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Understanding the stability and
sustainability of the violence
against women voluntary sector

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New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) is a consultancy and think tank dedicated to helping funders and charities to achieve a greater impact.

We provide independent research, tools and advice for funders and charities, and shape the debate about what makes charities effective.

We have an ambitious vision: to create a world in which charities and their funders are as effective as possible in changing people's lives and in tackling social problems.

- For charities, this means measuring the results of their work and using evidence to learn and improve, as well as to attract support.
- For funders, it means using evidence of charities' results to make funding decisions and to measure their own impact.

This is a report of the results of independent research commissioned by the Government Equalities Office and conducted by New Philanthropy Capital between January and September 2009. Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Government Equalities Office or any other Government Department.

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Executive summary

Background

In 2009, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) commissioned New Philanthropy Capital to undertake this research to improve its understanding of the stability and sustainability of the voluntary sector services dealing with violence against women (VAW). GEO has responsibility within government for gender issues.

By **stability** we mean the extent to which organisations can maintain the status quo in service delivery. By **sustainability** we mean the extent to which organisations can safeguard both their likelihood of success, and also the success for the future in the coming five to ten years. It should be noted, however, that these terms are referred to widely by different stakeholders consulted in the report, and in some of the literature, and it is not clear that all of these sources were using the terms in this way, or in any other consistent way.

VAW is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including domestic violence, sexual violence and harmful traditional practices (such as female genital mutilation (FGM)). The VAW voluntary sector provides vital services to support and protect the victims of VAW. For this report, we have broken down the VAW sector into four sub-sectors: domestic violence; sexual violence; charities helping black and minority ethnic (BAME) victims of VAW; and other forms of VAW (including FGM, trafficking and prostitution).

This research was commissioned in response to issues raised about the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector. The Women's National Commission (which closed in December 2010) had advised the GEO that the VAW voluntary sector was experiencing problems. There was also anecdotal evidence that parts of the women's voluntary sector were 'at risk', that they were unstable, that their service delivery was unsustainable, and that the problems appeared at the time the research was commissioned to be endemic.

This research aims to establish, using an independent, objective and robust approach, whether there is a problem with the stability and sustainability of VAW voluntary organisations, and, if so, what the nature of the problem is, its causes and its extent.

For parts of the research, a comparison is made with the mental health voluntary sector to try to assess the extent to which any particular problems are unique to the VAW voluntary sector or affect voluntary organisations more widely. The mental health sector was chosen because it has many similar features to the VAW sector, as it is an issue that affects a comparable number of people, uses similar interventions to the VAW sector, and has a high degree of reliance on government funding.

Approach

The approach was conducted in five stages:

- a rapid evidence assessment and stakeholder interviews to ensure that the research built on what is already known in the area;
- an analysis of VAW charities' accounts using the GuideStar database to compare the income of the VAW voluntary sector with that of organisations in the third sector as a whole;
- analysis of a sample of 27 VAW voluntary organisations to assess their stability and sustainability and a sample of 19 mental health voluntary organisations to provide a benchmark against which to compare the VAW voluntary organisations. The size of these samples was dictated by the research design, which required in-depth analysis of charities. Because these are not large samples, any results must be viewed with caution, particularly in sub-sectors; and,
- three local case studies, designed to illuminate a variety of statutory involvement with the VAW sector, including the impact of government policies on the funding of the VAW sector.¹

¹ This relates to the period up to around mid 2009, prior to the change of Government in May 2010.

Findings

Findings reported by the research reflect the period during which the research was conducted.

Changes in the sector

The overall number of VAW voluntary services has not changed significantly in the last five years (see Section 3). However, there was a perception that the sexual violence sub-sector has seen significant closures of services. This was found both in the literature and evidence from the stakeholders. This suggests that, aside from sexual violence, the VAW sector in terms of number of services provided has been stable in the five years to 2009.

There is considerable change in the VAW voluntary sector, with both service development and closure, and the emergence of potential mergers partly in response to the changing commissioning environment (see Section 3). This was supported by all sources of evidence. Some concerns about this were raised by stakeholders, for example that mergers within the sector may pose a risk to specialist services. Some charities cited successful mergers, however.

External factors

The analysis looked at external factors that could potentially threaten the stability and sustainability of the sector. These were considered to be (for both the VAW and mental health sectors): funding (heavy reliance on statutory funding and lack of full cost recovery); the recession; and changes to commissioning. The Gender Equality Duty (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2006) did not appear to be affecting the stability or sustainability of the VAW sector.

Most Rape Crisis centres in the sampled organisations receive money from central government through the Special Fund. Some of these commented that the Special Fund had 'saved them from closure'.

There were some sub areas for which adequate funding was found to be difficult (see Section 7). The most commonly cited funding gaps for VAW organisations were in work with children and women with no recourse to public funds. This comes through from the literature, the stakeholders, the VAW organisations in the sample, and the case study areas.

Another risk is associated with the way that the sector is funded. The majority of VAW and mental health voluntary organisations in our sample were not receiving full cost recovery, (see Section 6). This is a risk to their stability as, without full cost recovery, an organisation will have to fundraise for its core costs separately.

Funding and the recession

There were widespread fears within the sector that funding was about to reduce significantly although not because of the recession (see Section 3.3). This came through particularly strongly in the literature and the evidence from the stakeholders. Specific concern was expressed by some stakeholders about the stability of BAME VAW organisations, because of their need to compete with larger non-specialist organisations for local authority contracts.

Statutory funding makes up a large proportion of VAW voluntary organisations' income (see Section 5.4). This was clear from the evidence from the sampled organisations. The literature shows that recessions in the past have had more of a negative impact on voluntary organisations reliant on statutory funding (see Section 8). Concern about the recession in the VAW sector at the time of the research was low.² It was not mentioned in the literature, by most of the stakeholders or the sampled organisations. The timing of the research may have avoided stronger concerns about the economy in late 2009 and 2010.

² The stakeholders were interviewed in March 2009, and the sample organisations were analysed between May and August 2009.

Commissioning

The move to commissioning through competitive tendering is perceived by many as a threat to organisational stability and sustainability (see Section 4). This came through particularly strongly in the evidence from the stakeholders and the sampled organisations. Supporting People (SP) contracts (the largest statutory funding stream for victims of domestic violence) are increasingly being commissioned through competitive tendering. The narrow funding base of domestic violence organisations (see below) means that, for them, losing an SP contract could be a threat to stability. There was also some concern from the stakeholders that the removal of the ring fence on Supporting People could reduce funding to domestic violence organisations.

Charities across the VAW and mental health sample cited numerous case studies of what they felt were bad commissioning processes (see Section 4.4). Commissioners themselves acknowledged that processes were still evolving. The literature suggested that women-only services were increasingly being asked by funders to open their services up to men. However, the sample did not support this view. Some organisations in the VAW sample were opening up their services to men without being asked to do so by funders.

The Gender Equality Duty (GED)

There are some concerns that the GED is being misinterpreted (see Section 5). These concerns were expressed by the stakeholders and the sampled organisations. However there is little evidence from the sampled organisations or the local case studies of it having had any impact to date, either positive or negative. Some voluntary organisations commented that it was 'something to have in your back pocket' to use to persuade statutory funders to fund them. Therefore it remains inconclusive whether the GED is affecting the stability and sustainability of the sector.

Internal factors

While analysis of external factors shows the pressures that may endanger the stability of the sector, analysis of internal factors shows how well equipped organisations are to respond to these pressures. Our analysis identified financial risks across the VAW sector and particular problems with paid management in the sexual violence sector.

Finances

The finances of organisations may be both causes and symptoms of instability. Domestic violence refuges in the sampled organisations have very low income diversity (see Section 12). They are largely reliant on Supporting People funding. This finding is echoed in the literature. This narrow funding base is risky as it means that the loss of one contract will mean that the whole organisation is at risk rather than just one service. This means that changes to the commissioning environment worry domestic violence organisations more than other organisations without this concentrated funding base.

Sexual violence organisations in the sampled organisations have high income volatility. They are also more likely to have short-term funding. This echoes evidence from the literature that points towards higher income volatility for smaller women's organisations. This could be either a cause of instability or a consequence of other issues around instability.

Staff

The staff of VAW voluntary organisations are widely perceived to be committed and have grass-roots knowledge of VAW (see Section 10). The sexual violence organisations in our sample had particular problems recruiting staff. This was attributed to the harrowing nature of the work. They were also less likely to have paid management and were more reliant on trustees.

Local networking was identified by the stakeholders as an important way to get issues high on the agenda of local government. However, more than half of chief executives in the VAW sample spent less than 10% of their time networking (see Section 11). This is compared to a quarter of the mental health sample. This is supported by evidence from the stakeholders. As a whole, VAW organisations were much less likely than mental health organisations to be involved in appropriate boards and networks. However, domestic violence organisations were more likely than the rest of the VAW sector and the mental health sector to be involved in local strategic partnerships.

Evidence of outcomes

The majority of our VAW sample said they measured outcomes systematically (see Section 9). In the domestic violence sector outcomes were collected primarily using the Supporting People framework for outcomes. In other areas, voluntary organisations had developed their own approaches to monitoring outcomes. This means that they should have the evidence to make a strong case to funders. However, given charities' perceptions that funders are not interested in evidence of outcomes (see Section 6), the collection of evidence may not help charities.

Contradicting the findings from the sampled organisations, stakeholders believed that most VAW organisations were not measuring their outcomes. Evidence from the local case studies showed that views on the quality of charities' reports about their results were mixed. However, the VAW sector was not thought to be worse than the voluntary sector in general.

Conclusions

The research found that the main concerns about stability and sustainability in the VAW sector were related to financial issues, and the knock-on effect which these had on other aspects of the work of the VAW sector and the services it provides, including particularly its staffing resources, its ability to offer service specialisation and to develop and expend services.

The combined evidence from a literature review, stakeholder interviews and organisational analysis carried out for this project gave a mixed picture of findings:

- there was an overall increase in the funding, in the number of local authorities offering specialist services VAW services, and in the number of services offered, but a number of services had closed particularly in the sexual violence sub-sector;
- the VAW sector funding may be highly vulnerable to public sector spending cuts because of its heavy reliance on statutory funding;
- the shape of services provided in the VAW sector may be changing as statutory funders seek to commission more generic services, from larger provider groups;
- there are fears that this changing shape of funding may be prompting a downward spiral in the stability and sustainability of some smaller organisations and the highly specialised services they offer; in particular a lack of paid management is contributing to the unsustainability of the sexual violence sector, and there are no obvious funding streams for the sexual violence, BAME, FGM, prostitution and trafficking sub-sectors;
- the VAW sector may be particularly vulnerable to changes in funding brought about by the recession or competitive commissioning;
- this may ultimately reduce the quality of support available to beneficiary groups.

Aspects of the domestic violence sub-sector may be unstable due to a combination of its narrow funding base and the commissioning environment, and this could affect its ability to maintain its services for vulnerable women. Domestic violence organisations are experiencing the same challenging environment as other sectors heavily reliant on local government funding, such as the mental health sector. However, they may well be more vulnerable to changes in commissioning and Supporting People contracts due to their narrow funding base. Refuges make up a substantial proportion of domestic violence voluntary organisations and every refuge analysed as part of this research was reliant on two or fewer income streams for 60% of its income. In each case these two incomes were Supporting People income and rent. The two income streams are linked as without Supporting People funding it is unlikely that a refuge will continue to operate as a refuge and collect rent.

While this issue seems most extreme amongst refuges, low income diversity was common across all types of VAW voluntary organisations (over 70% in the sample have low income diversity) when compared to mental health organisations (40% in the sample have low income diversity).

The sexual violence sub-sector may be growing less sustainable due to a lack of paid management and no obvious funding streams. Lack of paid management and obvious funding is already affecting its ability to safeguard existing services, as evidenced by the decline in Rape Crisis centres. The Special Fund was credited by one interviewee with having ‘saved the sector’, however no new alternative funding streams had been identified by the organisations we spoke to. Their funding was primarily from local authorities but this funding tended to be very short-term and did not come from any ring-fenced budget.

These problems with funding are exacerbated by low management capacity. In comparison to the mental health sector and other VAW sub-sectors, the sexual violence sub-sector is heavily reliant on trustees for management. Over half of the sexual violence organisations (four out of seven) in the sample, we analysed were being managed by their trustees. This compares to less than 10% across the rest of the VAW sample and 30% across the mental health sample.

Outside the domestic violence sub-sector, there are no obvious funding streams for VAW voluntary organisations. Domestic violence seems to have benefited from a higher funding priority within local authorities than other forms of VAW, such as sexual violence, due in part to dedicated funding through the Supporting People programme. On a local level, there is nothing similar for voluntary organisations helping victims of other forms of VAW. This is not just a problem of funding but also of wider statutory strategy. The case studies were designed to represent a variety of local relationships and while undertaking local case studies, despite several attempts, we did not manage to speak to anyone in a statutory organisation who was specifically thinking about other forms of VAW as part of their remit.

I. Introduction

I.1 The purpose of this research

This research was commissioned by the Government Equalities Office (GEO) in 2009 to help improve its understanding of the stability and sustainability of the violence against women (VAW) voluntary sector. It was conducted between January and December 2009 and the findings reported here relate to that time period.

The then Minister for Women's priorities for women included a commitment to 'tackling violence against women and supporting women who are the victims of violent crimes' (2007). Then, and now, the voluntary sector plays an important role in helping to deliver key services to these women. The GEO was therefore keen to develop a robust evidence base which assesses the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector.

This research aimed to establish, using an independent, objective and robust approach, whether there was a problem with the stability and sustainability of VAW voluntary organisations, and, if so, what the nature of the problem was, its extent, and the reasons for it. For parts of the research, a comparison is made with the mental health voluntary sector to try to assess to what extent various problems are unique to the VAW voluntary sector and which issues are affecting the sector more broadly.

The Coalition Government has prioritised tackling violence against women and on 25 November 2010 the Home Secretary launched a cross-Government Strategic Narrative on violence against women and girls which covered provision of services for women and girls affected by abuse. While the majority of funding for violence against women services is expected to come from local areas, central government has committed to supporting local areas to produce an effective delivery framework. The Coalition Government has committed to providing long-term sustainable funding to existing rape crisis centres and to establishing new centres where need is most acute.

Findings reported by the research reflect the period during which the research was conducted. Section 1.2 below provides a summary of the context when the research was commissioned and conducted.

1.2 The context to the research

There are thousands of women's organisations in Britain that work in a wide range of fields including VAW, employment, health, education, rights and equality, the criminal justice system and the environment. The VAW voluntary sector plays a vital role in helping to deliver essential services, support and expertise to some of the most marginalised groups of women.

The Women's National Commission (which closed in December 2010) has advised GEO that the VAW voluntary sector is experiencing problems. A recent report by NPC claims that VAW voluntary organisations are 'chronically under-funded' (Jarvinen *et al.* 2008). There is also anecdotal evidence that parts of the women's voluntary sector are 'at risk', that they are unstable, that their current service delivery is unsustainable, and that the problems appear to be endemic.

The problems with funding Rape Crisis centres in particular have been recognised; in March 2008, a cross-government emergency fund of £1m was established to support Rape Crisis centres and a further £1.25m was invested in specialist third sector services through the Victims Fund (Government Office for London, 2008). In March 2009, a second year of this funding was announced, with £1.6m for Rape Crisis centres and The Survivors Trust sexual violence charities across England and Wales (Office of the Third Sector, 2008). In 2010, a Combined Fund (funded by the GEO and the Ministry of Justice via the Victims' Fund) was established to support services for victims of sexual violence. This was also a one-off fund.

There are fears in the VAW voluntary sector that the problem with stability is broader than the funding of Rape Crisis centres – that the VAW voluntary sector as a whole is facing a funding crisis. This research comes at a time when the VAW voluntary sector is facing many changes and challenges which may affect its sustainability:

- **The removal of the Supporting People ring-fence.** The Supporting People (SP) funding stream for housing services for vulnerable people has been the major source of income for refuges since its introduction in 2003. In April 2009 the ring-fence came off this funding so local authorities can spend the money according to their local priorities and needs.
- **Increase in statutory services for victims of VAW.** Over the last ten years, services for victims of VAW provided by the statutory sector have increased enormously, including the development of specialist domestic violence courts, Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors, sexual assault referral centres as well as the partnership of multi-agency risk assessment conferences for domestic violence victims. This has changed both the funding landscape for the VAW voluntary sector and its relationship with government.
- **Continuation of devolution.** As funding and decision-making is increasingly devolved to local authorities and primary care trusts (PCTs), discussions about funding must take place at a local level. Organisations which were previously able to speak to central government through their umbrella bodies have now been forging relationships with local government for themselves and work to put VAW on lists of local priorities. This may involve reallocation of resources for organisations that have been focused on frontline services.
- **The move to commissioning.** As local authorities increasingly move from giving grants to charities to contracting services from them, charities need to learn a new language and set of skills to bid for contracts and monitor their services.
- **The recession.** As the current recession continues and cuts in public spending are forecast, funding will be tight across the voluntary sector.

1.3 Scope of research

The research focussed on the questions: How stable and sustainable is the VAW voluntary sector? If there are problems, what is the nature of these problems, their extent, and the reasons for them? More detail on the criteria for assessing these questions can be found in Section 2 and Appendix 4.

The research was also guided by four additional questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the VAW voluntary sector? How do these characteristics affect the ability of the VAW voluntary sector to secure funding at present and in the future?
2. How effective and cost-effective is the VAW voluntary sector?
3. On what basis is there a 'funding gap' and why?
4. What has been the impact of recent government policies on the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector, and in particular their ability to fundraise?

These questions were considered in relation to their importance for stability and sustainability. The definitions used in this report are set out in Box 1:

Box 1: Definitions used

Violence against women (VAW). This report uses the UN definition of violence against women, that is, any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, and coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses, but is not limited to, the following:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Violence against women (VAW) voluntary sector. This refers to voluntary organisations that are delivering services to support and protect the victims of violence against women. While this definition includes organisations which provide services exclusively to women, it also covers those that deliver services to men and children who are the victims of sexual or domestic violence, as well as women.

Stability. By stability we mean the extent to which organisations can maintain the status quo in service delivery.

Sustainability. By sustainability we mean the extent to which organisations can safeguard both their likelihood of success, and also the success for the future in the coming five to ten years.

From the sector. VAW voluntary organisations and members of the End Violence Against Women coalition (EVAW).

Funders. Organisations which give money to voluntary organisations to deliver services for victims of violence against women, including private or corporate foundations, government departments, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), and local authorities.

This research does not specifically address the question of whether the sector is currently providing the 'right' level of services or look at particular gaps in service provision, although where these issues are relevant to the research questions they are touched upon. These topics are discussed further by Coy *et al.* (2007 and 2009).

The elements of the stability and sustainability of organisations assessed were: activities, management, staff, the impact of changes to the commissioning environment, the impact of government policies and finances. More detail on this is given in Appendix 4.

The geographical scope of this research covers England only.

1.4 The structure of this report

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the methodology for collecting evidence and its limitations.

Chapters 3 to 12 are divided into thematic sections. Each section addresses a particular issue that may be affecting the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector. Under each section, the evidence is grouped by approach (see Section 2).

The themes are grouped under the following headings:

- A snapshot of the VAW voluntary sector, which looks at the size and number of VAW voluntary organisations, as well as any merger activity.
- External factors, which looks at how the external environment (eg, national policy) is perceived as affecting the VAW voluntary organisations' stability and sustainability.
- Internal factors, which looks at the organisational characteristics of VAW voluntary organisations (eg, levels of reserves) that may affect their stability and sustainability.

Chapter 13 provides a conclusion. More detail on methodology and contributors to this report can be found in Appendix 4.

2. Method

This section gives a brief overview of the method, evidence collected and its limitations at each stage in the research.

2.1 Approach

There have been five stages to our research (for a detailed methodology see Appendix 1):

- **Rapid evidence assessment (REA).** The first step in the research was a rapid objective review of the evidence available to find out how much is already known about the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector. January–March 2009
- **GuideStar analysis.** The GuideStar database contains information on every charity registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales. Data on the income of 367 VAW voluntary organisations was analysed and compared to the income of the third sector as a whole. March 2009
- **Stakeholder interviews.** The next stage of the research was to interview a range of 37 stakeholders across the sector, including charities, funders and academics, to start addressing some of the gaps in evidence identified from the REA. The stakeholders were selected to provide a cross-section of experience of the VAW sector and were selected in consultation with GEO. February–April 2009
- **Organisational analysis of a sample of charities.** The aim of this part of the research was to assess the organisational stability and sustainability of voluntary organisations working in the VAW voluntary sector, compared to voluntary organisations from another comparator sector, the adult mental health sector. The adult mental health sector was chosen because it has many similar features to the VAW sector, as it is an issue that affects a comparable number of people, uses similar interventions to the VAW sector, and has a high level of government funding. In order to get as representative a picture

of the VAW sector as possible, we analysed a random sample of 7% of voluntary organisations in the VAW sector and compared their financial situation with that of a random sample from the comparator sector. The data for this analysis came from audited accounts supplemented with short telephone interviews with senior staff/chief executives. May–September 2009

- **Local case studies.** The purpose of this part of the research was to explore the impact of government policies on the funding of the VAW sector. It involved interviews with statutory representatives and voluntary sector representatives in three areas: Manchester; Wellingborough; and Bath and North Somerset (BANES). These were chosen to provide a spread of areas with high, medium and low levels of provision according to the Map of Gaps report. August–September 2009

More detail on the case studies can be found in Appendix 3.

The VAW sector was only compared to the mental health sector in the organisational and some of the funding analysis, and therefore we can only make comparisons for this part of the research.

This research has been informed throughout by a small independent advisory group comprising representatives from relevant government departments and other stakeholders from the voluntary sector.

2.2 Overview of the research

Rapid evidence assessment (REA)

The REA was designed to find as much relevant literature in the available time using an objective and methodical approach. Government social research guidelines were followed throughout. Databases and relevant websites were searched using a pre-determined list of search terms. A call for evidence was put out over relevant mailing lists (eg, End Violence Against Women campaign) and stakeholders were given three weeks to submit any relevant evidence.

Each source was then assessed against explicit criteria and classified as high, medium and low in terms of robustness and relevance.

In total, 54 documents were found that met the search criteria. As expected, the majority of the literature was 'grey literature'³: nine documents were published in peer-reviewed journals; seven were government documents; and the rest were published by charities.

Some of the most useful evidence comes from surveys of voluntary organisations carried out by umbrella bodies in the VAW sector. Most of the government documents do not distinguish between voluntary, private or statutory sector services, so in these cases it is not possible to tease out issues relating directly to the VAW voluntary sector. Much of the literature referring to the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) sector talks about the BAME sector in general, rather than specifying whether it refers to charities helping with a particular issue, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or trafficking.

Around three fifths of the evidence collected was classified as not being robust for inclusion in this review because it is based on opinion and anecdote, the research methods are unclear, or the sample sizes of surveys are too small to be statistically significant. When presenting the findings we concentrate mainly on the sources that we have classified as robust, however where evidence is limited we do refer to less robust sources. This was particularly the case for much of the BAME literature, which is dominated by campaigning documents with a strong ideological bias.

The sources considered highly robust that were relevant to the research questions are: Hague and Malos (1998), Women's Resource Centre (2007a), Morley *et al.* (2005), Women's National Commission (2003), Matrix Consulting (2006), Ashton and Turl (2008), Sadowski (2008), Ramsay *et al.* (2005), Coy *et al.* (2007), Coy *et al.* (2009), Women's Resource Centre (2009), Soteri (2002b), Gill and Banga (2008), and Mocroft and Zimmick (2004).

³ By 'grey literature' we mean information not controlled by commercial publishing i.e. where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body. Examples include reports from government agencies or charities.

Additionally, Women's Resource Centre (2008a) is considered a highly robust source except on the issue of women-only services, where it becomes less precise. We were not able within the timeframe of this project to assess the methodology used in extrapolating the data from Women's Aid Federation of England (WAFE) (2001), Toren (2004), Williamson (2006), Barron (2007) and Barron (2008), which were all carried out under the auspices of WAFE. However, the aspects of the methodology we were able to assess were considered robust, and hence we treat these sources as robust throughout the report. Where other sources are mentioned, their weaknesses are noted. It should be noted in particular that we frequently refer to Thiara (2005) and Thiara and Hussein (2005) even though we did not classify these sources as robust. We use these sources due to the low level of evidence available on the BAME VAW sector.

More detail on the REA method and classification system can be found in Appendix 4.

GuideStar analysis

NPC's search through the GuideStar database found 367 VAW voluntary organisations in England. These were classified as follows:

- 209 domestic violence organisations;
- 71 sexual violence organisations;
- 34 Victim Support organisations;
- 35 culturally-specific BAME organisations;
- 4 female genital mutilation (FGM) organisations;
- 9 prostitution organisations;
- 2 trafficking organisations; and
- 3 general VAW campaigning organisations.

We classified voluntary organisations by which type of VAW they primarily worked with, which meant that only a few organisations working in smaller-scale specialised areas such as trafficking, prostitution, and FGM organisations were included in the small study sample. A description of the relative sizes of these voluntary organisations can be found in Section 3.2.

Stakeholder interviews

A total of 37 stakeholders from national and local charities, national and local government departments, and academic institutions were interviewed for this research. There were 38 stakeholders contacted, all of whom consented to be interviewed, however one was not able to do this within the timeframe of the research. A list of key stakeholders is documented in Appendix 3.

The input of these stakeholders was particularly useful in exploring the impact of more recent changes, for example changes to local authority funding. These interviews were also useful in exploring trends in the VAW sector and identifying what was different about the 2009 situation, as there is a lack of historical data in the published literature.

In order to encourage as much openness as possible, all interviews were anonymous, to the extent that no quotations are attributed and opinions are assigned to large groups, eg, 'funders' and 'charities'.

Sampled organisations

Description of the VAW sample. The VAW sample was composed of 27 voluntary organisations (7% of the total number of VAW services found on the GuideStar database), chosen at random from a list ordered by type of activity and level of income. Because we ordered the list by activity, the sample reflects the spread being addressed in the VAW sector. However the sample is not large enough to reflect the exact proportions of charities working within each activity area.

The sample was checked for any inadvertent bias (see Appendix 4 for further detail). Housing associations that work with victims of VAW are included within this research, and there were two housing associations in the VAW sample. Seven were sexual violence services, three were BAME services, two were other VAW services (as a result of the random nature of the sample, both happened to be prostitution voluntary organisations) and fifteen were domestic violence services. There were twelve refuges within the sample, of which two were specialist BAME refuges. The three BAME organisations primarily dealt with domestic violence within the family within the BAME community. Two of the BAME charities also helped victims of forced marriage. Three of the twenty seven VAW voluntary organisations were national organisations.

The income range was from £4,266 to £256 million (see Appendix 4 for further detail). Eight voluntary organisations had an income below £100,000, and twelve voluntary organisations had an income between £100,000 and £500,000. Only three voluntary organisations had an income above £1 million. The number of full-time equivalent paid staff varied from zero to 3,412. Nineteen voluntary organisations had a staffing level of ten or lower.

Eighteen of the organisations considered themselves to be women-only.

Description of mental health sample. The mental health sample was composed of 19 organisations (see Appendix 4 for further detail on how the sample was constructed). Five organisations were community-specific services (two of these focused on minority community groups that would not be classified as BAME) and nine were local Mind associations. The other five voluntary organisations were a mixture of national, regional and local organisations, and included the two largest organisations in the mental health sample.

The income range was from £592 to £38.9m, with three organisations having income below £100,000 and ten organisations having income from £100,000 to £500,000 (inclusive) (see Appendix 4 for further detail). Only three organisations had income of over £1 million. The number of paid staff varied from zero to approximately 1,294 full-time equivalent staff (though the next lowest after that had approximately 60, and then it drops by about half to the next organisation).

Local case studies

The local case studies were chosen to elicit a spread of practice rather than to provide a accurate representation of local funding and practice (see Appendix 4 for further detail). In total NPC spoke to 18 respondents in local areas: seven in Manchester; six in Bath and North East Somerset (BANES); and five in Wellingborough. Nine represented statutory organisations – one from a PCT, three Supporting People commissioners, and five from Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership teams within the local authorities. Nine represented voluntary organisations – five domestic violence charities, one sexual violence charity, and one Asian women's refuge.

Interviews explored how government policy was seen to be affecting the relationship between local authorities and VAW voluntary organisations, in particular the impact of the Gender Equality Duty.

2.3 Limitations of the research

Overall, the small number of organisations and limited research relating to the smaller sub-sectors of VAW means that conclusions for the larger categories of domestic violence and sexual violence are stronger than conclusions for the smaller sub-sectors such as trafficking or FGM.

Rapid evidence assessment (REA)

The REA is necessarily retrospective due to the time it takes to get reports to publication. As a result, it can only tell us about recent trends rather than current or future trends. The REA looked only at publicly available material, or emails sent to NPC from the call for evidence, so the wealth of information provided by charities in monitoring forms to funders was not considered as part of the review. The time for the REA was limited, so the authors do not claim to provide a comprehensive list of literature on the topic. However, we believe that the systematic approach we took should have ensured that there is no inherent bias in the sources covered.

Stakeholder interviews

Interviewees were chosen to elicit a spread of experience and were not chosen to form a representative sample, so this means the findings from these interviews can only be taken as indicative of the variety of opinions about the VAW voluntary sector. The individuals were not representing the official view of their organisations, but their impressions from their experiences of the sector. One stakeholder was not able to respond within the tight timescale of the research. The research design did not allow for follow-up after the stakeholder interviews.

