

An aerial, top-down view of a city map, rendered in a vibrant green color. The map shows a dense network of streets and buildings. Scattered across the map are several small, realistic human figures, appearing to walk or stand on the streets. The figures are diverse in age and appearance, adding a sense of scale and human presence to the urban environment. The overall composition is centered, with the text overlaid on the map's grid.

# Violence Against Women and Girls

Police and Crime Committee

**LONDON ASSEMBLY**

## Police and Crime Committee



Marina Ahmad AM  
Labour



Susan Hall AM  
(Chairman)  
Conservatives



Tony Devenish AM  
Conservatives



Sem Moema AM  
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Unmesh Desai AM  
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Liberal Democrats



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Neil Garratt AM  
Conservatives



Caroline Russell AM  
(Deputy Chair)  
Greens

The Police and Crime Committee examines the work of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and investigates issues relating to policing and crime reduction in London.

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## Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an umbrella term for a range of crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls. It includes: domestic violence; rape; sexual offences; stalking; and human trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution. It also includes harmful practices, such as forced marriage; so-called ‘honour’ crimes; and female genital mutilation (FGM), as well as many other crimes.

The UN defines VAWG as:

*“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.”<sup>1</sup>*

The UN goes on to state:

*“VAWG encompasses, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family or within the general community, and perpetrated or condoned by the State.”<sup>2</sup>*

Over the course of 2021, the issue of VAWG in London has attracted national attention, following the murders of Sarah Everard, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sabina Nessa and many other women in the capital. The Mayor has called the increase in VAWG an “epidemic” and added, “Harassment in the public space against women should be a criminal offence.”<sup>3</sup>

The Police and Crime Committee launched its investigation in response to the renewed focus on VAWG following these high-profile murders and the increase in reports of domestic abuse, sexual violence and rape. In November 2021, the Committee held an open mic session with a range of organisations that work with victims and survivors of VAWG. It examined the detail behind the rise in reports of VAWG, support for victims, and the way in which partner organisations are working to prevent it; and explored what more is needed from the Mayor, the Metropolitan Police (the Met) and other criminal justice partners to effectively tackle VAWG. The Committee also considered the work taking place to rebuild trust in the police. The session predominantly focused on domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence; and these discussions are reflected in this report.

The Committee has also examined data from MOPAC and the Met to assess the rise in reports of VAWG in London. We have also spoken to organisations working with victims and survivors to understand what more could be done to improve the way VAWG is tackled and how victims can be better supported. This report summarises the Committee’s key findings.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women, [Frequently asked questions: Types of violence against women and girls](#)

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, [Frequently asked questions: Types of violence against women and girls](#)

<sup>3</sup> ITV News, [Violence against women and girls an ‘epidemic’, says Mayor Sadiq Khan](#), 23 September 2021

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Working to end VAWG requires investment of resources across the public and specialist VAWG sectors. A joined-up approach, including sustainable and robust partnerships with health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice and communities is also needed.<sup>4</sup>

The Committee welcomes the Mayor and the Met's commitment to prioritise VAWG and rebuild trust and confidence in the Met – as set out in the Mayor's draft Police and Crime Plan, and the Met's VAWG action plan and rebuilding trust programme. However, we believe more can be done to enhance the safety of all women and girls across the capital. The Met's action plan, the Mayor's new Police and Crime Plan and his refreshed VAWG strategy provide a valuable opportunity to intensify efforts to respond to the increase in reports of VAWG. These plans must include clear and measurable targets to support victims of VAWG; bring perpetrators to justice and improve outcomes for victims; and increase women's confidence in the police.

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<sup>4</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

MOPAC must work with the Met to prioritise action to improve the way VAWG data is gathered, recorded and analysed, including by race and other protected characteristics. MOPAC must also ensure it has robust performance-monitoring arrangements in place to hold the Met to account on this.

### Recommendation 2

MOPAC and the Met should carry out a dip sample of domestic abuse incidents to ascertain how many incidents result in multiple arrests, and to determine how widespread the issue of counter-allegations may be.

### Recommendation 3

MOPAC must commission specific research to examine the barriers that prevent victims from reporting VAWG offences, to better understand the scale of under-reporting in London and the action that can be taken to encourage more women and girls to come forward.

### Recommendation 4

The Met must listen to and learn from the conversation now taking place on VAWG. It must actively seek and respond to feedback from partners and communities on its VAWG action plan, particularly Black and minority ethnic women and organisations, to ensure it implements what London's women and girls want to see from their police.

### Recommendation 5

The Mayor must set clear and measurable VAWG targets in both his Police and Crime Plan and renewed VAWG strategy; and detail the resources needed to ensure he is able to deliver on his VAWG commitments.

### Recommendation 6

MOPAC must demonstrate, by September 2022, that it has robust performance monitoring in place to hold the Met to account on its work to increase trust and confidence.

### Recommendation 7

MOPAC must put in place, by September 2022, a forum to ensure regular engagement with organisations working with VAWG victims in order to hold the Mayor to account on his VAWG commitments.

### Recommendation 8

The Mayor must commit funding to ensure that specialist support services are available and accessible for every woman and girl in London that needs them; and end the postcode-lottery access to specialist services.

### Recommendation 9

The Mayor must demonstrate how he is working with the Government, and using his commissioning powers, to ensure long-term funding to provide specialist services with the certainty they need to provide support to victims.

