



The National Quality Framework: Background and Context

Challenging times, difficult choices

In today's challenging economic times, commissioners have a difficult job. Central funding only covers a small proportion of local provision, local funding is severely reduced and there is no single commissioner with a statutory duty to address violence against women and girls (VAWG). Decision-making to ensure consistent provision of quality support for survivors is an increasingly complex task.

The negative impact of cuts to funding has been aggravated by some commissioning processes that have failed to take account of service user need or the contribution of specialist services. This is coupled with limited capacity in the specialist VAWG sector to fully engage in commissioning processes. Investment has consequently focused on the "tip of the iceberg" – victims assessed as being at high risk of being murdered or those that choose to report to the police – and a disinvestment in the services which provide earlier intervention, longer term recovery, and help prevent re-victimisation.

As national VAWG organisations, Imkaan, Women's Aid and Rape Crisis England and Wales (RCEW) are committed to assisting commissioners with their task by raising awareness among their members about the importance of engaging effectively with commissioners. They can provide commissioners with practical support, advice and guidance about service user need in local areas and commissioning appropriate services to meet it. See page 9 for contact details.



The need for specialist support services

The statistics evidencing the extent of violence against women and girls in England and Wales are well known:

- ▶ In 2012/13 there were 7.1% of women who reported having experienced any type of domestic violence in the last year, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female victims of domestic violence¹.
- ▶ Overall, 30% of women had experienced any form of domestic violence since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 4.9 million female victims of domestic violence².
- ▶ On average two women a week are killed by a partner or ex-partner in England and Wales³.
- ▶ On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic violence every 30 seconds⁴.
- ▶ A study based on 2001 census data in England and Wales estimated that 23,000 girls under the age of 15 could be at risk of FGM each year, and nearly 66,000 women are living with its consequences⁵.
- ▶ Approximately 85,000 women are raped and 400,000 women are sexually assaulted every year, and one in five women (aged 16 - 59) has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16⁶.
- ▶ The Forced Marriage Unit recorded 1,485 cases of forced marriage across the UK in 2012⁷.
- ▶ Domestic violence costs society nearly £16 billion per year⁸.

1.2 million
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30%
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1 call to
police every
30 seconds

£16 billion
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**1 serious
case review**
costs a local
authority
£20-25k

1 Office of National Statistics (February 2014) *Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences*, 2012/13 Release.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Women's Aid: www.womensaid.org.uk. Accessed 20.02.14.

4 HMIC (March 2014) *Improving the police response to domestic abuse*.

5 Efa Dorkenoo, Linda Morrison and Alison Macfarlane (2007) *A Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales*, London: FORWARD with The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and City University.

6 A joint commission (2013) *An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales: Statistics bulletin*. Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics.

7 Forced Marriage Unit, Statistics January-December 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/141823/Stats_2012.pdf.

8 Walby, S (2009) *Cost of domestic violence*. Lancaster University.



- ▶ **One in 20 children has been sexually abused; 18,915 sexual crimes against children under 16 were recorded in England and Wales in 2012/13⁹.**
- ▶ **Violence against women was a factor in the deaths of at least 15 children in 2012, a third of children killed that year¹⁰.**
- ▶ **One serious case review costs the local authority an average of £20-25,000¹¹.**

Women and children require support at every stage of their journey: from disclosure of abuse to accessing safety and support, and coping with and recovering from the abuse. Leaving a violent relationship or situation, or disclosing experiences of abuse, can take many months, even years. The support of specialist organisations is often critical in helping women through periods of crisis, whilst also supporting them around understanding and recognising the dynamics of abuse, coping with and recovering from their experiences of violence. This is important for practical concerns such as safety planning but is also essential around other areas such as emotional well-being. A six week period of support within the criminal justice system will not achieve these objectives; it is not designed to. Specialist services, however, ensure support from disclosure to recovery and throughout the criminal justice system as well¹². The Government's recently updated national VAWG prevention plan explicitly acknowledges: "...we must ensure that victims who do not wish to formally report offences receive the support and services they need."¹³

In funding independent dedicated specialist services, whose primary purpose is to address and prevent VAWG, commissioners can be assured of a holistic approach to addressing VAWG in their area. As dedicated services, specialist organisations strive to be agents of social change: as well as supporting survivors, they seek to change public attitudes, raise professional awareness, educate children and young people, hold perpetrators to account and prevent violence in the future. Black and minority ethnic (BME) led services engage communities and individuals who may face multiple barriers to accessing statutory and non-specialist voluntary services, improving access and reducing isolation for marginalised people and communities. The Government's *End Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan 2014* states:

We also need to recognise that attitudes which are entrenched in some segments of society need to be tackled to make a real sustainable change – attitudes which foster ongoing gender inequality, that provide cultural excuses or exemptions for illegal activity and attitudes of ambivalence and it being someone else's problem or responsibility.¹⁴

9 Radford, L., Corral, S., Bradley, C., Fisher, H., Bassett, C. and Howat, H. (2011) *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today* London: NSPCC.