GuideStar analysis

Organisations were found through key word searches so we did not pick up organisations without any of the key words in their charitable objects.⁴ This may bias the sample away from organisations which have recently started doing VAW work. Additionally, to help ensure the sample consisted of organisations still in existence, only organisations which had filed accounts in the past two years were admitted. This may bias the sample away from organisations that have trouble filing accounts.

Organisational analysis of sampled charities

A total of 27 VAW charities and 19 mental health charities were interviewed. As these are not large samples designed to find statistically significant results, any trends must be viewed with caution, in particular patterns found within sub-sectors. Because there are so few FGM, prostitution, trafficking and BAME organisations in the sample, the analysis of these organisations is particularly anecdotal. For all organisations, the majority of the indicators, such as whether or not an organisation has full-cost recovery or whether or not a charity monitors outcomes, are based on the subjective opinion of the organisation. We did not investigate the quality of evidence collected or look at any financial information beyond the annual accounts. We also did not talk to the funders' of the sampled organisations, and therefore comments on funders' behaviour are based on organisations' perceptions.

⁴ This is the same list of key words as used for the REA, see Appendix 4.

The sample is naturally biased away from organisations that have lost major contracts as these are more likely to have closed in recent years and therefore be unrepresented in the sample. Both the VAW and mental health samples are biased away from larger charities due to non-response. The overall response rate was 57% for the sample of VAW organisations and 46% for the sample of mental health organisations. The final VAW sample reflected the spread of activities and regions found in the VAW voluntary sector as a whole.

The interviews with the sample organisations were conducted in May–September 2009. The timing of the interviews may mean that not all the effects of the recession on voluntary organisations had come through, as the economy reached its lowest point in the final quarter of 2009 after the study was completed. Therefore findings about the recession should be treated with caution.

Local case studies

Case studies by their nature are limited in scope and are designed to explore issues qualitatively. Case studies allow us to look at causality within particular scenarios and understand motivations in a way that quantitative analysis cannot. However case studies do not allow us to understand how widespread the issues raised are, or their relative importance.

In this research only three geographical areas were chosen, with the aim of getting a feel for the variety of relationships between local statutory agencies and the VAW voluntary sector, rather than accurately representing a national picture. The areas were chosen based on getting a spread of areas with different VAW service provision. However, we did not ascertain beforehand the size of these services in relation to the population. Whether or not people were interviewed depended on their availability; where no-one could be found who felt able to speak about a particular subject, no-one was interviewed. In fact the case studies focused on domestic violence because no-one from the other sub-sectors could be found to interview.

Beyond domestic violence and sexual violence

This research cannot make any firm conclusions relating to FGM, prostitution, trafficking or specialist BAME charities. This is because the rapid evidence assessment found very little evidence relating to the stability and sustainability of these sub-sectors, and the size of our sample meant that it included few of these organisations. During the stakeholder analysis we spoke to representatives from voluntary organisations tackling all forms of VAW and we also considered all VAW organisations in the GuideStar analysis. The local case studies included the perspective from one specialist Asian women's refuge but no prostitution, trafficking or FGM organisations were included. This was because there were no such organisations that received significant local statutory funding in the areas chosen for the case studies.

3. Baseline review of the VAW voluntary sector

The purpose of this section is to review aspects of the VAW voluntary sector in the period leading up to this research. This information is intended to provide context for understanding the importance of various internal and external pressures to this sector and how they have changed in recent years. This context includes a look at the number of VAW services, the structure of provision and mergers of organisations.⁵ The section includes commentary from a range of sources on the possible impact of such factors on the stability or sustainability of the sector. For example, the size of charities gives an indication both about the amount of funding for the sector, and the capacity of individual organisations to react to new trends. It is not within the remit of this research to judge what is the 'right' level of provision.

The literature is naturally retrospective, and the evidence from interviews with the stakeholders and the charities gives a more current view of the situation.

3.1 Evidence from the literature

The number of VAW voluntary services does not appear to have changed significantly between 2007–2008, and the literature points to a small overall increase of 7%.⁶ The key sources for numbers of VAW voluntary services are *Map of Gaps* and *Map of Gaps 2* by Coy *et al.* (2007, 2009). The methodology is considered robust, subject to the caveat that there were very strict inclusion criteria for counting services. This meant that a lot of provision went uncounted which others might have included. In particular, generalist services like Victim Support services available to both men and women, and some statutory services, were not included.

⁵ Mergers was the language used by the sampled organisations. We cannot differentiate between mergers and takeovers.

⁶ We define 'services' as used in Coy *et al.* (2007) and (2009) ie, programmes and projects rather than organisations.

These two reports show the following changes in the VAW voluntary sector between 2007 and 2008:

- The number of local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales that have a specialist VAW service increased from 69.8% to 73.5%.
- 18 services out of 769 had closed, but there was an overall increase to 825 services.
- The number of domestic violence services has fallen by 0.3% since 2007, but the number of local authorities with no domestic violence provision also fell, from 33.9% to 31.1%.
- The number of Rape Crisis centres fell from 42 to 38, but geographical coverage of sexual violence seemed to have improved, as the number of local authorities with a sexual violence service increased from 22.1% to 27.5% between 2007 and 2008 (Coy *et al.* 2007; Coy *et al.* 2009).
- The number of specialist BAME services (including FGM services) increased from 73 to 78 between 2007 and 2008.
- The number of prostitution, trafficking and sexual exploitation services increased from 56 to 57 between 2007 and 2008.

The research does not capture the size of services, so its findings are not necessarily a good indicator of whether level of provision has changed. However, we do have information on the level of provision of bed spaces in refuges. The national WAFE surveys show that while the number of refuge spaces has steadily increased, from 3,412 in 2002 to 3,655 in 2007, there is no clear trend either upwards or downwards since 2002 in the number of refuge organisations, the number of women using services, or the number of children using services (Women's Aid Federation of England, 2001; Toren, 2004; Williamson, 2006; Barron, 2007; Barron, 2008). The authors hypothesise that this means that families are staying in refuges for longer.

The number of children using services seems to vary widely from year to year, suggesting that data recording in this area may not be wholly reliable. An earlier WAFE survey shows that bed space nationally had increased by 15% between 1995 and 1998 (Women's Aid Federation of England, 1998).

There is limited consideration of organisational stability; the surveys concentrate on the services being provided, rather than the funding situation.

- **Problems in the sexual violence sub-sector.** Some evidence suggests that there may be problems within the sexual violence sub-sector. Women's Resource Centre (2008a), for example, paints a stark picture for Rape Crisis centres – it states that 21 services across 11 centres had to close or reduce over the previous three years. Nine centres had closed altogether in the past five years, but overall the numbers only declined by 4, from 42 to 38 (Coy *et al.* 2007 and 2009). Other sexual violence services have increased, meaning that geographic coverage has increased (Coy *et al.* 2007 and 2009).

An online survey by Rape Crisis England and Wales of its members to gather data for Coy *et al.* (2009) gives more detail of potential problems in the sexual violence sub-sector. A total of 29 of the 38 affiliated centres (76.3%) responded and results indicate that almost a quarter of responding organisations (24.1%) stated that they faced closure in that financial year. Almost two-fifths (39.3%) stated that they feared closure in 2009/2010 because of a lack of funding. The vast majority (89.7%, n=26) identify a lack of sustainable funding as their biggest challenge. Four centres specifically mentioned PCTs as uninterested in funding their services. However no exact definition was given for the term 'facing closure'.

- **Service closure in refuges but overall bed increases.** Four refuge providers interviewed in Women's Resource Centre's (2007a) research reported that they had to close an outreach service during the previous four years because of a lack of funding. Three providers had also had to reduce their outreach services due to lack of funding. However, of the 21 boroughs that provided detailed information, there was a net increase of 27 bed spaces funded across these boroughs between 2004/05 and 2007/08.

At the organisational level, some mergers are taking place. The issue of mergers is explored by Women's Resource Centre (2007a). Over the three years leading up to that research, at least seven refuges were taken over by larger providers: two by larger women's organisations; one by a BAME housing association; and four by general housing associations. Two BAME housing associations (it is not clear whether these are specialist VAW organisations) were considering merging with larger housing associations, and one general housing association was merging.

Although it has been acknowledged (Women's Resource Centre, 2007a) that Supporting People (SP) has provided greater funding stability for refuges, there is anecdotal evidence in the literature that a trend for SP funding to favour mainstream provision is placing pressure on BAME organisations. This has caused volatility in income and put pressure on some projects to make cuts, merge with other organisations or diversify their services (Thiara and Hussain 2005; Imkaan, 2008; Mouj 2008).

3.2 GuideStar analysis

VAW voluntary organisations have higher incomes than the average voluntary organisation

The income of an organisation can affect its stability and sustainability. If a charity's income is too low for what it is trying to do, it may have to concentrate on one aspect of its services to the detriment of others, or may be more vulnerable to changes in funding streams. Kane *et al.* (2009) shows that medium-sized charities are more likely to receive a high proportion of their income from the government. Hence medium-sized charities might be more vulnerable during times of change to government funding.

In order to get an understanding of the size of VAW voluntary organisations, we compared VAW voluntary organisations on the GuideStar database with other organisations in the voluntary sector as a whole. For the sake of simplicity and

practicality we define size in terms of income, using the same income categories as the NCVO uses for ‘general charities’⁷ (Kane *et al.* (2009)).⁸ Kane *et al.* (2009) categorises the size of charities as shown in Table I.

Table I: Income distribution of charities in England

Categorisation	Number of charities	Percentage of charities
Micro (less than £10,000 per year)	74,642	54%
Small (£10,000 to £100,000 per year)	42,675	31%
Medium (£100,000 to £1m per year)	16,470	12%
Large (£1m to 10m per year)	3,203	2%
Major (more than £10m per year)	356	<1%
Total	137,346	100%

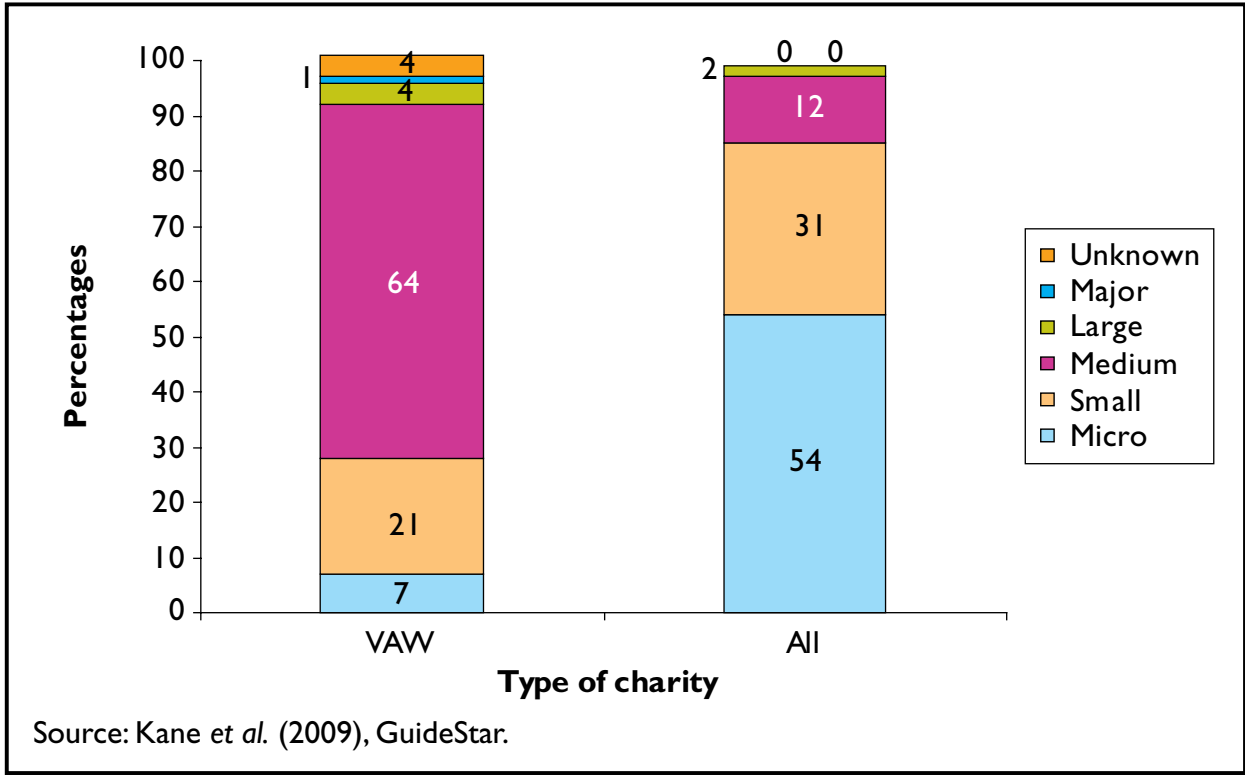
Source: Kane *et al.* (2009).

⁷ The ‘general’ charities category excludes: members of co-operatives; universities; housing associations; independent schools; building societies; trade associations and professional bodies; trade unions; common investment funds; political parties; industrial and provident societies; faith groups; friendly societies; working men’s clubs; benevolent societies; independent museums; community interest companies; sports clubs; excepted charities; and informal community organisations. The data sources that the NCVO Almanac uses for general charities are GuideStar UK, NCVO, Charity Commission, Office for National Statistics, SCVO and NICVA.

⁸ NPC recognises that income is not the only proxy for size of an organisation, however it is the one for which data is readily available.

The analysis of the GuideStar database by income shows the VAW voluntary sector has fewer micro and small charities and more charities in the medium category than the voluntary sector more generally (see Figure 1). This tallies with the picture presented by the analysis of income bands of women’s organisations (of which 26% were VAW charities) presented in Women’s Resource Centre (2009). This research found that, in comparison to charities as a whole in England, women’s organisations (of which over a quarter worked on VAW) were considerably more likely to have an income of £100,000–£1m per year and significantly less likely to have an income of £10,000 or less per year.

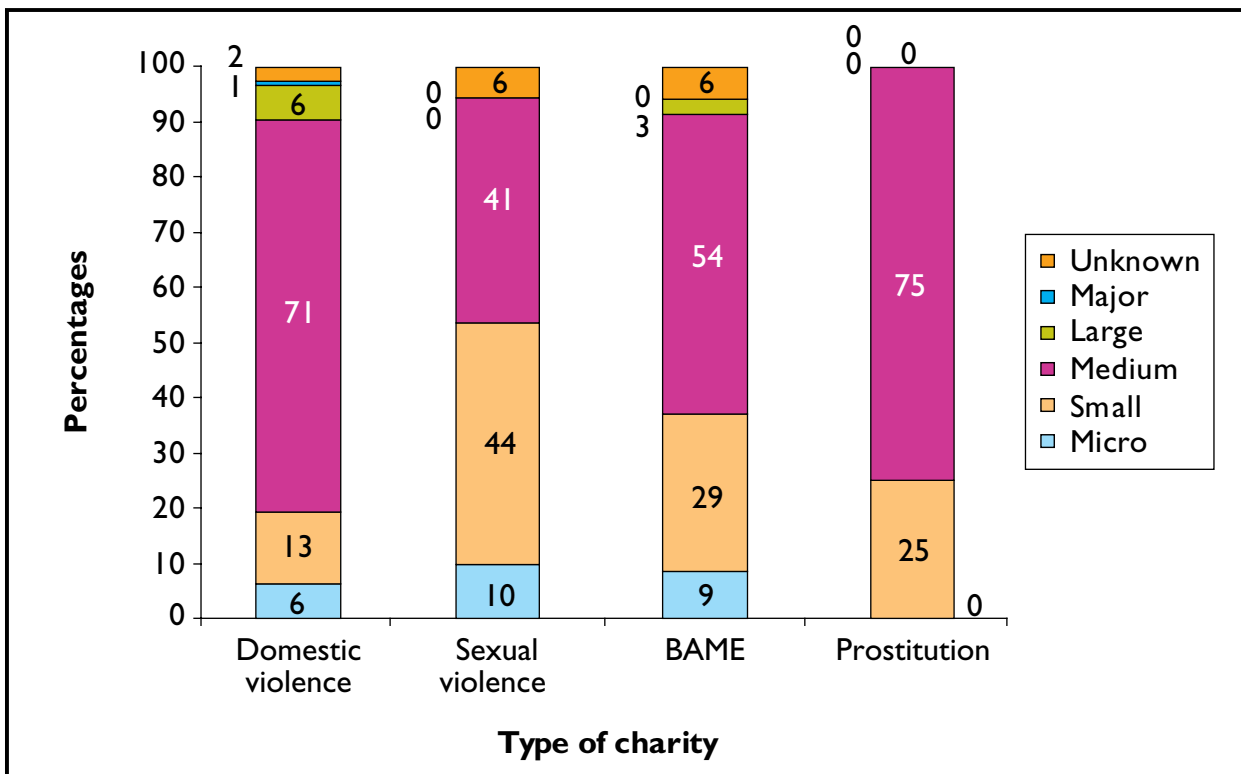
Figure 1: Distribution of VAW voluntary organisations and all voluntary organisations in England



The median income of the VAW voluntary sector is £225,275 and the mean is £542,291.

There are some differences between the sub-sectors within VAW (see Figure 2). Not shown in the graph are FGM charities, of which there were only four in the GuideStar list (three were medium, one was of unknown size), specialist trafficking charities, of which there were just two (one was small, one was of unknown size), and general VAW charities, of which there were three (all of medium size). Many organisations undertook a range of activities, for example some refuges also provided services for trafficked women.

Figure 2: Distribution of sub-categories of VAW voluntary organisations



The VAW sector consists largely of medium-sized voluntary organisations. However, as is shown above, the sexual violence sub-sector is made up of smaller voluntary organisations than the other sub-sectors within VAW, which tallies with the comments about size from the literature and stakeholders. Women's Resource Centre (2008a) shows that Rape Crisis centres tend to be small. The average income per year is £81,598, but the range is £0 to £381,749. The majority of Rape Crisis centres have an income of less than £100,000 per year.

Income is not a direct proxy for capacity as a charity may have very high overheads that cannot be spent on increasing capacity (eg, refuges must spend a lot of their income on maintaining property), however the data challenges any argument that VAW voluntary organisations are small and therefore have low capacity (see Section 10.3).

3.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

Many stakeholders reported a concern that the number of VAW voluntary organisations may be about to decrease. Most funders and stakeholders from the sector thought that there were problems with the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector. Many stakeholders, especially, but not only, those from within the sector, thought that the VAW voluntary sector is becoming less stable. They also felt that the problem is accelerating, mainly due to issues around commissioning, for example having to take part in competitive tendering processes which require a lot of time and expertise which many VAW organisations do not have. Many respondents believed that their own and others' concerns about the VAW voluntary sector are justified and echoed the remarks of one interviewee that the VAW voluntary sector is on 'the brink of widespread closures'.

On the other hand, some other stakeholders, mainly funders, thought that the situation was more variable. They suggested that the situation for Rape Crisis centres has improved due to the Government's special fund of 2008, but some sexual violence services had suffered because of a belief amongst funders that

they were being supported by the special fund. One respondent from within the sector said that funding for refuges is stable and several funders agreed with this. A few funders believed that the VAW sector more broadly is stable, noting that more money from central government has gone into it in recent years. Other funders commented that it is difficult to assess due to the lack of data.

The interviews indicated that funders often appeared to use a different definition of the VAW sector to the voluntary organisations themselves. The VAW voluntary sector often defines itself in terms of specialist provision, whereas funders appeared to be referring to a broader range of provision delivered by generic voluntary organisations eg, housing associations, as well. This meant that they disputed the gaps in provision (eg that nearly one in three local authorities does not have a specialised domestic violence service) presented by Coy *et al.* (2007 and 2009). The interviews did not ask respondents to use a particular definition of VAW in answering the questions.

There is a perception that VAW voluntary organisations are small although the GuideStar evidence is contrary to this. Most respondents described the sub-sector as being made up of small organisations. However, they were not asked what they meant by a ‘small organisation’, and the GuideStar analysis in Section 3.2 does not show that the sector is made up of small organisations on the standard NCVO definition of ‘small’. However VAW organisations may be small in comparison to private providers or housing associations that some have to compete with to win local authority contracts.

The perception is that sexual violence and BAME VAW organisations may be most at risk of closure. Some funders and voluntary organisations thought that the sexual violence sub-sector may be particularly unstable, and it was felt that there have been problems in this sub-sector for some time. In addition, many stakeholders thought that the BAME VAW sub-sector is struggling to compete with non-specialist service providers for funding. One respondent claimed that over half of BAME refuges have been taken over in the past five years and the rate has accelerated in the last 18 months. However this trend was not picked up by Coy *et al.* (2009) and has not yet been substantiated elsewhere.

Perpetrator programmes were another area highlighted by stakeholders as one that may not be receiving enough funding or support. One stakeholder said that 10% of Respect's membership had to stop their programmes in the previous year due to lack of funding.⁹

Although sexual violence, BAME and perpetrator programmes were thought by some to be at particular risk of closure, domestic violence providers wanted to stress that, whilst there is a perception that the domestic violence sub-sector is fine, it also suffers from stability and sustainability problems.

Mergers are seen by some as a potential risk to specialist services.

The risk that specialist services may be taken over by mainstream providers was mentioned by some voluntary organisations and funders. Stakeholders from the voluntary sector saw mergers as a potential risk to being able to continue to provide specialist services. An example, was for services appropriate to South Asian women (see 3.5).

Some stakeholders from within the sector commented that voluntary organisations may be at risk of merging into mainstream services, and suggested that where this happens the specialist expertise of the original charity may often get lost. They suggested that large housing associations may lack knowledge about domestic violence, may not provide added-value services to victims (such as taking in women without recourse to public funds), and may not undertake the local lobbying that keeps VAW on the local political agenda. One stakeholder commented that often the merger of a BAME specialist service with a generic service would be the precursor to the BAME service being discontinued after a few years. However, some other stakeholders from within the sector said that this was not always the case and provided anecdotes of successful mergers.

⁹ Respect is the UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services.

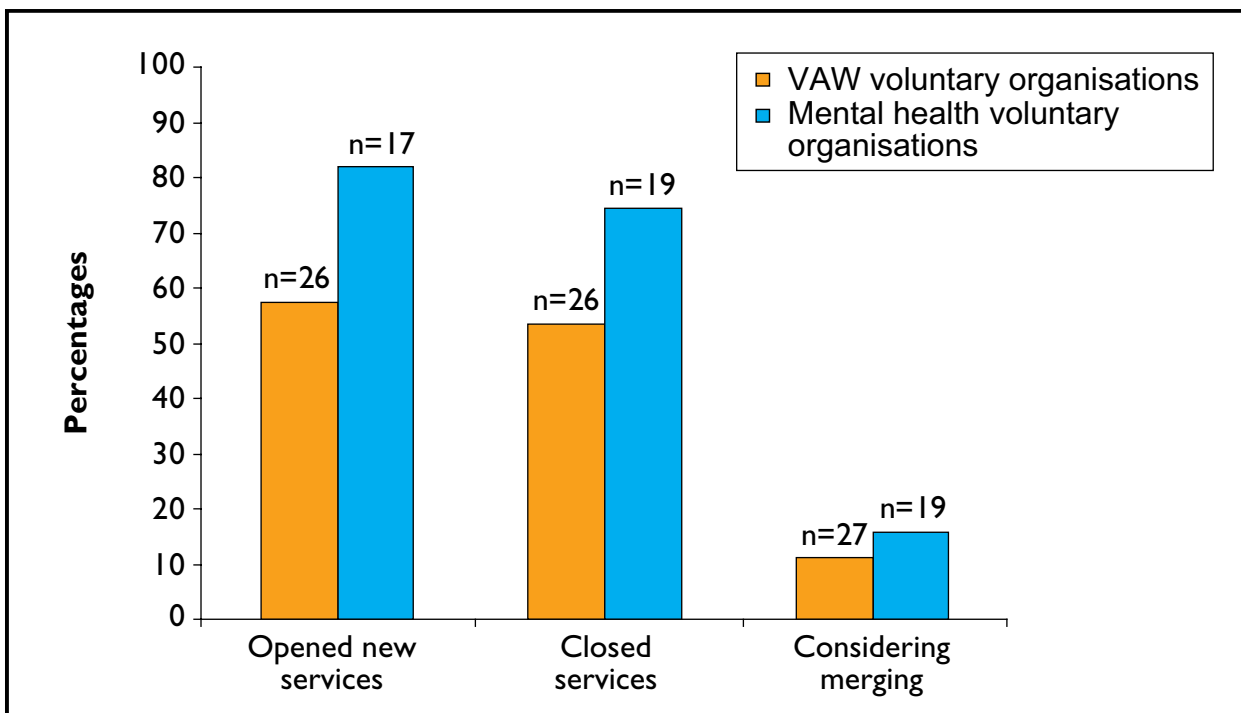
3.4 Evidence from the sampled voluntary organisations

The research focused on three issues among sampled organisations:

- whether voluntary organisations have had to close services;
- whether voluntary organisations were opening services; and
- whether they were considering merging.

Figure 3 summarises the number of charities in both VAW and mental health samples who said they were affected by these issues.

Figure 3: Comparison of change within VAW and mental health organisations



There is considerable change in the VAW sector, with results showing a mixed picture of service development and closure, and some potential merger. A slightly higher proportion of VAW organisations had opened new services than had closed them. The proportion of new services both being opened and being closed was higher in the mental health sector. The results also show evidence that a few mergers in both samples were being considered, and the reasons behind the potential mergers varied. Two VAW voluntary organisations reported that they were considering merging and one had recently merged on the advice of Supporting People and other funders, and therefore felt in a stronger position to cope with commissioning. This organisation said there had been some benefits in terms of better back office functions, and benefits and support for staff. Another was seriously considering merging with other domestic violence organisations to rationalise services, to provide a wider range of services, and to present a stronger voice in responding to the local authority. It reported that it felt that these changes were needed to help it respond to the commissioning environment. The third organisation was considering merging as a possibility if it lost its Supporting People tender. We do not know if these three potential mergers are with another local organisation, or with a national organisation.

None of these three organisations reported that they had already had direct experience of commissioning, so it is possible that mergers are happening as a positioning move **in anticipation of the process**, rather than as a result of lost tenders.

Two mental health organisations were considering mergers to enable them to compete for larger contracts that are being issued in the new commissioning environment. Another mental health voluntary organisation had already merged with a mental health voluntary organisation working in the same area. However this did not seem to have been a direct result of changes to commissioning; the other organisation was very small and proposed a merger when it was about to lose the chair and secretary of its board.

Opening and closure of services. In both the mental health and VAW samples around the same number of organisations were opening services as were closing services. Sometimes it was the case that the same organisation was closing some services and opening others. One possible explanation for this is a change in either the charity's or funders' priorities, though this was not explored in the research. Six VAW voluntary organisations that said that they had closed VAW services and opened another service.

Size of charities. The VAW voluntary sector had more income per staff member than the mental health voluntary sector. There could be several interpretations of this. For example, while income for the VAW voluntary sector is higher than average, this does not necessarily reflect higher levels of staffing. It may be that charities that provide accommodation services put a lot of their income into building maintenance rather than employing staff, so the result cannot be taken as evidence that VAW voluntary organisations with higher incomes have no problems with staff capacity, and its true explanation requires further research.

3.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

Mergers prompted by commissioning. In December 2008, five Women's Aid groups merged to form Manchester Women's Aid. The impetus for this came partly from the group themselves, but it was the changes to Supporting People commissioning that prompted them to act. Only three Supporting People tenders were put out across Manchester: one for refuge accommodation; one for floating support services; and one for emergency accommodation. Respondents from both Manchester Women's Aid and Manchester City Council said that tendering for the contract would have been impossible without merging because of the complexity of co-ordinating five different organisations to bid for one contract.

When interviewed, respondents from both Manchester Women's Aid and Manchester City Council commented that the merger has been a positive thing. It has simplified relationships and the resulting voluntary organisation is now big enough to think more strategically about its services and funding, and represent other local voluntary groups at local authority meetings. Many of the interviewees thought that the merger had worked because the right people had been put in post.

However, it is worth noting that as all interviews took place after the merger, it was not possible to interview representatives of the organisations that no longer exist, who might have had a different perspective on the merger.

The specialist black women's refuge formed part of the merger and is still run as a black women's refuge, retaining the specialism that existed before the merger. However, the South-Asian women's refuge wanted to remain separate and did not merge.

Summary of Section 3

Previously published research suggests that the number of VAW voluntary services has not changed significantly in the last two years, although it was reported in interviews that the sexual violence sub-sector had seen significant closures of services.

There are widespread fears within the VAW sector that funding is about to reduce significantly, although this view was not unanimous and some felt that the funding picture was more stable. These perceptions came through in the literature and in the interview evidence from the stakeholders.

No evidence was found in the literature that the number of BAME services has declined, although some stakeholders were particularly concerned about the stability of BAME VAW organisations.

The GuideStar analysis shows that the VAW voluntary sector, excluding the sexual violence sector, is dominated by medium-sized charities. This contradicts the perception of stakeholders that the sector is dominated by small organisations.

There is considerable change in the VAW voluntary sector, with both service development and closure, and the emergence of a few potential mergers partly in response to the changing commissioning environment (see Section 3). This was supported by all sources of evidence. The evidence from the stakeholder interviews showed a perception that mergers may be a risk to specialist services.

4. Influence of external factors on the VAW sector: Changes to local government

There have been substantial changes to how local government distributes funding over the last five years, for example:

- more funding being devolved to local government;
- less funding going to grants and more funding going through commissioning arrangements (Kane, 2009) (Note: commissioning is generally local authorities contracting charities to provide a particular service, while grant-funding is funding for the charity as whole); and,
- the introduction of new national indicators chosen by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

One key change has been to Supporting People funding, which, as of April 2009, is no longer ring-fenced (see glossary), so local authorities are no longer directed to spend budgets specifically on housing-related services for vulnerable groups. (It is not possible to break down how much of Supporting People's funding goes to VAW voluntary sector organisations). As local government is the primary source of statutory funding for charities, changes that happen to the way that it provides funding can have a major impact on charities' stability and sustainability. The funding priorities of local government are determined by various things: direction of central government, the priorities decided by the local strategic partnership for the local area agreement and which national indicators they choose. All this will feed into how much emphasis is given to VAW and therefore the stability of VAW voluntary organisations' statutory funding.