### **Recommendation 10**

**The Mayor must work with the specialist VAWG sector and use his commissioning powers to ensure smaller 'by and for' services are able to access funding, and are supported through the procurement process.**

### **Recommendation 11**

**The Mayor's forthcoming VAWG strategy must strengthen MOPAC's commitment to provide wraparound support for victims of VAWG with no recourse to public funds. This should include both immigration and intensive resettlement support.**

### **Recommendation 12**

**The Mayor's refreshed VAWG strategy must include an emphasis on services for children affected by sexual violence and domestic abuse.**

### **Recommendation 13**

**The Mayor must work with specialist VAWG partners to determine what more is needed to increase and improve the provision of programmes for VAWG perpetrators in the capital. This work must take account of cultural and age-related need, and identify the funding required to deliver a stable long-term programme of support to perpetrators and their victims.**

### **Recommendation 14**

**The Mayor must use his influence, and work with partners, to lobby for investment in education resources and training for schools to provide programmes that promote healthy relationships, and support children and young people affected by VAWG, including early intervention.**

## Key findings

### Ensuring London is safe for women and girls

#### *VAWG in London*

VAWG is on the rise in London. In the year to the end of December 2021, total sexual offences rose by 26 per cent; rape by 17 per cent; and other sexual offences by 31 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Reports of domestic abuse in London rose during the pandemic, with a peak of 9,139 incidents in August 2020 (compared to 7,969 offences in December 2021; 7,723 offences in December 2020; and 7,543 offences in December 2019).<sup>6</sup>

Domestic abuse offences increased by 6 per cent in Q3 2021-22 compared to the same quarter in 2020-21 (1,260 more offences). Both sexual offences and domestic abuse offences have increased compared to pre-pandemic levels (Q3 2019-20) – domestic abuse by 18.2 per cent (an increase of 1,825 offences) and sexual offences by 30.1 per cent (an increase of 1,492 offences).<sup>7</sup>

Victim Support runs the London Victim and Witness Service, which incorporates a domestic abuse service, across the whole of London. Rachel Nicholas, Head of Service for Domestic Abuse at Victim Support, told the Committee:

*“Domestic abuse has increased year on year. Within the first six months of this year [2021], we have seen a 72 per cent increase since the same period of time last year, which is an incredible increase.”*

She added: “We are seeing a huge rise in domestic abuse without the resource to be able to back that up across the capital.”<sup>8</sup>

During its investigation, the Committee heard how VAWG data recorded by the Met is not an accurate reflection of the nature of VAWG in London. The Committee was told that data collection methods should be improved to ensure a more realistic reflection of how VAWG is presented and understood. For example, Vivienne Hayes, Chief Executive of the Women’s Resource Centre, highlighted to the Committee that police data does not “capture the reality of what is happening” and that discussions are taking place with MOPAC about this. She added: “The issue of collecting the data, of it being fully disaggregated by sex, race, and other protected characteristics, is critical if we are to see policies that are going to be effective.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Ngozi Fulani, an independent domestic violence adviser at Sistah Space, said:

<sup>5</sup> MOPAC, [Report to Police and Crime Committee](#), 13 January 2022

<sup>6</sup> The Met, [Hate crime or special crime dashboard](#)

<sup>7</sup> MOPAC, [Quarterly Performance Update Report, Quarter 3 2021/22](#)

<sup>8</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>9</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

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*“If we continue with this BAME thing, whatever that is, it simply means that we have perhaps White middle class, and then everybody else in one bracket. You cannot collect data about, for example, African-heritage women if we are under ‘BAME’.”<sup>10</sup>*

### **Ngozi Fulani, Sistah Space**

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In September 2021, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published the findings of its inspection on how the police respond to VAWG offences. It reported that tackling VAWG should be as much of a priority as counter-terrorism. HMICFRS said that the police response to VAWG needed to improve, and called for a shift in priority given to VAWG by the police. Its concerns included the number of VAWG cases closed without charge and the gaps in data on VAWG offences. It also called on the Government to consider legislating to create a new statutory duty for all partner agencies to work together to protect women and girls, similar to the framework for child protection.<sup>11</sup>

HMICFRS reported that it “found considerable inconsistencies over what data on VAWG offences is collected at local level, and how it is used.” This included information on the protected characteristics of victims and the recording of ethnicity. It stated:

*“In one force, 50 per cent of cases had no self-defined ethnicity information recorded, while the best performing force only had this recorded in 65 per cent of cases. We were told that one reason for the absence of this important information was that race and other protected characteristics were not mandatory fields on the crime reporting systems. This inconsistency at local level then makes it impossible to have an accurate national picture of responses to women and girls across England and Wales. There are missed opportunities to use the experiences of victims themselves to improve practice, spot trends or diagnose problems. And it makes clear accountability at local and national levels difficult.”<sup>12</sup>*

The Committee supports HMICFRS’s call for more consistent gathering, analysis and action following the acquisition of better-quality data. It also supports its recommendation that the Home Office, the National Police Chiefs’ Council and all police forces should improve VAWG data gathered, and how this data is used to monitor performance in responding to VAWG. At the Committee’s meeting in November 2021, Louisa Rolfe, Assistant Commissioner for Met Operations, confirmed that there is work under way “to better record ethnicity and all other protected characteristics to help us [the Met] better understand what is going on.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Recommendation 1**