10 Ingala-Smith, K. (2013) *Child Killers*. <http://kareningalasmith.com/2013/04/14/child-killers-2/>. Accessed 20.02.14.

11 Walby, S. (2004) *The Cost of Domestic Violence*. University of Leeds.

12 Westmarland, N. and Hester, M. (2005) *Tackling Domestic Violence: effective interventions and approaches*. London: Home Office Research Study 290.

13 HM Government (2014) *A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls: Action Plan 2014*, p.14.

14 *Ibid.* p.13.



Legal duties and guidance

National and international legal duties that have a bearing on the commissioning of violence against women services include:

- ▶ **EU Directive on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime:** the EU Directive sets minimum standards of service provision to support victims of crime. Article 8 outlines duties to establish specialist support services in addition to, or as part of, the more general victim support services. As with general support services, access to specialist support should not depend on whether the crime has been reported.
- ▶ **The Public Sector Equality Duty:** the Equality Duty is a duty on public bodies, covering both direct service provision and the commissioning of services, to consider the needs of people with protected characteristics including sex, race and sexual orientation. The Act allows services to be provided separately for men and women, or to be provided to one gender only (Schedule 3, part 7). Commissioning for equality can lead to better business outcomes since services that are more tailored to users' needs tend to result in better long term outcomes and are more cost effective for the state.
- ▶ **The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012:** places a duty on commissioners and procurers to consider social value ahead of procurement. *“The authority must consider how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area, and how, in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement”*¹⁵

The need for services led by and for women

While men and women experience domestic and sexual violence and harmful practices, the overwhelming majority of victims are women and the perpetrators men. 89% of victims of domestic violence who have experienced repeat victimisation (over 4 incidents) are women, and are victims of a repeated pattern of coercive control; women are also much more likely to be killed by their partners or former partners than men¹⁶. Men who have been victims of violence have different needs and due consideration can be given to their needs without compromising the specialisms of women's services. A detailed, balanced analysis of need should include all victims but this will not show the same demand for the same services, and it is the data from this needs analysis which should drive commissioning¹⁷.

¹⁵ The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

¹⁶ Stark, E and Flitcraft, A (1996) Preventing Gendered Homicide in Stark and Flitcraft, *Women at Risk: Domestic Violence and Women's Health*. London: Sage.

¹⁷ *Respect position statement: gender and domestic violence*. Accessed 20.02.14. Respect is a national membership organisation that develops, delivers and supports effective services for men who are victims of abuse.



The Equality Duty does not mean one service for everyone. As the Equality and Human Rights Commission notes:

The public sector Equality Duty does not mean that single sex services should be cut, have funding withdrawn or that any new services should not be funded. Neither does it mean that services should necessarily be provided on the same scale for both men and women. For example, because women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence and rape it may not be appropriate for a local council to fund or provide refuge services on an equal basis for men and for women.¹⁸

The need for services led by and for black and minority ethnic women

The specialist black and minority ethnic (BME) women's sector has played an essential part in addressing violence against women and girls, yet BME organisations are often marginalised at both local and national levels. Specialist BME VAWG organisations are designed to respond to the needs of BME women who have experienced violence and will reach communities and individuals who face multiple barriers to accessing statutory and other voluntary services. Such organisations are independently developed, led and delivered by BME women for BME women¹⁹ thus promoting social and community cohesion, as detailed in the Compact 2010²⁰.

For many BME women and girls, support and advice from a specialist BME advocate and frontline service is often a critical component... Language support is not always the primary presenting need. BME women and girls are likely to value other aspects of provision. BME VAWG services provide women and girls with the choice to access spaces they identify with, where they feel accepted, safe and less isolated.²¹

... the [BME women's refuge] understand my culture and I feel comfortable looking for support in my own community. (Survivor)²²

Part of the reason for outsourcing public services to the voluntary sector is its greater accessibility, overcoming the stigma and fear often attached to accessing statutory services, and the consequent

18 Equality and Human Rights Commission, <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/faqs-on-the-equality-duty/>. Further information on this can be found in the Commission's guidance on the Equality Act.

19 Larasi (2013) A fuss about nothing?: Delivering Services to Black and Minority Ethnic Survivors of Gender Violence—the Role of the specialist Black and Minority Ethnic Women's Sector in Rehman et al. *Moving in the Shadows: Violence in the lives of minority women and children*. Ashgate.

20 HM Government (2010) *The Compact*. London: Cabinet Office, Commitment 5.2.

21 Roy, S. & Thiara, R.K. (2012) *Vital Statistics*. London Imkaan.

22 Imkaan (2013) *Beyond the labels: women and girls' views on the 2013 mayoral strategy on ending violence against women and girls*, p.24. London.



enabling of earlier intervention and more effective work with an engaged population of service users. For women who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual violence and/or harmful practices, the fear of statutory agencies is often particularly strong, and is compounded by a need to receive a service from other women and, in the case of BME women, from women from a similar black or minority ethnic background.