4.1 Evidence from the literature

Changes to commissioning are affecting the whole of the third sector.

There has been a clear shift from grant funding to contract funding over recent years. Grants from government have remained more or less static in real terms, with a slight decrease over the last year, while contract funding increased by 9.8% to £7.8bn in 2006/2007 (Kane *et al.* 2009). This general increase in contract funding corresponds with perceptions amongst the VAW voluntary sector, although some of the stakeholders interviewed suggested that grants from government sources were falling, which does not match the picture presented of what is happening in the voluntary sector overall where the level of grants is remaining static.

Commissioning may be favouring larger organisations. Women's Resource Centre (2008b) claims that Women's Resource Centre's members¹⁰ have been losing out to bigger organisations for contracts, or more often, not even putting in a bid for a contract because of limited capacity or inability to provide services to men and women. However, this source does not explain how the case studies and literature that inform it were selected. Women's Resource Centre (2007a) also expresses concern regarding a lack of knowledge about domestic violence amongst commissioners and potential subsequent impact on services commissioned. In addition, they expressed concern that some black women's organisations and other grass-roots groups felt isolated or overlooked in multi-agency initiatives.

¹⁰ To become a full member of the Women's Resource Centre organisations must be not-for-profit based in the UK, support the mission and aims of the Women's Resource Centre, have as one of its main purposes to raise the status of women and have an approved Equal Opportunities policy in place. Full members are entitled to vote at the Women's Resource Centre's Annual General Meeting and nominate candidates for our Board of Trustees. See http://www.wrc.org.uk/membership/members_listing/default.aspx for more details.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) may not be prioritising VAW in the most appropriate way. Gudnadottir *et al.* (2007) claims that women are not being represented on LSPs and this may be affecting local authorities' priorities.¹¹ Although the Scottish approach to Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and selection of indicators is not directly analogous to the English approach, there are interesting lessons to be drawn from research for Scottish Women's Aid (2008). This found that 20 local authorities chose the indicator on the number of domestic abuse incidents per 100,000 of the population – however, half of local authorities choosing this indicator had a target to increase the number of incidents reported while half had a target to decrease reporting. This is despite guidance in Hester and Westmorland (2005) that explicitly states that domestic violence is an under-reported crime and so any targets related to reports should be to increase reporting in the short- to medium-term.

Supporting People has provided stability for some organisations but may have been problematic for BAME organisations. Women's Resource Centre (2007a) notes that Supporting People funding has provided domestic violence organisations with a greater sense of financial security. However, this source notes that, as Supporting People accounts for over half of providers' income on average, any changes to contracts could have a big impact on the sustainability of particular services. There are also anecdotes in the literature on BAME organisations that Supporting People funding and the reported trend in favour of mainstream provision has caused volatility in income and put pressure on some projects to make cuts, merge with other organisations or diversify their services (Thiara and Hussain 2005; Imkaan, 2008; Mouj 2008). Women's Resource Centre (2007a) reports that two BAME housing associations were considering being taken over by a larger housing association. Thiara and Hussain 2005

¹¹ The three indicators relating to VAW were:

- NI 26 Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence (taken up by 4 out of 150 localities);
- NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence (taken up by 75 out of 150 localities); and
- NI 34 Domestic violence – murder (taken up by 0 out of 150 localities).

suggest that Supporting People budgets may not necessarily factor in the extra costs BAME organisations must incur in order to be effective, such as the costs of interpretation and translation.

There is anecdotal evidence that the Supporting People programme has required BAME domestic violence organisations to assess their effectiveness more systematically than they did in the past (Thiara and Hussain, 2005). Much of the literature from the BAME sub-sector touches on difficulties with providing evidence for funders (Sheridan, 2004; Thiara and Hussain, 2005; Banga and Gill, 2008; Gill and Banga, 2008c; Imkaan, 2008). In particular, for Supporting People funding, Thiara and Hussain (2005) suggested that the quality assessment framework is a 'one-size-fits-all' tool that does not take into account the specific situation of BAME organisations.

BAME organisations may be suffering from low priority at a local level. Gill and Banga (2008a) suggest that the stability and sustainability of BAME women's organisations is affected if local authorities give the low priority to funding initiatives that benefit BAME groups. It cross-references *Map of Gaps* (2007) by Coy *et al.*, noting that a third of local authorities in the UK have no specialised support services for VAW and fewer than one in ten have specialist services for BAME women.

Possible pressure from some funders to open up to men. Women's Resource Centre (2007b) states that 70% of the women-only services it surveyed felt that being women-only made it harder for them to secure funding. Some organisations reported that funders and decision-makers are increasingly pressurising women-only services to deliver services to men. However the response rate to this survey is unclear so we do not know how representative the answers are.

4.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

4.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

The word ‘commissioning’ was used in various ways by the stakeholders. Although commissioning can refer to a whole process from identifying needs and defining services through to securing services, stakeholders tended to use it just to refer to competitive tendering. In reporting findings from the stakeholder interviews, we have tried to be as precise as possible whilst still accurately conveying what the respondents said.

Respondents were not clear where LSPs are getting data on need.

Assessing need in a local area is a key part of the commissioning of services by LSPs. Respondents from some funders and voluntary organisations were unsure about whether government or voluntary organisations should be responsible for collecting data on need for VAW services. These stakeholders highlighted specialist issues where data about the levels of need are particularly limited, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

Some funder respondents reported that devolution was failing VAW voluntary organisations while others thought that local authorities had the ability to judge needs and that differences in provision between areas were the inevitable result of differences in local priorities. One of the funder respondents thought that domestic violence struggled to compete as a priority against other forms of crime within local authorities.

There is a common perception that commissioning may be making the VAW sector’s income less stable. Many of the stakeholders interviewed, especially, but not confined to, those from within the sector, thought that the VAW sector was becoming less stable due to problems with commissioning. Most respondents within the sector felt that the commissioning process involved more time than applying for grants did, as well as new skills that many organisations fear they currently lack. In addition, many respondents from the sector felt that commissioning favoured large organisations with lower unit costs, and commented that quality, which they felt to be their strong point, was not valued properly. Many stakeholders raised concerns about the quality of commissioners: some

respondents within the sector said that too often commissioners were using inappropriate procurement processes for funding voluntary organisations, instead of using the full range of purchasing options available. Many of the funders and voluntary organisations interviewed thought that the domestic violence sub-sector was better equipped than other VAW voluntary sub-sectors to face the new funding landscape.

Many respondents from the VAW sector thought that sexual violence voluntary organisations struggled to compete in commissioning processes and struggled to find the time to do the necessary networking required to access funding.

There was some perception that the level of take-up of VAW National Indicators were lower than it was. Some respondents both within and outside the sector thought that too few local authorities had taken up the national indicators on domestic violence and sexual violence. While it is true that very few local authorities have selected the sexual violence national indicator, half of local authorities selected the national indicator relating to repeat incidents of domestic violence.¹² Many stakeholders within the sector said also that considered these national indicators to be inadequate since the holistic work for which voluntary organisations are renowned does not easily fit into a framework that only measures criminal justice outputs. Some stakeholders from the VAW sector said that if voluntary organisations get funding through the commissioning framework, they risk changing their work priorities to fit with the outcomes that funders measure them on. (See section on funders' practices below).

¹² The three indicators relating to VAW were:

- NI 26 Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence (taken up by 4 out of 150 localities);
- NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence (taken up by 75 out of 150 localities); and
- NI 34 Domestic violence – murder (taken up by 0 out of 150 localities).

Each of these indicators is to be monitored using data from police forces and authorities. Department for Communities and Local Government (2008). National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions, Department for Communities and Local Government.

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are perceived as providing little funding to the VAW voluntary sector. Respondents from both funder and voluntary organisations suggested that it is difficult to get funding from PCTs and few voluntary organisations within the VAW sector actually do so. Several possible explanations were given for this: that PCTs take a medical approach to helping victims, whereas voluntary organisations prefer an holistic approach; that PCTs are difficult to engage with and not easily influenced (see Section 4.5); that PCTs demand high standards of evidence, which voluntary organisations find difficult to meet; and, especially for minority groups like people with disabilities, that on a local level there is not the critical mass of cases to make PCTs interested in this work. Some respondents within the sector said that the targets for local authorities relating to VAW are too linked to the criminal justice system and therefore the health aspects of their work are missed by local authorities and PCTs.

Removing the ring-fence for Supporting People is perceived as a direct threat to the stability of the domestic violence sector. All respondents from the within the domestic violence sub-sector were concerned about the effects of removing the Supporting People ring-fence from local authority funding (it is not possible to break out how much of the sector's funding is made up of Supporting People funding). However, as this happened in April 2009 it is too early to know what the effects of this will be. Many respondents from funder and voluntary organisations thought that *Supporting People* funding has increased funding to the domestic violence sub-sector and fostered stability.

There is perceived to be a 'disconnect' between central and local government. Respondents from many voluntary organisations and funders thought that problems arise if central government pilots new approaches and then looks to local government to continue funding them without giving local voluntary organisations enough time to comment and negotiate. Respondents from both voluntary and funder organisations gave funding for Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) as a recent example of this. Respondents said the national IDVA funding had not been in place long enough to allow

voluntary organisations time to make the case to local authorities of the value of funding these approaches. Respondents said that this problem existed despite the evidence that IDVAs are effective.

Respondents within the sector were concerned that, while lobbying has traditionally been the preserve of national umbrella organisations who made the case to central government to secure funding for the VAW sector, devolution will require smaller local charities to approach local government directly in order to secure funding – something that they may lack the capacity or skills to do. Most respondents within the sector were concerned about whether there was sufficient training in and understanding of VAW amongst commissioners in local government.

4.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

The key concerns identified in the literature (section 4.1) and the analysis of stakeholder perceptions (section 4.2) were:

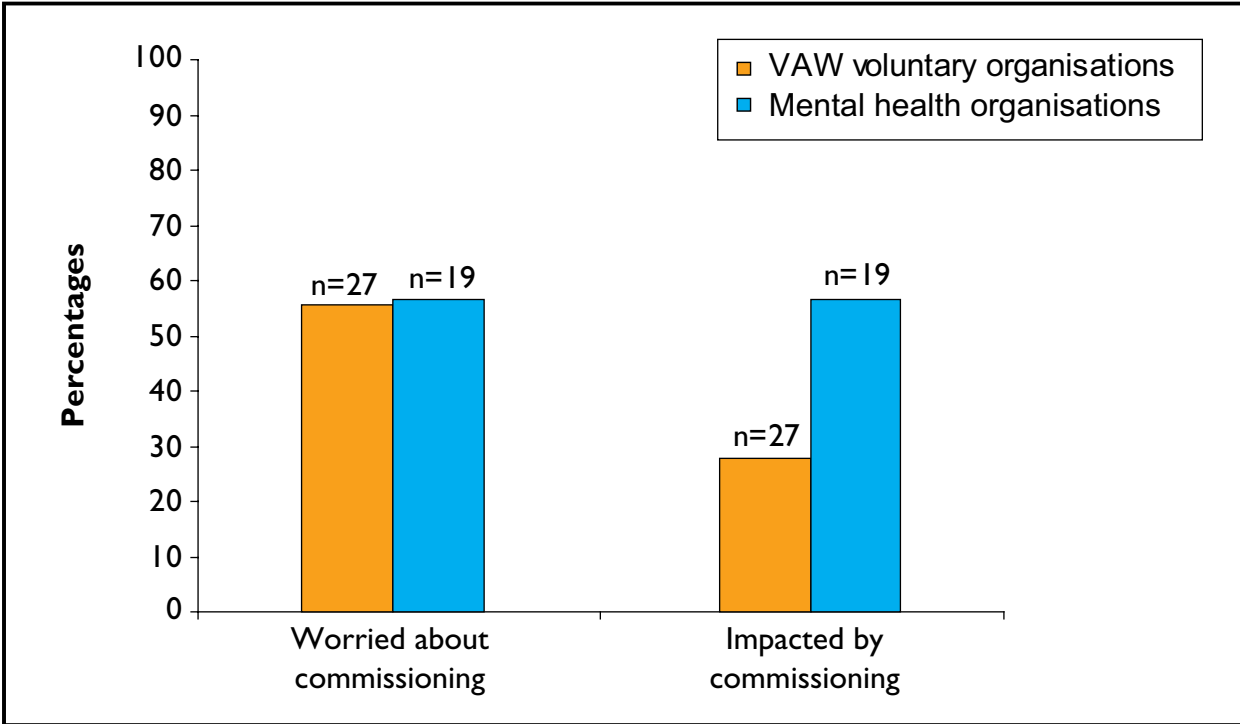
- the potential impact on VAW of the move to competitive tendering within commissioning;
- the potential impact on VAW of the removal of the Supporting People funding ring-fence;
- whether needs assessment in VAW and take-up of VAW national indicators by LSPs was fully appropriate;
- perceived low levels of funding by PCTs;
- whether strategy from national government was sufficiently clear; and,
- a possible low priority given to BAME organisations.

In this section, we have investigated issues with commissioning and Supporting People in more detail through the sampled organisations. The other issues are covered in the local case studies (section 4.4).

Concerns about commissioning. There were similar levels of concerns within the VAW and mental health samples about commissioning (Figure 4), but more mental health organisations said they had been involved in commissioning already.

All domestic violence voluntary organisations except two reported that they were worried by the move to tendering, or had already been affected by it. Two out of three BAME organisations were worried by commissioning. Outside of the domestic violence sub-sector and the BAME sub-sector however, none of the voluntary organisations reported that they were worried about commissioning. This is probably because domestic violence organisations are more likely to hold large contracts with local authorities and so be affected by the move to commissioning.

Figure 4: Concerns about commissioning in VAW and mental health sector



Experiences of commissioning. There were seven VAW voluntary organisations in the sample which reported that they had already been involved in commissioning; three of these had lost tenders. For the three organisations which had lost tenders, these were for small parts of the organisation's work rather than for something which threatened the sustainability of the whole organisation. We do not know if there was a particular type of organisation that they are losing tenders to. The other organisations which had already been affected by commissioning said they had been affected in a variety of ways, such as employing consultants to respond to tenders, or that the increase in commissioning had reduced the amount of funding available for innovative approaches.

Ten mental health organisations reported that they had already been involved in commissioning. Of these, four said that they had lost tenders. However, at least two of these had also won tenders. Three organisations said they had chosen to exclude themselves from tenders for certain contracts due to capacity or scale issues (eg, they could not provide services for the whole county), and one said that it had decided to terminate a contract with its local social services because it did not cover the cost of the service. In two cases, the organisations' experience was reported to be related to the introduction of the Government's *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies* (IAPT) programme, which was affecting contracts for counselling services. One organisation no longer received funding from the PCT for its counselling service, because that funding had been transferred to the IAPT programme. It therefore closed the service. The other organisation could not tender for the IAPT programme because its county council was doing pilots with preferred providers. These preferred providers were required to cover a broader geographical area than the organisation could reach, so the only way it could participate in the IAPT programme was through a sub-contracting process. This may have either positive or negative implications for the future sustainability of the service.

One VAW organisation had opened up its services to men to fit the tender requirements better. Apart from this one issue, the problems raised by the VAW and mental health sectors were very similar. These can be grouped into two broad categories, information and time to complete tenders and size of tenders:

- **Information and time to complete tenders.** Two of the three VAW organisations that had lost tenders thought that the commissioning process that they had gone through was poor, with little notice given, too much information required within the short timeframe, or contracts being too large in scope for most local voluntary organisations to be able to compete.

One mental health organisation described the commissioning process as 'horrendous' and noted that it was not consistently notified about tendering opportunities. Another organisation commented that a last-minute and unclear communication from the PCT last year had caused the organisation to panic and submit some ill thought-out proposals. As a result, the organisation had not got anything out of the process.

- **Size of tenders.** Small organisations in both the VAW and mental health voluntary sectors felt that their size put them at a disadvantage. Even one VAW organisation that already operated at a regional level thought that the contracts that were going out to tender were on too large a scale for it to bid for. In this case, commissioners had insisted on getting bids from national players as well. However, the larger voluntary domestic violence providers also did not feel that they were benefitting from a move to commissioning and their estimates of the proportion of bids that they won was not particularly high.

This issue of large tenders being offered had led one mental health voluntary organisation to extend some of its services into a new geographical area. Other mental health organisations did not have the geographical reach to be eligible for contracts, so they said they had either excluded themselves from the tendering process, or worked in partnership with other organisations. One of these organisations commented that it only tenders for smaller commissioning projects. Increasingly, it finds it has to compete for tenders against 'bigger players'. It also remarked that tendering for large contracts is difficult without

the 'adequate infrastructure'; in 2008 it discontinued its CEO post due to lack of funding, so the trustees are now responsible for day-to-day management. The organisation finds itself in a self-reinforcing situation because the lack of a CEO is having a negative impact on its ability to secure funding, and the more the organisation is not seen doing big pieces of work, the less likely big players in the sector are to think of it as a potential partner. One of the largest mental health organisations in the sample noted that it has been well-equipped to deal with changes to commissioning due to its size and the fact that it has good relationships with local commissioners.

Preparing for the commissioning environment. Many VAW voluntary organisations were making changes to get ready for commissioning. One organisation was hoping to put in a bid for a small tender as a **practice exercise** before it had to put in a bid for its large Supporting People contract. Another organisation has had training on the Gender Equality Duty to equip itself to ensure proper commissioning practice. Another organisation has started on a quality assurance scheme and is making sure that all its staff are registered professionally with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Another is also going through the PQASSO scheme¹³ because the county council is encouraging partnership working and believes that quality assurance schemes can reassure potential partners. Another refuge organisation is looking at improving the quality of the housing it provides, making it more accessible to disabled women in order to help its chances of securing the Supporting People tender. Another domestic violence organisation has brought in consultants to help with its tendering process.

¹³ PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) is a assurance system designed by Charities Evaluation Services and intended to help voluntary organisations be more effective and efficient. For more details see (<http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=42>).

Fewer mental health voluntary organisations commented on changes that they were making in preparation for commissioning. None of the six organisations who had received some form of support with capacity-building specifically said that this was to help them prepare for commissioning, though consultants had been employed to develop business plans, fundraising strategies and improve quality assurance. A couple of other organisations reported that they were considering merging with other organisations so that they could save resources by sharing back-office functions, and/or tender for contracts that cover wider geographical areas. Mental health voluntary organisations also commented on the importance of building relationships with local commissioners.

Views about commissioning. While valuable service and capacity improvements have been reported above, none of the VAW voluntary organisations in the sample made positive comments about commissioning.

Only one mental health organisation made unequivocally positive comments about commissioning. It remarked that contracts can no longer be secured with ‘a nod and a wink’ and noted that its local PCT now requires more rigorous monitoring. Two other organisations noted that commissioning practices have become more transparent. One of these noted that contracts are advertised rather than the process working on a ‘closed circle’ basis.

Some mental health organisations noted that, despite their concerns about aspects of the process, they had been successful in winning contracts, and some recognised the longer-term benefits. For example, one organisation suggested that a more open and competitive tendering process may drive up standards. Another organisation noted that the new open tendering process in its area was more time-consuming, but it could see that it also had a positive impact, encouraging voluntary organisations to take ‘a more business-like approach’.

Removal of the Supporting People ring-fence. The review of evidence and stakeholder interviews identified that the potential impact of the removal of the ring-fence on Supporting People funding was a serious concern to organisations

working in the domestic violence sub-sector. There is a correlation between having Supporting People funding and low income volatility. Eleven of the sixteen VAW organisations in the sample that received Supporting People (fifteen domestic violence organisations and one sexual violence organisation) funding had low income volatility. However, the smaller voluntary organisations appeared to be less likely to receive Supporting People funding. Sixteen out of twenty seven organisations received money from Supporting People. All of these had incomes above £100,000 per year.

Supporting People funding is less common in the mental health sector and also skewed towards larger organisations. There was no link between receiving Supporting People funding and income volatility.

While, as noted above, some domestic violence voluntary organisations were worried about the removal of the ring-fence on Supporting People funding, more were worried generally about commissioning (which in most cases is commissioning by Supporting People). None of the three mental health voluntary organisations that had received Supporting People funding was worried, and this may be because two of them were sub-contractors and the funding was a less significant income stream. One domestic violence provider commented that the removal of the Supporting People ring-fence might be a factor in the current difficulty around recruitment that the organisation was experiencing. This organisation hypothesised that domestic violence workers would not wish to move from organisations that have clarity over their local authority funding, to organisations where the situation might be more uncertain.

Most domestic violence providers in the sample said that Supporting People had brought increased stability to the sub-sector, although it is more prescriptive about what funding can be spent on than the funding stream that it replaced. As Supporting People often sets three or five year plans for domestic violence services, the amount of money is unlikely to change significantly in this time frame and voluntary organisations can therefore struggle to respond to changes in the external environment or expand within the timescale. For example, one charity

said that they had experienced difficulties around changes in their costs, and because the contract was inflexible there was no room to renegotiate this for a few years. This could explain why organisations with Supporting People funding have less income volatility than other organisations.

4.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

Commissioning processes. The case studies were designed to represent a variety of relationships rather than accurately representing the national picture. Interestingly, it was in Manchester where charities were most likely to report being confused by the tendering process, even though this was the area where relations between the local authority and VAW voluntary sector seemed to be best. This seemed to be because the large number of organisations made co-ordination difficult, and the merger of Manchester Women's Aid had changed potential partnerships. Manchester City Council designed the Supporting People tender for floating support to provide access for both men and women. This meant that Manchester Women's Aid had to open up its floating support services to men in order to win the tender. However, it was felt that Manchester City Council Supporting People team had not considered the Gender Equality Duty in the design of the tender.

In both BANES and Wellingborough there was just one large provider of refuge services and no joint tendering. In Wellingborough the main refuge provider is Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Women's Aid, which has been there for 37 years. When Supporting People was first introduced there was no competition for the tender. However the landscape has since changed and commissioners in all areas felt that providers would be vulnerable to outside competitive bids in the future. Commissioners also spoke of the 'danger' of attracting non-specialist bids, which implies that they value the specialisation of domestic violence charities while feeling that they might not be able to protect this specialism in competitive tenders.

In Bath, the main refuge provider is Nextlink Housing which won the Supporting People contract from Bath Women's Aid in 2007. All relevant interviewees thought that the handover had a minimal impact on service users. In BANES, relationships between voluntary organisations and contract managers seemed to be good. However some organisations felt that they were not able to influence the local authority at a strategic level. The research design did not allow for us to follow this up with Bath Women's Aid as it had closed.

All statutory interviewees stressed in each of the three areas that they were still going through a learning process with commissioning and that they 'weren't there yet'.

Commissioners consider removing the Supporting People ring-fence is not a problem for VAW. None of the Supporting People commissioners in the three areas felt that the removal of the ring-fence would mean that less money would go to voluntary organisations working in the field of domestic violence. The commissioners suggested that safeguards were in place to protect vulnerable client groups. However, it is possible that there will be less traditional refuge funding as commissioners talked enthusiastically about the possibility of joint commissioning new services with other teams and being more flexible in their approaches.

Some local authorities in Greater Manchester have disbanded the teams within the local authority that administer SP funding which may potentially lead to some loss of specialist knowledge in commissioning refuge services. While this is unlikely to happen in Manchester City Council, the structure of its SP team is changing; the next 1–2 years will be an uncertain time for SP teams as well as voluntary organisations.

Voluntary organisations contribute to needs assessments. In all three case study areas, voluntary organisations played a significant role in contributing to the local authorities' needs assessments of domestic violence. As well as providing basic data on demand, voluntary organisations were seen as being a particularly useful source for highlighting more 'hidden' issues, eg, rural domestic violence, FGM and women with no recourse to public funds.

Manchester City Council had paid a consultant to do a needs assessment, while BANES and Wellingborough relied on recent research and government reports to assess needs. One commissioner in BANES noted that the domestic abuse coordinator used to play a pivotal role in bringing together data on need and that since she had left information was much harder to come by.

We did not speak to anybody who could comment on needs assessments for sexual violence services.

PCTs can be difficult to access. In both Northamptonshire PCT and BANES PCT, no-one appropriate could be found to interview for this research. There may be many reasons for this, but it is worth noting that the experience fits with the views of stakeholders that PCTs can be difficult to access. Even within Manchester, where there is a clear contact person for domestic abuse, it was felt that one person was not enough to both sit on external boards and committees and try to influence the PCT itself.

Most VAW charities mentioned that they often got referrals from mental health services.

Summary of Section 4

The move to commissioning through competitive tendering is perceived as the biggest threat to organisational stability and sustainability. This came through particularly strongly in the evidence from the stakeholders and the sampled organisations. Removal of the Supporting People ring-fence may reduce funding to domestic violence refuges, however evidence from the local case studies suggests that this is likely to be through funding for fewer beds rather than removal of contracts altogether. Evidence from the sampled organisations showed that they are more worried about losing their contracts completely through the tendering process.

Charities across the VAW and mental health sample reported numerous case studies of commissioning processes causing problems. Commissioners themselves acknowledged that processes were still evolving. There was anecdotal evidence from commissioners that while they value specialist domestic violence charities, they feel they are unable to favour this specialism in competitive tenders.

Only one organisations in the VAW sample had opened its services up to men because of funding requirements. This is an interesting contrast to evidence from the literature that women-only organisations are increasingly pressured by funders to open up to men. See Section 5 for evidence on how the GED has affected women-only status of charities.

VAW charities play a crucial role in local area needs assessments. Anecdotal evidence from the local case studies showed that there is no standard approach to assessing need for VAW services in a local areas.

5. Influence of external factors on the VAW sector: National policy

While local government is the main funder of voluntary organisations, it operates within a framework laid out by national government. This framework may include direct policy about the issue, policies relating to the way that funding is given out, or other policies that tangentially affect the way that local government funds organisations.

There are some particular government policies which have been thought to affect the VAW voluntary sector. One is the Gender Equality Duty which requires public bodies to promote and take action to bring about gender equality, which involves looking at issues for men and women, understanding why inequalities exist and how to overcome them, and creating effective service provision for all, so that everyone can access services that meet their needs. Another policy is the Community Cohesion agenda which is about enabling different groups of people to get on well together. The relevant recommendation for community-specific VAW organisations is laid out in the report *Our Shared Future*: 'the presumption should be against Single Group Funding unless there is a clear reason for capacity building within a group or community' (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007).

Levels of central and local statutory funding are one indicator of how likely changes to these funding streams will impact on the stability of organisations. Devolution of policy and funding to local government makes it more difficult to make conclusive statements about funding gaps and the impact of recent government policies on the VAW voluntary sector because the information about funding is not collected at a national level. Identifying how much central government funding the VAW sector receives is also difficult as central government does not provide a breakdown the amount of money given to voluntary organisations for work on violence against women.

5.1 Evidence from the literature

There are some concerns that the Gender Equality Duty may be being misinterpreted. One respondent quoted in Women's Resource Centre (2008a) reported that her organisation was being asked to justify its women-only status 'despite the Gender Equality Duty'. Women's Resource Centre (2008a) states that 15 Rape Crisis centres reported that they had been challenged about being single sex, but the source does not make clear over what time period this took place and whether the Gender Equality Duty has had any impact on this. Women's Resource Centre (2007b) also said that many organisations were worried that the Gender Equality Duty might be used inappropriately to direct funding to services open to men.

The *Funding Issues* survey by The Survivors Trust asked about the impact of the Gender Equality Duty, although the response rate is low (35 organisations, representing approximately 30% of Survivor's Trust membership¹⁴) and so results have to be treated with caution (The Survivors Trust, 2009). The survey found that 5 out of 34 respondents had extended services to other client groups to get funding, but only two out of 19 respondents thought that Gender Equality Duty was being misinterpreted. Four respondents out of 35 thought it was more difficult to get funding for a women-only or men-only service. Of these, 2 specified that it was more difficult to get funding for men-only services. One respondent thought that it was easier to get funding for women-only services over mixed services.

¹⁴ The Survivors Trust is a national umbrella agency for 130 specialist voluntary sector agencies providing a range of counselling, therapeutic and support services working with women, men and children who are victims/survivors of rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse. For more information please see (<http://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/>).

There are some concerns that Community Cohesion agenda may pose some threats to VAW BAME voluntary organisations. There is a lack of robust evidence relating to the impact of government policies on BAME voluntary organisations dealing with violence against women. However, three of the sources suggested that the Community Cohesion agenda was influencing an increasing number of local authorities to put BAME organisations under pressure to merge with mainstream services, or to broaden their remit to other ethnic groups (Voice4Change for England, 2008; Imkaan, 2008; Mouj, 2008).

Two sources suggested that the specialist nature of BAME women's organisations means that government policies favouring mainstream, generic services may affect their ability to secure funding. However, neither of these sources specified how many such organisations are being affected and neither were classified as robust (Sheridan, 2004; Thiara and Hussain, 2005).

5.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

5.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

Central government is seen by some as not providing enough strategic direction to local authorities on provision of VAW services. Some funder respondents felt that the VAW sector's strength in lobbying may have led to a situation where central government was seen as allocating funding on the basis of lobbying demands rather than coherent funding strategy.¹⁵ Some of the funders interviewed thought that the VAW voluntary sector organisations felt they should be funded because they were inherently a 'good thing' and this meant that they might try to rely on having the 'ear of ministers' rather than providing evidence that they are effective.