**MOPAC must work with the Met to prioritise action to improve the way VAWG data is gathered, recorded and analysed, including by race and other protected characteristics. MOPAC must also ensure it has robust performance-monitoring arrangements in place to hold the Met to account on this.**

Counter allegations made by perpetrators at domestic abuse incidents was also highlighted as a concern to the Committee. Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters, said:

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<sup>10</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>11</sup> HMICFRS, [Police response to violence against women and girls: Final inspection report](#), 17 September 2021

<sup>12</sup> HMICFRS, [Police response to violence against women and girls: Final inspection report](#), 17 September 2021

<sup>13</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

*“What happens when there are counter-allegations made by perpetrators when the police are called to a domestic violence incident is that there is no proper investigation or contextualisation of a complaint made by a woman, and instead a counter-allegation is often accepted. On the basis of a counter-allegation, often both the parties are labelled as perpetrators because the police cannot work out who has done what to whom, or they are both labelled victims. When perpetrators are labelled victims – and usually that happens because there is no proper scrutiny brought to bear on an incident in terms of contextualising a wider coercive and controlling dynamic – the data gets skewed.”<sup>14</sup>*

Currently, the Met’s data systems do not enable extraction of information that identifies multiple arrests at domestic abuse incidents without undertaking significant investigation and analysis of individual case files.<sup>15</sup>

### Recommendation 2

**MOPAC and the Met should carry out a dip sample of domestic abuse incidents to ascertain how many incidents result in multiple arrests, and to determine how widespread the issue of counter-allegations may be.**

Despite the increase in reports of VAWG, these crimes remain severely under-reported, making it hard to establish the full extent of VAWG in London. The Committee heard how women with poor mental health, migrant women with insecure status, LGBT+ communities and disabled women face additional barriers when reporting VAWG. Pragna Patel, then Director of Southall Black Sisters, told the Committee: “The issue is not just what we know, but also what we do not know, the scale of under-reporting that is going on [...] the issue of under-reporting needs to be addressed properly.”<sup>16</sup>

### Recommendation 3

**MOPAC should commission specific research to examine the barriers that prevent victims from reporting VAWG offences, to better understand the scale of under-reporting in London and the action that can be taken to encourage more women and girls to come forward.**

While there have been increases in recorded VAWG offences in London over the past few years, charges, prosecutions and successful outcomes at court have declined. This affects the confidence of victims in the police and wider criminal justice system.

In June 2019, MOPAC and the London Victims’ Commissioner, Claire Waxman, published the London Rape Review.<sup>17</sup> The review provided a snapshot of rape in London and why so few cases resulted in conviction. In 2021, an update on the review was published.<sup>18</sup> It made the following findings:

- 65 per cent of rape cases end in a victim withdrawing from pursuing justice, an increase on 58 per cent in the 2019 London Rape Review.

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<sup>14</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>15</sup> Mayor’s Question Time, [Domestic abuse incident arrests](#), 22nd November 2021

<sup>16</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>17</sup> MOPAC, [The London Rape Review: A review of cases from 2016](#), July 2019

<sup>18</sup> MOPAC, [The London Rape Review 2021: An examination of cases from 2017 to 2019 with a focus on victim technology](#), December 2021

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- Of those victims to withdraw, 38 per cent of victims did so in the first seven days, and almost two-thirds (64 per cent) in the first 30 days. This is a significant increase from 2019 findings, where only 18 per cent of rape victims who withdrew did so in the first 30 days.
- Only 1 per cent of cases reached trial, compared to 6 per cent in 2019.
- 25 per cent of cases resulted in police taking “no further action”.

In response to the 2021 update, the Victims’ Commissioner made a number of recommendations. The Committee welcomes these, in particular the recommendation that “MOPAC should conduct further research to better understand victim/survivor withdrawal, particularly the early attrition of victims/survivors and what is driving this.”<sup>19</sup>

### *Making sure London is safe for all women and girls*

Ensuring women and girls feel safe in London is a top priority for the London Assembly and the Mayor. The Mayor has set out his priorities for tackling VAWG through both his Police and Crime Plan<sup>20</sup> and his VAWG Strategy.<sup>21</sup> The Mayor’s new Police and Crime Plan for 2021-25 is due to be published shortly, and his refreshed VAWG strategy is currently being finalised.<sup>22</sup> The refreshed strategy will focus on combining “effective action against perpetrators; high-quality support for victims and survivors; and taking a public health approach to identify and address the underlying causes of VAWG.”<sup>23</sup>

The Mayor has said that his refreshed VAWG strategy will build on the Mayor’s:

*“record level of investment in tackling violence against women and girls and will set out measures from City Hall to make London a city in which women and girls are safer and feel safer. It will take a public-health approach that protects women’s right to safety, with a focus on preventing violence against women and girls from happening in the first place. It will work to ensure victims receive a better engagement with and outcomes from the criminal justice system, and address the behaviour of the perpetrators of abuse.”<sup>24</sup>*

The Mayor’s draft Police and Crime Plan outlines specific measures that will be taken to make “London a city in which women and girls are safer and feel safer”.<sup>25</sup> These include:

- working with the Met to improve the investigation and detection of VAWG offences
- overseeing the delivery of the Met’s VAWG action plan
- improving the support available to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation, primarily through the Mayor’s new duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act
- supporting programmes to address the behaviour of perpetrators

