

Towards ending violence directed at women and girls in Wandsworth

(TEVEA Wandsworth)



Phase One Report
March 2023

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I can still recall a time when people did drink and drive. This is socially very unacceptable now, and so we can make big changes. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]



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Additionally, we would like to thank all individuals and organisations who shared information about the project with their networks and helped encourage the participation of different groups of people in the survey, focus group discussions and workshop sessions. This study would not have been possible without your support.

Thanks to **Wandsworth Council SEND Participation Team**, this report is also available in Easy Read.

Roots to Change CIC would like the information in this report to be shared as widely as possible. Please feel free to quote from it. We only ask that you please do not use Roots to Change materials and resources for commercial purposes and that you cite this work as the source.

About Roots to Change

Roots to Change CIC is a community interest company that was incorporated in 2022.

Building on **20 years of experience**, the company's main activities include:

- **Social Research:** We conduct research and analyses on a range of social issues
- **Strategy and Project Support:** We support organisations in designing and developing their strategies and projects
- **Training and Capacity Building:** We provide bespoke training and other capacity building support to individuals, social sector and other organisations
- **Coordination and Facilitation:** We facilitate consultations and other engagement processes
- **Evaluations and Reviews:** We carry out independent and participatory evaluations and reviews for a range of organisations



Definitions

Violence directed at women and girls

In line with the United Nations definition, violence directed at women and girls is defined as **any act** that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental **harm or suffering** to women and girls **because they are women and girls**, including threats of such acts, whether **in public or private life**.

Violence directed at women and girls is a **human rights issue**.

Violence can include but not be limited to being forced to have sex or do sexual things; being forced to do something you don't want to do; having your money and/or movements controlled by another person; being harassed or stalked; being verbally or physically attacked; being forced to marry someone; being made to question your version of events; someone sharing images of you without your consent; and all forms of exploitation and trafficking.

People can be harmed physically, psychologically (mentally and emotionally), sexually, and socio-economically and by people they know or by strangers. These harmful acts can take place online, on the phone, and in person. They can happen in the home, in the street, in social settings and in the workplace.

OTHER KEY TERMS

Patriarchy

A system of society, community, or government in which men hold a disproportionate amount of power.

Sexism

Sexism refers to prejudice or discrimination on the basis of sex.

Misogyny

Misogyny is hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women and girls.

Structural inequalities

This refers to when the policies and practices of organisations, institutions, governments or social networks advantage some groups of people and disadvantage others.

Equality

This refers to the state of being equal in status and rights.

Key Statistics

(from latest [ONS](#) and [Femicide Census](#) data)



Many cases go unreported in Wandsworth and across the country for a variety of reasons, so the real figures are likely to be much higher across different types of violence. Additionally, there are some issues with some online data collection tools that limit the types of questions that can be asked due mainly to safeguarding concerns.

What is clear is that too many people in the borough have a story to tell, whether it is based on their own experiences or the experiences of women or girls they know.

These stories, posts on social media, the few high-profile cases we hear about in the news, together with available data from the ONS and the latest Femicide Census all indicate that this problem isn't getting better. Some data suggests it could even be getting worse. Sexual offences recorded by the police were at the highest level recorded within a 12-month period (196,889 offences) in the year ending June 2022.

The problem is not going away

Violence directed at women and girls does not just affect women and girls. It affects everyone in society and the problem is not going away.

912,181

offences recorded as domestic abuse-related.
A 14% increase.

5.7%

of adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in year ending March 2022,
presenting an 21% increase from the year ending March 2020

36%

of sexual offences were rape, a 20% increase from year ending March 2020

718,317

cases of stalking and harassment (45% increase compared with the year ending March 2020)

Impacts of violence

The impacts of violence can include physical injury, even death; significant gynaecological issues; mental health issues, including depression and anxiety; loneliness and isolation; suicide; difficulties socialising and having relationships; inability or difficulties sustaining education and/or employment; substance mis-use; and difficulties with self-care and caring for others.

Overview

Towards ending violence directed at women and girls in Wandsworth (TEVEA Wandsworth) is a community-led project that aims to bring about positive change towards building a more equal, fairer and safer borough where women and girls can live free from violence and fear.

Roots to Change CIC co-designed this study, as the first phase of the project, to gain a better understanding of what is contributing to or enabling high levels of violence directed at women and girls in the borough; what could be done to help prevent it from happening in the first place; and who has what role to play.

The outputs will be used to develop a plan of action to be implemented in subsequent phases of the project.

Roots to Change CIC carried out work between June 2022 and February 2023. It consisted of a review of various related resources and also drew on valuable insights gathered from over 140 people across the borough through an online anonymous survey, one-to-one interviews, small focus group discussions and workshops.

The interconnected factors that can contribute to or enable violence directed at women and girls include:

- Structural inequalities that deny equality to women
- Adherence to certain attitudes and behaviours associated with “being a man”
- Condoning of violence directed at women and girls
- Portrayals of violence directed at women and girls in all forms of the media
- Influence of popular, high-profile individuals and groups

Factors that present significant challenges to tackling this problem include:

- Limited awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities that impacts on people's understanding on how they should be treated and how to treat others; what constitutes violence and its impact; and what healthy relationships look like between and among people of all genders
- Some tensions between schools and parents and carers of children and young people
- Limited investment in long-term strategic interventions

To achieve real change, we will need to directly address these multiple factors. This will take time and require coordination and collaboration. Actions will be needed on all levels and across all settings and people of all genders must be meaningfully engaged and supported to participate in this process throughout.

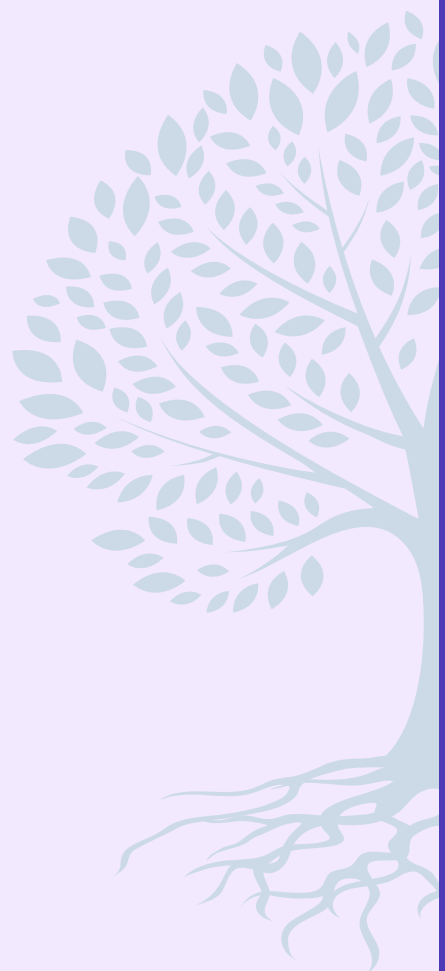
Our collective approach must also focus on human rights principles and consider how sexism and misogyny intersect with other forms of discrimination and prejudice such as homophobia, transphobia, racism, ableism, or ageism.