¹⁵ The use of the word 'lobbying' by stakeholders was not explored in the research.

Most stakeholders from within and outside the sector said that the lack of a strong, clear VAW strategy from central government meant that the issue had a lower priority at the local level (since the stakeholder interviews were conducted the Home Office has published a strategy on VAW). Some respondents from within the sector suggested that whilst government had comprehensively addressed domestic violence, sexual violence was less well understood, and therefore less money had gone to sexual violence charities.

Most respondents from within and outside the sector had a common view that central government departments have not worked as well together on VAW as they might have done. Some funders mentioned a difference in cultures between central government departments that have a delivery chain and rely on commissioning, such as the Department of Health and Communities and Local Government, and those that do not, such as the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice. These funders thought that those without a delivery chain were less likely to understand the difficulties of directing local commissioners to fund VAW.

Direct central government funding has contributed to stability. Some respondents believed that the VAW voluntary sector has become more stable in recent years because central government had put more money into the sector. They thought the situation for Rape Crisis centres has improved due to the Government's special fund of 2008.

Some funders commented that small VAW voluntary organisations have become reliant on central government funding and have not explored all the other options available to them. These stakeholders thought that central government funding was easier to obtain for small organisations that could rely on help from their umbrella body, rather than having to lobby lots of local government bodies themselves. Evidence for this view might lie in research showing that applications to central government were significantly more likely to be successful than applications to local government (Women's Resource Centre 2008a).

The Gender Equality Duty. Feedback from the stakeholder interviews on the impact of the Gender Equality Duty was mixed. Many respondents thought that it was too early to gauge its impact; some from within the sector thought it had been misunderstood by local authorities and had led to a policy for provision of mixed services. Others, representing both funders and voluntary organisations, felt that it had the potential for positive change.

The Community Cohesion agenda. Most respondents from within and outside the sector were aware of the Southall Black Sisters case against Ealing Borough Council.¹⁶ Some respondents from the sector said they felt there had been pressure from local government on BAME voluntary organisations to provide non-specialist services or merge with larger providers. This reflects findings in the literature. Funder respondents were more likely to suggest that the policy had initially been misinterpreted in some cases, and to note that the terms have since been clarified so local authorities are aware that they can still commission specialist services. However, some respondents from the sector felt that the Community Cohesion agenda is used by local authorities as the basis for funding generic services, which tend to have lower unit costs.

5.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

The evidence review (section 5.1) and stakeholders interviews (section 5.3) revealed that there may be problems which affect the stability and sustainability of VAW voluntary organisations associated with:

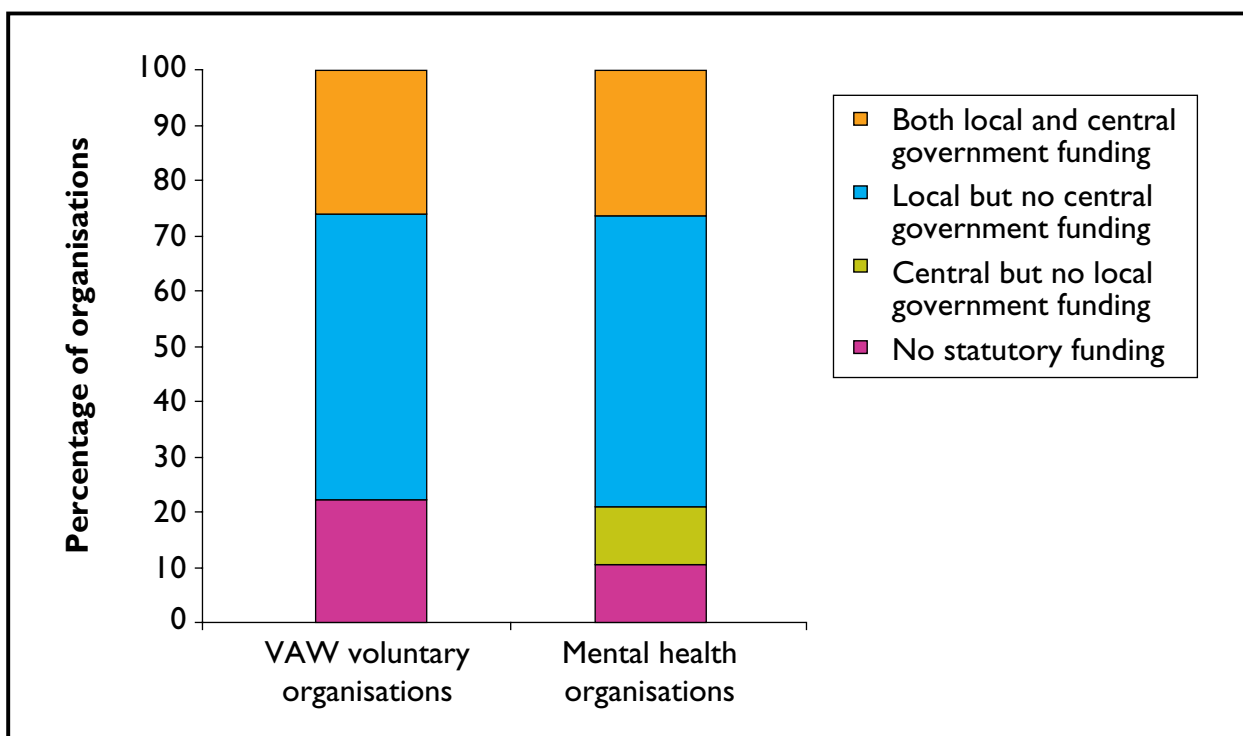
- the potential impact of the Gender Equality Duty;
- the potential impact of the Community Cohesion agenda;

¹⁶ In 2008, Southall Black Sisters took Ealing Council to the high court after Ealing Council withdraw its funding. The judgement said that throughout the case ‘Ealing believed that cohesion could only be achieved through making a grant to an organisation which would provide services equally to all within the borough’. However, the judgement said that there is no dichotomy between the promotion of equality and cohesion and the provision of specialist services to an ethnic minority.

- a lack of a sufficiently clear VAW strategy; and,
- central government funding being a possible disincentive for small charities to approach local government.

This section uses the sampled organisations to look at where statutory funding was coming from, and the perceived effects of the Gender Equality Duty and the Community Cohesion policies. We explore the level of strategic direction provided by national government in the local case studies in Section 5.4.

Figure 5: Where voluntary organisations get statutory funding from



Government funding. Figure 5 summarises the proportion of government funding received by VAW and mental health voluntary organisations in our sample.

Central government funding was most prevalent amongst Rape Crisis centres in the sample. Six out of the seven sexual violence charities received funding from both central government and local government. Four of them had received money through the cross-government sexual violence Special Fund. All were pleased that the government was funding services addressing sexual violence, and two explicitly referred to the sexual violence Special Fund as saving them from closure. Another said that Home Office funding had unlocked local authority funding as local authorities regarded it as an indication of quality.

Central funding for mental health charities came from the Department of Health, the National Institute for Mental Health in England (now the National Mental Health Development Unit) and Futurebuilders.

If providing central government funding acts as a disincentive to lobby local government for funding, as some stakeholders suggested, the chart above shows that it would not just be an issue for the VAW sector, but for the mental health sector as well.

Gender Equality Duty. Eighteen out of twenty seven VAW organisations reported that the Gender Equality Duty had no impact upon them. Four VAW organisations thought that there had been signs that the Gender Equality Duty was having a positive impact – they believed that their commissioners had understood it, or the organisation had training on it in preparation to use it if its funding is cut. Two VAW organisations thought that the Gender Equality Duty was being obfuscated and used to open up more services for men. One organisation thought that the Gender Equality Duty was leading to more services for men, but that this was positive. One organisation had opened up its services to men as it thought that funders would expect it to because of the Gender Equality Duty. There was no obvious trend in terms of the types of organisation which felt that the Gender Equality Duty had affected them.

Community Cohesion agenda. When asked about the impact of government policy one VAW organisation mentioned the Community Cohesion agenda and how this may have affected the funding of single issue groups. Although the Community Cohesion agenda had not affected them directly, the Southall Black Sister case (referred to in Section 5.3) had made this BAME VAW voluntary organisation more worried about its own funding.

5.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

High awareness of the Gender Equality Duty. Awareness of the Gender Equality Duty was high everywhere across the case study areas both within voluntary organisations and local authorities, with the exception of domestic violence charities in Bath.

No-one interviewed from the statutory sector said that the Gender Equality Duty had any impact on the way that their services were commissioned. Many felt that they were already abiding by the duty. One commissioner commented that it was ‘lumped in with all of the other equalities duties so it has to compete for attention’. Only one statutory representative (out of nine) had been involved in the gender impact assessment of a tender for VAW services. This had led to a floating support Supporting People tender specifying that the service had to be open to both men and women. Two commissioners and one voluntary organisation said that they had thought about access for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community in response to the Gender Equality Duty.

As in the sampled organisations, some local voluntary organisations felt that the Gender Equality Duty was ‘something to have in your back pocket’. Only one charity (a sexual violence charity) had tried to use the duty as a lobbying tool, but the chief executive felt that she had been ignored. Many charities commented that it was difficult to find the time to think about high-level policy issues.

Community Cohesion agenda. The only specialist BAME refuge that we spoke to was Saheli¹⁷ in Manchester, although both Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Women's Aid (WENWA) and Manchester Women's Aid provide specialist BAME accommodation for victims of domestic violence within the larger organisation. There was no specialist provision in BANES. Of the three case study areas, the only area in which the Community Cohesion agenda was mentioned was in Manchester, in which it had been considered during the merger of Manchester Women's Aid, involving a merger with a black women's refuge. Saheli had been encouraged to merge with Manchester Women's Aid and felt that the Community Cohesion policy had added to the case for this, making it necessary for them to justify the importance of having a culturally specific service for South Asian victims of domestic violence. Saheli does, however, remain a separate refuge.

National strategy on VAW. In contrast to some of the stakeholders' comments, many commissioners in the case study areas felt that the national strategy on domestic violence was clear. Awareness of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and specialist domestic violence courts was high, and commissioners were aware of the recommended number of refuge spaces per 100,000 women. However there was no clarity on other aspects of VAW, eg, sexual violence and FGM. Only a few commissioners knew anything about these issues, and those that did said they were unaware of what was expected from national government. One local commissioner commented that within the current situation they were more likely to take a steer on their priorities from local voluntary organisations than from national government. All of the sexual violence voluntary organisations in the three case study areas said they found it very difficult to get representation within local authorities.

¹⁷ Saheli is a refuge for Asian women facing domestic violence in Manchester. See (<http://www.saheli.org.uk/home>) for more details.

Summary of Section 5

There are concerns that the Gender Equality Duty is being misinterpreted. These concerns were expressed by the stakeholders and the sampled organisations. However there is little evidence from the sampled organisations or the local case studies of it having any impact, either positive or negative. Some voluntary organisations commented that it was ‘something to have in your back pocket’.

Government funding makes up a large proportion of the funding of VAW voluntary organisations. This was clear from the evidence from the sampled organisations. No VAW organisations had central government funding without local government funding (unlike the mental health sector). The VAW organisations in the sample and the interviewed stakeholders feel that there is a lack of clear strategy from government.

Most Rape Crisis centres in the sampled organisations receive money from central government through the Special Fund. Some of these commented that the Special Fund had ‘saved them from closure’.

No organisations interviewed had been directly affected by the Community Cohesion agenda. This was true for both the VAW and mental health samples.

6. Influence of external factors on the VAW sector: Funding practices

As well as the amount of funding available to the sector, the nature of funding is also important as this can have positive or negative effects how stable organisations are. For example, factors influencing who gets funded might include whether networking is seen as an important criterion for funding, or the type of information sought from potential grantees, or whether funders are looking for innovation or have their own agenda for funding. Such factors may affect the degree of independence of the sector. If organisations fail to achieve full cost recovery, this can also affect their stability if they subsidise projects from reserves or unrestricted income that might have been used for other purposes. Funders who give late renewal of repeated funding will make organisations' situations uncertain and unstable. Alongside asking about these issues, we also looked at whether funders were asking for evidence of outcomes and effectiveness when making funding decisions.

6.1 Evidence from the literature

No robust sources provided evidence on funding practices in the sector. In general, although funding practices are important for the whole of the charitable sector, in the literature review and stakeholder analysis we did not find much evidence about their affect on the VAW sector in particular.

Sheridan (2004), an anecdotal source, attributes any volatility in BAME women's organisations to a lack of funding for core costs. For example, it was said that problems in finding venues for classes or even private meetings, which can be related to lack of core funding, prevented BAME women's organisations from running their services effectively and consistently.

6.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

6.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

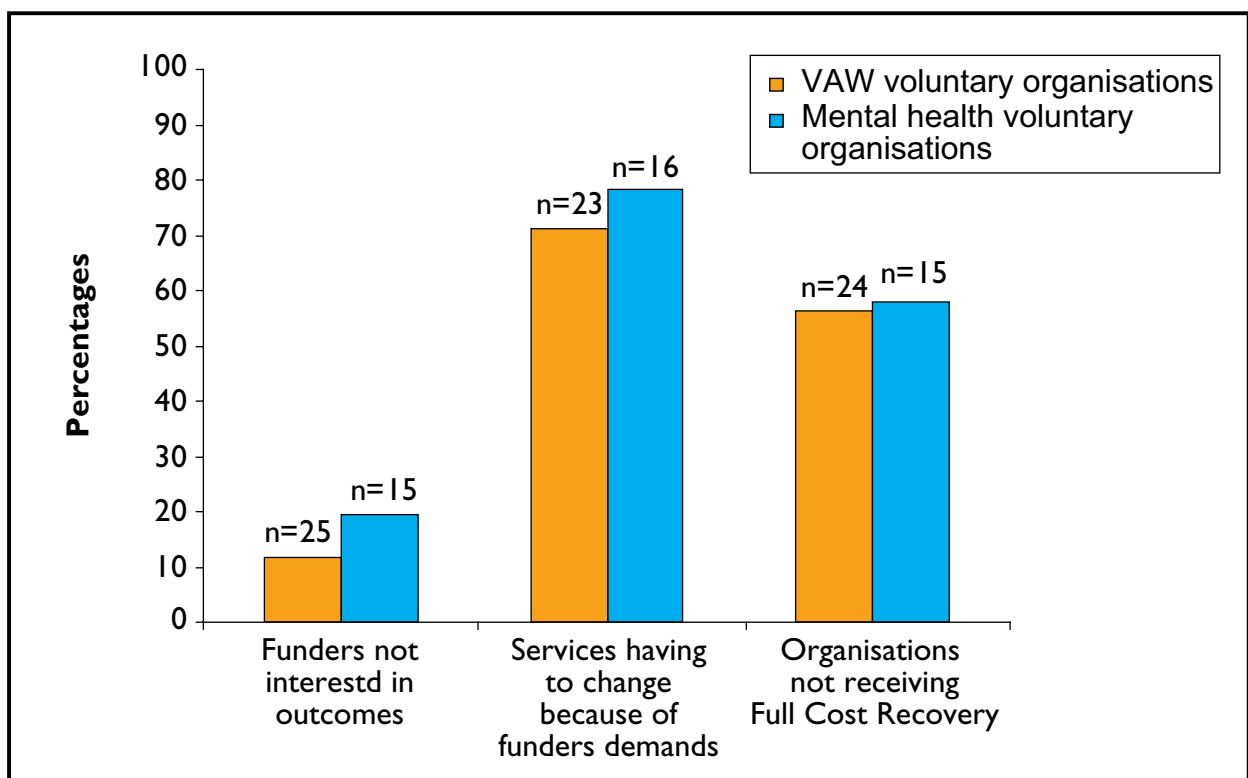
An unpopular cause. Some funder respondents and those from within the sector said that VAW services may have difficulties in accessing independent funding and noted that it may not be a popular cause for trusts and foundations. Independent funders thought that their role was to highlight key gaps, test new services and leverage other funding into the VAW sector.

6.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

One possible cause of the perceived sustainability problems reported in this report could be issues related to funding applications and full cost recovery.

This section investigates each of these issues using the sampled organisations. Figure 6 summarises the extent to which each of these issues is seen as a problem within the VAW and mental health voluntary organisations in our sample.

Figure 6: Comparison of reported funding practices in VAW and mental health voluntary sectors



Reporting for funders. The majority of VAW organisations in the sample thought that funders were interested in outcomes, meaning that funders asked for outcomes and appeared to make decisions based on outcomes – however there were variations within that¹⁸. Almost all voluntary organisations that were funded through Supporting People thought that Supporting People was interested in outcomes, but only those that were set by Supporting People.

¹⁸ Charities can measure their effectiveness in different ways:

- Outputs – eg, numbers of people that use service;
- Feedback – eg, comments from service users about the service;
- Outcomes – eg, how the service has changed peoples lives.

However, there were some who thought that Supporting People's outcome measures were not suitable for VAW voluntary organisations because they were too general. Examples included that domestic violence victims were less likely to make a planned move because they moved around the country more often, and that Supporting People placed too much emphasis on economic well-being that was not always applicable to victims of domestic violence who become homeless because of violence rather than because of economic problems.

One voluntary organisation thought that Supporting People was oriented towards meeting national indicators and not enough towards what the victims of domestic violence wanted to achieve. One charity commented that Supporting People had increasingly become a 'box-ticking exercise'.

VAW voluntary organisations that were not funded through Supporting People were more likely to have devised their own system of measuring outcomes, rather than have outcomes set by funders. Five VAW organisations said that funders had started to care about outcomes data recently and there had been a change there. One charity specifically said that it had been refused funding because it did not have good enough outcome measurement systems.

Most mental health organisations thought that their funders cared about outcomes. It should be noted, however, that different meanings may have been attached to the term 'outcomes'. For instance, one organisation said that its funders were interested in outcomes, but appeared to be talking more about 'outputs'. Three organisations questioned whether their funders were asking for the right outcomes. One commented that its shift towards fundraising from grant-making trusts had sharpened its focus on evaluation. Another commented that its PCT seemed less interested in data on outcomes than the Big Lottery Fund.

The mental health voluntary organisations provided anecdotal feedback which suggested that the type of evidence of results that funders in the mental health sector required varied quite widely. Findings from interviews with mental health voluntary organisations did not suggest that statutory funders were more rigorous than voluntary funders, and one charity commented that it was an increase in

the proportion of its funding from grant-making trusts that led to an increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. Another charity commented that its statutory funders are sometimes unrealistic about the level of evaluation that can be achieved, particularly where specific funding allocated to monitoring is limited or non-existent.

Three of the mental health organisations interviewed suggested that PCTs did not ask for outcomes data. One of these noted that its PCT did not currently require it to evaluate the impact of its counselling and psychotherapy services using a clinical outcomes scale, although the charity did this nonetheless. Another noted that the PCT was happy with receiving a quarterly report listing the charity's outputs. A further two organisations felt that the PCT was not asking for what the charities regarded as the most appropriate evidence to assess their effectiveness. One felt that the PCT prioritised clinical outcomes and waiting lists. The other said that it had approached its local PCT about introducing more user-focused outcomes, but had not got very far with this; it commented that 'evaluation does not seem to be a priority' for the local PCT.

Responding to funders' criteria for funding. In both the VAW and mental health voluntary sectors, some organisations report that they have to adjust services because of funders' criteria, although often the changes are only slight. This is often linked to funders wanting to fund innovative services.

Full cost recovery. As Figure 6 shows, both some VAW and mental health organisations report that they struggle to get full cost recovery (FCR) from their funders. This can affect the stability of organisations, as it means that grants and contracts have to be topped up from other sources of funding. It is unclear to what extent this is failure to achieve FCR is because funders refuse to give it, or because organisations have not calculated their full costs. We cannot comment on the extent to which full-cost recovery is achieved as the majority of charities we spoke to had not calculated their unit costs.

Renewal of funding. There were three cases in the VAW sample where late renewal of funding was reported as having led to organisations having to put staff on redundancy notice. One VAW organisation said that its funding was given in one-year contracts, and its funders often gave notice of renewal late, which meant that it had to put its staff on redundancy notice. This meant that staff worry about their own jobs, and towards the end of the financial year, look for new jobs. Another said that few of its grants, either from local or national funders, were Compact compliant and they were often given late notice of renewal. Again, this means that the funding regime can be making the staff insecure about the organisations and their own future.

Similarly, one of the mental health voluntary organisations reported that its local PCT sometimes provides funding information late, as a result of the PCT itself receiving this information late. The result of this is that it makes it difficult for the charity to do accurate budget forecasts. Related to this, one organisation noted that its local PCT has been reluctant to make a long-term decision on the continuation of funding for a particular staff post, and so is currently only re-funding on a three-monthly basis, which makes it difficult for the organisation to plan ahead.

6.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

Quality of evidence. In the three case study areas, views from those working in local authorities on the quality of evidence from the VAW voluntary sector were mixed, but not thought to be worse than from any other part of the third sector. In all cases this did not seem to harm relationships between organisations and their funders. However some funders thought that poor quality reporting might disadvantage organisations in competitive commissioning processes. Nextlink Housing in BANES, which won the Supporting People refuge tender from Bath Women's Aid in 2007, was considered by those working in BANES local authority to produce particularly professional and clear reports.

Summary of Chapter 6

The majority of VAW and mental health voluntary organisations in our sample said they were not receiving full cost recovery.

The majority of VAW and mental health voluntary organisations in our sample said they were adjusting services to meet funder criteria.

VAW organisations are more likely than mental health organisations to think their funders care about outcomes. Evidence from the local case studies showed that views on the quality of charities' reports from those working in local authorities were mixed, however the VAW sector was not thought to be worse than the voluntary sector in general.

7. Influence of external factors on the VAW sector: Funding gaps

One of the questions guiding this research was: ‘On what basis is there a “funding gap” and why?’. We use the term ‘funding gaps’ to refer to the types of work which interviewees said they found it very difficult or impossible to get supported, whether for ongoing operation or future development. This definition arose out of conversations with stakeholders rather than a formal definition. If there are a large number of these, this is likely to affect organisations long-term stability or sustainability, particularly if they are services that voluntary organisations prioritise and will try to use their own resources to deliver.

During the research we did not gather objective evidence for reported funding gaps but elicited stakeholders’ perceptions on funding gaps.

7.1 Evidence from the literature

Reported gaps in sexual violence funding. Women’s Resource Centre (2008a) claims that prevention and inter-agency work are particular funding gaps in the sexual violence sub-sector. According to this source, the best funded services are Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs), counselling and help lines. The respondents indicate a range of client needs that are not being met, including: providing specialist services for BAME, disabled and young women; and work on prevention. It also notes that the average waiting time for clients is three months. No reasons were given for these funding gaps.

In addition, Women’s Resource Centre (2008a) highlights that some funders are not funding Rape Crisis centres as much as the authors consider to be appropriate. It was felt that applications for grants to central government were much more likely to be successful than applications to local and regional government agencies and associated partnerships.

Reported gaps in refuge funding. In Women’s Resource Centre (2007a), refuges cited a variety of services that lack funding, including: support for women with no recourse to public funds; children’s services; support for women with specialist needs; access to refuges for working women; and access to legal

injunctions. However, the WAFE surveys show that the number of women without recourse to public funds being housed in refuges has increased since 2005, despite fears of the impact of ending the Last Resort Fund in April 2005 (Toren, 2004; Williamson, 2006; Barron, 2007; Barron, 2008).¹⁹

Reported gaps in funding for specialist BAME provision. Funding issues noted in the literature on BAME organisations include: a gap in funding for core costs; the reduction in safe places for BAME women and children; and the loss of specialist outreach and therapeutic services for BAME women and children (Sheridan, 2004; Thiara and Hussain, 2005; Imkaan, 2008; Mouj, 2008). However, the evidence presented in these sources tended to be anecdotal and methodologies were not reported so these sources cannot be classified as robust.

Problems relating to language difficulties, the size of organisations and staff skills were also mentioned as barriers to BAME organisations securing funding. Again, because methodologies were not reported, and they did not specify how many organisations were affected, none of these sources could be classified as robust.

It should be noted that although these sources may not have been classified as robust for the purposes of this research, this does not mean that their findings are inaccurately reported.

7.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

¹⁹ Women's Aid's Last Resort Fund provided financial assistance for up to eight weeks for women experiencing domestic violence and who had no recourse to public funds.

7.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

The services mentioned by charities as being particularly difficult to fundraise for match those areas highlighted in the literature. Sexual violence was considered to be under-funded by many respondents both within and outside the sector. Other services commonly mentioned as funding gaps were:

- BAME services;
- support for women without recourse to public funds; and
- services for young people.

A range of other potential gaps were mentioned by just one or two respondents, including: prevention and educational work; research; disabilities; casework; legal advocacy services; ex-prisoners; and perpetrators. Some respondents from within the sector said that even areas that they considered to be comparatively well funded, like trafficking, still do not receive enough funding, and that services across the board cannot match the demand.

7.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

We asked our sampled organisations where they felt the funding gaps in the sector were. These findings are based on the organisations' opinions as we did not look for additional evidence of these gaps.

Five voluntary organisations (four domestic violence and one BAMEVAW) mentioned children's services as an area that is under-funded. One of these said that Supporting People does not pay for services for children of victims of domestic violence, but expects local authorities to pay. In the experience of this charity, the reality is that local authorities do not have the funds, therefore children's services for victims of domestic violence do not exist.

Two organisations reported women with no recourse to public funds as a funding gap²⁰. One said that, although the local authority had recently started to provide more money for the children of women with no recourse after a long period of not funding them, it was worried about what would happen with public sector spending cuts.

In the mental health sector, there are also reported funding gaps. One mental health organisation commented on the difficulties of getting funding for specialist mental health services for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. This organisation commented that because the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are not monitored at a local level, it is particularly difficult for commissioners to understand the level of need and appropriate response. Another mental health organisation highlighted that they found it more difficult to secure funding for public health promotion work than direct services, and that support for severe mental illnesses is easier to fund than preventative or early intervention work.

The government's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme is changing the funding arrangements for counselling services run by mental health organisations in some areas, and increasing the emphasis on cognitive behavioural therapy over other forms of counselling. The implications for some of the VAW voluntary organisations in the sample were not yet clear as the programme still seems to be in its early stages in many local areas.

²⁰ Women with no recourse to public funds are women who are not able to claim housing benefit because of their immigration status. This means that they cannot be funded to stay in a refuge through the usual method of claiming housing benefit.

7.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

Funding gaps reported above were also recognised by statutory interviewees in each of the three areas. Those working in local authorities who mentioned such issues felt that they were important but did not know where they would get the money from to fund work in these areas.

Summary of Section 7

The most commonly cited funding gaps for VAW organisations are in work with children (both preventative and reactive work) and women with no recourse to public funds. This comes through from the literature, evidence from the stakeholder and the VAW organisations in our sample.

8. Influence of external factors on the VAW sector: Recession

Cuts in public expenditure are likely over the next few years because of problems caused by the credit crunch and ensuing recession. It is likely that this will affect charities which receive statutory funding including the VAW voluntary sector. The research took place from January to September 2009 and so will not have picked up the most recent effects of the recession.

8.1 Evidence from the literature

Heavy reliance on government funding leaves organisations particularly weak where recessions bring government funding cuts. According to Kane *et al.* (2009), a number of indicators suggested that the voluntary sector approached the economic downturn in a stronger position than previous recessions. The voluntary sector in general expanded in 2006/07 in terms of income, assets, workforce and volunteers.

Sources of income fluctuate in different ways. Evidence from the last recession suggests that central and local government funding for voluntary organisations is likely to be cut during the downturn. Government funding to the voluntary sector contracts and expands more rapidly than broader changes in public spending (Kane *et al.* 2009). The apparent reliance of the VAW voluntary sector upon government funding highlighted in Section 5 may therefore place it in a weaker position than other charitable sectors.

Larger organisations are likely to be more resilient, so the downturn may see strong charities get stronger and weak charities get weaker (Kane *et al.* 2009). If the VAW voluntary sector is as weak as many stakeholders suggest, this would be a serious concern.

A recession is likely to increase demand for VAW services. Demand for some services provided by voluntary organisations had increased by 72% in the 12 months to September 2008 (Office of the Third Sector, 2009). In particular, housing, debt, employment and mental health charities are experiencing a surge in demand (Office of the Third Sector, 2009). This is similar to the experience of past recessions where voluntary organisations working in housing, social services, employment and training experienced more difficulties during the recession – due partly to an increase in demand, and partly because they were not among the charitable sectors whose income increased (Kane *et al.* 2009).

Although stakeholders tended to think that the stability of the VAW voluntary sector was declining, they did not rate the recession as a major cause of this. This may be because it is too early to identify a trend. As VAW crosses the housing and mental health fields it may suffer similar increase in demand and decline in funding as these sectors.

8.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

8.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

Few respondents identified the recession as a distinct cause of instability in the future, although it was acknowledged a few that it may exacerbate existing problems.

8.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

Findings from the review of evidence and the stakeholder interviews suggest that they have high levels of statutory funding and will be vulnerable to any government funding cuts arising from the recession.

8.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

In the three case study areas, statutory employees reported that the recession was likely to lead to a further reduction in the grants budget for local authorities. None thought that domestic violence was particularly at risk of funding cuts. None felt able to offer an opinion on the likely impact of the recession on funding for services for victims of other forms of VAW.

Summary of Section 8

Concern about the recession in the VAW sector is low. This may be due to the timing of the research. It was not mentioned in the literature, by most of the stakeholders or the sampled organisations. Evidence from the local case studies suggests that there is no reason to think that domestic violence organisations will suffer more than any other during the recession – no opinion was offered on voluntary organisations tackling other forms of VAW.

Evidence from the literature shows that recessions in the past have had more of a negative impact on voluntary organisations reliant on government funding. VAW voluntary organisations fall into this category.