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<sup>19</sup> MOPAC, [The London Rape Review – 2021 Update, Reflections and Recommendations from London’s Victims’ Commissioner](#)

<sup>20</sup> MOPAC, [Police and crime plan: a safer city for all Londoners](#), March 2017

<sup>21</sup> Mayor of London, [A Safer City for Women and Girls: The London Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018-2021](#), March 2018

<sup>22</sup> Mayor of London, [Draft Police and Crime Plan – Draft for Consultation](#)

<sup>23</sup> Mayor of London, [Draft Police and Crime Plan – Draft for Consultation](#)

<sup>24</sup> Mayor of London, [Mayor launches campaign to help end violence against women and girls](#), 27 February 2022

<sup>25</sup> Mayor of London, [Draft Police and Crime Plan – Draft for Consultation](#)

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- improving the police response to harmful practices such as FGM, and working with partners, communities and charities to provide support to victims
- lobbying to extend hate crime laws to include those based on someone's gender, including misogyny; and to change the law to make sexual harassment a specific criminal offence in public spaces
- a new sexual harassment communications campaign for London's public transport networks, and training for frontline transport workers
- supporting the creation of buffer zones around abortion clinics to prevent threatening behaviour towards women using these services
- supporting the use of antisocial behaviour legislation to keep women safe in public spaces
- promoting learning about positive, healthy relationships
- challenging misogynistic attitudes and promoting gender equality.

The Committee examined the Mayor's draft Police and Crime Plan at its meetings in December 2021. In its response to the draft plan, the Committee welcomed the focus on VAWG.<sup>26</sup> However, it highlighted concern that the draft plan did not go into the "scale or the complexity of the problems women are facing" and that the provision of perpetrator programmes should be strengthened across London. The Committee recommended that the final plan should:

- include specific commitments to address domestic abuse, including rolling out domestic abuse perpetrator programmes across London so that there is a high and consistent level of intervention in every London borough; introducing LGBT+ domestic abuse perpetrator programmes; rolling out Domestic Abuse Matters training to all Met staff
- adopt a whole-school approach to tackle domestic abuse and VAWG
- include commitments to promote and support the strategic oversight of training needs for practitioners supporting survivors of VAWG, including awareness of cultural sensitivities. As a minimum, this should include the development of a live training-needs strategy for all practitioners funded by the Mayor.

In addition, the Mayor and MOPAC must ensure that the final Police and Crime Plan includes clear, measurable targets to improve the response to VAWG in London. These should include victim care; bringing offenders to justice; improving outcomes for victims; and regaining the trust of London's women and girls. Supporting this, MOPAC must ensure regular engagement with specialist organisations working with VAWG victims in order to hold the Mayor to account on his VAWG commitments.

In November 2021, the Met published its VAWG action plan setting out what it is doing to make women and girls safer and feel safer in London.<sup>27</sup> The plan focuses on four key themes:

- protecting women and girls in public spaces, at home and online
- working with partners and with women to improve prevention and victim care
- bringing offenders to justice and improving criminal justice outcomes for victims
- improving Met culture and professional standards.

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<sup>26</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Response to the Mayor's draft Police and Crime Plan 2021-25](#), 23 February 2022

<sup>27</sup> The Met, [Violence against women and girls action plan](#), November 2021

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The Committee welcomed the publication of the Met's action plan as a vital step in giving women and girls the confidence to report VAWG to the police; and a step in the right direction in rebuilding the trust of the public.

### *Trust and confidence*

Following the deception, kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer; the inappropriate behaviour of officers photographing and sharing images of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman; and the Independent Office for Police Conduct's (IOPC's) findings of its Operation Hotton investigation that shone a light on misconduct and inappropriate behaviour, predominantly by officers at Charing Cross Police Station,<sup>28</sup> the Met has had to work hard to demonstrate what it is doing to rebuild the trust and confidence of all Londoners, in particular that of women and girls.

Concerns were raised at the Committee's open-mic session about officers who have previously committed sexual offences but have not received the appropriate disciplinary action. As part of the Met's efforts to rebuild trust, the Met says it will intensify its work to tackle sexual misconduct and domestic violence by officers and staff.<sup>29</sup> Andrea Simon, Director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition, told us:

*"Women are quite concerned about policing – for good reason – because of what has been out there, because of Wayne Couzens, and because of countless others who are currently undergoing investigation and trial for sexual violence, domestic abuse, and other kinds of crimes."*<sup>30</sup>

The Met's vision is to be "the most trusted police service in the world".<sup>31</sup> However, confidence in the Met – that is, the proportion of those who agree that the Met is doing a good job in their local area – has fallen consistently over the last four years, from 69 per cent in June 2017 to just 51 per cent in December 2021.<sup>32</sup> The Met is committed to rebuilding trust; focusing on raising standards; and ensuring it has a positive, supportive and healthy culture. This includes the appointment of Baroness Casey to lead an independent review into standards of behaviour and the internal culture of the Met. It has also begun an urgent review of current investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct and domestic abuse against officers. These include dip-sampling cases from the past 10 years where sexual misconduct and domestic abuse allegations have been made, and those accused remain in the Met.<sup>33</sup>

The Committee believes that it is essential that women and girls have complete trust and confidence in the Met and the action it is taking to respond to VAWG. Higher standards in the Met are needed; inappropriate attitudes and behaviour must be addressed as a priority; and officers should be held accountable for offences, including VAWG. The Met must do all it can to ensure that its internal processes support and encourage those that work for it to come forward and raise concerns, at the same time as challenging and addressing sexism and misogyny within the force.

