

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG):

**END
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN**

A GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

By the [End Violence Against Women Coalition](#), and supported by the leading VAWG membership organisations in England & Wales including Imkaan, Respect, Rape Crisis England & Wales, Women's Aid Federation of England, Welsh Women's Aid, and Women's Resource Centre.

July 2024

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): a government framework for delivery and accountability*



*Please see explainer for further details

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CONTEXT

We welcome the new government's commitment to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG). If the government is to deliver on this mission, it is essential that it takes a [whole-society](#) and cross-government approach to ending VAWG, and draws on the expertise of the specialist VAWG sector.

We are heartened to hear the government's plans to establish [cross-departmental boards responsible for driving progress on key government missions and to draw on outside expertise](#). We call on the government to apply this to its VAWG mission - engaging with the specialist VAWG sector as an essential partner in achieving this commitment, and developing a robust cross-government framework to deliver a new Ending VAWG strategy.

Here, we set out an approach that incorporates key components for engagement, delivery and accountability against a strategy to end VAWG.

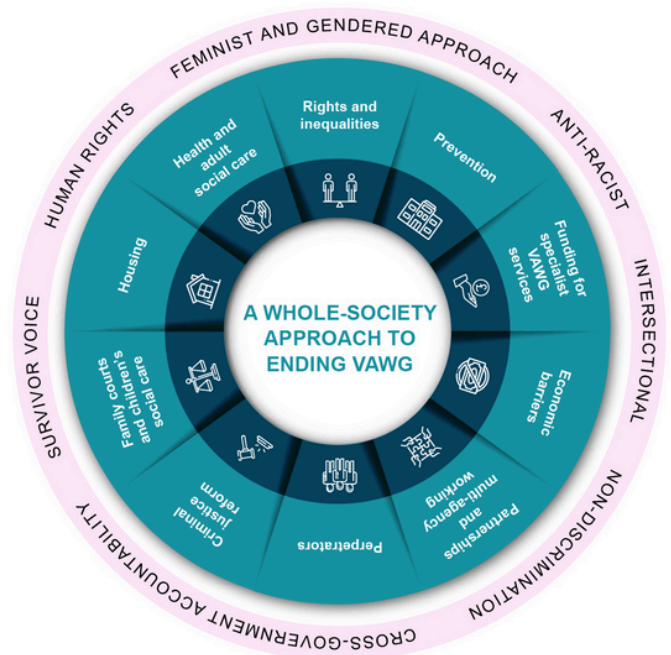
FRAMEWORK MAP

Please see page 2 for the map of the framework: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): a government framework for delivery & accountability. Below is a short explainer of each of the framework's components.

PRINCIPLES AND A WHOLE SOCIETY APPROACH

Over 70 leading VAWG organisations came together ahead of the 2024 election to put forward a [manifesto to end VAWG](#).

In this manifesto we set out principles which must underpin any approach to ending VAWG, and the components of the necessary whole-society approach to such a mission. For more information on what these look like in practice, please refer to the [manifesto to end VAWG](#).



A REFRESHED *ENDING* VAWG STRATEGY

How the government plans to deliver on its mission to halve VAWG must be laid out in a refreshed Ending VAWG Strategy (the [latest strategy](#) came to an end in Spring 2024). A refreshed strategy must be developed with a robust consultation process and ongoing engagement with the specialist VAWG sector, (as seen in collaborative approach to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy in Wales),^[1] including organisations led 'by and for' marginalised women (the 'by and for' sector),^[2] and informed by the experiences of survivors.

In developing a new strategy, we note the whole-society asks from the [VAWG sector's manifesto](#), and the [VAWG sector principles](#) submitted to the last government during the development of the [2021-2024 Tackling VAWG Strategy](#). We urge the government to ensure the next strategy builds on this essential learning and delivers a more comprehensive and holistic plan to end VAWG, with prevention at its core and a public health approach^[3], which needs to be supported by long-term funding. It must also be clear and monitorable to ensure transparency and accountability.