Together we must actively seek to:

- Adjust the systems and structures that disadvantage or deny equality to women and girls
- Reshape ideas and expectations about who and what men and boys, women and girls and people of other genders should be and how they should behave
- Reset the social norms that help to condone so much of the violence in our society
- Change how people of all genders are portrayed in all forms of media
- Build positive relationships between and among people of all genders

In the short-term, there needs to be a fundamental shift in understanding of rights and responsibilities; some of the principles of healthy relations; what constitutes violence directed at women and girls and its impact; how violence directed at women and girls is present in all forms of media; the ways in which we as a society condone violence directed at women and girls; and how children and young people are targeted online.

With this knowledge, people should have the confidence and skills to meaningfully engage in the process.



Additionally, we need to see:

- More opportunities for people of all genders to come together to engage on this issue more constructively, which should help foster mutual trust to develop a foundation on which to build more positive, equal and respectful relations
- More investment in initiatives to support women and girls, including specialist support to meet the specific needs of different groups of women and girls
- More long-term investment to support people of all genders to address trauma and grievances, and talk about and manage a range of feelings and emotions; address isolation and loneliness; and to develop self-esteem, confidence and positive personal identities not constrained by harmful stereotypes
- A more inclusive and less-judgemental approach to better support parents/ carers and others who come into contact with children and young people
- A shift in the way both men and women are portrayed in the media generally and to how violence is reported specifically
- More education around healthy relationships and at an earlier age
- More work to address the gender pay gap
- A workable system that promotes shared parenting and one that promotes financial autonomy and independence for all

When people recognise the positive benefits of a more equal, just and fairer society, they are more likely to choose to adopt and model safe behaviours and reject sexism, misogyny and other violent attitudes and behaviours. As more people promote healthy and positive behaviours, call out harmful practices and encourage others to do the same, we should start to see a significant shift in attitudes and in turn a reduction in violence directed at women and girls.

To help facilitate this..

Individuals

are encouraged to help share this report widely, participate in discussions around this issue and encourage friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues to do the same. They are also encouraged to promote healthy relations and behaviours and join efforts to bring about positive change.

Individuals who have contact with children

and young people are encouraged to engage them in discussions and help them to build positive personal identities that are not constrained by harmful gender and other stereotypes.

Civil society organisations

are encouraged to critically reflect and promote discussion within their organisations around what they are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other forms of prejudice and to promote equality. They are also encouraged to consider how their work could contribute to addressing harmful gender and other stereotyping and other factors enabling violence.

Local businesses

encouraged to critically reflect and promote discussion within their organisations around what they are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other forms of prejudice and to promote equality. They are encouraged to allow flexible and adaptable working to ensure both women and men are able to choose a balance that works for them between work and family commitments.

Public facing entities like pubs and gyms

and other public facing entities are encouraged to use their space to encourage positive dialogue and share knowledge. They are also encouraged to ensure their staff members are adequately trained and supported to call out harmful behaviours.

Riverside Radio and other media platforms

are encouraged to provide platforms and space for people of all genders to engage in discussion. They are also encouraged to commission creative writers and journalists who could contribute to creating the space for less divisive and more humane discussions. Additionally, they are encouraged to promote positive and diverse portrayal of people of all genders and contribute to eliminating the (sexual) objectification of women in the media, drawing on existing resources and guidelines.

Wandsworth Council

are encouraged to **simplify the definitions of violence** directed at women and girls. They are also encouraged to support Council-run schools with the necessary resources to support children's mental and physical wellbeing; and implement PSHE and RSE curriculum more effectively. They are also encouraged to play a role in ensuring the work of members of the newly formed forum on violence against women and girls who are largely responding to the problem is coordinated with work done on primary prevention.

Funders

are encouraged to invest in long-term strategic interventions that tackle the root and underlying causes of this problem to bring about change and move away from short-term piecemeal funding. They are also encouraged to do their bit to ensure that the initiatives that they support do not reinforce but rather address harmful gender and other stereotypes. Additionally, they are encouraged to ensure adequate provision is made to bring people together to encourage dialogue, build trust and understanding, and develop positive relationships between and among people of all genders.

School governance bodies

are encouraged to support schools to ensure that PSHE and RSE is prioritised and ensure that teachers are provided with the necessary resources and time to meaningfully implement this important part of the curriculum. They are also encouraged to participate in any consultations that may be offered around future iterations to the primary or secondary school curricula.

Faith leaders

are encouraged to use their space to encourage critical reflection and discussion and promote mutual respect and understanding among and between people of all genders.

Police, fire service and other public sector entities

are encouraged to promote critical reflection and discussion within their organisations around what they are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other forms of prejudice and to promote equality. They are also asked to use their platforms to encourage positive dialogue and disseminate information and key messages to help people understand what constitutes violence, its impacts and related laws.

Background to this study

In 2021, Polly Newall, Founder and Director of **Roots to Change CIC**, provided guidance as a consultant to members of an international alliance of faith-based humanitarian and development organisations across six countries in Asia and Africa to develop their joint plans to address gender injustice and influence positive change. The groups were asked to come to the online workshop sessions with one issue to focus on. Almost all groups chose to focus on violence directed at women and girls in their contexts.

This piece of work coincided with the murder of Sarah Everard just down the road from her house that, together with other murders at the time, helped bring this issue back into focus in the UK. Driven by this and her own experiences of violence, Polly was prompted to want to try to do something about this issue in her own community in Southwest London.

She did some research into what was being done to address the issue in the borough of Wandsworth. Perhaps not surprisingly given the limited resources and the scale of the problem, most initiatives in the borough are focused on **responding to the problem, not on prevention**.

Some work is being done with those identified to be at high risk of perpetrating or of experiencing violence (in some contexts referred to as early intervention or secondary prevention) and with known perpetrators to try to prevent a recurrence of violence (in some contexts referred to as tertiary prevention). However, she could find very little being done on trying to prevent it from happening in the first place (also referred to as primary prevention).

Furthermore, she could not find any substantial studies into what is contributing to or enabling violence directed at women and girls that would naturally inform any primary prevention work.

In response, Roots to Change CIC co-designed this study as the first phase of TEVEA Wandsworth, a community-led project that aims to bring about positive change towards building a safer, fairer, and more equal borough where women and girls can live free from violence and fear.



Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of:

- What is contributing to or enabling high levels of violence directed at women and girls in Wandsworth
- What could be done to help prevent it from happening in the first place
- Who has what role to play

The outputs of this study will be used to inform the development of a plan of actions to address some of the contributing factors to be implemented in subsequent phases of the project.

We also hope it will inspire and give some ideas to others who are interested in playing their part in tackling this issue that affects each and every one of us.



Methodology

Roots to Change CIC carried out this study between June 2022 and February 2023.

The study consisted of a review and analysis of various related documents and resources. This included various plans to address violence against women and girls, and to enhance gender equality in the country; Office for National Statistics data and reports; various reports relating to the issue in the UK; documents relating to work being done on primary prevention in other countries; media articles; briefing papers; and various webinars and podcasts.

The analysis also drew on valuable insights gathered from over 140 people through:

- An online anonymous survey of open-ended questions around why they think so much violence happens, what could be done to prevent it from happening in the first place and who has what role to play
- One-to-one interviews, small focus group discussions and workshop sessions that were semi-structured around the same questions
- Consultation workshops where some of the findings were presented and where some suggested community-led actions were further discussed

Roots to Change CIC utilised its networks and contacts to encourage participation from different groups of people from across the three areas of Wandsworth: Battersea, Putney/ Roehampton, and Tooting. Please see Annex 1 for more information about who participated in the survey and these discussions.



Limitations

While the size and make-up of the sample was more than sufficient to meet the objectives of the study, it was not fully representative of the borough.

Although the purpose of the study and criteria for participation were shared widely, some people still seemed to assume that only women and girls were invited to participate. Although a number of men and boys did join the discussion, this idea may have impacted on the participation of others.

Roots to Change CIC would like to thank the organisations that helped to ensure that the young people they work with were given an opportunity to participate in a discussion and have their voices heard. Roots to Change CIC was also in contact with a number of secondary schools and other organisations that work with young people aged 14 and over in the hope that they would help facilitate the inclusion of more young people in the discussion. Unfortunately, due to time and other constraints, this support was not forthcoming.

Roots to Change CIC also contacted a number of organisations to try to get a wider representation from different groups of people from across the borough, including offering to provide tools for those organisations to gather inputs themselves if that worked better, to pay for an external facilitator if needed, and translation costs where relevant. Unfortunately, this support was not forthcoming.



Findings

Summary of factors enabling violence

There is not one single factor that contributes to or enables violence directed at women and girls in any given context. It is rather a combination of multiple, interconnected factors that contributes to this problem.

Some of the factors that contribute to creating and maintaining the conditions and an environment that enables violence directed at women and girls in the UK more broadly and in Wandsworth specifically, are explored below.

These include:

- Structural inequalities that disadvantage or deny equality to women
- Adherence to certain attitudes and behaviours associated with “being a man”
- Widespread acceptance and condoning of violence directed at women and girls
- Portrayals of violence directed at women and girls in all forms of the media
- Influence of popular, high-profile individuals and groups promoting misogyny and violence directed at women and girls

There are some other factors that present significant challenges to addressing violence directed at women and girls in the borough and these include:

- Limited awareness and understanding of:
 - Rights and responsibilities and what equality means
 - What constitutes violence and the impact it has on all involved
 - What healthy relations look like between and among people of all genders (friendships, intimate relationships, work partnerships)
- Some tensions between schools and parents and carers of children and young people
- Limited investment in long-term strategic interventions

Structural inequalities that disadvantage or deny equality to women

The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women clearly recognised that violence directed at women and girls is a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women. This is further supported by numerous studies across the globe. A global review of evidence conducted in 2016 found that violence directed at women and girls tends to be more common in societies with high levels of gender inequality.

Many aspects of society in the UK are still very much organised around the principles of patriarchy where men hold most of the power and where women are disadvantaged and denied equality with men. Amongst other things, this sends the message that women are less valuable or important than men and boys, whether in the home, in the workplace, or in wider society.

Since women are not a fixed group and have multiple, intersecting identities, women can experience additional forms of inequality and discrimination, based on their age, race, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, nationality, socio-economic status, and other defining characteristics.

Structural inequalities are evidenced in a number of ways.

I think there is an unrecognised and unstated systemic social bias towards women and girls being seen as the 'weaker' sex, and thereby somehow less deserving in some way. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

How can I as a woman feel equal if everything around me makes me think that I am not? I guess that for men is the same: how can they feel equal if for centuries everything around them has made them feel represented, better, superior? [Female Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

Firstly, there is not enough long-term investment in organisations and services that provide specialist support to different groups of women, including those affected by violence, poverty, unemployment, and other key issues. The Universal Credit system requires payment into a single bank account for couples, which potentially puts women who find themselves in violent situations at risk of not being able to access the funds to leave the situation and becoming trapped.

It is also well documented that men are generally paid more than women. According to the [Office for National Statistics 2022](#) data, the gender pay gap for all employees (full-time and part-time) was 14.9% less for women. Among full-time employees, it was 8.3%. The gap among full-time employees widens considerably for those aged 40 to 49.

As the Women and Equalities Committee noted in its [2016 report](#), in addition to direct discrimination playing a role in women's lower wages, structural factors are a key cause of the gender pay gap. These include but are not limited to how workers are distributed within and among occupations; the penalties relating to part-time pay; the disproportionate share of unpaid caring responsibility falling to women; and the higher numbers of women than men employed in the lowest-paying sectors as well as in lowest-paying positions across all sectors. See for example, [School Workforce in England 2021](#) data.

What is the Women and Equalities Committee?

The Women and Equalities Committee looks at the work of the Government Equalities Office (GEO) on equalities and also the work of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. See their [website](#) for more information.

I think men and boys are typically brought up to behave and feel strong, powerful and more valuable [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

I think it comes back to society's approach to gender norms and unchecked male violence. And of course the patriarchy. [Male Survey Respondent, aged 19 – 29]

Time spent out of the labour market to care for children or elderly relatives that can affect future earnings could partially explain the widening gap for those aged 40 to 49. The amount you earn naturally affects how much pension and indeed certain other benefits you receive later, which puts older women at a significant financial disadvantage.

Take up of the Shared Parental Leave scheme that was introduced in 2015 appears to be around 2% of those eligible so there is some way to go before we see a more equal distribution of parenting responsibilities between men and women.

The government's roadmap towards gender equality, which was launched in July 2019 focuses on trying to get more women into roles within sectors currently dominated by men and therefore on trying to get girls to take up relevant subjects in school (ie. science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). However, plans to ensure adequate pay to women (and others) in sectors they currently occupy are less clear.