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<sup>28</sup> IOPC, [Operation Hotton: Learning report](#), 1 February 2022

<sup>29</sup> The Met, [Violence against women and girls: action plan](#), 8 October 2021

<sup>30</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>31</sup> The Met, [Vision and values](#)

<sup>32</sup> MOPAC, [Public voice dashboard](#)

<sup>33</sup> The Met, [Rebuilding trust](#)

Vivienne Hayes from the Women’s Resource Centre told the Committee, “Overwhelmingly, women have no trust and confidence in the police.”<sup>34</sup> She also said:

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*“What our women and members want is accountability from the police. We want a new framework of direct accountability from the police to a specialist VAWG sector in London because there is no accountability.”<sup>35</sup>*

**Vivienne Hayes, Women’s Resource Centre**

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### Recommendation 4

**The Met must listen to and learn from the conversation now taking place on VAWG. It must actively seek and respond to feedback from partners and communities on its VAWG action plan, particularly Black and minority ethnic women and organisations, to ensure it implements what London’s women and girls want to see from their police.**

### Recommendation 5

**The Mayor must set clear and measurable VAWG targets in both his Police and Crime Plan and renewed VAWG strategy; and detail the resources needed to ensure he is able to deliver on his VAWG commitments.**

### Recommendation 6

**MOPAC must demonstrate, by September 2022, that it has robust performance monitoring in place to hold the Met to account on its work to increase trust and confidence.**

### Recommendation 7

**MOPAC must put in place, by September 2022, a forum to ensure regular engagement with specialist organisations working with VAWG victims in order to hold the Mayor to account on his VAWG commitments.**

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<sup>34</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>35</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

## Support for victims

The Mayor's VAWG strategy states that, through the strategy, MOPAC aims to "provide higher-quality services, which respond to the needs of victims, and secure a more positive experience for those who have contact with the [criminal justice system]."<sup>36</sup>

A range of support services are available for victims and survivors of VAWG, including refuge accommodation; housing support; and support for victims going through the criminal justice process, such as independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs), independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs), London's four rape crisis centres, sexual assault referral centres (havens) and specialist advocacy. However, demand for support services continues to exceed availability, leading to increases in waiting lists for vital support.<sup>37</sup>

The VAWG sector continues to face a funding crisis, resulting in women being turned away daily at the point of need. COVID-19 saw an increase in women seeking help, and it is believed this will have a lasting impact on the VAWG sector as women experiencing violence and abuse reach out for help well into the years to come.<sup>38</sup> The Committee heard that while there has been an increase in funding, this falls far short of the increase in demand and need.<sup>39</sup>

The Mayor has recently announced £11.3 million of new investment in specialist services for victims of domestic abuse. The funding, awarded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, will enable specialist support to women; LGBT+ individuals; male victims; young women leaving care; and people with learning disabilities, in particular survivors with complex needs. This investment, a result of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which gave local authorities responsibility to provide support in safe accommodation to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, is welcomed by the Committee.

The Committee heard that many VAWG services are very borough-based, and there are many areas in London where services are just not available. At present, women and girls' access to services are dependent on which borough they reside in and whether that borough funds a specialist service. In addition, Woman's Trust told the Committee that strong partnership working across the VAWG sector is vital to provide a full pan-London service that meets women's needs.<sup>40</sup> The Committee would like to see a commitment to ending patchwork access to specialist services.

### Recommendation 8

**The Mayor must commit funding to ensure that specialist support services are available and accessible for every woman and girl in London that needs them; and end the postcode-lottery access to specialist services.**

The Mayor, through MOPAC, has a vital role to play in the commissioning of services for victims of VAWG, and could do more to drive improvements to service delivery. The Committee heard

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<sup>36</sup> Mayor of London, [A Safer City for Women and Girls: The London Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018-2021](#), March 2018

<sup>37</sup> MOPAC, [Q1 Report 2021-22](#), 18 August 2021

<sup>38</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>39</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>40</sup> Woman's Trust, written submission to Police and Crime Committee

how sustainable funding for VAWG support services remains an issue. Verona Taylor-Blackford from SafeLives stressed the need for long-term funding:

*“When we are talking about support for victims, we really need to be looking at long-term and sustainable funding for community-based services. At the moment, they are running on single-year funding rounds. It is impossible to train up and retain staff and keep morale high when they are dealing with a horrendous subject on a daily basis. The funding that comes out is brilliant, but it needs to be longer-term, and we need to not have people in frontline services wasting their time constantly bidding when they could be working with survivors directly.”<sup>41</sup>*

Similarly, Isabelle Younane from Women’s Aid, added:

*“The issue around sustainable funding is important for the response to violence against women and girls and domestic abuse specifically, but also to prevention. The lack of funding to this statutory duty we are seeing for the ‘by and for’ sector particularly is problematic in the sense that this sector already has some of the most effective solutions in terms of community-based response. They are significantly underfunded, including in London, in terms of domestic abuse statutory duty. Being able to show they are signposted and resourced is key for prevention.”<sup>42</sup>*