Evidence from the literature shows that a recession may increase demand for VAW services.

9. Internal characteristics: Activities and evidence

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the activities that a voluntary organisation provides is important to the question of stability, because without evidence of need and effectiveness funders may not be willing to fund them. Evidence of the cost-effectiveness of approaches is also important, since if funders have evidence of this, they may be more willing to fund VAW voluntary organisations.

9.1 Evidence from the literature

Activities

A key role for the sector. All relevant sources point to the VAW voluntary sector's key role in providing advocacy for women escaping domestic violence. Women's National Commission (2003) highlights the vital role that refuges and outreach services play, especially if the victim is unable to get help from statutory agencies. Morley *et al.* (2005) also show that refuges are thought to play an extremely important role as advocates for individual women when dealing with housing authorities.

Specialised services are seen as vital. Often in the VAW voluntary sector, the specialisation of services is seen as vital to meeting the needs of women. By specialisation, we mean either specialist VAW services, specialist women-only services, specialist BAME VAW services, or specialist in another way such as for disabled women.

- **Women-only.** Women's Resource Centre (2008a) says that having a "women-only" status is a strength of the sexual violence sub-sector, and that survivors of sexual violence would not come to Rape Crisis centres if they were mixed. The source does not present precise evidence on this.

Two pieces of research present the results of surveys that ask why women prefer to go to women-only spaces (Women's Resource Centre, 2006a; Women's Resource Centre, 2007b). Women's Resource Centre (2007b) is more robust as it asks female members of the public as well as staff at women's centres. According to these surveys, women-only services provide safety, comfort and understanding, making them more accessible to women who would otherwise be reluctant to access services. However, this research is limited in that it gives little idea of the degree of preference for women-only services and it was conducted as part of a campaign.

Related to this, Lovett *et al.* (2004) states that both male and female victims of sexual assault expressed a strong preference for female staff.

The literature tends to concentrate on the impact that the specialisation of the VAW voluntary sector has on its ability to secure funding. Women's Resource Centre (2007b) states that 70% of the women-only services provided by VAW voluntary organisations it surveyed felt that being women-only made it harder for them to secure funding. Some organisations reported that funders and decision-makers are increasingly asking women-only services to deliver services to men.

Women's Resource Centre (2008a) states that 15 Rape Crisis centres had experienced challenges from funders about their women-only status. The source does not specify the nature of these challenges, nor how serious they were what time period they were over or whether they resulted in funding cuts.

- **BAME VAW voluntary organisations.** Thiara (2005) highlights the strength of BAME women's organisations in providing VAW services that are sensitive to cultural and religious practices. The source says that Asian women report experiences of racism and language barriers in mainstream services. It also says that many domestic violence workers are poorly informed about the issues facing women with an insecure immigration status, and that these women wanted to be supported by workers from similar backgrounds. However, this is a lobbying document that is based on secondary research and does not critically appraise its sources, so it is difficult to assess how robust it is.

Anitha *et al.* (2008) reported on primary research by the Saheli Women's Group and echoed the findings from Thiara 2005. Thirty women were interviewed for this research, and eight specialist refuges answered a questionnaire. BAME women in specialist refuges reported positive experiences and high levels of satisfaction with specialist outreach services while BAME women in mainstream refuges often reported feeling isolated and confused due to language barriers and the absence of culturally-sensitive and specialist support.

- **Women with disabilities.** Hague *et al.* (2007) present concerns that domestic violence organisations do not provide enough specialist services for disabled women. In reply to a survey for this research sent to local women's aids and other domestic violence voluntary organisations through the Women's Aid National Office, three-quarters (76%) of projects stated that they were not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. Awareness of disability issues was low in the majority of organisations surveyed, despite the fact that six out of ten (59%) offered disability equality training. This training was offered by a wide range of providers and quality was variable. The survey had a response rate of only 40% and so results must be treated with caution. However the trends are sufficiently extreme to suggest that there is a problem even if there was a non-response bias.

Women's Aid Federation of England (1998) reported that refuges appear to see disability purely in terms of mobility problems. In addition, the 2007 WAFE survey found that 3% of women in refuges were recorded as disabled. This represents an increase on previous years. However no breakdown of disability type was given, so the level of provision for disabled women, in particular those with learning difficulties, was unclear (Barron, 2008).

Effectiveness

An incomplete picture on effectiveness. There were a number of evaluations of individual VAW projects, as well as the research on the effectiveness of the VAW sector as a whole, which is discussed below (Robinson, 2003; Robinson, 2004; Hester and Westmorland, 2005; Robinson, 2005; Robinson and Tregidga,

2005; Skinner and Taylor, 2005; Robinson, 2006a; Robinson, 2006b; Robinson 2006c; Bacchus L, et a., 2007; Victim Support and Bily Kruh Bezpeci, 2007; CAADA, 2008). In particular, there were a number of evaluations of IDVA services.

Data about the comparative effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different parts of the VAW voluntary sector was very limited. The discussion in this section is therefore grouped in terms of features of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

The effectiveness of the VAW voluntary sector was discussed in two main ways in the literature: in terms of **specific forms of support**, such as counselling or advocacy; and **specific settings for support**, such as women-only or specialist BAME services.

Specific services. Sadowski (2008) describes the effectiveness of various interventions, some of which are used by voluntary organisations (although it does not explicitly refer to voluntary organisations). The findings show:

- Advocacy may reduce re-victimisation rates compared with no treatment.
- Peer support groups may alleviate psychological distress and decrease use of healthcare services compared with no intervention.
- It is not known whether other types of counselling are effective compared with no counselling.
- It is not known how different types of counselling compare with each other.
- It is not known whether the use of shelters reduces re-victimisation, as little research has been done into this.

Some of these findings were supported by Ramsay *et al.* (2005). Again, this source describes the effectiveness of possible interventions, some of which are used by voluntary organisations, although it does not explicitly refer to voluntary organisations. Of particular interest are the following findings:

- Advocacy, particularly for women who have actively sought help from professional services or are in a refuge setting, can reduce abuse, increase social support and quality of life, and lead to increased use of safety behaviours and access to community resources.
- The one support group intervention discussed in the study resulted in a reduction of abuse and improved psychological outcomes, including self-esteem and ability to cope with stress.

Women's Resource Centre (2008a) says that Rape Crisis centres provided service-user feedback to illustrate the outcomes of the services provided. It gives some examples of these, which show that Rape Crisis centres helped women with depression, isolation and recovery from the impact of trauma. The impact of centres was not confined to individuals – families and communities experienced benefits too. The evidence for these outcomes was service user evaluation and feedback.

It is striking that there is not a larger body of robust research on the effectiveness of the main services offered by VAW charities, namely refuge provision and counselling in Rape Crisis centres. However, there are challenges associated with assessing the longer term outcomes and benefits of accessing specialist support following experiences of violence. The impact and benefits of such support may not come to fruition for many survivors until significant time has passed, at a point when follow up may no longer be possible. This REA also did not examine the monitoring and evaluation information collected by voluntary organisations and provided to funders.

Cost-effectiveness

The literature discussed cost-effectiveness in terms of the significance of unit costs on effectiveness and the potential cost savings that VAW charities may generate for society.

Unit costs. Women's Resource Centre (2007a) implies that low unit costs in refuges should not be equated with cost-effectiveness. It describes the range in the unit costs of London refuges and how these impact on the services that refuges are able to provide to women. Providers with lower than average unit costs were 60% more likely to report 10% or more women returning to the perpetrator. On average, BAME services had a 6% higher unit cost than other services. It suggests that this is due to higher level, multiple and/or specialist support needed by BAME victims of domestic violence. In addition, refuges with higher unit costs tended to have more staff.

The source also notes that 11 boroughs highlighted that 15 providers (across these boroughs) had experienced problems with under-utilisation (ie, beds going unoccupied), although refuge respondents reported consistently high occupancy rates. During 2006/2007 over 2,300 women were turned away from refuges responding to this survey because the refuge was full. BAME providers were more likely to turn women away because they were full.

Cost-benefit analysis. Matrix Consulting (2006) carried out a cost-benefit analysis of women-only organisations. One of the services it analysed is a Rape Crisis centre, RASASC. The evaluation shows that because of the use of volunteers, the economic cost of the service provided is much more than its cost to funders. Matrix calculates the economic cost to funding received ratio to be 3.58. The report suggests that savings to the statutory sector as a result of RASASC's activities are likely to be significant. For example, if RASASC prevents:

- Four episodes of mental illness involving a six-week stay in an acute NHS facility then it will more than break even and save the NHS £6,930.
- One case where a child has been taken into residential care for one year it will more than break even and save a local authority £106,496.
- Two cases where a child has been taken into foster care for one year it will more than break even and save a local authority £36,296.

However, the report does not allow a thorough assessment of RASASC's cost-effectiveness as it does not indicate the frequency or likelihood of RASASC preventing these types of incidents. The lack of evidence of effectiveness therefore undermines an assessment of cost-effectiveness. Matrix also notes that RASASC's work has an impact on the community and on the work of other service providers, but does not calculate the economic value of this.

Ashton and Turl (2008) calculate that £59.5m was spent by Supporting People on women at risk of domestic violence and the net financial benefit is £85.7m per annum. This figure is impressive, but the scope of this research means that it does not directly help to assess the cost-effectiveness of the VAW voluntary sector as it does not split out the impact of voluntary organisations or any particular type of service.

Women's Resource Centre (2008a) also details the number of people seen and the length of support provided by Rape Crisis centres. This could potentially be used to calculate cost-effectiveness, if the accompanying data on the effectiveness of their services was available, although it should be noted that all not respondents answered all questions. For example, 27 respondents reported that 8,669 survivors had accessed counselling services over the 12 months to February 2008 an average of 321 women per organisation. There were 109,958 helpline calls over the same 12 months. It also states that 25 respondents had a total of 510 women on waiting lists. The average length of time a woman spent on a waiting list was roughly three months.

Measurement challenges for the BAME VAW sub-sector. There is anecdotal evidence that the Supporting People programme has required organisations to assess their effectiveness more systematically than they did in the past (Thiara and Hussain, 2005). Much of the literature from the BAME VAW sub-sector touches on difficulties with providing evidence for funders (Sheridan, 2004; Thiara and Hussain, 2005; Banga and Gill, 2008; Gill and Banga, 2008c; Imkaan, 2008). In particular, for Supporting People funding, one source suggested that the quality assessment framework is a 'one-size-fits-all' tool that does not take into account the specific situation of BAME organisations (Thiara and Hussain, 2005).

9.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

9.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

Specialist services. Most respondents within and outside the sector thought that services are more effective if they are delivered by specialist providers such as themselves (either specialist domestic violence or specialist BAME). A number of anecdotes of bad practice by generic providers were given. Reporting on this issue was confused by ambiguous language around the exact meaning of ‘specialist’ (see beginning of Chapter 2).

One respondent commented that the need for specialist services for BAME women victims of domestic violence was not held up by Supporting People data. This person thought that since the Supporting People data showed an increase in the number of BAME victims accessing services there is an implication that BAME victims are happy to access mainstream services.

Evidence of need. Some funder respondents commented on the low quality of funding applications and suggested that this might indicate a misunderstanding between VAW voluntary organisations and statutory funders as to what robust evidence looks like and how much evidence of need on a local basis is required (section 9.1 shows some of the evidence about need on a national basis). Some respondents from the sector commented that they did not get feedback on why their applications were rejected. Although some funder respondents thought that the quality of applications represented a weakness in the VAW sector, voluntary organisations thought that funders did not always use the evidence that they presented. Most funder respondents felt that if charities were able to improve the quality of evidence for their services it would lead to more funding. The majority of charities did not agree that providing better evidence would lead to more funding.

Some respondents from within the sector who had worked in other parts of the voluntary sector felt that the VAW voluntary sector is asked to provide greater evidence of need than other charitable sectors. Many respondents from the VAW voluntary sector felt particularly frustrated when requested by funders to provide evidence on levels of need for male victims of rape and domestic violence when they felt that funders were ignoring the higher levels of need amongst female victims.

Effectiveness. The lack of high-quality evidence for effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, was acknowledged as a weakness in the VAW sector by many respondents, especially funders. This was not just evidence of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness but also evidence of need on a local basis and services provided. Respondents largely blamed this on the already acknowledged capacity problems within the VAW voluntary sector. Another reason given by some funders was that the VAW voluntary sector did not prioritise collecting evidence. In contrast, some stakeholders from within the VAW voluntary sector felt that charities did provide good evidence of effectiveness.

Cost effectiveness. Respondents had different understandings of what cost-effectiveness means. Some interpreted it as meaning the VAW voluntary sector had to be cost-effective compared to statutory agencies such as Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs). Others thought it referred to whether interventions lowered the cost of VAW to the state.

The need for evidence. Despite a lack of evidence, most funder respondents did not doubt that the VAW voluntary sector as a whole was effective: because of the high level of preventative work it was assumed by many funder respondents that the VAW voluntary sector was probably cost-effective as well. This was tempered by many funders' belief that not all services would be of high quality and that a system was needed to identify high quality services. Many funder respondents felt that this would help with funding, particularly at a local level. Some respondents from within and outside the sector felt that the National Services Standards, currently in development, for domestic violence and sexual

violence services may provide this guidance.²¹ Some of the stakeholders who were interviewed pointed out that without quality assurance, a badly delivered service can actually be damaging to the vulnerable service users which these organisations work with. A number of funder respondents did not think that membership of one of the VAW sector's umbrella bodies was, on its own, an adequate indication of quality.

Funder-driven data. Supporting People funding was acknowledged by many funders and charities interviewed to have raised the standard of evidence in the domestic violence sector. This is despite having onerous requirements for many organisations, particularly BAME ones which tend to be smaller. Some respondents thought that collection of evidence had focused too heavily on criminal justice interventions, eg, IDVAs, Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), reflecting the government's priorities in this area and assessment of the relevant National Indicators (see Section 2.5).

Some funder respondents said that evidence collection for statutory VAW services could be improved. For example, the currently available of evidence does not allow a comparison of the effectiveness of SARCs with Rape Crisis centres, or sanctuary schemes with refuges. Some respondents from the voluntary sector reported that impact is hard to assess as it is not always clear what a positive outcome is. An example of this is the question: what is more preferable, for a victim to be reconciled with an abusive partner and face an ongoing, but lower, risk of abuse or to be separated from the perpetrator? Most respondents from within the sector felt that indicators collected by local authorities do not capture all the outcomes that VAW voluntary organisations are trying to achieve as they are primarily focused on the criminal justice element.

²¹ Women's Aid is developing National Service Standards for Domestic and Sexual Violence Services with the aim of ensuring that individuals within the field are competent within their role, and will provide a benchmark for domestic violence services across the UK.

9.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

The evidence review (section 9.1) and the stakeholder interviews (section 9.3) revealed that there was:

- widespread doubts about the VAW voluntary sector's ability to show evidence of effectiveness and need;
- disquiet within the sector about whether funders were asking for the right sort of information.

We used the sampled organisations to investigate what evidence charities collect (see Figure 9 for a breakdown of results) and how much of this is driven by funders (see Figures 7 and 8 for a breakdown of results).

Figure 7: Comparison of reported activities and effectiveness of VAW and mental health organisations

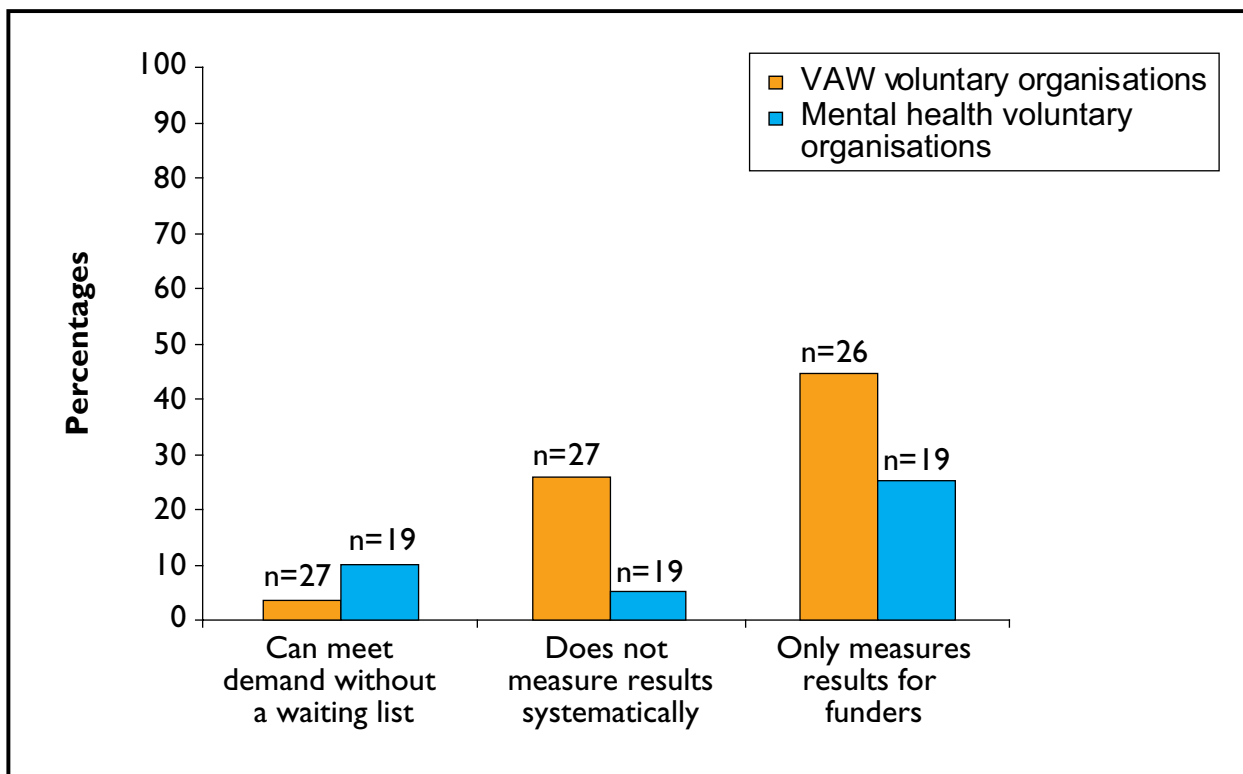


Figure 8: Comparison of reported activities and effectiveness within the VAW sub-sectors

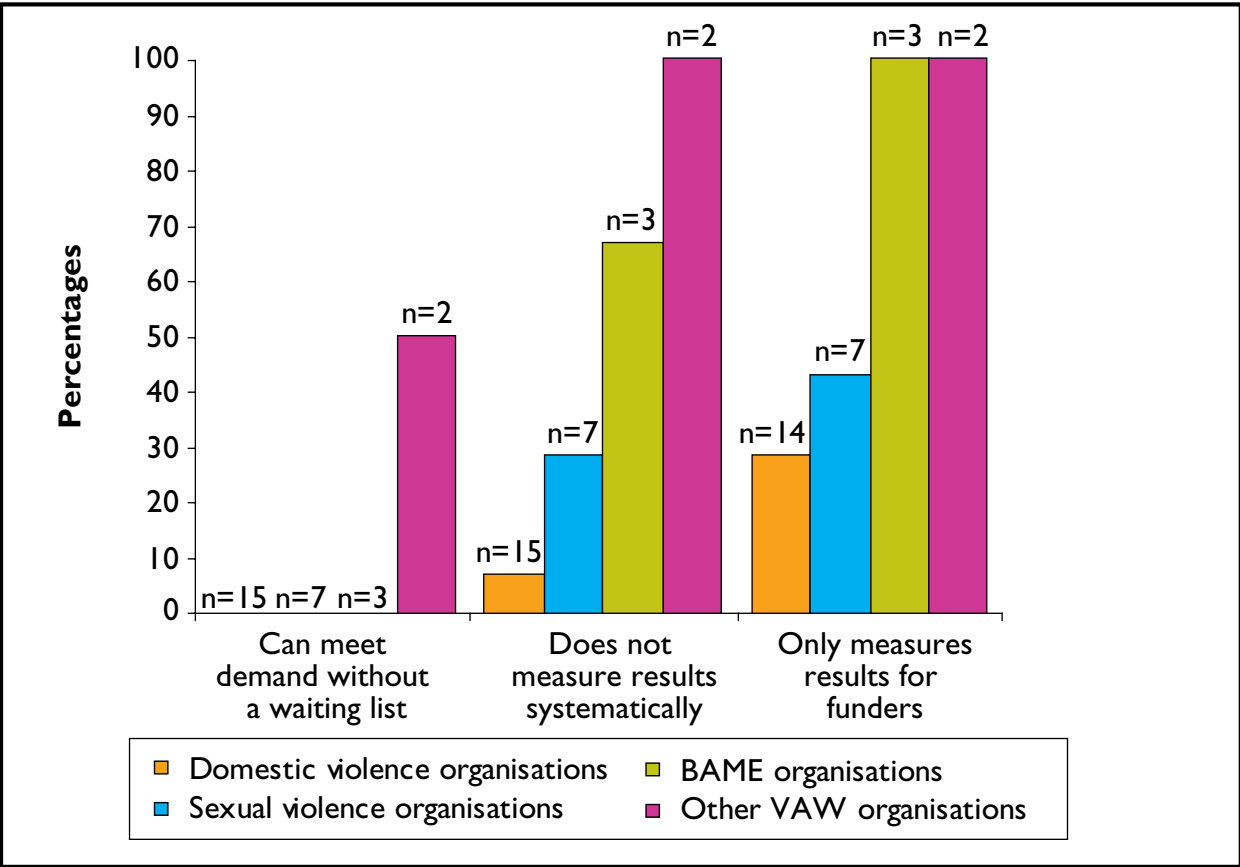
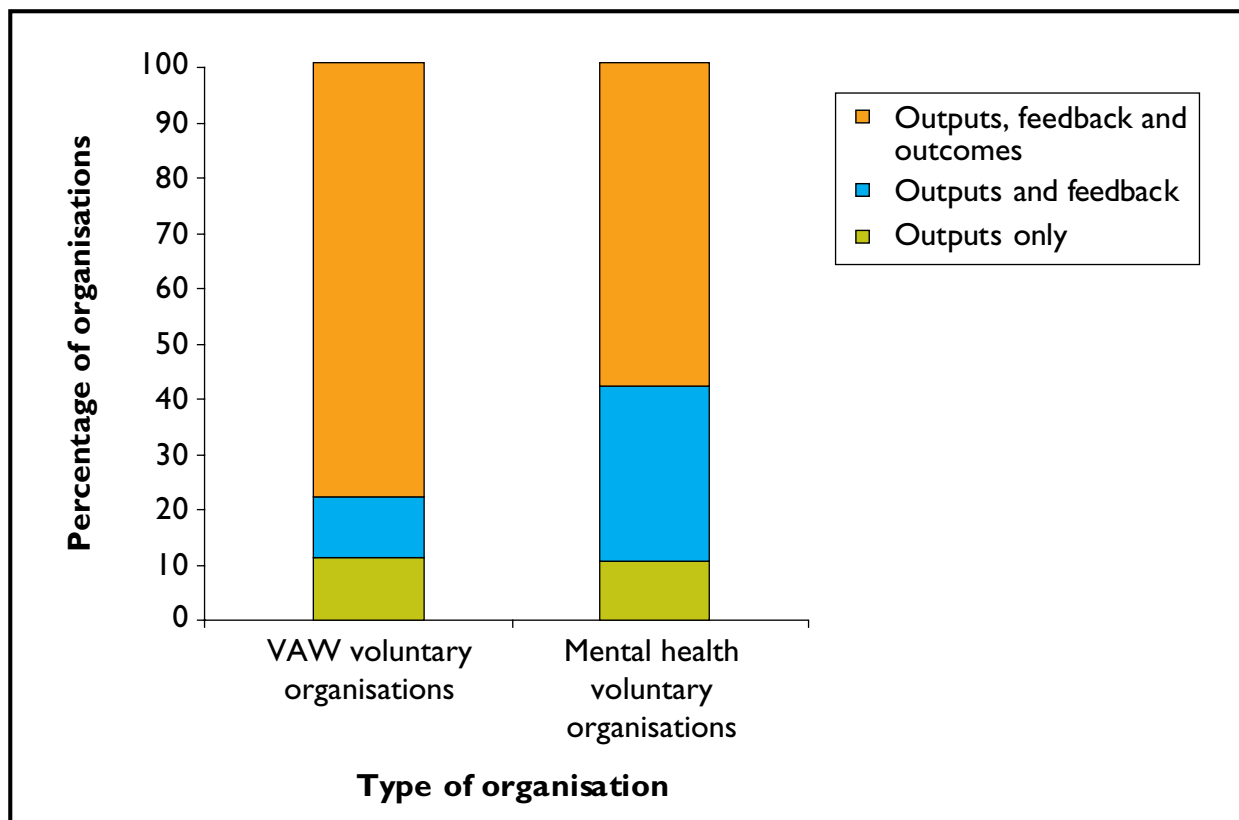


Figure 9: How organisations measure their effectiveness



Activities

Almost all the VAW and mental health charities in the sample could provide evidence of demand for their activities through waiting lists of clients for the activities.

Effectiveness

The survey found that the majority of the VAW voluntary organisations measure their results systematically. Two BAME VAW organisations monitored outputs and user feedback, but did not seem to monitor outcomes in the same way as the domestic violence organisations. However, as both these organisations are funded by Supporting People, this may be an issue around interpretation of the questions

that we asked. The two prostitution organisations did not measure outcomes. One of them said that funders had rejected its applications because it had no outcomes data. The reasons given not measuring effectiveness varied. Some organisations did not prioritise measuring outcomes, others did not think that their outcomes could be measured. Our interviews did not probe further the reasons why organisations did not measure outcomes.

All the domestic violence organisations in the sample provided measures of their outcomes, although NPC did not review the outcome data of each organisation. Twelve out of fifteen domestic violence organisations were funded through Supporting People. As mentioned in Section 6.3, Supporting People has been credited with bringing in more rigorous measurement of results. One organisation said that because of Supporting People's monitoring requirements it had to be more structured in the way that it dealt with service users. Another said that measuring the outcomes more systematically had been beneficial for the organisation (see section 6 on funding practices for more information on the evidence that funders wanted). Many organisations thought that Supporting People's measurements were too generic to be useful to VAW voluntary organisations themselves. Most of the VAW organisations said that they had not used the information collected to measure their effectiveness to plan or improve their services, although they did use service user feedback to change aspects of their services (eg, changing the nights that groups were run on). Only two VAW voluntary organisations in the sample reported that they had been subject to external evaluations.

The survey also found that mental health voluntary organisations that run supported housing or counselling services are more likely to be able to demonstrate their effectiveness. Of the ten mental health voluntary organisations that measured outcomes, six had counselling services and two of these currently received Supporting People funding or had received it in the past. None of the charities in the sample that did not measure outcomes had adult counselling services (although one had a counselling service in the past and another was in the process of starting a telephone counselling service) and only one had

received Supporting People funding, and that was in the past. This trend may be explained by the fact that Supporting People requires a certain level of outcomes measurement and it is standard for many counselling services to use clinical outcomes scales. As with the VAW voluntary sector a small number of organisations had been subject to external evaluations. In this sample, a total of four mental health charities reported that they had been subject to external evaluations, either of the whole organisation or a specific project.

9.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

There was no evidence from the local authority case study areas analysis relating this issue.

Summary of Section 9

The majority of our VAW sample measured outcomes systematically.

This contradicted the views of funders in the stakeholder evidence. In the domestic violence sector outcomes were collected primarily using the Supporting People framework for outcomes. In other areas, voluntary organisations had developed their own approaches to monitoring outcomes.

Evidence from the sampled organisations suggests that VAW voluntary organisations were more likely than mental health organisations to measure their results only for funders.

10. Internal characteristics: Management and staff

Problems with stability can cause problems with staff and management capacity, for instance in failing to recruit people because of a reliance on short-term funding. The reverse can also be true if, for instance, the organisation does not have the right people or enough time to respond to funders' demands. Management and staff problems influencing stability can be seen in a number of ways:

- Problems recruiting and retaining staff which has implications for the quality of service delivered, and the knowledge management of the organisation. Some of this can be seen through the qualifications of staff.
- Fluctuation in staff numbers which affects the retention of knowledge and contacts in an organisation.
- The amount of time management has to dedicate to planning the organisation's future and conversely the amount of time that the organisation has to spend on fundraising.
- Whether an organisation has had any help from capacity building organisations to strengthen their fundraising and management structures.

The quality of the staff and management of the organisation will also affect funders' willingness to fund it. Here qualifications and quality assurance schemes can be used as a proxy for the quality of the staff and management. Some funders also said that the decision to fund an organisation could be influenced by whether they perceived that the organisation had an ideological angle, such as a perception that the organisation was more focused on feminism than on victims of violence.

10.1 Evidence from the literature

The charity sector. Recent research suggests that the voluntary sector workforce as a whole appears to be highly qualified: over half work in 'professional', 'associate professional and technical' or 'managerial and senior official' occupations; and one third have a degree-level qualification (Kane *et al.*

2009). However, research from the UK Workforce Hub in 2007 identified skills gaps in the voluntary sector. A quarter of employers in the voluntary sector reported hard-to-fill vacancies. These were particularly identified within youth work, social care and healthcare (Kane *et al.* 2009).

- Around three in ten employers in the voluntary sector reported under-skilled staff, and these were most often related to marketing and fundraising. This had implications for the workload of other employees.
- Half of voluntary sector employers identified that the skills gaps within their organisation were the result of a lack of time and/or funding for training.
- Other issues were high employee turnover due to short-term funding, project funding, and limited access to external training and development.
- Approximately 9% of the workforce in the voluntary sector are on temporary contracts (Kane *et al.* 2009).