On what is contributing to the problem...

The lack of openness about causes and a failure to develop adequate responses [Male Survey Respondent, aged 60+]



Adherence to certain attitudes and behaviours associated with “being a man”

There are a set of attitudes and behaviours that many men are expected to participate in and often feel pressure to conform to that are associated with “being a man”. These particular attitudes and behaviours can offer a way for some men to relate to other men, in some cases show or prove their “manhood” and can be used as a means to gain approval from their peers and others.

In the UK, these behaviours are generally centred around being a financial provider and protector; being rough and aggressive; being dominant and in control; not showing emotion; being hypersexual; and heterosexual.

Some of these expected behaviours can help to maintain and almost legitimise gender inequality and the power men have over women. Gender inequality and the power men are afforded can also almost legitimise these attitudes and behaviours.

Expected behaviours of women in the UK are often centred around being caring and nurturing; looking and dressing in a certain “feminine” way; being polite; and being accommodating (including in a sexual way).

On what doesn't help.....

The perpetuation that men have to be alpha. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

Its a way to show dominance and due to a lack of self-control some people have. [Male Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

A review of evidence conducted by Our Watch in Australia found that men who form rigid attachments to these stereotypes and expectations of masculinity are more likely to demonstrate sexist and misogynistic (and homophobic and transphobic) attitudes and behaviours and to perpetrate violence directed at women and girls – especially when their masculinity is challenged and/or when they find it difficult to live up to these (unrealistic) expectations.

Studies have also found that in order to assert some control or power in their lives in general, some men who experience social discrimination and disadvantage may also turn to some of these behaviours, including aggression and violence.

Pressure to conform to and support these harmful attitudes and behaviours can come from friends, peers, work colleagues, teachers, youth workers, parents and carers, other family and/or wider community members. This can often include women and girls as well as other men and boys.

Men are likely to receive more pressure from peers in male-dominated settings and where physical strength is part of the job (for example, the police or fire brigade) or where being physically strong or athletic becomes overly competitive (for example, in the gym). This is not helped by a shortage of positive male role models in these settings and beyond.

There are also religious and cultural factors that can affect how woman and young girls are viewed (often by men), but at times can be perpetrated by women. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 19 – 29]



This pressure can also come from the media in all its forms, which is explored in a later section of this report.

Fear of repercussion, whether that is physical violence, verbal abuse or ridicule, is one of the most common reasons why a lot of men who don't buy into or actively participate in these behaviours do not stand up to or call out harmful behaviour.

During an interview, a male participant shared details of a recent incident in a pub in Battersea as one example of many of what can happen when a man's "manhood" is challenged and/or he feels unable to live up to expectations. Two female friends of his who were in their 20s had gone to the pub. A man who was around the same age and out with some friends decided to chat them up. The women declined his advances at which point the man started hurling abuse at them. Terrified, the women phoned their friend who came to pick them up. He did not say anything and neither did the male pub staff so there were no consequences for the abusive man.

Not only can these behaviours cause untold harm to women and girls, but evidence also shows that having a rigid attachment to these patterns of masculinity and harmful gender stereotyping can be very damaging to men and boys. Amongst other things, not feeling able to talk about feelings or emotions can stop men from seeking proper help, which can lead to more violence, serious mental health issues and as was highlighted in this [Equimundo report](#), suicide. It can also harm their ability to form emotional connections. In a recent study done by [SafeLives](#), boys and men told researchers they are facing pressures to 'man up,' to conceal emotions and to refrain from asking for support.

Peers don't step in to stop it for fear of retribution, girls and women don't report it as they don't think they will be listened to and for some people it is an everyday occurrence, so they feel powerless [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

*Men and boys believe it is ok and get away with it.
[Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]*

Acceptance and condoning of violence directed at women and girls

The same global review of evidence that found violence against women common in societies that have high levels of gender inequality also found that it tends to be more common in societies that condone violence.

Violence directed at women and girls can be condoned in many ways, across settings and across the UK that has contributed to a culture of men not taking responsibility and not being held to account. These include but are not limited to when violence is downplayed or trivialised; when it is excused or justified; and when blame is shifted from the perpetrator to survivor.

Women and girls, as well as men and boys, often participate in this condoning of violence directed at women and girls.

A non-exhaustive list of examples for each that came up in various discussions are outlined below.

Violence is excused, justified, and in some instances even legitimised when:

- Flippant comments like “boys will be boys”, “they are just being men”, or “it’s just a bit of rough and tumble” are made
- Disproportionate focus is placed on the stress he is/was under, his heavy workload, his low self-esteem, his poor mental health, his alcohol or drug addiction, his feelings being hurt, and/or that his football team losing, over the act of violence itself and the harm it caused

Violence is downplayed or trivialised when:

- Sexism and misogyny are brushed off, or let go as “banter”, “lad chat”, or “men just having a laugh”
- Comments such as, “it wasn’t that bad”, “that can’t have hurt”, “I didn’t lay a finger on her”, and “he/I wasn’t physically abusive” are made

Blame is shifted from the perpetrator to survivor when:

- Newspapers and other reports use the passive voice, such as "Woman was murdered by man" rather than "Man murdered woman"
- Instead of on the act of violence itself and the harm it caused, focus is placed on what the survivor did or didn't do, what she was wearing, what time she was out alone, where she was and how dark it was, how many drinks she had had, whether she had taken drugs, what she did to annoy, provoke or upset him
- Comments like "she's just too sensitive/ over emotional" are made
- The general character, mental health and/or emotional state of the survivor is called into question when recalling events

Some women who participated in a discussion shared that in their community, if a woman stands up to a man physically, it can be interpreted that she is then on a level playing field to him and that can be used in some cases as an excuse for violence. This may be linked to the narrative of "equal rights means equal fights" that has become common in schools and elsewhere.

Some participants also shared that in some communities, there is a culture that particularly disapproves of "snitching", which means some violence goes unchallenged or unreported.

Finally, while it could be argued that the case of Sarah Everard received particular attention because it was a serving police officer who raped and murdered her, the coverage was still disproportionate to the coverage of cases of men killing women from other ethnic groups at around the same time, such as Sabina Nessa. This can send the message that the lives of some women are less important than others.

A general lack amongst the general public to speak up when they see someone behaving in a violent way towards women/ girls. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

Portrayals of violence directed at women and girls in all forms of the media

The **Scottish Women's Convention** developed a useful guide that focuses on how violence is present in the portrayals of women and men across different media in the UK, including advertising, television programmes, movies, songs and newspapers. They produced the guide with the aim of raising awareness and stimulating discussion.