### Recommendation 9

**The Mayor must demonstrate how he is working with the Government, and using his commissioning powers, to ensure long-term funding to provide specialist services with the certainty they need to provide support to victims.**

The Committee learned the value of ‘by and for’ services for victims of VAWG. For example, specialist services led ‘by and for’ Black and minoritised women; Deaf and disabled women; LGBT+ survivors; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women; and other groups are said to be trusted by victims and survivors due to their long-established reputations, their understanding of multiple forms of discrimination, their linguistic and cultural accessibility, and their expertise in meeting victims’ needs.<sup>43</sup>

### Recommendation 10

**The Mayor must work with the specialist VAWG sector and use his commissioning powers to ensure smaller ‘by and for’ services are able to access funding, and are supported through the procurement process.**

#### *Support for migrant victims*

Victims of VAWG with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) face specific barriers, particularly when accessing refuge accommodation. NRPF means that victims are not entitled to key welfare benefits and local authority housing. This can be a major barrier to escaping abuse and seeking specialist help due to financial dependency on the victim’s abuser.<sup>44</sup> As a result, many victims are reluctant to report their abuse to authorities for fear of immigration enforcement.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>42</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>43</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, written submission to Police and Crime Committee

<sup>44</sup> Southall Black Sisters, [Abused women with no recourse to public funds](#)

<sup>45</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, [The Solace pledge to end violence against women and girls in London](#)

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*“We now see more than 60 per cent of the women that come to us are migrant women with no recourse to public funds.”<sup>46</sup>*

### **Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters**

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In written evidence provided to the Committee, Solace Women’s Aid reported that it set up an emergency COVID-19 refuge in partnership with Southall Black Sisters. However, half of all referrals that were turned away from the service between May 2020 and November 2020 were due to lack of provision for women with NRPF.<sup>47</sup>

The London Holistic Advocacy Wrap Around Service’s ‘No Recourse Fund’ was set up to meet the needs of women and children who are victims of domestic and sexual abuse, and other forms of gendered violence, and have insecure immigration status subject to NRPF. The aim of this fund is to provide long-term holistic advocacy and wraparound support to abused migrant women with NRPF; and to assist them with accommodation and subsistence support until their immigration status is regularised or the NRPF condition is lifted.<sup>48</sup> This is welcomed by the Committee.

The Committee heard that wider support is still needed for victims with an insecure immigration status who are fleeing abusive relationships. The Committee recognises that MOPAC has set a target for 250 victims of VAWG with NRPF to be provided with wraparound support.<sup>49</sup> However, the Committee believes more needs to be done to support these victims of VAWG.

### **Recommendation 11**

**The Mayor’s forthcoming VAWG strategy must strengthen MOPAC’s commitment to provide wraparound support for victims of VAWG with no recourse to public funds. This should include both immigration and intensive resettlement support.**

*Support for child victims*

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*“We sometimes forget that children are victims of domestic abuse as well, and they also need that support and they also need that after-support. They need that counselling. Once they are out of the domestic abuse situation, it is the work that goes into the prevention around that as well.”<sup>50</sup>*

### **Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters**

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It is estimated that around one in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused.<sup>51</sup> The Committee heard that the reality of child victims of sexual and domestic abuse is sometimes forgotten. For example, Judith Banjoko, Solace Women’s Aid said: “We sometimes forget that children are victims of domestic abuse as well, and they also need that support and they also

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<sup>46</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>47</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, written submission to the Police and Crime Committee

<sup>48</sup> Nia: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, [Partnerships](#)

<sup>49</sup> MOPAC, [Q1 Report 2021-22](#), 18 August 2021

<sup>50</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>51</sup> NSPCC Learning, [Statistics on child sexual abuse](#), 2021

need that after-support.”<sup>52</sup> This is important, as research suggests that children can experience both short and long-term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects as a result of witnessing domestic abuse.<sup>53</sup> There also remains a lack of provision of mental health support for children. We heard that whilst one service provider prioritises therapeutic support for children’s mental health, it is often not commissioned as part of the core provision.<sup>54</sup> Specialist therapeutic support and counselling services for children who are victims of VAWG must be made more widely available.<sup>55</sup>

### **Recommendation 12**

**The Mayor’s refreshed VAWG strategy must include an emphasis on services for children affected by sexual violence and domestic abuse.**

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<sup>52</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 7 November 2021

<sup>53</sup> Women’s Aid, [The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people](#)

<sup>54</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, written submission to the Police and Crime Committee, 12 November 2021

<sup>55</sup> Solace Women’s Aid written submission to the Police and Crime Committee, 12 November 2021

## Working with offenders, men and boys

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*“Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is across the whole of society, and we need to be able to have robust deterrents for our perpetrators.”<sup>56</sup>*

**Rachel Nicholas, Victim Support**

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### *Prosecuting offenders*

The Committee recognises the Met’s attempts to increase enforcement against VAWG perpetrators. Between March and November 2020, the Met says it arrested 2,000 more suspects and solved more offences than in the same period the previous year.<sup>57</sup> The Mayor’s draft Police and Crime plan acknowledges the low level of prosecutions in cases of domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences. The Mayor has said that MOPAC will continue to support programmes to change the behaviour of the VAWG perpetrators.<sup>58</sup> The Met’s key measure for this area of work will be increasing the prosecution rates for these offences.<sup>59</sup>

The Met has a range of powers available to help prevent domestic abuse. These include powers specific to domestic abuse, for example, Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs), Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), Criminal Behaviour Orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law); and more general powers such as Criminal Behaviour Orders and restraining orders. DVPNs are an emergency non-molestation and eviction notice that the police can issue to a perpetrator when attending a domestic abuse incident.<sup>60</sup> The most up-to-date data shows that in 2021, there were 1,707 DVPNs authorised compared to 1,660 in 2020.<sup>61</sup>

A DVPO is a civil order that “enables the police and magistrates” courts to put in place protective measures in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident where there is insufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator and provide protection to a victim via bail conditions.<sup>62</sup> In 2021, there were 1,354 DVPOs issued compared to 1,245 in 2020.<sup>63</sup> The Committee heard that there are discrepancies with how DVPOs are issued in different boroughs.

