openly and collaboratively work through the plans and actions necessary to effect real change and improvements in police handling of VAWG and the culture relating to women and girls within the police service.

MOPAC will oversee the implementation of the proposed changes to the Serious Violence Duty (to include VAWG) that are in the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

MOPAC will continue to work with the MPS and communities to ensure that our police service reflects our city's diversity by improving the recruitment, retention and promotion of officers from all of London's diverse communities. This also means continuing to increase the representation of, and support for, women and those from diverse backgrounds in the MPS workforce.

Retaining women from all backgrounds in the MPS and encouraging them to develop their careers and progress is equally important. We welcome the steps the MPS is taking to increase the support to women progressing in the service, and to strengthen avenues for officers and staff to report sexual harassment and unacceptable conduct. MOPAC will continue to engage with MPS staff associations and groups to understand the needs of women in the service, and to support the MPS in ensuring that it is an organisation in which women can thrive at every level.

The MPS is rolling out training – built on the feedback from women in the service - to ensure all officers and staff actively intervene and challenge inappropriate behaviours; and a leadership programme focused on improving the skills to lead inclusive and high performing teams. Through its oversight of the MPS, MOPAC will monitor the progress and impact of this training.

As well as recruiting and retaining the best, it is vital that the MPS can more quickly and effectively identify and remove officers and staff who do not live up to the values and standards expected of them. The MPS has created a new dedicated team focused on the investigation of allegations of sexual misconduct and domestic abuse by police officers or police staff (replicating the existing team which investigates all serious discrimination cases). This will improve their ability to identify patterns of concerning online and 'real world' behaviours in the workplace. MOPAC will oversee

the work of this unit and ensure officers and staff are dealt with appropriately and as necessary dismissed from the service.

The MPS has conducted reviews of current and historic allegations of sexual misconduct and domestic abuse involving police officers and staff. MOPAC will ensure that learning and actions are taken forward by the MPS to improve the standards of investigation and support for victims.

The super-complaint from the Centre for Women's Justice, regarding the way policing systems operate where police officers and staff are accused of domestic abuse, is being investigated by HMICFRS, the IOPC and the College of Policing. MOPAC will hold the MPS to account to implement any forthcoming recommendations to improve confidence, among women and girls, that such police officers and staff will be dealt with appropriately.

MOPAC will support the MPS in developing a framework through which organisational and/or thematic learning can be taken from the public's complaints, in order to improve the future policing response to VAWG. MOPAC will also hold the MPS to account for the implementation of recommendations from the MPS review into its Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection command.

## How we deliver

## **Working with partners and communities**

Effective partnership working is central to the successful delivery of this Strategy. The Mayor is calling on all our partners to work collaboratively - including the VAWG sector, local authorities, police, the CPS, the Probation Service, HMCTS and the NHS - to achieve his ambition of ending VAWG.

The views of London's diverse communities are also critical for our work. Over the lifetime of the Strategy, MOPAC will work to listen to and understand the views and experiences of our many communities regarding VAWG – including most importantly, listening to the voices of victims and survivors. MOPAC will ensure these experiences inform plans and service delivery.

## **The London VAWG Board**

The London VAWG Board brings together partner agencies involved in tackling VAWG and supporting victims to provide strategic leadership for VAWG in London. It is co-chaired by MOPAC and a representative of the VAWG sector.

The Board should hold statutory partners to account for their actions in support of the VAWG Strategy and facilitate a partnership response to collectively tackle the barriers to ending VAWG.

## **VAWG Expert Reference Group**

MOPAC supports an independent VAWG Expert Reference Group which brings together representatives from across the VAWG sector and acts as the voice of the VAWG voluntary sector in its interactions with the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, London's Victims' Commissioner, and the VAWG Board. Its co-chairs are members of the London VAWG Board, ensuring that those with expertise in VAWG have a strong voice and representation on the Board.

MOPAC will work with the VAWG Expert Reference Group and the MPS to explore how the group could facilitate more effective engagement between the MPS and the VAWG sector and act as a forum for consultation on the MPS's work to improve trust and confidence.