It shows the extent to which men are portrayed as powerful and in control and women are so often presented as victims, subordinate to men, and often as sex symbols. It also shows the extent to which women are humiliated and violated, ridiculed and belittled, and put down for all sorts of reasons including for the way she looks and/or her dress sense.

As they point out, in adverts for products ranging from trainers to aftershave to deodorant to ice cream to cars, women are naked, whereas men get to keep their clothes on.

They also note that for women in positions of power, the focus is often whether she could still be a good mother. The same comments are very rarely made about fathers in the same position. Women who are assertive are often branded as hysterical and emotional- even bossy. Conversely, if they remain silent, they are often branded as not having "what it takes" to do the job. It is also common for comments to be made about their clothes, hair, make-up and bodies.

Continued portrayal and perception of women and girls as objects of desire which may make men feel that their abusive and/or violent actions are justified. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 - 59]

The “Legs-it” incident was one perfect example of many. In 2017, the former British prime minister, Theresa May met with Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland to discuss the implications of the UK leaving the European Union for Scotland. Instead of focusing on the very serious issue of Brexit, the Daily Mail decided that their legs warranted more attention. The newspaper’s headline read: “Never mind BREXIT, who won legs-it?”.

Another more recent example of how women are treated with such disdain in the media was an article that Jeremy Clarkson was able to publish, with no obvious consequences, that referenced his “dreaming of the day when she [referring to Meghan Markle] is made to parade naked through the streets of every town in Britain while crowds chant, ‘Shame!’ and throw lumps of excrement at her”.

On what’s not helping....

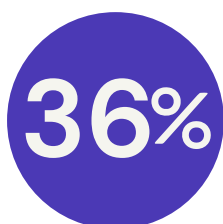
That it often goes unpunished and is seen by some as “normal” and that it feeds into the cycle of violence in creating more victims and potentially perpetrators. [Male Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

Pornography is also easily available and accessible through social media sites such as “Only Fans”. As one male participant in a focus group discussion said, “Anyone can be a porn star”. Worryingly, the recent study conducted by SafeLives found that 22% of boys look for information through pornography, and 27% go online for information about sex and relationships.

Popular TV shows such as Eastenders and Love Island also portray a lot of violence directed at women and girls. In 2022, Women’s Aid was forced to act against “misogynistic and controlling behaviour” on Love Island.

All of these factors help to normalise violence directed at women and girls. They can also have a powerful influence on how people of all genders see themselves and others, influence the way they think, dress, and behave and can have a significant impact on the mental well-being and body image of women and girls.

According to the Girlguiding Girls' Attitude Survey 2022:



of girls and young women aged 11-21 say knowing about the abuse high profile women get online puts them off certain jobs (like politics)



of girls and young women don't like being the way they are



of young women aged 17 to 21 are completely happy with their appearance

Influence of popular, high-profile individuals & groups on social media

There are a number of popular, high-profile individuals that persistently promote misogyny and, in many instances, incite violence directed at women and girls and who have significant followings.

There are increasing concerns about the influence on boys and young (and older) men of Andrew Tate, the British-American “influencer” also known as the “king of misogyny” who was banned from Twitter in 2017 for saying that women should “bear some responsibility” for being sexually assaulted.

Tate is currently in custody in Romania having been arrested as part of an investigation into rape, organised crime and human trafficking.

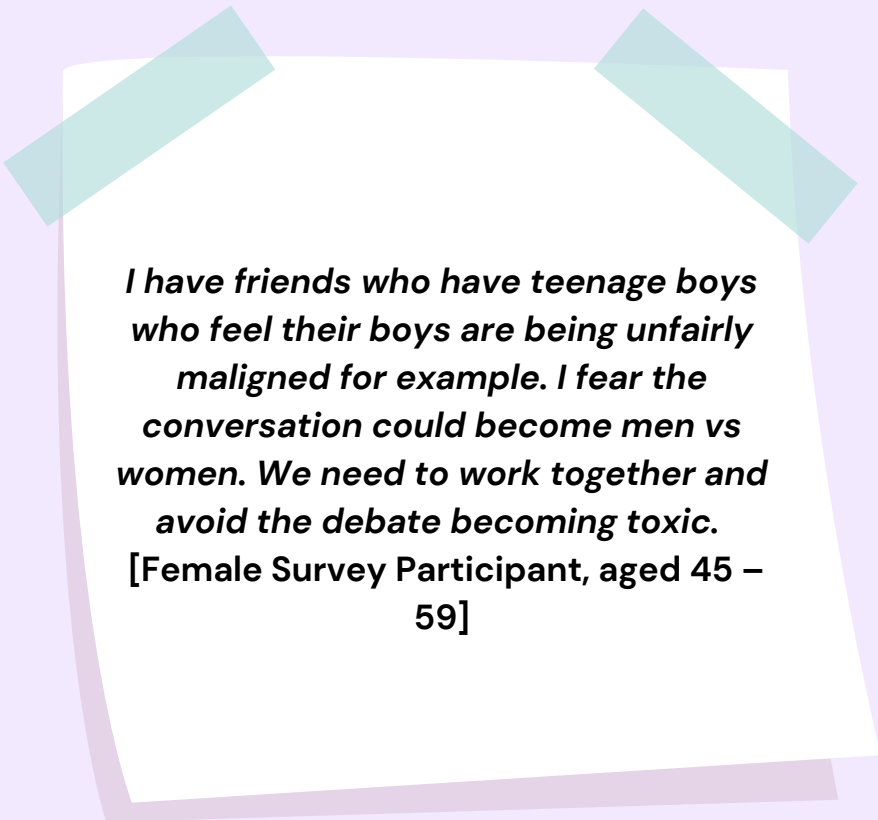
To date, he has persistently used derogatory language to describe women, comparing them to property, graphically describing how he would assault a woman for accusing him of cheating, and claiming that men would rather date women who are 18 or 19 than those in their mid-20s because they have had sex with fewer men.

Social media has had a huge influence on the lives of many people, including men and women, boys and girls, and there has been a rise of a particular school of thought from men who not only agree with misogyny and violence against women and girls, but encourage it too. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 19 – 29]

Teachers that were interviewed for a recent piece for the Guardian, say that boys are often sucked into his “glamorous” ultra-macho world by seemingly more “benign” content on lots of mansions, fast cars or fitness. However, as David Challen, a domestic abuse campaigner points out, this form of masculinity “cages men to not be emotive, to get over your problems by lifting weights and that the route to happiness is being rich.”

A female teacher in a secondary school shared that she had asked a boy if he understood Tate’s views on women. He replied: “Well, men are better than women, so he’s right.” Apparently, his friends all nodded in agreement.