### *Perpetrator programmes*

The demand for perpetrator interventions is increasing,<sup>64</sup> and with trends showing an increase in VAWG, there is a need for the commissioning of consistent perpetrator programmes across London that challenge violent and/or abusive behaviour. We heard that the provision of perpetrator programmes is inconsistent, with some London boroughs having no programmes.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 7 October 2021

<sup>57</sup> Mayor of London, [Police and Crime Plan 2021-25 draft](#)

<sup>58</sup> Mayor of London, [Police and Crime Plan 2021-25 draft](#)

<sup>59</sup> Mayor of London, [Police and Crime Plan 2021-25 draft](#)

<sup>60</sup> Home Office, [Domestic violence protection orders](#), 29 June 2011

<sup>61</sup> Mayor’s Questions, [Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Protection Notices](#), 18 October 2021

<sup>62</sup> Home Office, [Domestic violence protection orders](#), 29 June 2011

<sup>63</sup> Mayor’s Questions, [Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Protection Notices](#), 18 October 2021

<sup>64</sup> Drive Project, [‘Publish and fund a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy to cut violent crime and protect victims’ backers of a new campaign tell Government](#), 20 January 2020

<sup>65</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, written submission to Police and Crime Committee

Ensuring the provision of perpetrator programmes across the capital is an important way to support VAWG perpetrators to change their behaviour.<sup>66</sup>

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*People do not start out as up-skirters or rapists. There is a spectrum, and if we can identify those problematic demonstrations of misogynist views early, we can prevent more serious demonstrations of it later.*<sup>67</sup>

### **Anna Birley, Reclaim the Streets**

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At its meeting in November 2021, the Committee considered what work with perpetrators is needed. The Committee heard that perpetrator programmes are irregular in their availability; limited in the range of perpetrators they reach; and variable in their quality.<sup>68,69</sup> Pragna Patel from Southall Black Sisters said: “One of the problems with perpetrator programmes is that they are not geared towards different diverse perpetrator groups.” She also highlighted that perpetrators are not a “homogenous group”.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Judith Banjoko of Solace Women’s Aid supported the need for perpetrator programmes to be “more diverse in their delivery” and highlighted that while Solace runs some perpetrator programmes, “they are patchwork in the boroughs, not all boroughs have the funding for it and it seems to be the last thing they do.”<sup>71</sup>

The Committee also heard that there are lots of components to how to tackle perpetrators of VAWG. Rachel Nicholas, Victim Support, said:

*“Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is across the whole of society, and we need to be able to have robust deterrents for our perpetrators and also education systems so that we are not enabling that through the patriarchal and misogynist views of society.”<sup>72</sup>*

The need for “properly accredited” perpetrator programmes that also provide support for the female survivor was also highlighted at the Committee’s meeting. We heard that it is “imperative” that perpetrator programmes are delivered by specialist VAWG organisations and that there should be parallel support for the victim when commissioning these programmes.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Diversity in perpetrator programmes*

Perpetrators of VAWG have different characteristics, which may inform the response needed to challenge their behaviour. As those who perpetrate VAWG are not a homogenous group, programmes need to be more diverse in their delivery.<sup>74</sup> Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters, told the Committee: “One of the problems with perpetrator programmes is that they are not geared towards different diverse perpetrator groups.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, written Submission to Police and Crime Committee

<sup>67</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>68</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>69</sup> The Drive Partnership, [A Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy for England And Wales: Call to action](#), 2020

<sup>70</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>71</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>72</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>73</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>74</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>75</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

It is also important to consider the wider cultural or religious context that enables VAWG to occur. We heard that VAWG may look different in some communities compared to others. For example, Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters, also informed the Committee that VAWG in Asian communities is often experienced within a context of extended family structures, which can include multiple non-male perpetrators such as mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.<sup>76</sup>

The Committee also heard that perpetrator programmes tend to be aimed at men with children, or men who have been through the criminal justice system. There remains a gap in service provision for other groups, particularly younger men without children.<sup>77</sup>

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*“... there are the same dynamics involved across communities in relation to violence against women and girls, but there are also different dynamics... Unless that is understood – the wider cultural or religious context that enables violence against women and girls to occur – in relation to different groups, we are not going to get very far. One of the problems is that when there is an issue about what to do with perpetrators and where to send perpetrators, there are no programmes for, say, Asian male perpetrators. I say that particularly because violence against women and girls in, say, Asian communities, is often experienced within a context of extended family structures. It is not just one, but multiple perpetrators that we are talking about, and they are not necessarily men, but also women like mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.”<sup>78</sup>*