## **Commissioning**

MOPAC invests money via commissioning to prevent VAWG, reduce reoffending and support victims – in support of the VAWG Strategy ambitions and objectives. The Mayor has invested more than £112m in tackling VAWG since 2016/17 and has secured a further £46m investment for 2022/23. As part of this, he has committed to an annual £5m boost to MOPAC's commissioned VAWG services over the lifetime of this Strategy.

MOPAC has developed commissioning principles that guide its work:

Londoners are the driving force of MOPAC's work. Through listening to Londoners, and to London's victims of crime and service users, we can understand how to make a positive impact with real meaning - from policy development through to commissioning, service delivery and service evaluation.

We are relentless in our pursuit of equality, inclusion and diversity.

We recognise all assets and strengths of London's diverse communities, leading through empowering others and enabling outcomes.

We foster collaboration and co-production with partners, providers and service users

We use a broad range of evidence to inform commissioning and contributing our own insight evidence through reflection and evaluation.

As part of its wider commitments in the PCP, MOPAC will continue to publish quarterly updates on the performance of its commissioned and grant funded VAWG services.

### **Measuring impact**

As with the PCP, MOPAC will oversee the delivery of this Strategy by tracking a core set of measures. These measures reflect the Mayor's priorities in the VAWG Strategy. Where appropriate they align to the measures set out in the PCP. These will set clear joint objectives, outcomes, and performance

frameworks against which successful delivery of the Strategy can be measured.

MOPAC's outcomes framework aligns to the approach taken for the PCP and seeks to present a balanced view across the priorities set out in this Strategy. This will avoid the pitfalls of a narrow, target-based approach by using a mix of broad perception-based measures (such as fear of crime) and confidence and objective measures (such as sanction detections), as measured through both the PAS and police data.



Figure - VAWG Strategy Performance Framework

A full list of the measures used, and a technical note providing more detail on the performance management approach are provided as part of the supporting documents for this Strategy.

MOPAC's Evidence and Insight Team will continue to conduct and contribute to evaluations on services and pilots commissioned to understand their impact and effectiveness. These findings will contribute to our future policymaking. In line with its public health approach, the VRU will continue to commission an extensive programme of evaluation on its funded interventions, to understand their impact and contribute to the wider evidence base on what works to reduce violence.

## References

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- 1** 'Incel' is an abbreviation of the term 'involuntary celibate' and used by men who believe they have a entitlement to hetero-sex and that women have no right to deny them that. Incels have punished or taken revenge against women who they perceive as denying them sex though VAWG, including femicide.
- 2** For more on the recommendations see: London.gov.uk, The London Rape Review – 2021 Update (5: Recommendations), 2021
- 3** See: London.gov.uk, The London Rape Review – 2021 Update (5: Recommendations), 2021
- 4** Centre for Women's Justice, Submission 2 – Criminalisation of survivors, Draft Statutory Guidance Framework: Domestic Abuse Bill.
- 5** For the year to end March 2022 the MPS recorded a detection rate for rape of 4.3 per cent
- 6** Drive Project, Call to Action for a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy, 2019

**7** The Public Attitude Survey (PAS) aims to gauge what Londoners think about policing and crime in the capital, and to understand the issues that matter to you. [Share via email](#)

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Londoners' perceptions of the police, identifies local policing priorities, and captures views and experiences across a range of crime and safety issues. The survey has taken place since 1983 and speaks to around 19,200 London residents each year. Results from the PAS help to ensure that Londoners' priorities for policing and safety are at the heart of decision making in MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police Service.

**Useful links**

- 8** [Quarter 4, 21/22 data, /programmes-strategies/mayors-office-policing-and-crime/data-and-jobs-statistics/public-voice-dashboard](#)
- 9** [As measured by responses to the Public Attitude Survey Question – “Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in your area are doing?” Twelve months to March 2017 – 68%, March 2022 – 49%](#)

**10** For overall confidence in policing, Black and Mixed ethnicity groups, along with younger respondents, have notable negative gaps compared to the overall result: as of Q3 2021/22 – Black (-6pp), Mixed (-8pp) and 16-24 year olds (-8pp)

**11** MOPAC's Youth Survey 2021-22 gathered the views of 11,874 young Londoners aged 11 to 16 about the crime and policing issues that affect them. The survey was hosted online, and fieldwork took place from November 2021 to January 2022.

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