This indicates a picture of general difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff in the voluntary sector, although the extent to which these are specific to the voluntary sector is not known.

The VAW voluntary sector. The literature indicated that the characteristics of staff working in the VAW voluntary sector represented both strengths and weaknesses. Hague and Malos (1998) pointed out some weaknesses in London refuges owing to difficulties in recruitment and a lack of provision for redundancies, maternity cover, enhanced pay, sick leave or pension contributions. Women's Resource Centre (2007a) also identified difficulties in attracting staff in London refuges due to low pay, the need for language skills and undesirable locations.

As a strength, Women's Resource Centre (2008a) highlighted the wide range of professional qualifications held by staff and their extensive experience. In addition, they reported that the level of commitment of the staff was often extremely high, with examples of staff foregoing pay to keep services running.

This research also says that Rape Crisis centres rely heavily on volunteers and could not deliver the range of services without them. There were a total of 696 volunteers working at 35 Rape Crisis centres at the time of the survey (November 2008 to February 2009) (Women's Resource Centre, 2008a). This is supported by O'Sullivan and Carlton (2001), research which, while independent, is based on a small sample. This research states that independent centres were more likely to use volunteers who act as advocates in the community and forge links to other organisations. It also notes that independent centres are more accessible, which may be because the volunteers help to forge links with other organisations. The heavy use of volunteers is also mentioned anecdotally by members of The Survivors Trust in its *Funding Issues survey*, although it was not a specific question asked in the survey (The Survivors Trust, 2009).

Much of the research treats the use of volunteers as a strength of the sector. However, Women's Resource Centre (2008a) does note a potential weakness, in that those services that depended on volunteers had to rely on whoever had capacity to do fundraising at any given time, although it did not explicitly say that this undermined their ability to get funding.

10.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

10.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

Committed staff. There was a common view amongst respondents within and outside the sector that the staff in the VAW voluntary sector are passionate and committed. There was also a common view across all types of interviewees that VAW voluntary organisations are grassroots organisations and so tend to be peer-led and attract a strong volunteer base. The respondents interviewed suggested that this means that the support VAW voluntary organisations offer is accessible and responsive to the needs of women. They thought that, in contrast

to the statutory sector, the approach of VAW voluntary organisations is less focused on the criminal justice system and takes an ‘holistic’ approach to meeting the needs of victims of VAW. Many respondents, both those from the sector and funders, thought that the passion of the staff working for these organisations means they become activists and are willing to challenge government policy.

The funders interviewed said they thought that VAW voluntary organisations had expertise and knowledge. However some funders had concerns about how well staff were qualified to undertake more clinical interventions. In contrast, many respondents within the VAW voluntary sector felt their staff were highly qualified and had a good understanding of ‘what works’.

Lack of capacity. Most respondents within and outside the sector perceived the VAW voluntary sector as consisting of small organisations (even although the empirical data quoted above do not support this). While some respondents suggested that small scale could be a strength in terms of flexibility and responsiveness, it was more often identified as a potential source of problems. For example, it was felt that small organisational size limited the VAW sector’s capacity to attract funding – for example, due to lack of staff time and fundraising skills. One respondent felt that staff turnover within the BAME VAW sub-sector had increased. The VAW voluntary sector was described by many of the respondents within and outside the sector as focused on ‘fire-fighting’ and many thought that there was little time for reflection and getting up to speed on commissioning practices (see Section 4 External factors: changes to local authorities). Lack of support for staff was also a recurring theme among VAW voluntary sector respondents; they reported that in their experience many staff do not have pension provision and contracts are uncertain, so it can be difficult to attract and retain highly-skilled staff.

Feminist stance. Many VAW voluntary organisations have roots in the feminist movement, as many respondents from within and outside the sector noted. Most voluntary organisations mentioned this as a strength in terms of empowering women. However, funder respondents often commented that where VAW voluntary organisations had a strong political or ideological approach, this might potentially be alienating to some potential funders. Some funder respondents

and those from the sector suggested that women's issues are not a priority for funders as they once were. Some charities felt that their women-only stance was a barrier to accessing some funding but this was not the general view amongst the funders interviewed. Most funder respondents believed that problems only arose if funders felt that the women-only stance was driven by ideology rather than the needs of service-users, and that being women-only might sometimes be a barrier to accessing funding at a local level – although they were not speaking from their own experience. Some respondents from within the VAW sector mentioned that the taboo nature of VAW in society, in particular sexual violence, could present barriers to getting funding. However, the research did not explore whether this topic was a taboo subject to funders or not.

10.4 Evidence from the sampled organisations

The following issues were explored within the sampled organisations and case study areas:

- what was the level of staff turnover in the organisation;
- how staff numbers had changed in the past five years;
- whether managers found it difficult to recruit staff;
- whether managers felt that their staff were suitably qualified;
- whether management *had* to get involved in service delivery often; and,
- how much time management felt that they spent on fundraising.

The stability and skills of staff teams are important factors to explore because they affect the ability of voluntary organisations to provide ongoing, good quality services. Organisations that rely on trustees for some day-to-day management may be less stable in terms of both finances and service delivery. Most of these issues were explored from the point of view of the charity, eg if the chief executive felt that recruitment was difficult. High staff turnover is defined by NPC as anything above 20%, with the average for the voluntary sector being 17%.

Figure 10: Reported staff issues between VAW and mental health voluntary organisations (1)

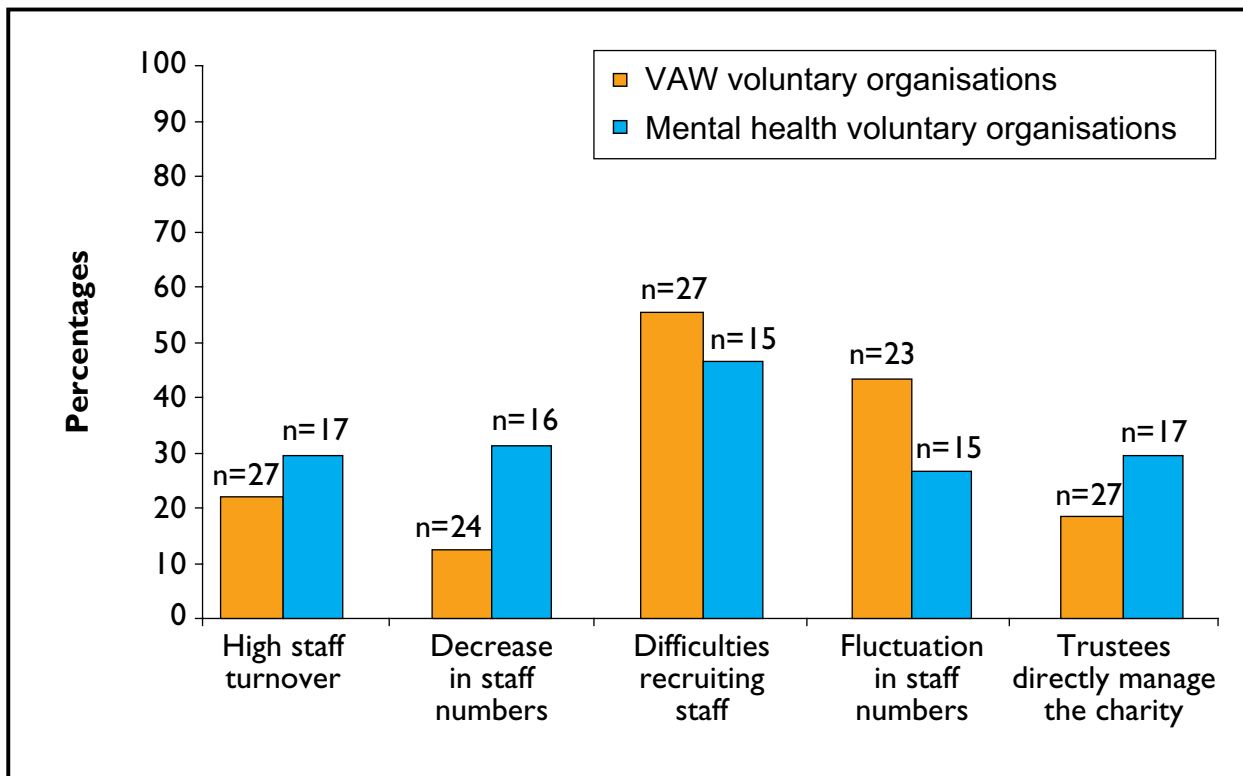


Figure 11: Reported staff issues between VAW and mental health voluntary organisations (2)

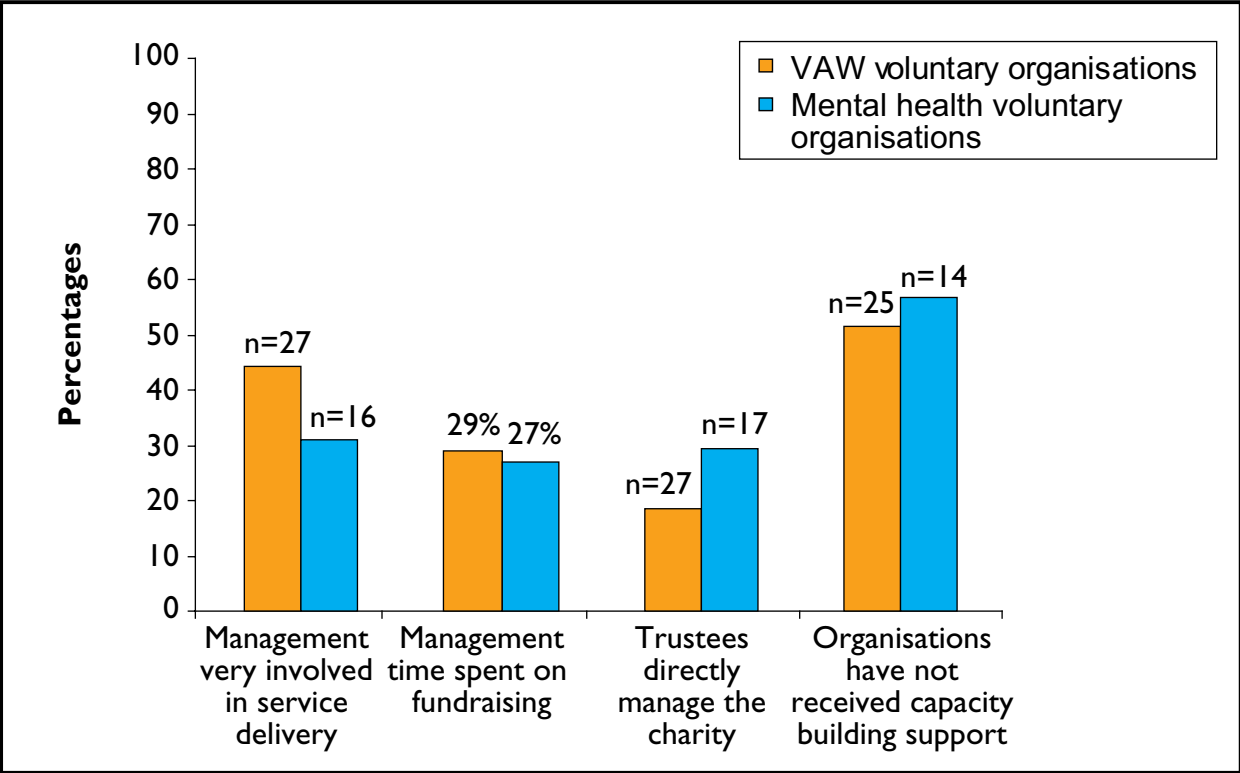


Figure 12: Reported staff issues between VAW voluntary sub-sectors (1)

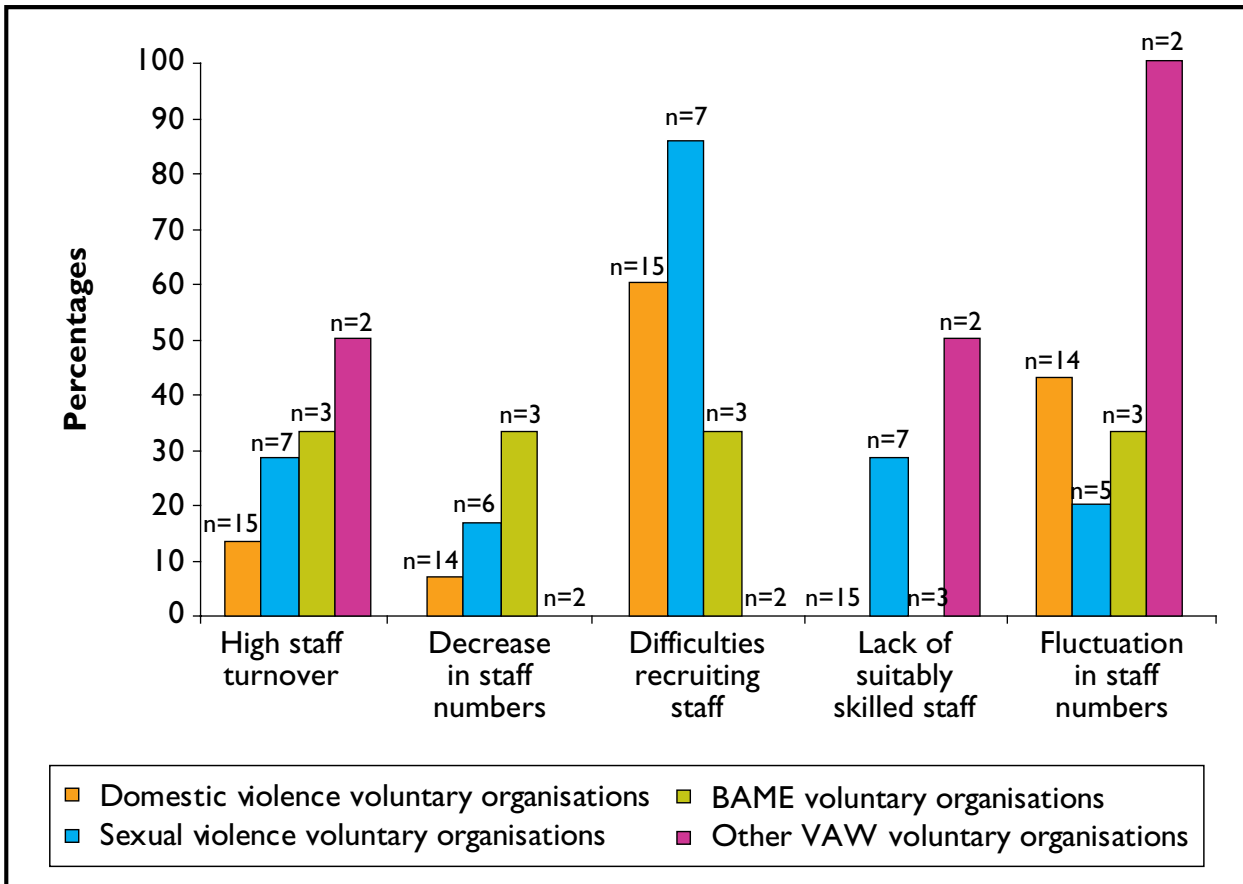
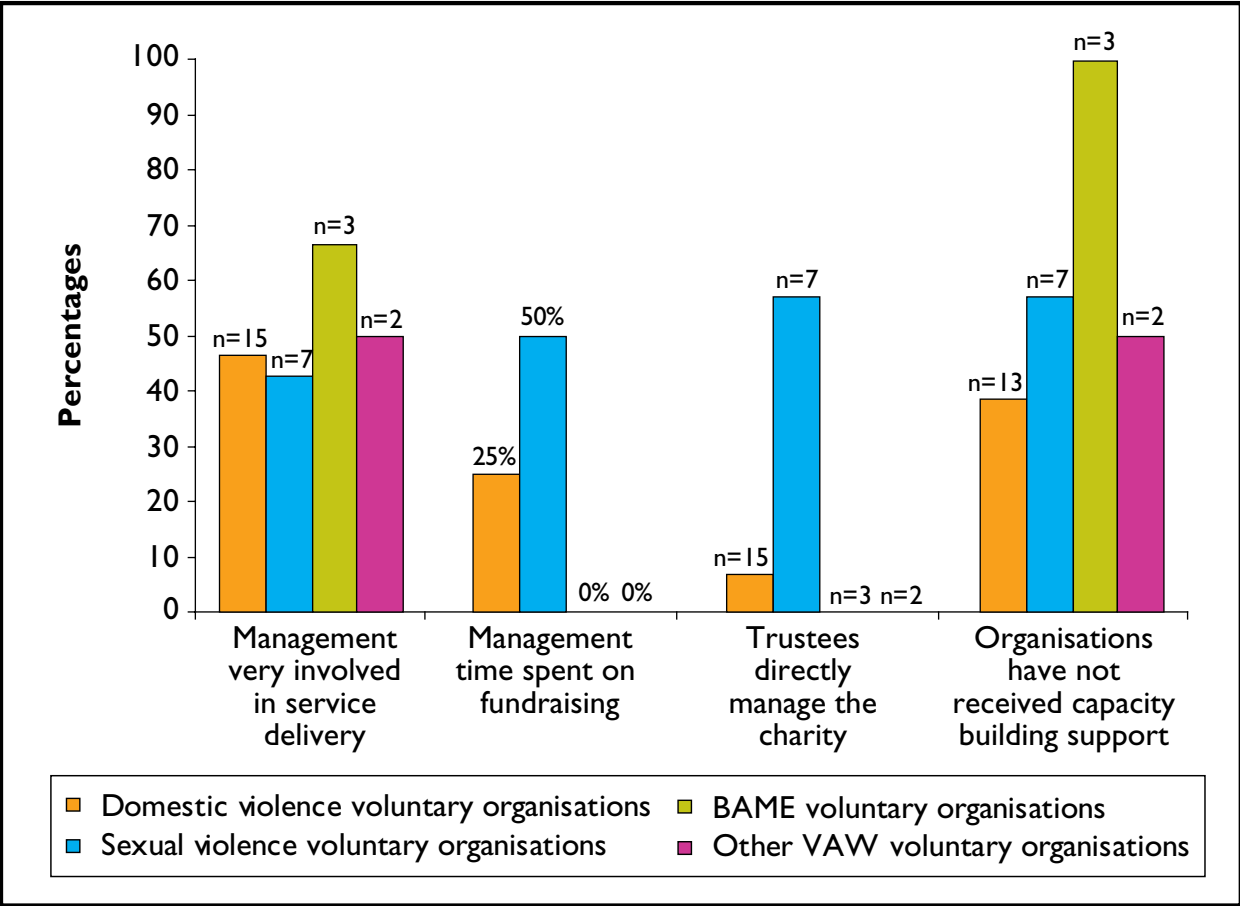


Figure 13: Reported staff issues between VAW voluntary sub-sectors (2)



Management. A large proportion of VAW voluntary organisations reported involving managers in direct service delivery. Six of these twelve organisations had to close services in the past five years. There appeared to be a particular problem in the sexual violence service, reporting a lack of paid management. Four out of seven sexual violence services sampled were managed by their trustees. The strain this was reported to place on the organisation varied, but organisations reported a lack of time for fundraising, difficulty recruiting trustees with the time or requisite skills, and trustees wanting to be involved in practical work rather than in organisational help. Three out of seven also had management (either trustees or paid staff) who were involved in service delivery. Six reported finding recruitment difficult.

In the mental health voluntary sector also, reliance on trustees for some day-to-day management also seemed to be linked to service closure. Four of the five mental health voluntary organisations where trustees had to do some direct day-to-day management have closed services. Another organisation has downsized aspects of its work, although it has not closed them altogether. Four out of the five mental health organisations where management were directly involved in service delivery had closed services, and the other one had downsized aspects of its work. Staff turnover was high (over 40%) in only one of these organisations.

Figures 9 and 10 show that the situations are broadly similar for the VAW and mental health voluntary sectors. However the sexual violence sub-sector stands out as having particular problems with recruiting and management capacity (see Figures 11 and 12).

Time spent on fundraising. Most of the charities interviewed found it difficult to estimate how much time they spent on fundraising. This means direct comparisons must be treated with caution. Domestic violence charities appeared to report spending less time on fundraising than sexual violence voluntary organisations. No domestic violence charity managers thought that they spent more than 50% of their time on fundraising, but two managers of sexual violence charities thought that they spent 70% of their time on fundraising. One domestic violence charity commented that the amount of time spent on fundraising had reduced after the Supporting People funding came in, as the charity relaxed after spending a lot of time on fundraising. The charity thought that this may have affected its level of income more recently as it was not used to fundraising. The estimates of the time spent on fundraising by the mental health voluntary organisations were similar to that spent by the VAW voluntary sector organisations.

Capacity building. Organisations were asked if they had any capacity building help. Many organisations said they had not, but felt that they did not need it because they had the skills in-house. Therefore, it is difficult to make any conclusions about the capacity of the organisations.

Staff. In both the VAW and mental health sectors, organisations primarily discussed staff skills and experience in terms of service delivery rather than business acumen. Difficulties in recruiting staff were reported mainly within the sexual violence sector rather than the rest of the VAW sample and the mental health sample. The VAW voluntary organisations said that while there were a lot of people who wanted to work in the sector, it could be difficult to find people with the right skills to cope with the traumatic nature of the work. As sexual violence counselling is a niche and specialised skill, it could be difficult to find people with the experience in this area. A few organisations within the VAW voluntary sector sample commented that they did not have “suitably experienced” staff. Where these gaps were explicitly mentioned, it was often around fundraising or business skills. The organisations which reported a gap around experience tended to be smaller organisations, where staff are expected to fulfil a great deal of roles. Therefore, it may be the case that the organisations simply do not have enough staff. Twelve of the mental health organisations said their staff generally have suitable experience and skills. However, recruitment was not always easy: five of these organisations said that they had experienced problems with recruitment. One commented that it can be a ‘nightmare’ to find staff with the right experience and skills. Another said that its proximity to London meant that it had to compete with higher-paid jobs in the capital.

Volunteers. Volunteers were used extensively in both the VAW and mental health samples. However, the average number of volunteers was higher in the mental health samples at 35 versus the VAW sector average of 14. In both samples, volunteers were used more by the smaller organisations. The most common use of volunteers in the VAW sample was using people who were training for a counselling qualification to provide counselling services. In the mental health sample, volunteers were often used for befriending. This analysis does not take into account extra time worked by staff beyond their contracted hours.

Quality assurance schemes. Taking part in quality assurance schemes is common in both the mental health and VAW voluntary sector.

The VAW voluntary organisations had taken part or were working towards the following schemes:

- Supporting People: fifteen organisations.
- PQASSO: five organisations.
- Investors in People: two organisations.
- the IOS 9000 accreditation: one organisation.

Others were more interested in quality assurance schemes related directly to activities, such as mentoring and befriending standards, the National Service Standards from Women's Aid, or the National Occupational Standards from Rape Crisis England and Wales.

Similarly, in the mental health field, there are common quality assurance schemes. All local Mind associations, of which there are nine in our sample, are supposed to take part in the *Mind quality assurance scheme*, which involves assessment every three years. However, a few of these organisations commented that, due to recent changes to the scheme, not all of them have a quality award that is up-to-date.

The other quality assurance schemes that organisations in the sample had taken part in or were working towards, including some of the local Mind associations, were:

- Supporting People: three organisations;
- Investors in People: two organisations;
- PQASSO: three organisations; and
- Action for Advocacy Quality Performance Mark: one organisation.

Counselling accreditation. As some stakeholders expressed concern about the qualifications of staff within VAW organisations (see Section 10.2), and cited this as a possible reason for funding problems, we looked at the accreditations of the staff within organisations giving counselling. In the VAW voluntary sector, the five sexual violence organisations which said that they provided counselling

(rather than telephone support) all had staff members who were members of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and some also had organisational membership. There were three other organisations which provided counselling, none of which said that they belonged to the BACP.

Four mental health organisations reported having counsellors who had been accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or who adhere to its professional ethics. Counsellors at another organisation were working towards registration with counselling professional bodies. Another mental health organisation noted that all its counsellors and therapists are registered with a professional body. For a further mental health organisation, we know it only uses volunteer counsellors who have, at the least, reached diploma level in their counselling training. One mental health organisation noted that it had to close down its counselling service because it was unable to satisfy the new criteria laid down by the BACP. Another had to close its counselling service because it lacked the funding to train and supervise the volunteers on whom the service was reliant.

10.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

None of the statutory interviewees thought that VAW voluntary organisations having a feminist stance or providing women-only services was a barrier to getting statutory funding.

Summary of Section 10

Staff of VAW voluntary organisations are widely perceived to be committed and have a grass-roots understanding of VAW. This was supported by the literature and evidence from the stakeholders.

The sexual violence organisations in our sample appeared to have particular problems recruiting staff. This was attributed to the nature of the work, which respondents described as ‘harrowing’

The sexual violence organisations in our sample in particular were less likely to have paid management and were more reliant on trustees to do management jobs. There was also evidence for this in the literature. Across the VAW sample, managers were more likely to be spending their time on day-to-day service delivery than those in the mental health sample.

Although some stakeholders felt that the feminist stance of the sector could be a barrier to getting funding, this was not confirmed by evidence from the sampled organisations or local case studies.

11. Internal characteristics: Relationships with stakeholders

Charities have to engage with other stakeholders, particularly other charities and funders, if they are to make the most of their impact and receive funding. Key structures, such as the local strategic partnerships, domestic abuse coordinators and domestic violence forums, are an important way for VAW voluntary organisations to make sure that funders are aware of the importance of VAW and so ensure organisations' stability. Another important issue is how well supported and cohesive the sector is as a whole – whether the whole sector is united about the key issues to support and provides help on how to access funding.

11.1 Evidence from the literature

Hester and Westmorland (2005) identify that close working relationships between statutory agencies and Women's Aid and other women's voluntary organisations are needed since statutory agencies usually only deal with high-risk victims for a short period of time, and refer victims on to voluntary agencies for longer-term support. However, this evidence is anecdotal.

11.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

11.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

Fragmentation. The majority of respondents we interviewed from within and outside the sector commented on tensions within the VAW voluntary sector. They perceived that it was fragmented. Many of the funder respondents reported finding it difficult to interact with voluntary organisations that they perceived did not cooperate with each other. They also thought that they engaged in unnecessary competition and exhibited a lack of awareness of the work of other organisations which had damaged the credibility of funding applications.

Many respondents both inside and outside the VAW voluntary sector felt that it was the charities with the 'loudest voices' that were heard by policy-makers, rather than the most representative, and therefore policy-makers had a distorted picture of the views of the sector.

Some of those interviewed – both funders and representatives from the VAW voluntary sector – suggested that the perceived fragmentation of the sector might be due to competition for small amounts of money or differences in ideology, in particular disagreements about whether services should be women-only. One sector respondent commented that since sexual violence services often dealt with historic abuse and domestic violence services usually focused on immediate impact and safety, the interventions required were very different. She thought that joining the domestic violence and sexual violence sub-sectors together without recognising these potential differences exacerbated the tensions within the VAW voluntary sector.

According to respondents across the sector and funders, charities with Supporting People funding were more likely to have the skills to access funding and cope with changes to commissioning. In contrast, sexual violence charities may be struggling to compete on commissioning, and to find the time to do the necessary networking which would strengthen applications for funding. However, some respondents from within the VAW voluntary sector felt that the capacity of sexual violence organisations to access funding and make policy contacts might be improving.

All providers of specialist BAME VAW services which were interviewed also commented that they were overstretched and did not have time to meet with all relevant decision-makers.

Networking. Some funder respondents also felt that the way to get VAW services higher up the agenda of local funders was for senior staff from VAW voluntary organisation to attend more meetings and do more networking. But many of the respondents from within the sector commented that they do not have enough time to do this. Most funder respondents felt that if charities spent

more time networking, this would lead to increases in funding. Many respondents from the VAW voluntary sector agreed that more networking would probably increase their funding opportunities.

11.4 Evidence from sampled organisations

Some respondents put forward the hypothesis that charities that were involved in local strategic partnerships and other statutory bodies were more likely to get funding from statutory bodies. Figures 12 and 13 summarise the extent to which the samples networked and were involved in local strategic partnerships and other boards.