### **Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters**

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The Mayor, in his draft Police and Crime Plan, makes a commitment to:

*“continue to support programmes to change the behaviour of the perpetrators of VAWG and will continue to lobby the Government for greater long-term certainty around national funding for this important work.”*

The plan also states that the refreshed VAWG strategy will “combine effective action against perpetrators” and support programmes to address the behaviour of perpetrators.<sup>79</sup>

### **Recommendation 13**

**The Mayor must work with specialist VAWG partners to determine what more is needed to increase and improve the provision of VAWG perpetrator programmes in the capital. This work must take account of cultural and age-related need, and identify the funding required to deliver a stable long-term programme of support to perpetrators and their victims.**

#### *Working with schools*

When addressing the issue of VAWG, early prevention is needed. The Committee believes that it is important to work with men and boys from an early stage. As schools are where children and

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<sup>76</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>77</sup> Solace Women’s Aid, written submission to Police and Crime Committee

<sup>78</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>79</sup> Mayor of London, [Police and Crime Plan 2021-25 draft](#)

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young people learn how to interact with others, it is therefore viewed by some as an environment where discriminating attitudes that can underpin abusive behaviour can be tackled.<sup>80</sup> However, Verona Taylor-Blackford, SafeLives, stressed:

*“When we are talking about relationship and sex education, there is a concern that teachers are being asked to be specialists in a topic that is not their specialism. Do they have the training and do they have the resources to respond, for example, when a pupil discloses what they are experiencing at home or what they are experiencing in their own intimate relationships? We cannot just send teachers out into the world to run these lessons without that.”<sup>81</sup>*

Judith Banjoko, Solace Women’s Aid, added: “I completely agree that teachers are not equipped to be able to lead these programmes and answer those difficult questions that come through.”<sup>82</sup>

In his draft Police and Crime Plan, the Mayor has made a commitment to “promoting learning about positive, healthy relationships.”<sup>83</sup> The Committee welcomes this commitment.

Ofsted’s review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges found that around nine in 10 girls it spoke to as part of the review said that sexist name-calling, and being sent unwanted explicit pictures or videos, happened “a lot” or “sometimes”.<sup>84</sup> Inspectors were also told that boys talk about whose “nudes” they have and share them among themselves like a “collection game”. Ofsted recommended putting in place a “whole-school approach”, working with all students, teachers and other professionals to learn the signs and impacts of VAWG/abuse, and how to respond to them.<sup>85</sup>

The Committee heard about the need for a “whole-school approach” and a lack of funding for the rollout of relationship and sex education (RSE).<sup>86</sup> Andrea Simon, End Violence Against Women Coalition, said:

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*“RSE cannot be delivered in isolation, which is why we always talk about a whole-school approach. That has been piloted in London and that has been funded by MOPAC. There is a lot of learning that needs to come from that pilot work and a commitment to really rolling out a whole-school approach across the country, but in London it is really key. It is about the curriculum; it is about the ethos of the schools and it is about safeguarding. It is about the specialism that needs to come from the women’s sector to come in and deliver some of these lessons around consent, etc, that we know that teachers are not confident in doing, We know that because of the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) review as well, which was this year, into sexual violence in schools and colleges, which found that teachers are not confident in this area. They are not trained and there is insufficient funding from central Government going into the rollout of RSE, but there is also insufficient funding in*

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<sup>80</sup> London Councils, [Tower Hamlets – Whole school approach](#)

<sup>81</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>82</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>83</sup> Mayor of London, [Police and Crime Plan 2021-25 draft](#)

<sup>84</sup> Ofsted, [Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges](#), 10 June 2021

<sup>85</sup> Ofsted, [Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges](#), 10 June 2021

<sup>86</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

*the capital. Making that a priority and really pinning it on the whole-school approach is key.”*

**Andrea Simon, End Violence Against Women Coalition<sup>87</sup>**

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In addition, Andrea Simon went on to say that schools should be linked to advocacy support from local domestic abuse services for children and young people who disclose experiences of violence and abuse during the sessions.<sup>88</sup>

#### **Recommendation 14**

**The Mayor must use his influence, and work with partners, to lobby for investment in education resources and training for schools to provide programmes that promote healthy relationships, and support children and young people affected by VAWG, including early intervention.**

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<sup>87</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

<sup>88</sup> Police and Crime Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), 3 November 2021

## About this investigation

The Committee would like to thank the following organisations that took part in the open-mic session held in November 2021, and those that provided written evidence to support the investigation:

Andrea Simon, End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW)  
Anna Birley, Reclaim These Streets  
Aoife Delaney, The Traveller Movement  
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Donna Covey, AVA (Against Violence & Abuse)  
Harriet Wistrich, Centre for Women's Justice  
Isabelle Younane, Women's Aid  
Jane Connors, Metropolitan Police Service  
Judith Banjoko, Solace Women's Aid  
Louisa Rolfe OBE, Metropolitan Police Service  
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Niki Scordi, Advance  
Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters  
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Sally Field, Woman's Trust  
Sharon Erdman, Rape Crisis South London  
Verona Taylor-Blackford, SafeLives  
Vivienne Hayes, Women's Resource Centre  
Will Balakrishnan, MOPAC

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### Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

### Greek

*Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.*

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

### Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

### Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغتك،  
فرجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على  
العنوان البريدي أو عادي أو عنوان البريدي  
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

### Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઈ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

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