In an interview with iNews, a male teacher shared that he had to abandon a maths class because he had some Year 10 boys talking about ‘equal rights, equal fights’, which is the idea that if women want to be treated as equal to men, men shouldn’t have to hold back from physically attacking women.



I have friends who have teenage boys who feel their boys are being unfairly maligned for example. I fear the conversation could become men vs women. We need to work together and avoid the debate becoming toxic.
[Female Survey Participant, aged 45 – 59]

In addition to individuals like Tate and others, there are also groups like “Incels”, which stands for “involuntary celibate” and who operate largely online and appeal to some boys and young (and older) men. “Incels” often blame women for the fact that they are not having sex as much as they would like or are not in a happy relationship. They tend to believe women go for men who look a certain way, and if they don’t think they fit these traits, they feel shoved aside, leading to loneliness and isolation, and in turn frustration and jealousy. This built-up resentment is used as an excuse for misogyny, and sometimes, for violence.

In October 2022, the UK’s Home Office and security and intelligence agencies funded a piece of research that looked at the extent to which this male supremacist ideology posed a threat. It found that it had “all the hallmarks of an extremist ideology”.

One of the biggest challenges for teachers, youth workers, parents and other carers of children and young people, in dealing with this issue is that many boys and young men feel that these individuals offer them hope, which is particularly powerful at a time when many do not feel that enough is being done to support them. Again, this is not helped by a shortage of positive male role models in the media landscape and elsewhere.

At root failure to regard people as people though I suspect socio economic reasons can provide soil in which it is easier to grow [Male Survey Respondent, aged 60+]



Limited awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities

There seems to be a limited awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities. There also seems to be a very poor understanding of what equality means.

This is perhaps not surprising since rights and responsibilities are not taught in all education settings. The study done by SafeLives, found that only half (52%) of young people surveyed have been taught about gender equality.

Additionally, very few charities and other civil society organisations in the country take a rights-based empowerment approach to their work. Furthermore, rights language including a clear definition of equality seems to be missing from a lot of equality/equity, diversity and inclusion work in the country.

When people do not understand rights and responsibilities (or what equality means), it makes it hard if not impossible for them to **exercise them or fully understand how they should treat people or be treated themselves.**

It also makes it near to impossible to recognise and challenge false narratives such as “we don’t have equal rights though, do we?” or “equal rights means equal fights” or “equal rights for all means fewer rights for some”, that could imply someone is taking something away from you.

Limited understanding of what constitutes violence and its impact on all involved

Responses to the first question of the online survey (What kinds of violence do you think is directed at women and girls in Wandsworth?) for this study indicated a very narrow understanding of what counts as violence directed at women and girls.

This is not helped by the over-complicated and confusing definitions used by the Council and other organisations.

If people do not have a sufficient understanding of what constitutes violence and its harmful impacts (and the laws around it), it is very difficult for both the survivor and perpetrator to recognise what is happening and know when and how to seek help as needed.

This lack of understanding of what counts as violence and importantly the devastating impact it can have on all involved also makes it very challenging to promote and encourage empathy of men and boys, and indeed of others.

On what is not helping...

Lack of knowledge and clarification of what violence includes [and] The lack of information about what it is and isn't acceptable behaviour [Female Survey Respondent, aged 60+]

There is also some evidence to suggest that some men (and probably women) don't actually understand what is and isn't acceptable/ legal. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 - 59]

Limited awareness and understanding of what healthy relations look like

Perhaps not surprising given the amount of unhealthy and harmful behaviours people are exposed to or experience, there is limited awareness of what healthy relationships look like between and among people of all genders. This would include healthy ways to resolve differences of opinion or tensions. Since many of the principles that make them healthy (and indeed unhealthy) are the same, this includes friendships, intimate relationships, and work partnerships.

Some work on relationships is being done in both primary and secondary schools, although it is not always clear if and how the two link or how effective they are.

The recent study done by [SafeLives](#) revealed:

Only half (52%) of young people believe Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) classes give them a good understanding of toxic and healthy relationships. Just 24% of young people recall being taught about 'coercive control' in RSE classes and as little as 13% believe this topic was taught well.

If people are not aware or don't understand the principles of healthy relations or what healthy relations could look like, it makes it very difficult to form and maintain relationships based on these principles.

The relationships that some of our female participants describe as healthy actually constitute rape in some cases.
[Male Participant in focus group discussion]

Some tensions between schools and parents and carers of children and young people

There seems to be some tension between some schools and parents and carers, and poor communication between them.

Many of the participants in focus group discussion shared their experiences of the limited non-judgemental support they feel they received in dealing with the everyday challenges of parenting or caring for children. Participants shared their experiences of feeling judged as a failure when their child misbehaved. Some teachers that participated in the discussion shared their experiences of not feeling supported by the parents and carers.

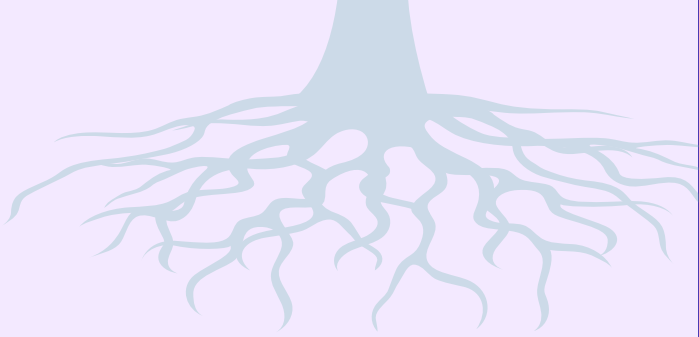
This tension and breakdown in communication presents a significant barrier to collaboration at a time when we really need to be finding ways to work together productively.

Limited investment in long-term strategic interventions

There is currently very limited investment in long-term strategic interventions that aim to drive real change.

Civil society and other organisations are often constrained by short-term funding.

Amongst other things, short-term funding restricts long-term and strategic planning, can have a crippling effect on recruitment and development of key staff members and severely impacts on the quality of relationships that are needed to build trust and confidence between stakeholder groups.



***It must become the 'way
we do things around here'
which is a big cultural
change programme***
**[Female Survey
Respondent, aged 45 – 59]**


Summary of what could be done

If we are to see real change and realise our vision of a just, fair, and more equal Wandsworth where women and girls can live free from violence and fear, we need to directly address the multiple factors that are contributing to or enabling the problem, and the barriers that present challenges to tackling it.

The journey to real change will take time and will require significant coordination and a willingness and commitment to **work together as a community in a collaborative way** and for **everyone to play their part**.