It is critical that this plan applies an equalities lens throughout, and includes ambitions to tackle the disproportionate impact of VAWG on marginalised women, including migrant women - from poorer access to justice to poorer outcomes.^[4] The plan should address all forms of VAWG, and consider how to overcome the marginalisation of certain forms of abuse (e.g. sexual violence, so called honor-based abuse or FGM).

This strategy should also consider its intersection with other related strategies, e.g. child sexual abuse and exploitation, and its intersection with strategies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It must set out how it will embed intergovernmental working with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and devolved powers at regional level e.g. local commissioners.

WHAT DOES A CROSS - GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO TACKLING VAWG LOOK LIKE?

In order for the government to deliver the necessary whole-society approach to tackling VAWG, its delivery plan (a refreshed *Ending VAWG strategy*), and the responsibility to deliver it, must sit across all government departments, with ultimate responsibility for robust oversight and governance sitting at the highest levels of government.

[1] Welsh Government (2022). [Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy 2022 to 2026](#)

[2] Imkaan [definition of 'by and for'](#)

[3] Welsh Women's Aid (2021). [A blueprint for preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in Wales.](#)

[4] Imkaan and Centre for Women's Justice. (2023). [Life or Death? Preventing Domestic Homicides and Suicides of Black and Minoritised Women](#)

History has shown us that approaches narrowly focused on the criminal justice response to VAWG, and sitting solely with the Home Office and/or Ministry of Justice, are insufficient. Departments such as the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care must play a far greater role in this work. It is essential that all government departments appoint VAWG leads at both the ministerial and senior civil servant level, and we recommend a Minister for Women and Equalities, who sits at the cabinet level, tasked with holding the thread across departments. It is also essential that this work is adequately resourced; a huge barrier faced by the VAWG sector[3][4] and previous governments' work in this area. As such, the Treasury plays a vital role within this framework.

This framework proposes both regular **interministerial** (ministerial leads) and **inter-departmental** (civil servant leads) **VAWG meetings** to ensure work across departments is joined up. These meetings would focus on the delivery and monitoring of the *Ending VAWG Strategy*, and in partnership with sector experts.

We also recommend the establishment of specific taskforces to move this agenda forward. These taskforces should again be cross-governmental and involve the expertise of the specialist VAWG sector. Examples of historic workstreams which could sit with such taskforces include the End-to-End Rape Review, the 'Enough!' public awareness campaign, support for migrant women, perpetrator responses, family courts and the [Harm Panel report](#), and work to tackle and prevent sexual harassment in schools - for example, mirroring the establishment of a [Gender-Based Violence In Schools Working Group](#) as set up by the Scottish Government.

DATA AND REPORTING: IMPACT, EQUALITIES, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

A clear and monitorable delivery plan for the *Ending VAWG Strategy* is required to ensure that there is transparency and accountability. The quality, availability and transparency of data available from government and statutory agencies related to VAWG has been a significant and ongoing challenge.[4]

Without sufficient data we cannot assess how well government strategies are working to prevent and tackle VAWG, and all too often government outputs become focused on what can be publicly framed as success rather than reflecting the realities survivors are facing on the ground. In particular, the lack of disaggregated equalities data severely limits our ability to assess if the actions of government and state bodies are addressing the inequalities survivors face e.g. equal access to justice and safety for Black and minoritised, D/deaf and disabled and LGBT+ survivors.

[3] Welsh Women's Aid (2021). [A blueprint for preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in Wales.](#)

[4] Imkaan and Centre for Women's Justice. (2023). [Life or Death? Preventing Domestic Homicides and Suicides of Black and Minoritised Women](#)

It is therefore essential that this framework is accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, and that the expert VAWG sector feeds into its development to ensure it is focused on holistic success measures, captures government spending on VAWG, and applies an equalities lens which enables us to see the impact of interventions for marginalised groups. The measurement indicators of the *Ending VAWG strategy* should be made publicly available, with transparent and regular reporting mechanisms that allow for independent review and scrutiny of progress (see also *Expert Voice and Accountability* section below), and a process of reflection and learning built into future work. We note the significant challenges with data, for example how we measure prevalence,[5] what success looks like and who defines that, and the VAWG sector is keen to work with the government in developing how it will measure its mission to halve VAWG.