It's important to build a human relationship with providers, trust is really important and encourages me to go back, and if they are clinical then I am less likely to go. (Survivor)²³

When you've got that women-only space then you can really breathe out and you know it's a different atmosphere and you can speak to other women who might be going through the same stuff and help each other, support each other. (Survivor)²⁴

By taking a needs-led, rather than a risk-led, approach to service commissioning, commissioners will naturally “improve the availability of local women-only services which are specialist in their approach and respond to women and girls’ individuality of experience and identity.”²⁵ Research has shown that the provision of such services will reduce long term costs for statutory services:

The societal benefits per woman of the women’s community services are between three and fourteen times the costs of the services.²⁶

Working with specialist, local services in the commissioning process

The range of specialist VAWG organisations need to be consulted early on in the commissioning cycle so they have the time and resource to come together to present a clear offer to the commissioner demonstrating the history, expertise, skills and local reputation of each member of the collaboration. Local organisations will also be a mine of information for needs analysis which can help shape the tender process.

Imkaan and Women’s Aid are committed to consortia building and jointly supporting local specialist organisations to work together where they identify that this would ensure the best possible services for women and child survivors in their area. The Imkaan and Women’s Aid Capacity Building Partnership can also provide practical support to commissioners to involve specialist services in the commissioning processes in a fair and balanced way, to identify suitable commissioning criteria for their area and to support the implementation of innovative and best practice in their area. Please see page 9 for contact details.

²³ *Op. cit.* Imkaan (2013) p.21. London: Imkaan.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.7.

²⁶ Nicholles N. and Whitehead S. (2012) *Women’s Community Services: A Wise Commission*, p. 17. Funded by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Corston Independent Funders Coalition (CIFC) through the Women’s Diversionary Fund (WDF)



How it helps you

The National Quality Framework for services supporting women and children survivors of domestic violence

The National Quality Framework provides a clear set of quality standards for specialist provision that meet the needs of women and children. It will assist commissioners to provide the best possible services for survivors of violence and abuse in their area. Use of the National Quality Framework will enable commissioners to demonstrate that the commissioning process has been informed by service user need, and that funding has been allocated to meet the diversity of that need. It will also help ensure they meet their legal Social Value and Equalities obligations²⁷.

The National Quality Framework forms a part of government-supported work across the VAWG sector “to develop a standards framework to assist local commissioners to make informed choices about local sexual violence and domestic violence services”²⁸. It is a set of integrated tools for measuring the performance and assessing the quality of VAWG services.

For further information on the Quality Framework and/or commissioning support contact:

Hilary Fisher, Director of Policy, Voice and Membership, Women’s Aid:
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Dorett Jones, Development and Training Manager, Imkaan:
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For information about services specifically addressing the needs of survivors of sexual violence or the National Rape Crisis Service Standards contact Katy Taylor, Membership Co-coordinator, Rape Crisis England & Wales: rcwmembership@rapecrisis.org.uk

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What the National Quality Framework comprises

²⁷ Commissioning services quality assured by their national professional body means funding organisations which are: community based, so statutory money and additionally sourced funds remain in the local area; accessible to diverse and marginalised communities; responsive to and shaped by survivor need; focused on holistic service provision; highly likely to provide additional training and volunteering opportunities for survivors helping ensure longer term independence.

²⁸ HM Government (2014) *A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls: Action Plan 2014*, p.8.



The National Quality Framework comprises:

- ▶ **On Track: Women's Paths to Safety.** This is a comprehensive set of survivor-identified outcomes against which services can document and measure their inputs, outputs and the progress of the survivors they support. This information will be available to inform local authority and other funders' commissioning processes. *"The collection and analysis of good data is a fundamental tool in our fight to combat violence against women and girls."*²⁹
- ▶ **Database & case management systems for recording & measuring outcomes,** specially designed around violence against women and girls which enable easy collection of service-specific, regional and national data on a wide range of aspects of domestic violence provision.
- ▶ **Women's Aid National Quality Standards & Accreditation Process.** These standards offer a quality standard mark for Women's Aid services that rolls out best practice and ensures consistent quality of service delivery by accredited providers across England.
- ▶ **Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards for dedicated BME women's services.** These standards form a set of criteria through which dedicated specialist BME services addressing domestic violence and harmful practices, including forced marriage, honour based violence and female genital mutilation, can evidence their quality.
- ▶ **Information about the Rape Crisis England & Wales (RCEW) National Service Standards.** Survivors of sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse are best supported by dedicated independent sexual violence services. The RCEW National Service Standards form a set of criteria through which these services can evidence their quality. RCEW holds its own database and case management system for recording and measuring outcomes relating to the support of survivors of sexual violence and child abuse.
- ▶ **National Guidance for Commissioning Violence Against Women and Girls' Services:** a model commissioning strategy and a model tender document for commissioning VAWG services.

²⁹ Ibid, p.14