Actions will need to be taken at **all levels and across all settings**– in the home, in education settings, in community centres and youth clubs, in gyms, in pubs, in healthcare settings, in faith settings, in workplaces, in police stations, in courtrooms, and in all other private and public spaces.

Men and boys, as well as women and girls, and people of other genders, must be meaningfully engaged and supported to participate in this process throughout.



We all should live in a system where girls should be encouraged to be more assertive and boys should be taught to be more respectful and less aggressive. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

Our collective approach must be **holistic, focus on human rights principles and consider how sexism and misogyny intersect with other forms of discrimination and prejudice** such as ableism, ageism, racism, islamophobia, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and cisnormativity.

We as a community must actively seek to:

- Reshape ideas and expectations about who and what men and boys, women and girls and people of other genders should be and how they should behave that are so often tied to harmful gender and other stereotypes
- Reset the social norms that help to condone so much of the violence directed at women and girls in our society
- Change how people of all genders are portrayed in all forms of media
- Build positive relationships between and among people of all genders based on the human rights principles of **dignity, fairness, respect, and equality**
- Adjust the systems and structures that disadvantage or deny equality to women and maintain unequal distributions of power between men and women

On what could be done...

Better education, self esteem building all round. Wider awareness that violence is against the law and more prosecutions.
[Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

Education, education and education. School and also families should teach social and emotional learning. In all media there should be a fairer representation of women. Their work in all fields should be encouraged and valued.
[Female Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

In the short term, there needs to be a fundamental shift in awareness and understanding across the board of:

- Rights and responsibilities; what equality means broadly and gender equality specifically
- What constitutes violence directed at women and girls, laws that relate to it, and the negative impact it can have on everyone
- How women and men are portrayed in all forms of media and how violence directed at women and girls is very much present in these portrayals
- Ways in which we as a society condone violence directed at women and girls
- Ways in which children and young people are targeted on social and other media
- Some of the principles that underpin healthy relations between and among people of all genders, whether that is friendships, sexual or intimate relationships, or work relationships/ partnerships. This should include all types of consent (not just around sexual consent), setting boundaries, and help in reading social cues

How this is done best will depend on the specific audience, but this should help provide people with the necessary knowledge, confidence and skills to engage and participate meaningfully in the process.

There needs to be more opportunities for people of all genders to come together to engage, discuss and critically reflect on attitudes and behaviours more openly and constructively.

As one participant put it ***"We need to open up conversations, not shut people down (cancel them) when they say something we don't like."***

This dialogue should help foster mutual trust and understanding and develop a foundation on which to build more positive, equal and respectful relations between and amongst all genders that are based on **dignity, fairness, respect, and equality**. The media could play a major role in providing the platform and space to have some of these conversations.

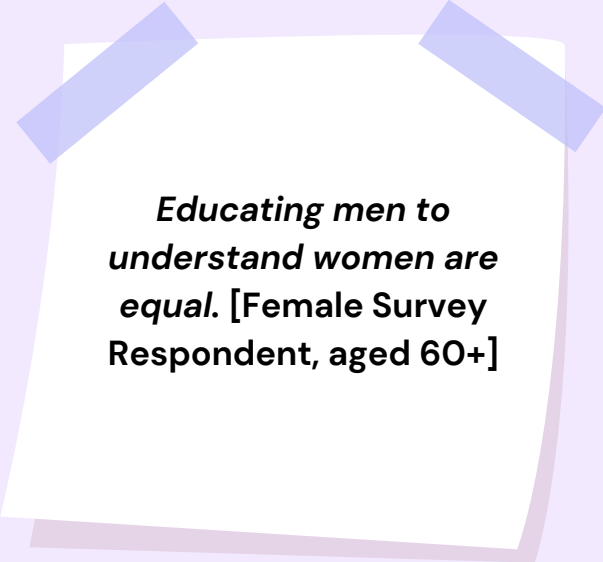
As well as more investment in organisations providing a range of specialist services to different groups of women, more long-term, sustainable investment is needed in initiatives and programmes at the community level that prevent isolation and loneliness, and also support people of all genders to:

- Address trauma and grievances
- Talk about feelings and emotions and develop tools and strategies to manage them
- Develop self-esteem and confidence and to build positive personal identities not constrained by harmful gender or other stereotypes

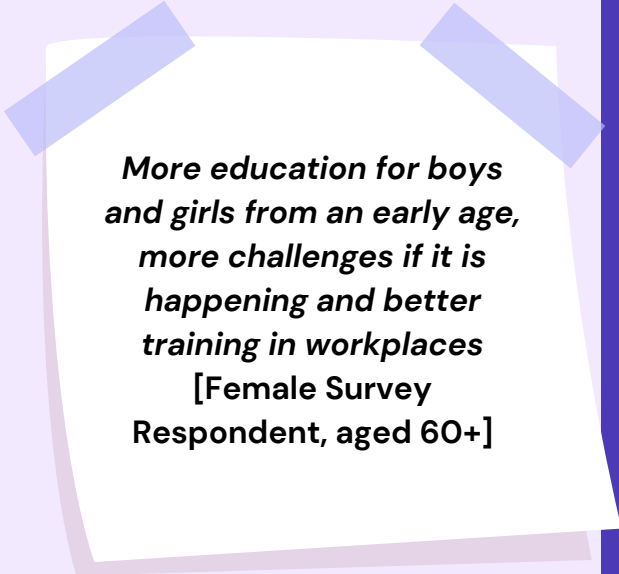
Children and young people should also be supported to learn about rights and responsibilities, as well as principles (and benefits) of healthy relations from a much earlier age.

Additionally, a more inclusive and non-judgemental approach is needed to better support parents/ carers and others who come into contact with children to deal with the natural challenges of parenting and this support needs to be normalised. This support should be available for all parents and carers to promote and encourage where possible shared parenting between people of all genders.

In the medium and longer term, we need to see a shift in the way both men and women are portrayed in the media generally and to how violence is reported specifically.



Educating men to understand women are equal. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 60+]



More education for boys and girls from an early age, more challenges if it is happening and better training in workplaces [Female Survey Respondent, aged 60+]

Furthermore, a more concerted effort is needed by businesses and other organisations to address the gender pay gap and other barriers to women's meaningful participation in the workforce.

A functioning mechanism is also needed within organisations to better ensure men are sufficiently supported to share parenting responsibilities. At a minimum, flexible and adaptable working conditions should be promoted within organisations to ensure both women and men are able to choose a balance that works for them between work and family commitments- and so that it doesn't automatically fall to women.

We need to make the sorts of behaviour in men which leave women/ girls feeling scared or uncomfortable much less acceptable. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

Education, more conversations and really looking at enforced gender norms from society. [Male Survey Respondent, aged 19 – 29]

The next section outlines some ideas and suggestions of how people might contribute to addressing some of the factors enabling violence directed at women and girls in Wandsworth.