Figure 14: Reported comparison of external relations in VAW and mental health organisations

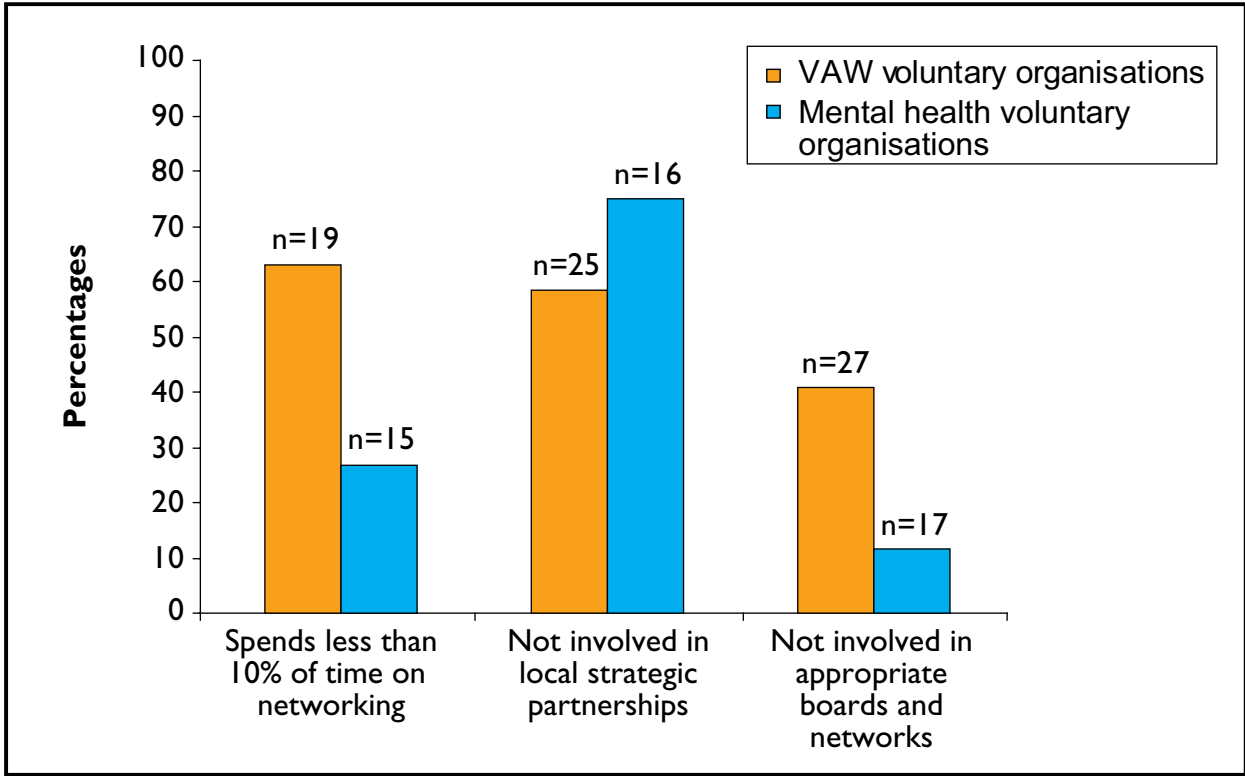
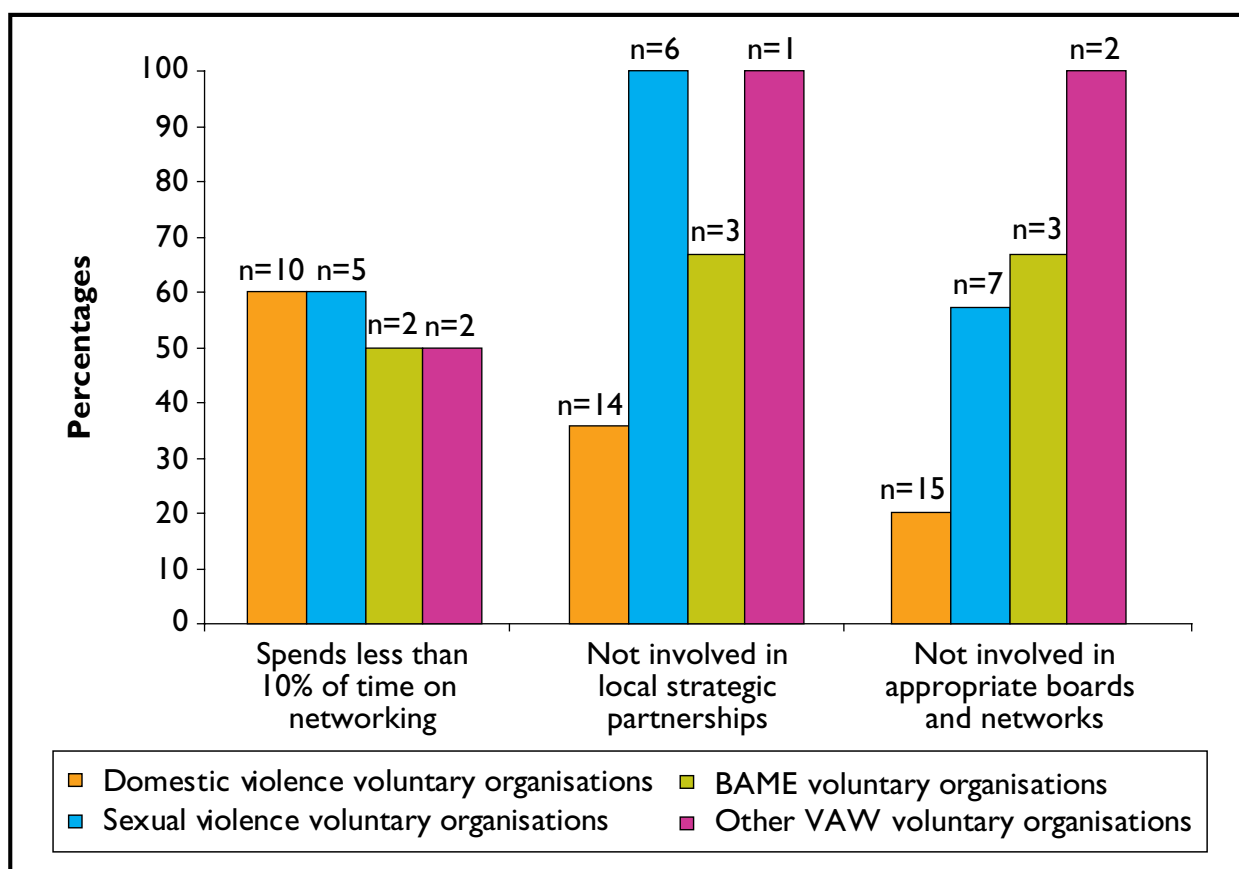


Figure 15: Reported comparison of external relations in VAW sub-sectors



Although VAW voluntary organisations appeared to spend less time on networking and were involved in fewer networks and committees, VAW voluntary organisations in the sample were more likely than mental health voluntary organisations to be involved in LSPs. This might imply more focused and targeted networking by the VAW sector. Domestic violence voluntary organisations were much more likely than any other type of VAW organisation to be involved in the LSP. Charities represent their sectors on LSPs for a variety of reasons, such as to raise awareness of their issues and campaign for funding for the sector. However, there is no obvious link between involvement in the LSP and receiving more money from statutory bodies. It may be that funding for the sector goes to organisations not involved in the LSP, or that it occurs over a longer period and was not easily picked up by this research.

Some VAW charities had strong views on the value of networking. One charity believed *'that the only reason it had grown is because it is at all the key meetings with funders.'* Another thought that networking was important to *'provide a voice for the sector'* and it felt it was important as it is the only large voluntary organisation in its area working on VAW.

Involvement in the LSP does not appear to have a clear impact on the stability of mental health voluntary organisations; only four voluntary organisations appeared to have had any involvement in their LSP. Three of these were local Mind associations. Only one of these four organisations received over 75% of its income from statutory bodies.

Relationship with umbrella bodies. The level of support that VAW voluntary organisations felt they received from their umbrella bodies varied. Some felt well supported particularly around new policies and funding as well as individual help to make organisations more professional, which had helped organisations to secure funding. Others felt that umbrella bodies were more useful for practical things rather than helping to secure sustainability. One organisation felt unsupported by its umbrella body.

11.5 Evidence from the case studies

The Domestic Abuse coordinator can play a pivotal role

In Manchester the role of the domestic abuse coordinator was seen as crucial for networking. The domestic abuse coordinator role included a lot of time helping organisations apply for tenders and report back to funders as well as facilitating partnership working.

In BANES there has been no domestic abuse coordinator since 2007 and charities there felt isolated and out of touch. One interviewee commented that, because there was now no general oversight, there was a risk that some charities may be acting in an unsafe way. Some statutory interviewees also felt that data on need and provision was now harder to come by.

In Wellingborough there is a domestic abuse coordinator but the role seems less important as there are fewer organisations to coordinate and the VAW organisations seemed less reliant on the coordinator for information and support.

Summary of Section 11

Domestic violence organisations were more likely than the rest of the VAW sector and the mental health sector to be involved in local strategic partnerships.

More than 50% of chief executives in the VAW sample spent less than 10% of their time networking. This is compared to 25% of the mental health sample. This is supported by evidence from the stakeholders.

VAW organisations were much less likely than mental health organisations to be involved in appropriate boards and networks. This was a concern that was also expressed by the stakeholders.

12. Internal characteristics: Finances

Financial characteristics of organisations show both stresses that are a result of instability and can be a reason why organisations struggle to respond to a changing funding landscape. For example, low levels of reserves can be a result of charities being poorly funded in the past, but will also mean that charities can struggle to cope with funding cuts caused by a recession.

NPC investigated several financial issues:

- income volatility to see whether income was changing to such an extent that it would put a strain on the organisation's ability to manage. The NCVO classifies 'high income volatility' as a change in income of more than 20% in one year, and then a 20% move in the opposite direction in the next year.
- the level of reserves to see whether organisations have enough internal resources to see them through a financial shock, or a lower level of income caused by the recession. The usual level of reserves is three to six months.
- whether reserves have been declining to see whether the charities' financial position was becoming less stable or not.
- the concentration of organisations' income bases, to see how vulnerable organisations are to the decisions of a few funders.
- whether organisations had statutory funding, because statutory funding in past recessions has been linked to increased income volatility as public spending is cut.

12.1 Evidence from the literature

Funding for the sector. Women's Resource Centre (2007a) states that in total, over 75% of refugees' income comes from Supporting People and rent. The rest comes from local authorities, grant-making trusts, central government, and donations. Refugees have on average four months of reserves.

Women's Resource Centre (2008a) shows that grants to Rape Crisis centres are small and come from several sources: 32% came from councils and their associated partnerships; 26% came from central government; 23% came from grant-making trusts; 8% came from local and regional public bodies; and 5% came from joint funders. The majority of respondents said that finding funding was 'a relentless and a constant challenge', and often required a group effort involving members of the management committee. This is particularly the case for organisations that relied solely on volunteers, which stated that fundraising was often done by whoever had capacity at the time.

Women's Resource Centre's (2009) research for its *Why Women?* campaign states that the income of women's organisations (of which over a quarter worked on VAW issues) increased by 5.5% each year in real terms between 2004/2005 and 2006/2007. The source says that this compares to 9.4% for charities across the UK.

Soteri (2002b) states that around half (49%) of women's organisations operated on a budget of less than £100,000 and three-fifths (59%) said that they had experienced a funding crisis in the previous five years. The medium-sized providers were least likely to report a funding crisis compared to their smaller and larger counterparts.

Looking to the future. Women's Resource Centre (2008a) found that more Rape Crisis centres thought that funding was unsustainable compared with three years before. They also noted that funding was short-term – four out of five (79%) of grants were for one year or less. Only one reason for the lack of funding is discussed explicitly in the research, which is that statutory agencies need to engage more fully in funding the sexual violence sector. It is unclear how stable these organisations are relative to other voluntary organisations. It is also unclear whether the problems stem from the size of the organisations or relate to sexual violence.

The Survivors Trust (2009) survey addresses issues about funding, although its small sample and low response rate mean that the results cannot be taken to be representative. According to the survey, around half (52%) of The Survivors Trust's members do not have enough funding to survive for more than a year. Three in ten (31%) of its members submit more than three funding applications a month. A total of 22% of organisations have experienced staff losses due to lack of funding over the last 12 months, and 13% are facing possible closure. No service has been taken over by another service.

Smaller organisations have greater income volatility. Statistics from the NCVO's latest almanac suggest that smaller organisations may experience greater income volatility (defined as a 20% move in income in one direction in one year, with a 20% in the opposite year the following year). Nearly one in four micro and small organisations have recently experienced significant volatility problems. (Kane *et al.* 2009).

Women's Resource Centre (2009) suggests that small women-only organisations experience income volatility. Its analysis of income volatility of women's organisations suggests that income in small-sized women's organisations is more volatile than in the average voluntary organisation. However, not all sizes of women's organisation have more volatile income than the voluntary sector average. Income volatility in medium-sized charities (the category that includes the majority of VAW voluntary organisations), is lower than average, with only 6% of medium-sized women-only organisations suffering from high volatility. It is not possible to tell from the current data whether the VAW voluntary sector's income volatility is more extreme than the norm.

12.2 GuideStar analysis

There was no evidence from the GuideStar analysis relating this issue.

12.3 Evidence from the stakeholders

As reported in Chapter 3, the stakeholders interviewed generally reported concerns about the stability of the sector. In terms of finances, some respondents mentioned concerns about the cash flow of BAME VAW organisations.

12.4 Evidence from the sampled organisations

The main issues identified from the literature and the stakeholder interviews relating to financial stability were around income volatility and ‘funding crises’ (although the term was not well defined). Concerns that the reliance on statutory funding would make organisations vulnerable to cuts in public spending were also raised.

Figures 14 and 15 summarise aspects of financial stability for the VAW and mental health samples.

Figure 16: Finances of VAW voluntary organisations and mental health organisations

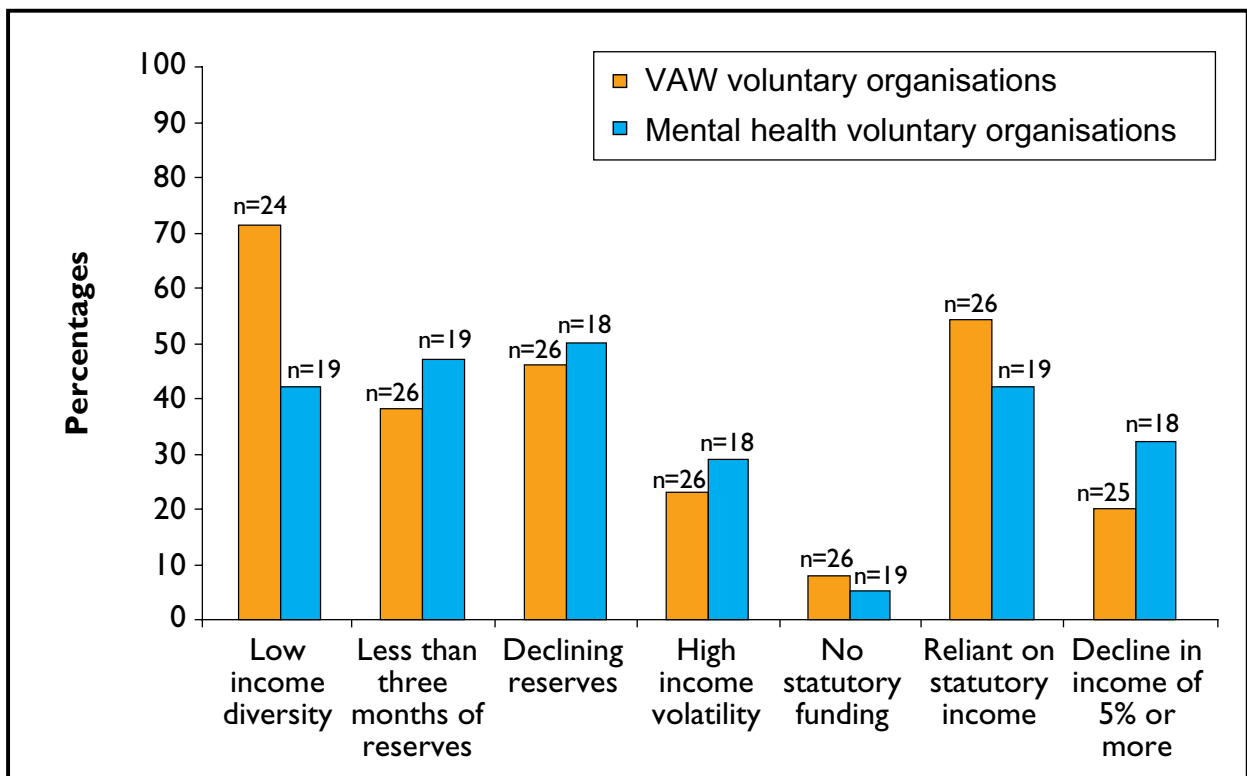
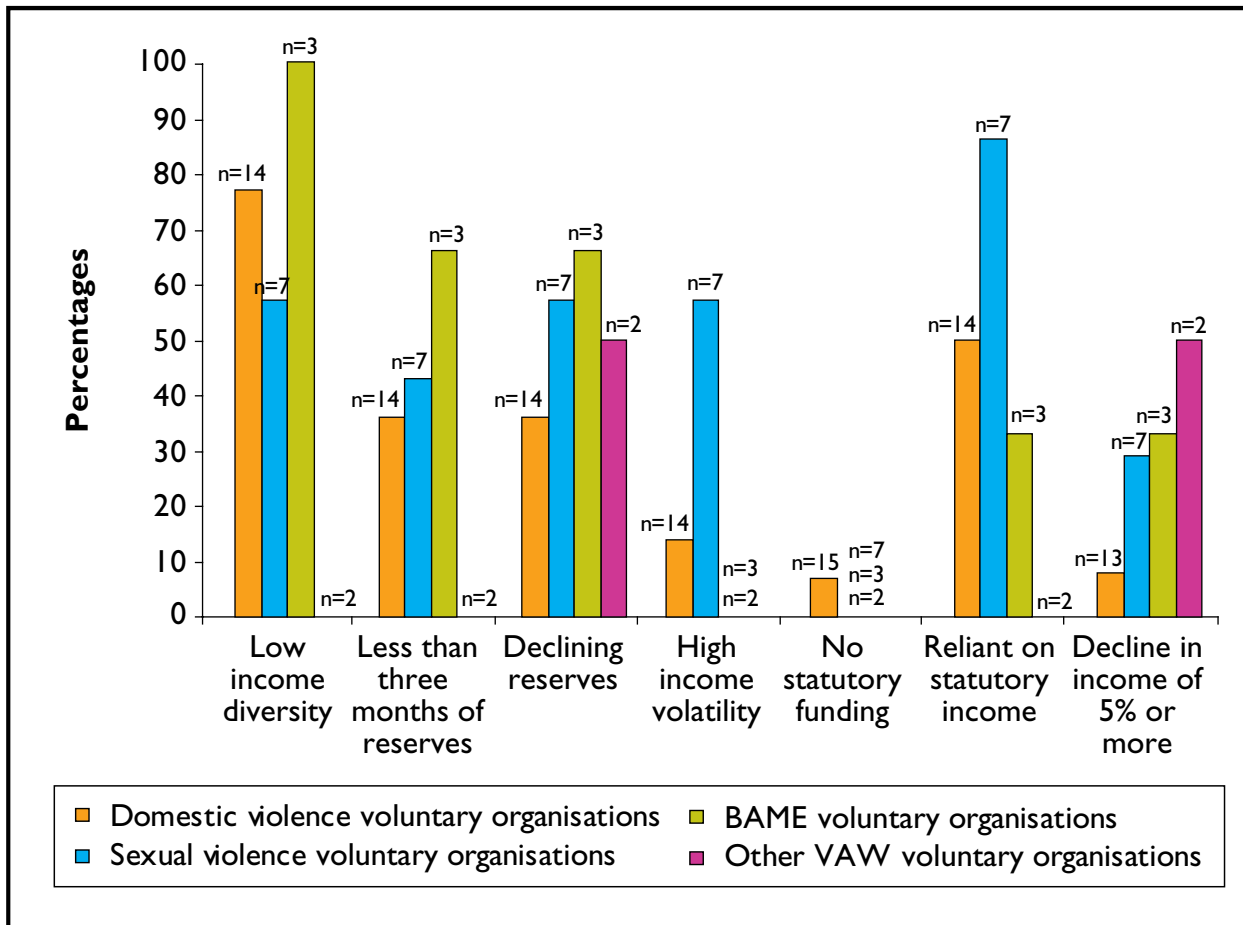


Figure 17: Finances of VAW sub-sectors



Refuges have a narrow funding base. The graph shows that the funding base of domestic violence organisations is particularly narrow; this reflects the predominance of refuges in the domestic violence sample. There is a tension between having stable funding streams and being very reliant on one source of funding. All the refuges in the sample are reliant on two or fewer funding streams for more than 60% of their income. All refuges except one indicated that they are worried by the changes to tendering and commissioning processes.

Refuges in the sample tended to rely on two sources of income: (1) Supporting People and (2) rent. These are essentially linked because without the Supporting People contract to deliver services to domestic violence survivors it is unlikely that a voluntary organisation could continue as a refuge and claim rent. Therefore, while it may seem that domestic violence refuges are stable because they have low income volatility and an obvious source of income, they are very reliant on maintaining their Supporting People contracts.

High levels of statutory funding are likely to make voluntary organisations more vulnerable during a recession, according to the literature review. This has not shown up in our analysis as the recession was yet to have an impact on central and local government budgets. The sexual violence sub-sector is highly reliant upon statutory funding and may be particularly vulnerable.

Between 2004/05 and 2007/08, statutory funding within the VAW sample has been increasing, with an average seven percentage point increase. Two charities, both sexual violence, had seen dramatic increases in the level of statutory funding, a difference of over 80 percentage points.

Five out of the 19 mental health voluntary organisations in the sample had experienced a percentage point increase in statutory income over the five years between 2004/05 and 2007/08. These increases ranged between 1 and 24 percentage points.

Income volatility within the sexual violence sub-sector was comparatively high. While income volatility had been high for sexual violence organisations, for most sexual violence voluntary organisations in the sample, this should not be confused with a drop in income, as income was higher in 2008 than in 2004. For some organisations this was entirely due to the special fund.

In the VAW voluntary sector sample, there are examples of both short term and long-term funding. Two organisations had funding on a five-year basis, but these were the exceptions. Three- and four-year contracts in the domestic violence sector were more common. However, there were eleven organisations where funding was given mainly on an annual basis. This was more common in the sexual violence sub-sector where all of the organisations complained that some if not all of their funding was on an annual basis. This was true for both statutory and independent grant-maker funding. In the other VAW voluntary sub-sectors, the funding sources were mixed as was the duration of funding.

A number of organisations in the mental health sample commented on the length of statutory contracts. Three-year contracts were common, with six organisations having three-year contracts. Some of these contracts were on a rolling basis, or allowed for extensions. One organisation commented that its contract was on an annual basis. We did not gather data about the length of Department of Health (eg, Section 64) grants, although one organisation commented that it had three times three-year grants from the Department.

One year funding appears to be a more common problem for VAW voluntary organisations than for mental health organisations. Sexual violence organisations in particular appear more likely to have short-term funding.

Many VAW voluntary organisations in the sample reported that they had experienced a decline in reserves (in terms of months of expenditure), which may threaten their future sustainability. However, there was not an obvious pattern in the direction of the level of reserves: twelve organisations had seen their reserves (in terms of months of expenditure) decline; three organisations had their reserves stay around the same level; and eleven had seen their reserves increase. The problem of low levels of reserves was similar to the situation in the mental health voluntary sector, where nine organisations had reserves that were less than three months.

It does not seem that low levels of reserves are a particular threat to stability in either the VAW or mental health samples.

12.5 Evidence from the local authority case study areas

There was no evidence from the local authority case study areas analysis relating this issue.

Summary of Section 12

Domestic violence refuges in the sampled organisations have very low income diversity. They are largely reliant on Supporting People funding. This finding is echoed in the literature.

The VAW voluntary sector is reliant on statutory funding. This is supported by evidence from the literature and the sampled organisations.

Sexual violence organisations in the sampled organisations appear to have high income volatility.

Sexual violence organisations appear more likely to have short-term funding. This echoes evidence from the literature that points towards higher income volatility for smaller women's organisations.

13. Conclusion

In this section we provide an overview of the findings of research, structured according to the questions outlined in Section 1.3. We then consider the effectiveness of the research and suggest avenues for future research.

13.1 The stability and sustainability of the VAW sector

The focus of this research was to answer the question: how stable and sustainable is the VAW voluntary sector? The evidence presented in this report answers this question more fully for the domestic violence and sexual violence sub-sectors within VAW, and provides some anecdotal evidence for the stability and sustainability of the VAW BAME, FGM, VAW prostitution and trafficking sub-sectors.

The research found that the main concerns about stability and sustainability in the VAW sector were related to financial issues, and the knock-on effect which these had on other aspects of the work of the VAW sector and the services it provides, including particularly its staffing resources, its ability to offer service specialisation and to develop and expend services.

The combined evidence from a literature review, stakeholder interviews and organisational analysis carried out for this project gave a mixed picture of findings:

- there was an overall increase in the funding, in the number of local authorities offering specialist services VAW services, and in the number of services offered, but a number of services had closed particularly in the sexual violence sub-sector;
- the VAW sector funding may be highly vulnerable to public sector spending cuts because of its heavy reliance on statutory funding;
- the shape of services provided in the VAW sector may be changing as statutory funders seek to commission more generic services, from larger provider groups;

- there are fears that this changing shape of funding may be prompting a downward spiral in the stability and sustainability of some smaller organisations and the highly specialised services they offer; in particular a lack of paid management is contributing to the unsustainability of the sexual violence sector, and there are no obvious funding streams for the sexual violence, BAME, FGM, prostitution and trafficking sub-sectors;
- the VAW sector may be particularly vulnerable to changes in funding brought about by the recession or competitive commissioning;
- this may ultimately reduce the quality of support available to beneficiary groups.

Aspects of the domestic violence sub-sector may be unstable due to a combination of its narrow funding base and the commissioning environment, and this could affect its ability to maintain its services for vulnerable women. Domestic violence organisations are experiencing the same challenging environment as other sectors heavily reliant on local government funding, such as the mental health sector. However, they may well be more vulnerable to changes in commissioning and Supporting People contracts due to their narrow funding base. Refuges make up a substantial proportion of domestic violence voluntary organisations and every refuge analysed as part of this research was reliant on two or fewer income streams for 60% of its income. In each case these two incomes were Supporting People income and rent. The two income streams are linked as without Supporting People funding it is unlikely that a refuge will continue to operate as a refuge and collect rent.

While this issue seems most extreme amongst refuges, low income diversity was common across all types of VAW voluntary organisations (over 70% in the sample have low income diversity) when compared to mental health organisations (40% in the sample have low income diversity).

The sexual violence sub-sector may be growing less sustainable due to a lack of paid management and no obvious funding streams. Lack of paid management and obvious funding is already affecting its ability to safeguard existing services, as evidenced by the decline in Rape Crisis centres. The Special Fund was credited by one interviewee with having ‘saved the sector’, however no new alternative funding streams had been identified by the organisations we spoke to. Their funding was primarily from local authorities but this funding tended to be very short-term and did not come from any ring-fenced budget.

These problems with funding are exacerbated by low management capacity. In comparison to the mental health sector and other VAW sub-sectors, the sexual violence sub-sector is heavily reliant on trustees for management. Over half of the sexual violence organisations (four out of seven) in the sample, we analysed were being managed by their trustees. This compares to less than 10% across the rest of the VAW sample and 30% across the mental health sample.

Outside the domestic violence sub-sector, there are no obvious funding streams for VAW voluntary organisations. Domestic violence seems to have benefited from a higher funding priority within local authorities than other forms of VAW, such as sexual violence, due in part to dedicated funding through the Supporting People programme. On a local level, there is nothing similar for voluntary organisations helping victims of other forms of VAW. This is not just a problem of funding but also of wider statutory strategy. The case studies were designed to represent a variety of local relationships and while undertaking local case studies, despite several attempts, we did not manage to speak to anyone in a statutory organisation who was specifically thinking about other forms of VAW as part of their remit.

Many of the issues associated with stability and sustainability facing the VAW voluntary sector are also relevant to the mental health voluntary sector. The risks to sustainability and stability shared by the VAW and mental health voluntary sectors are:

- changing patterns of funding due to commissioning (in particular competitive tendering);
- difficulty of achieving full-cost recovery;
- continued lack of funding for preventative work;
- lower funding available due to the recession;
- difficulties in recruiting staff;
- lack of capacity-building support; and,
- reliance on statutory incomes.

Many of these issues are challenging the voluntary sector as a whole, in particular the changes within local authorities away from grant-giving towards competitive tendering.

Throughout this research the largest and most immediate concern of the VAW voluntary sector was changes to the way in which statutory funding is being transferred to the sector. Funding from both local and national government has an enormous impact on a whole range of organisational factors, of which income is only the most obvious. In particular, statutory funding affects what outcomes information people collect, it affects their ability to influence policy, and whether or not organisations merge.

Many of the issues that the VAW voluntary sector seems to be facing are aspects of much larger movements in policy, in particular the devolution of funding to local authorities. Other voluntary sectors that rely heavily on government funding, such as the mental health sector, are also facing them. This research underlines the inevitable challenges of such a policy; the interpretation and implementation

of policy varies between local areas, and there is still some ambiguity over whether responsibility for some policies and services rests with local or national government. Tackling these challenges is not easy, the impact of various policies is often hard to separate from the personal relationship between the voluntary organisation and the commissioner. Furthermore, the effects of these changes will vary across the sub-sectors due to the specific organisational challenges they face. It is important that these differences are considered in any policy response.

Some external factors have had more of an impact on mental health organisations to date. For example, in our sample, mental health voluntary organisations were slightly more likely than VAW voluntary organisations to have reported a decline in their income over the last five years. They were also more likely to have been affected by changes to commissioning. The full effects of changes to commissioning and the recession are yet to be seen.

VAW voluntary organisations were more likely than mental health voluntary organisations in the sample to collect outcomes data. This is probably in part due to Supporting People funding for refuges.

13.2 The strengths and weaknesses of the VAW voluntary sector

The research considered the question: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the VAW voluntary sector? How do these characteristics affect the ability of the VAW voluntary sector to secure funding at present and in the future, and how effective and cost-effective is the VAW voluntary sector?

The evidence from the literature and stakeholders agreed that the strengths of the VAW sector were the passion and commitment of staff and volunteers, their strength as lobbyists, their 'holistic' approach to supporting women, and their grass-roots knowledge. The high proportion of VAW organisations that are involved in their local strategic partnerships (over 40% compared to 25% for

mental health organisations), is further evidence of the sector's lobbying ability. The research did not uncover any evidence that related these strengths directly to the ability to get funding, although they were clearly valued by the funders we spoke to.

