

Motion for Change: Together against violence towards women and girls

A template motion to help councils tackle the growing epidemic of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

We welcome Labour's commitment to halve VAWG in the next decade. However, this bold ambition cannot be realised by national government alone - we need action from local councillors, council leaders and Police and Crime Commissioners to turn the tide on VAWG in our local communities.

This motion has been developed to empower local authorities address the root causes of VAWG and ensure survivors can access specialist support. Please contact Women's Aid at policy@womensaid.org.uk for assistance.

Example context: **The impact of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is a national emergency



An estimated **one in four** women experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. (ONS, 2023)

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An average of **one woman per week** is killed at the hands of their male partner or ex-partner. (ONS, 2023)



Domestic abuse costs the public purse an estimated **£78 billion per year**. (Women's Aid, ResPublica, 2023)



Shockingly, between 2018/19 to 2022/23, police records of VAWG **rose by 37%** and in 2022 domestic abuse **made up 18% of all recorded crime** in England and Wales. (NPCC, 2024)

This sadly represents the tip of the iceberg in terms of domestic abuse prevalence, as we know most abuse is never reported.

The physical and emotional cost of VAWG on survivors and their family, friends and communities is devastating. **Domestic abuse can cause a range of health issues** including depression, PTSD, brain injuries, bladder and kidney infections, gastrointestinal disorders, long-term pain, miscarriage and other pregnancy complications (NICE, 2023). **The mental health impact is particularly disturbing**; recent research by the National Police Chiefs Council found that shockingly, between April 2022 to March 2023 there were more suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse than intimate partner homicides, and Women's Aid (2022) found that **45.6% of women in refuge services reported feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts.**

Attitudes towards healthy relationships in young people are also showing concerning trends, with research indicating a **direct correlation between exposure to misogynistic social media content and unhealthy views on relationships** (Women's Aid, 2023). In addition to this, young people don't know where to access support; a worrying **61% of children** surveyed who said they would seek support if they experienced domestic abuse were unsure of where to go for help (Women's Aid, 2023). **Sexism and misogyny as the root causes of domestic abuse must be addressed through prevention work with children and young people.**

The importance of preserving specialist services

Specialist domestic abuse services are independent from the state, and specifically designed to support survivors of domestic abuse, offering holistic and trauma informed wrap-around support. Often, they have a long history of supporting women within their local community and are embedded into referral pathways, working closely with other statutory services. **'By and for' services are run by and for the women they represent**, making them uniquely placed to foster trust and meet the specific needs of survivors.

Specialist services are not only best placed to support survivors, but they also reduce pressure on other local services, for every **£1 invested in specialist domestic abuse services £9 is saved to the public purse** (Women's Aid, 2023). Statutory guidance for the commissioning of domestic abuse services highlights the importance of commissioning specialist services and encourages flexible commissioning practices such as **grant funding**. However, competitive procurement practices, based on the assumption that domestic abuse services should operate within a competitive market, are threatening to erode our network of lifesaving specialist services in favour of larger, generic providers. Often these providers are unable to meet survivors' specific needs; the **Domestic Abuse National Expert Steering Group Safe Accommodation Annual Progress Report** found that shockingly, between 2022-23 there were **over 24,000 instances** where a survivor was referred to safe accommodation but was turned away from support.

As councillors, you have the power to ensure that survivors in **[name of council]** have access to specialist, trauma-informed support - the right response which will save money in the long run. By conducting a review of current commissioning practices and aligning them with statutory guidance, you can prevent the erosion of these vital services and safeguard the lives of vulnerable women and children. The time to act is now - **together we can preserve this essential network and ensure that survivors receive the life-saving support they deserve.**

In collaboration with Public Benefit Lawyer **Julian Blake**, Women's Aid have developed **bespoke guidance for local authorities** detailing alternatives to procurement in the commissioning of domestic abuse services and would be very happy to support you to review your commissioning plans.

Model Motion

This council commits to urgently address the epidemic of violence against women and girls. This council pledges to:

- Report to Full Council within **[12]** months on the actions it has undertaken to fulfil the pledges of this motion.
- Work with survivors and local specialist and 'by and for' services to understand the impact of VAWG in **[council area]** and develop a strategy to address this.
- Ensure comprehensive education on healthy relationships is available in all schools across **[council area]**.
- Conduct a review into **[council name]'s** procurement practices for commissioning VAWG services to ensure they align with statutory guidance and meet the needs of all survivors, including the most marginalised survivors.
- Appoint a VAWG champion, to hold the council to account on these pledges and amplify the voice of survivors.