When people recognise the positive benefits of a more equal, just and fairer society, they are more likely to choose to adopt and model safe behaviours and reject sexism, misogyny and other violent attitudes and behaviours. As more people promote healthy and positive behaviours, call out harmful practices and encourage others to do the same, we should start to see a significant shift in attitudes and in turn a reduction in violence directed at women and girls.

Teaching parents the importance of self-love in order for them to teach their children. Make it a requirement for schools to teach children the fundamental traits to healthy relationships [Female Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

As a youth worker, my role is to emphasise how horrid and unkind any violence is. Educating young people with case studies and facilitating conversations. [Male Survey Respondent, aged 30 – 44]

We need to allow men to understand how things feel for women. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

Boys being educated from a young age that this behaviour will not be tolerated and shown ways they should deal with situations other than violence. [Female Survey Respondent, aged 45 – 59]

Some suggestions

This is a non-exhaustive list of ideas and suggestions of how individuals could contribute to addressing some of the factors enabling violence directed at women and girls in Wandsworth.

All Individuals

- Help share this report widely
- Participate in discussions around this issue and encourage friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues to do the same
- Engage with friends and family about your experiences, offer support and share your knowledge
- Promote healthy relations and behaviours

Individuals responsible for or who come into contact with children and young people

- Engage children and young people in dialogue and share learnings around effective ways to do this
- Support and encourage them to build positive personal identities that are not constrained by harmful gender and other stereotypes
- Promote healthy relations between and among people of all genders

Civil society organisations

- Encourage critical reflection and discussion within your organisations around what you are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other forms of prejudice and to promote equality
- Use your platforms to encourage discussion and to share information
- Consider how your work could contribute to addressing harmful gender and other stereotyping and other factors enabling violence

Local businesses

- Encourage critical reflection and discussion within your organisations around what you are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other forms of prejudice and to promote equality
- Promote flexible and adaptable working to ensure both women and men are able to choose a balance that works for them between work and family commitments
- Ensure your staff members are supported to call out harmful attitudes and behaviours

Public facing entities like gyms & pubs

- Use your space to encourage positive dialogue and share knowledge
- Ensure your staff members are adequately trained and supported to call out sexism and misogyny and other harmful attitudes and behaviours

Riverside Radio & other media outlets

- Provide platforms and space for people of all genders to engage in positive dialogue
- Commission creative writers and journalists who could contribute to creating the space for less polarising, less divisive and more humane discussions
- Promote positive and diverse portrayal of people of all genders
- Call out harmful and misogynistic images of women in the media that condone violence against them
- Draw on existing resources and guidelines on portrayals of women and girls and the presence of violence in these portrayal and good practice relating to reporting on violence directed at women and girls

Faith leaders

- Use your space to encourage critical reflection and discussion and promote mutual respect and understanding among and between people of all genders

Wandsworth Council

- Work with partners to simplify the definitions of violence directed at women and girls
- Encourage critical reflection and discussion within your organisation around what you are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other forms of prejudice
- Support Council-run schools with the necessary resources to implement PSHE and RSE curriculum more effectively
- Play a role in ensuring the work of members of the newly formed forum on violence against women and girls who are largely responding to the problem is coordinated with work done on primary prevention

Funders

- Invest in longer-term interventions that tackle the root and underlying causes of this problem to drive real change and move away from short-term funding
- Ensure that initiatives you support do not reinforce but rather address harmful gender and other stereotypes and other factors enabling violence
- Ensure adequate provision is made to bring people together to encourage dialogue, build trust, and develop positive relationships

School governance bodies

- Support schools to ensure that PSHE and RSE is prioritised and ensure that teachers are provided with the necessary financial, technical and human resources as well as time to meaningfully implement this important part of the curriculum
- Clearly communicate the school's commitment to this issue
- Encourage participation in any consultations that may be offered around future iterations to the primary or secondary school curricula

Police, fire service and other public sector entities

- Encourage critical reflection and discussion within your organisations around what you are doing to address misogyny and sexism and other harmful attitudes and behaviours
- Use your platforms to encourage positive dialogue
- Ensure people are supported to call out harmful attitudes and behaviours
- Disseminate information and key messages to help people understand what constitutes violence, its impacts and related laws



Annex 1

Who responded to the survey (Total: 41)

Gender Identity

Female 81%

Male 17%

Prefer not to say 2%

Age Group

19 – 29 7%

30 – 44 24%

45 – 59 32%

60 + 32%

Prefer not to say 5%

Ethnic Group

Asian or Asian British – Indian 5%

Asian or Asian British – Chinese 2%

Asian or Asian British – Other 5%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – African 15%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – Caribbean 10%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – Other 2%

Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – White and Black Caribbean 2%

Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – White and Asian 2%

Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – Other 3%

White – English 27%

White – Scottish 2%

White – Irish 2%

White – British 10%

White – Other 7%

Other 2%

Prefer not to say 2%

Who responded to the survey (Total: 41) continued

Religion

No religion 44%

Sikh 2%

Muslim 2%

Buddhist 3%

Christian 42%

Prefer not to say 5%

Other- Spiritual 2%

Disability

Yes 20%

No 80%

Part of Wandsworth

Battersea 56%

Putney/ Roehampton 7%

Tooting 15%

Whole borough 8%

Other- Southfields 4%

Who participated in focus group discussions and workshops (Total: 99)

Gender Identity

Female 70%

Male 28%

Non-binary 2%

Age Group

14 – 18 7%

19 – 29 22%

30 – 44 33%

45 – 59 21%

60 + 16%

No answer 1%

Ethnic Group

Asian or Asian British – Pakistani 5%

Asian or Asian British – Chinese 2%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – African 11%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – Caribbean 9%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – African and Caribbean 1%

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – South American 1%

Black British 1%

Black African English 1%

Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – White and Black Caribbean 5%

Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – White and Black African 1%

White – English 34%

White – Welsh 1%

White – Scottish 1%

White – British 5%

White – Other 11%

Arab 1%

Latino 1%

Who participated in focus group discussions and workshops (Total: 99)

Religion

No religion 40%

Muslim 5%

Christian 40%

Prefer not to say 9%

No answer 4%

Other- Spiritual 2%

Disability

Yes 28%

No 61%

Prefer not to say 5%

No answer 6%

Part of Wandsworth

Battersea 50%

Putney/ Roehampton 10%

Tooting 12%

Whole borough 18%

Prefer not to say 2%

No answer 5%

Other 3%

**Fairness
Respect
Dignity
Equality
Independence**



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