The picture on weaknesses is less clear. The evidence from the stakeholders characterised the sector as having low levels of performance data. However the sampled organisations regularly collected outcomes for funders and no evidence was found that this affected funding. The stakeholders' view that the sector was concentrating on lobbying central government was not borne out by the evidence from the sampled organisations. Again, the view from stakeholders that the sector was fragmented and this limited its ability to get funding was not brought up as a problem by the sampled organisations.

There was evidence from the literature, stakeholders and sampled organisations that difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff was a problem. In the sampled organisations this was a particular problem for sexual violence organisations, (see above for the implications of this).

13.3 How effective and cost-effective is the VAW voluntary sector?

The research did not find any objective evidence of the effectiveness or cost-effectiveness of the VAW sector. However the opinion of the funders interviewed in the stakeholder interviews and as part of the case studies was that these organisations did offer value for money. Given the large amount of outcomes data that VAW organisations reported that compiled for themselves and for funders, there is scope to do future research analysing this information.

13.4 On what basis is there considered to be a 'funding gap' and why?

The funding gaps that were consistently identified in the literature, by the stakeholders and by the sampled organisations, were long-term counselling for victims of sexual violence, work with children affected by domestic abuse and work with women with no recourse to public funds. The research did not manage to identify the causes of such gaps. However the case studies suggested that, from a statutory perspective, there are rarely people at a local level who have explicit responsibility for delivering such services.

13.5 What has been the impact of recent government policies on the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector?

The research looked primarily at the impact of the Gender Equality Duty. The sampled organisations and local area case studies revealed very little impact of the Gender Equality Duty on VAW voluntary organisations. Despite concerns in the literature and from stakeholders that the Gender Equality Duty is being misinterpreted and used to challenge voluntary organisations on their women-only status, we did not find any evidence from the sampled organisations or the local case studies that this was the case. One VAW voluntary organisation had opened its services to men because it thought that funders would expect it to. In Manchester, the floating support Supporting People contract was for men and women, but this was not due to the Gender Equality Duty.

Many VAW voluntary organisations mentioned that the Gender Equality Duty gave them more confidence and it was good to have it in case they needed additional justification. Two commissioners and one voluntary organisation said that the Gender Equality Duty had made them think about access to their services for the LGB&T community.

13.6 Effectiveness of the approach to the research

Subject to the limitations outlined in Section 2.2, we feel that this report has made a substantial contribution to understanding concerns about the current stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector, although conclusions about domestic violence and sexual violence sub-sectors are stronger than those relating to the BAME, FGM, prostitution and trafficking sub-sectors. The existing literature and initial stakeholder interviews enabled us to focus our primary research on areas which were seen as high priorities by both the sector and government stakeholders. There are however some limitations of our approach to the research.

- While overall the mental health sector provided a good comparison in terms of reliance on statutory funding and similarity in size of organisations, it did not provide a useful comparison for the issues arising for some VAW organisations in relation to Supporting People funding. Only three mental health voluntary organisations in the sample received Supporting People funding and these were very large.
- The evidence on BAME VAW organisations was conflicting. While the literature suggested that there had been no decrease in the numbers of BAME services, it did point to problems with getting translation and other core services properly funded. Stakeholders were also particularly concerned about the stability and sustainability of the BAME sector. However this did not come through in our sampled organisations. However, findings from the sample of the BAME sub-sector must be treated with more caution than others, because of the small numbers in the sample.
- The case studies ended up being almost entirely focussed on domestic violence as no one could be found within local authorities or PCTs who felt able to comment on other parts of the VAW sector.

- The research questions led organisations to reflect on problems facing their organisations and their ability to withstand them. It may therefore have a negative bias.
- The research took place between January 2009 and September 2009 and so the full impact of the recession is unlikely to be captured by this report.

13.7 Further research

There are some areas that this research has touched upon, but which would benefit from exploration in further research. These include:

- research on the effects on beneficiary services of VAW women-only services being opened up to men;
- research on whether specialist services continue to be offered within merged organisations and the impact if they are not retained;
- more detailed research on commissioners' attitudes to the VAW voluntary sector.
- more research concentrating specifically on BAME, FGM, prostitution and trafficking organisation.

Appendix I. List of acronyms

VAW	Violence against women
LSPs	Local Strategic Partnerships
PCTs	Primary Care Trusts
LGB and T	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
IAPT	Improving access to psychological therapies
NICE	National Institute for Clinical Excellence
GEO	Government Equalities Office
EVAW	End Violence Against women
REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
SARC	Sexual assault referral centre

Appendix 2. Glossary

Supporting People

The Supporting People programme was launched in April 2003 and provides housing related support to prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care or homelessness and can help the transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment.

Commissioning

Commissioning is the process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet individuals' needs at a strategic level. This applies to all services, whether they are provided by the local authority or by the private or voluntary sectors. Commissioning is a term that is interpreted in many different ways. For example, the National Health Service commissions services at a high strategic level for example hospitals or prescribing budgets, whereas local authorities apply the term to services at all levels from the individual upwards.

National indicators on domestic violence/sexual violence

Effective from 1 April 2008, the NIS is the only set of indicators on which central government will performance manage local government. It covers services delivered by local authorities alone and in partnership with other organisations like health services and the police. There are three national indicators related to VAW: NI 26 Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence (taken up by 4 out of 150 localities); NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence (taken up by 75 out of 150 localities); and NI 34 Domestic violence – murder (taken up by 0 out of 150 localities).

Women's organisations

Organisations that seek to improve the status and situation of women.

Full cost recovery

This is when all costs of delivering a service are appropriately allocated.

Income volatility

This was classified using the NCVO terminology. High income volatility: a change in income of more than 20% in one year and then a change of more than 20% in the opposite direction. Moderate income volatility: a change in income of more than 10% in one year and then a change of more than 10% in the opposite direction. Low income volatility is when income fluctuates less than 10%.

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

The IAPT programme is funded by the Department of Health. Its objective is to support Primary Care Trusts to implement National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for people experiencing depression and anxiety disorders. The programme was launched in 2006 with two demonstration sites that focused on adults of working age. In 2007 this was extended to 11 Pathfinders that were exploring the specific benefits to vulnerable groups. In 2008/2009, 35 Primary Care Trusts are receiving funding to implement IAPT services and train therapists, with more to follow in the next two years.

Personalisation

This refers to new self-directed funding mechanisms that give service users greater control over and choice about the support they receive. Individual budgets bring together all the funding to which a service user is entitled from different statutory funding streams. Direct payments just cover social care funding. Although the service users direct how their money is spent, they do not necessarily administer the money themselves.

Reserves

The amount of money a voluntary organisation has available to spend. The formula is: net current assets plus realisable investments divided by monthly expenditure. The usual level of reserves for voluntary organisations is three to six months.

Compact

The compact is an agreement between government and the voluntary and community sector to improve their relationship. It covers details such as length of funding, renewal of funding.

Appendix 3. Overview of case studies

The aim of the case studies was to look at the impact of government policy, rather than to examine the stability and sustainability of organisations in the three areas. Hence a large number of the findings relate to relationships and funding between the VAW voluntary organisations and local statutory agencies.

Bath and North East Somerset (BANES)

Interviewees

Organisation	Role
Julian House (homelessness)	Runs the Libra Project
Bath Next Link (domestic violence refuge)	Team Leader
BANES local authority	Group manager – partnership delivery
BANES local authority	Part time Supporting People manager
Southside Family Project (domestic violence advocacy)	Director
SARA (sexual violence)	Chief Executive

No one from BANES PCT was available for comment within the time frame of the research, and there is no specialist BAME provision in Bath.

The funding relationship between VAW organisations and the local statutory funders in BANES varies. The Libra Project is funded largely through voluntary funds and is subsidised by Julian House. Bath Next Link have the local Supporting People contract to provide refuge spaces but have no contact with anyone else at BANES Local Authority. Southside Family Project is very well networked into the Local Authority and receives grants from them. SARA receives no funding from any statutory body in BANES and is funded solely by charitable grants.

In BANES there has been no domestic abuse coordinator since 2007 and charities there felt isolated and out of touch. One interviewee commented that, because there was now no general oversight, there was now a risk that some charities may be acting in an unsafe way. Some statutory interviewees also felt that data on need and provision was now harder to come by.

BANES stood out in the case study areas as having a low awareness of the Gender Equality Duty amongst VAW voluntary organisations.

Next Link Housing, (a specialist domestic violence service) won the Supporting People contract from Bath Women's Aid in 2007. All relevant interviewees thought that the handover had a minimal impact on service users. In BANES, relationships between voluntary organisations and contract managers seemed to be good, however some organisations felt that they were not able to influence the local authority at a strategic level.

Manchester City

Interviewees

Organisation	Role
Saheli (Asian women's refuge)	Director
Manchester City Council	Review officer for Supporting People
Manchester Women's Aid (domestic violence refuge)	Director
Manchester Rape Crisis (sexual violence)	Project manager
Manchester PCT	Public Health manager
Manchester City Council	Domestic Violence Coordinator
Manchester mental health and social care trust	Assistant Director of Social Care

All VAW organisations in Manchester receive money from the city council. Saheli receives funding from the Manchester City Council but was not successful in securing a Supporting People tender. Manchester Women's Aid has secured two major Supporting People tenders. Manchester Rape Crisis receives yearly funding from Manchester City Council.

In December 2008, five Women's Aid groups merged to form Manchester Women's Aid. The impetus for this came partly from the group themselves, but it was the changes to Supporting People commissioning that prompted them to act. Only three Supporting People tenders were put out across Manchester:

one for refuge accommodation; one for floating support services; and one for emergency accommodation. Respondents from both Manchester Women's Aid and Manchester City Council said that tendering for the contract would have been impossible without merging because of the complexity of coordinating five different organisations to bid for one contract.

The specialist black women's refuge formed part of the merger and is still run as a black women's refuge. However Saheli, the South-Asian women's refuge, wanted to remain separate and did not merge.

Interestingly, it was in Manchester where charities were most confused by the tendering process even though this was the area where relations between the local authority and VAW voluntary sector seemed to be best. This seemed to be because the large number of organisations made coordination difficult and the merger of Manchester Women's Aid had changed potential partnerships. Manchester City Council made a conscious decision to design the Supporting People tender for floating support so that there was access for both men and women. This meant that Manchester Women's Aid had to open up its floating support services to men in order to win the tender.

In Manchester the role of the domestic abuse coordinator was seen as crucial for networking. The domestic abuse coordinator role included a lot of time helping organisations apply for tenders and report back to funders as well as facilitating partnership working.

There was wide awareness of the GED in Manchester but it was generally felt that Manchester City Council provided such a high level of services that the Duty would not have an impact on how the Council operated.


Wellingborough

Interviewees

Organisation	Role
Northamptonshire County Council	Commissioning contract manager
Wellingborough Borough Council	Community Development Manager
Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Women’s Aid (WENWA) (domestic violence refuge)	Chief Executive
Northamptonshire rape and incest crisis centre (NRICC) (sexual violence)	Client Support Worker
Wellingborough Borough Council	CDRP Manager

No one from Northamptonshire PCT was available for comment within the time frame of the research. While there was no separate specialist BAME VAW voluntary organisation in Wellingborough WENWA does provide some specialist BAME services.

There is a mixed picture for statutory funding for VAW voluntary organisations in Wellingborough. WENWA have the local Supporting People contract to provide refuge spaces and has been operating in the areas for 37 years. NRICC did not receive any statutory funding from Wellingborough Borough Council but is supported by Northamptonshire Borough Council.



Wellingborough has low population density and even though there is not much VAW voluntary sector activity, there is the recommended number of refuge spaces per woman in the area. Relationships in the area were good and seemed uncomplicated given the low level of activity and lack of competition to win tenders.

There has recently been a centralisation of specialist domestic abuse police officers which interviewees felt had a negative impact on information-sharing locally on domestic abuse issues.

While there awareness of the existence of the GED, there was not a high level of understanding of its requirements or how it might be used by VAW voluntary organisations.

Appendix 4. Methodology

Rapid Evidence Assessment

Phase 1 of the search was to perform a brief mapping exercise to see which search terms yielded the most literature and if any were too broad and would prevent rapid collection of evidence. It quickly became apparent that due to a dearth of literature as many search terms as possible was desirable.

Search terms (general): Violence against women, violence against women charities, domestic violence UK, domestic violence services, domestic violence services UK, domestic violence voluntary sector, domestic violence charity, domestic violence third sector, Rape Crisis centre, rape services, sexual violence services, sexual violence services UK, domestic violence sustainable, domestic abuse, gender equality duty, honour crimes, female genital mutilation, trafficking.

Broader search terms for government websites: women, victims of violence.

Phase 2 of the search involved searching the following websites and databases for literature:

- Office of the Third Sector website;
- Web of Knowledge database;
- NAO website;
- Ministry of Justice website;
- The Government Equalities Office website;
- Home Office: research development statistics website;
- Department of Health website;
- ESRC website;
- PubMed database;
- Communities and Local Government website;

- Google;
- Cochrane Collaboration database;
- Campbell Collaboration database; and
- Jstor database.

Phase 3 of the search involved looking up relevant references from significant pieces of secondary research.

Phase 4 of the search involved gathering as much literature from voluntary organisations themselves and to this end we put out a call for evidence on the following mailing lists:

- EVAW;
- Women's Resource Centre;
- Eaves Housing for Women;
- Women's National Commission;
- Women's Aid Federation of England; and
- Respect.

We also contacted the main umbrella bodies and specific charities to ask if they have any additional information, including:

- Imkaan;
- Women's Aid Federation of England;
- Rape Crisis England and Wales;
- EVAW;
- Women's Resource Centre; and
- Southall Black Sisters.

Each source was critically assessed, noting the findings and classifying it according to its relevance to the research questions.

- **High relevance** – this source directly answers all or part of the question.
- **Medium relevance** – this source indirectly addresses parts of the question.
- **Low relevance** – this source contains no information related to the question.

The robustness of the sources was the classified as either high, medium or low.

High – the findings from this source can be trusted. Features of the source include:

- appropriate, objective approach;
- appropriate sample;
- thorough referencing;
- questions are not framed in a biased way; and
- objective approach to finding sources.

For primary, quantitative research

- sample is large;
- response rate is high (>70%) or fairly high with some consideration of non-response bias.

Medium – the findings from this source are useful but must be taken with caveats. Features of the source include:

- appropriate approach;
- approach may not be entirely objective but is transparent;
- appropriate sample;
- selective presentation of results;

- questions may have some bias; and
- referencing is not consistent.

For primary, quantitative research

- sample is large;
- response rate is lower (30%–70%) with no consideration of non-response bias;
- results do not tell us features of the population as a whole but may tell us something.

Low – this source is not useful as evidence but highlights areas of concern for the sector. Features of the source include:

- approach is inappropriate, heavily biased or opaque;
- patchy and erratic referencing; and
- source is dominated by opinion with little or no objectivity.

For primary, quantitative research

- sample is small;
- response rate is very low (<30%) with no consideration of non-response bias;
- results do not tell us features of the population as a whole but may tell us something.

Stakeholder Findings

Stakeholders were selected to get a representation of views across the sector – both national and local funders, and national and local charities dealing with a variety of issues. We were not able to speak to someone within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a Local Authority, Local Government Association, or a

police contact for domestic violence. The individuals have not been identified as they were not presenting the official view of that organisation, but their impressions from their experiences of the sector.

List of stakeholders interviewed

A total of 37 stakeholders were interviewed from the following organisations:

- Ashiana
- Association of Chief Police Officers
- CAADA
- Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University
- Comic Relief
- Communities and Local Government
- Coventry City Council
- Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Department of Health
- Eaves Housing for Women
- EVA
- Forward
- Home Office
- IDeA
- Imkaan
- Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust
- Ministry of Justice
- Northamptonshire Rape and Incest Crisis Centre
- OCJR

- Rape Crisis England and Wales
- Refuge
- Respect
- Respond
- Southall Black Sisters
- The Survivors Trust
- Victim Support
- Women's Aid Federation of England
- Women's National Commission
- Women's Resource Centre

The stakeholder evidence was analysed by coding statements mentioned by interviewees and then checking how many times each statement was mentioned by each interviewee and presenting that according to whether they were a funder, a charity or an academic.

GuideStar analysis

The GuideStar database, which holds income data for all charities in England and Wales, was searched using the terms 'domestic violence', 'sexual violence', 'VAW', 'honour crimes', 'female genital mutilation', 'forced marriage' and 'trafficking'. The data on these charities was downloaded and then cleaned up to ensure that:

- there were no duplications;
- VAW was a significant part of the charities work;
- the charity had submitted accounts within the past three years; and
- the charity operated in England.

Where necessary, the charity's website was consulted to check what its work was.

The charities were then categorised according to whether they mainly operated within the domestic violence, sexual violence, BAME, or other VAW sub-sectors. Again, where necessary, the charity's website was consulted to check what its work was. This allowed us to look at differences in the different sub-sectors' income.

The charities were then categorised by income, according to the definition of sizes used by the NCVO.

To check that the weeding process had not discriminated against one particular income category of charities, the original data set downloaded from GuideStar was also categorised by income to check its distribution. This showed a similar pattern to the refined dataset.

Assessment of organisational stability and sustainability

The aim of this part of the research is to assess the organisational stability and sustainability of voluntary organisations working in the VAW voluntary sector compared to voluntary organisations from another comparator sector. In order to get as representative a picture of the VAW sector as possible, we analysed a random sample of voluntary organisations in the VAW sector and compared their stability and sustainability to a random sample from the comparator sector.

Choosing a comparator sector

For the research to be robust, the comparator sector needed to be a sector that is recognised as analogous to the violence against women sector by the stakeholders. The interventions of the comparator sector need to be similar to those of the VAW sector in order to make comparisons of effectiveness and cost effectiveness. Also, the issue must affect a similar number of people. The importance of statutory funding within the VAW sector means that the comparator sector should also have a similar reliance on statutory funding.

It would also be helpful if the clients of the comparator sector had multiple issues, (such as housing needs, health needs and difficulties accessing services) as the victims of violence against women do. The comparator group must not be a sector that is extreme, positively or negatively, in terms of stability and sustainability, otherwise it will not be considered a fair comparator.

This shortlist of groups was presented to the steering group for comment. It was agreed, in discussion with the GEO project group, that adult mental health should be used as the comparator sector as it fulfilled most of the criteria outlined above.

Approach to sampling

VAW charities

As no comprehensive sampling frame exists to generate the population of organisations and produce a long list from which the sample of VAW organisations for Phase 2 was taken, we asked charities on the membership lists from umbrella bodies working with the following types of organisation:

- rape crisis centres (from Rape Crisis England and Wales);
- refuges (from Women's Aid Federation of England); and
- BAME services (from Imkaan).

The list of VAW organisations were cross-referenced against organisations on the GuideStar database to ensure that none have been omitted. The final list was therefore be as comprehensive and objective as possible.

Mental health charities

Similarly no sampling frame exists for mental health charities. To source the population of organisations and produce a long list from which the sample of mental health organisations was taken, we did a GuideStar search for Mind organisations and used charities on the membership lists from the following umbrella groups:

- Mental Health Alliance;
- Mental Health Providers Forum; and
- BAME Mental Health Network.

While this approach is not perfect it the best and most cost-effective method. It also provided an objective and unbiased list of organisations.

Selection of charities

We investigated further the differences in stability in VAW organisations working with different types of violence against women and different sizes (by income) of organisations. To do this, the long list of VAW organisations was stratified firstly by what type of violence it works with and then by its income. The list of mental health organisations was stratified by income.

The VAW and mental health samples was chosen at random from the long lists of organisations. This ensured that the two samples are chosen objectively. Any accidental over sampling by region was examined and adjusted.

The response rate for the survey was 57% for VAW charities and 46% for mental health charities. For both sectors the achieved sample was biased away from larger charities because of non-response bias.

Organisations Analysed

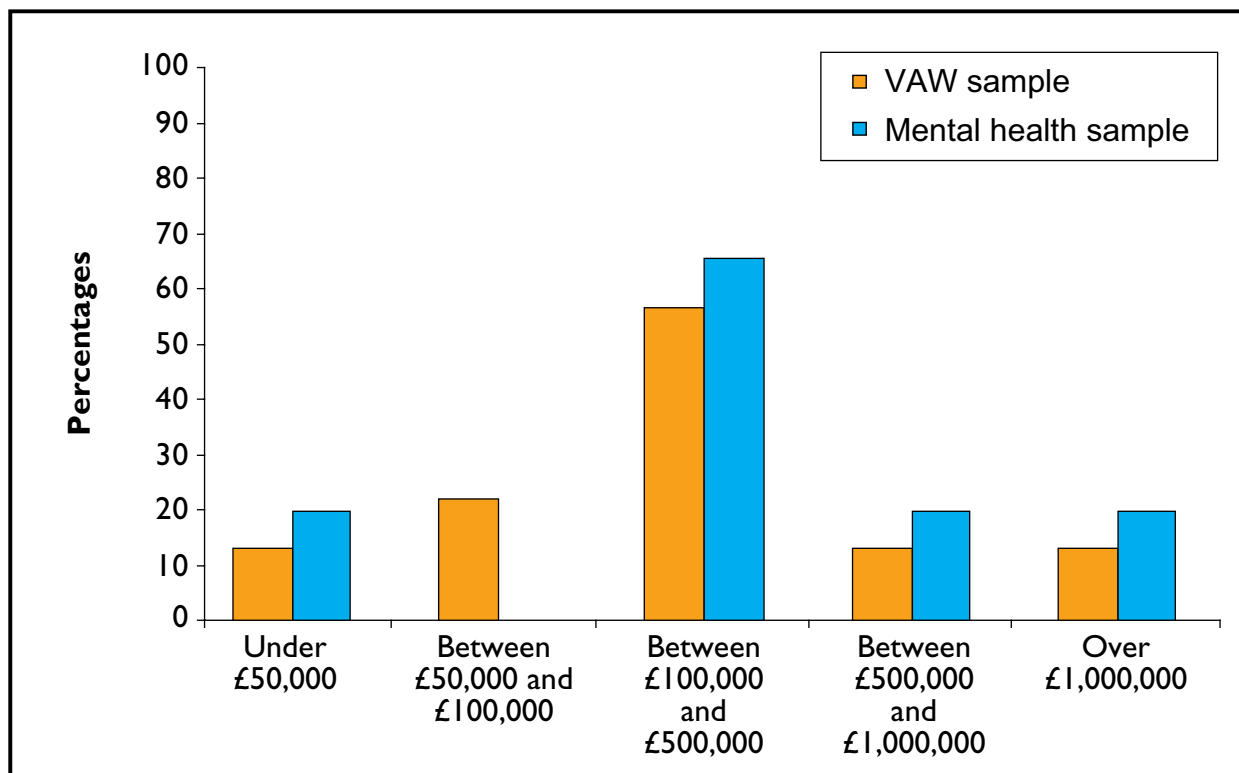
The list below shows the organisations in both the VAW and mental health sample that were analysed.

- African Caribbean Community Initiative
- Alternative Futures Group
- Amadudu Women's Refuge
- Apna Hag
- Beyond the Streets
- Bristol Mind
- Bromley Women's Aid
- Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre
- Chester-le-Street Mind
- Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service
- Gloucestershire Rape Crisis Centre
- Gloucestershire Domestic Violence Support and Advocacy Project
- Home
- Impact Housing
- Kairos Women Working Together
- Kirkless Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre
- Leeds Women's Aid
- Maan Liverpool Somali Mental Health Project
- Malvern Mind
- Mental Health Action Group
- Mental Health Foundation
- Milton Keynes Women's Aid
- Mind in Croydon
- Mind in Enfield

- Nottingham Rape Crisis Centre
- Panah
- Project for Advocacy Counselling and Education
- Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (Cheshire and Merseyside)
- Sevenoaks Area Mind
- Sheffield Domestic Abuse Forum
- Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre
- Sound Minds
- South Somerset Mind
- Splitz Support Service
- The Jan Foundation
- The Jewish Association for the Mentally Ill
- The London Centre for Personal Safety
- UK Advocacy Network
- Waltham Forest Black People's Mental Health Association
- Warwickshire Domestic Advice Support Services
- Wear Valley Women's Aid
- Wealdon, Eastbourne and Lewis Mind
- Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge
- West Leicestershire Mind
- West Lindsey Women's Aid
- Women's Aid Federation of England

The graph below shows the spread of charities in each sample by income. Two of the three VAW charities under £50,000 were sexual violence organisations.

Figure 18: Distribution of sample by income



Organisational analysis

The analysis of organisations' sustainability and stability was made using an adapted version of NPC's charity analysis framework. The data for this analysis came from audited accounts and short interviews with senior staff/chief executives and, where appropriate, finance managers. We examined

- activities;
- management
- staff;
- the impact of changes to the commissioning environment;
- the impact of government policies; and
- finances.

In addition where available we reviewed any documentation that will support the organisation's strategic intent and effectiveness of its activities.

NPC tested the semi-structured interviews with 3–4 organisations.

Analysis


The data from this research was used to produce a picture of the stability and sustainability of the VAW sector, identifying those activities or target groups that are most at risk, to what extent they are at risk and why.

Evaluation of recent government policies on the stability and sustainability of the VAW voluntary sector

The purpose of this part of the research is to see what impact recent government policies have made on the funding of the VAW sector.

The charity interviews from the previous stage was complemented by interviews with other people in local roles key to reducing VAW in their area, and those with local responsibility in comparison sectors. These include:

- commissioner within a local authority;
- commissioner within CDRP;
- commissioner within Primary Care Trust;
- commissioner within the housing department;
- commissioner within social services;
- commissioner within probation;
- commissioner within drug and alcohol team;
- domestic violence charity;
- sexual violence charity; and
- BAME specific VAW charity.



This part of the research was focused in 3 geographical areas. This gave a coherent picture of all factors contributing to the sustainability of the VAW and comparison sector and the views of all stakeholders in those areas. It aims to show how well various stakeholders are working together to provide coordinated services in the VAW and comparison sectors. The areas were chosen, using *Map of Gaps 2*, in order to reflect a spread of local authorities' responses to VAW. The three areas were Manchester, Wellingborough and Bath and North East Somerset

The interviews explored these stakeholders' understanding of recent government policy and how they have been implemented in their area.

Appendix 5. Interview guide for sampled organisations

Below is the interview guide we used for our organisational analysis of the VAW and mental health samples. Information not gathered at the time of the interview was followed up at a later date. The interview was conducted with the chief executive or director where possible. If there were no paid staff the interview was conducted with the chair of trustees.

Before the interview, NPC will look at accounts and any strategy or results documents that the charity has sent which may answer some of the questions below.

Background

When was the charity established?

What have been the major changes to your organisations over the last 5–10 years?

Services and Results

What are your main services?

Have you had to close any services in the past five years?

Do you have to change services much depending on what funders want?

What level of demand is there for your services? Are you oversubscribed?

What are the results of these services for your beneficiaries and how do you evaluate them? What data do you collect? (If a mental health charity, do you use a clinical outcomes scale?)

What results are your funders interested in?

Are you aware of changes to NHS assessments of service quality, such as changes to the Quality and Outcomes Framework?

What do you think are the appropriate outcomes on which your organisation's performance should be measured?

Do you use the findings of your evaluations to inform service development?

Activity	Results

Organisation

Management and leadership

How long has the CEO/Director been in post?

Is the CEO involved in service delivery, or is she free to concentrate on managing the project?

What would happen if he/she was not here (ie, is there a succession plan)?

Have you ever had any capacity building help, such as fundraising consultant, or evaluation support?

Do you have or are you working towards a PQASSO qualification?

If refuge, what Supporting People grade are you?

If Mind charity, what Mind Quality Award do you hold?

Are you affiliated to any umbrella organisations? If so, how useful do you find them?

Do you consider yourself a woman-only service? Are all your staff women? Are all your trustees women?

Staff

How many full-time equivalent staff do you employ?

How many volunteers do you have?

How have the numbers of staff and volunteers fluctuated over the last 5–10 years?

What is the level of staff turnover?

What are the different staff roles?

Do you find it easy to recruit staff with appropriate experience and skills?

How do you manage the performance and development of your staff?

If a mental health charity, are all your counsellors/therapists registered with a professional body (eg, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)? Are they volunteers or paid staff? How is their performance monitored?

Governance

Do you feel you receive enough support from your board?

Collaboration

Do you have enough opportunities to network with other statutory and other voluntary organisations working on the same issues as you?

What proportion of your time is spent on networking?

What boards and committees do you sit on?

Are you involved in the local strategic partnership and its setting of the national indicators? Do you have a relevant national indicator in your area?

How much do you work with other organisations?

Other

Have changes to local authority/PCT commissioning affected your organisation?

What impact, if any, do you think recent government policies have had on your organisation?

Finances

	2004/ 2005a	2005/ 2006a	2006/ 2007a	2007/ 2008a	2008/ 2009e	2009/ 2010e
Total income	£	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	£	£	£	£	£	£
Statutory income	£ %	£ %	£ %	£ %	£ %	£ %
Voluntary income	£ %	£ %			£ %	£ %
Earned income	£ %	£ %	£ %	£ %	£	£
Percentage of income of main funding stream	% name	%	%	%	%	%
Reserves	months	months	months	months	months	months
Staff (FTE)						
Volunteers						

How many major funders do you have?

What percentage of your funding is from grants, and what percentage from contracts?

When are your main grants/contracts due to come to an end?

What is your estimated income for 2008/2009 and your projection for 2009/2010?

How much time do you spend on fundraising? (Calculate fundraising ratio.)

How many of your funding applications are successful?

How has your income changed over the last 5–10 years? (In terms of amount of funding and type of funders.)

What level of reserves do you aim to hold in order to ensure sustainability?
How does this compare to your current level of reserves?

How do you cover your core costs?

What is your unit cost (and what is the relevant 'unit' for your service)?

Do you use full cost recovery techniques?

Risks

What are the major risks to your organisation's stability and sustainability?

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