EXPERT VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The expertise of the **VAWG Sector** is essential to ending VAWG, as is an openness to true accountability. The VAWG sector is committed to working with the government to achieve its mission of halving VAWG and seek meaningful seats at the table and the resourcing to do such work. It is also essential that this includes, and values, the specific expertise of the **'by and for' sector** across the VAWG mission, who have historically been excluded and under-resourced in this work.[6][7]

It is important to note that the VAWG sector has faced many challenges in government approaches to stakeholder management and consultation - from accessibility, to lack of resourcing and capacity, tokenistic engagement, and a lack of value placed on the expertise given.

We therefore seek to work with the government and establish principles which guide an ongoing relationship between the sector and government departments, alongside the establishment of a cross-government VAWG Sector Stakeholder Group, aligning with an Inter-Departmental VAWG Group. It is essential that this VAWG Sector Stakeholder group has ample 'by and for' sector representation, and that the capacity and resourcing for the sector is taken into account.

In addition to the role of the expert VAWG sector, **Commissioners** play a critical role in a framework to tackle VAWG - providing essential independent scrutiny of government. We currently have a combination of commissioner posts and other roles which partially cover elements of government work to end VAWG - including the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Victims' Commissioner, Independent Advisor on Sexual Violence, and the Children's Commissioner.

[5] Women's Aid (2024). [Funding safer futures: A government pathway for the quantity and quality of funding required to help women and children experiencing domestic abuse](#)

[6] Imkaan (2018). [From Survival to Sustainability](#)

[7] EVAW (2023). [What's Changed? Government's 'End to End' Rape Review: Two Years On](#)

We welcome the role of independent commissioners in this area. However, there are limitations with the current model. For example, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's brief is ostensibly limited to domestic abuse, which is out of step with the established national (and international) policy frameworks in this area (i.e. working across the continuum of VAWG) - from the Home Office[8] to the Crown Prosecution Service[9] - and means the focus of the commissioner is necessarily limited to only parts of any VAWG delivery plan. Many women's experience of abuse involves multiple forms of VAWG, as does service provision, and policy and practice should reflect this. We call on the government to ensure the Commissioner model provides sufficient independent scrutiny of the government across their VAWG mission, and we recommend a Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioner.

Finally, but most critically, it is essential that a framework to tackle and prevent VAWG is survivor-centred and informed by the experiences of survivors. All too often, survivor engagement in the development of policy is tokenistic, and at times, unsafe. Both the specialist VAWG sector and VAWG Commissioner(s) have mechanisms to strive for their work to be informed by survivor experience, and many of those working in the sector are survivors themselves. We call on the government to work with the sector to ensure meaningful and safe engagement with survivors[10][11] is an integral part of their framework to tackle VAWG.

This framework explainer and map provide an outline of how the government can look to deliver on its mission to halve VAWG. This is the start of the conversation. Developing what this looks like in practice and the content of an Ending VAWG Strategy is a critical next step, and the VAWG sector is ready and waiting to work with the government to take this work forward. To discuss further, please contact [Janaya Walker](#), Head of Public Affairs at the End Violence Against Women Coalition.

[8] Women's Aid (2020). [Why data matters when talking about domestic abuse](#)

[9] VAWG Sector [Anti-Racism Charter](#)

[10] Welsh Women's Aid (2022). [Meaningful Survivor Participation: An engagement toolkit for organisations](#)

[11] Imkaan, Welsh Women's Aid, Scottish Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland, and Women's Aid Federation of England (2024). [A guide to meaningful survivor engagement](#)