



Home Office

Violence Against Women and Girls Services Commissioning Toolkit

Guidance on commissioning local services to support victims and survivors¹
of violence against women and girls

March 2022

¹ For the purpose of this document, the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are used interchangeably to refer to those who have experienced VAWG.



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Part A: Context

Section 1: About the toolkit

This toolkit provides advice to demonstrate how commissioning services to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) can be done effectively. It will be useful for **all commissioners** as a practical guide to commissioning VAWG services as well as service providers, to provide an understanding of how to meet commissioners' needs. The purpose of the toolkit is to ensure that professionals can work together to provide an effective commissioning approach for services to support to anyone affected by any form of VAWG.

This toolkit is focused on commissioning all VAWG services in England and applies to agencies discharging reserved functions relating to crime, policing and justice in Wales. Devolved bodies and local organisations in Wales should also refer to the relevant Welsh legislation, such as the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015² and associated guidance. A separate toolkit and Statutory Guidance for the commissioning of VAWG services for Wales has also been developed to reflect the specific context in Wales.³

It should be noted that this toolkit does not constitute legal advice and commissioners should obtain their own legal advice when commissioning services.

1.1 How to use the toolkit

We recommend reading the document as a whole to achieve a full understanding of a whole system approach to commissioning VAWG services. A whole system approach means different professionals and agencies, local and national Government, charities, and others all working together to tackle violence against women and girls.

This document has been developed to support the implementation of the National Statement of Expectations (NSE) and aims to bring together key information for commissioners to consider when beginning the process of commissioning specialist VAWG services.

It is important to remember that service provision makes up only one part of a victim or survivor's journey and commissioners should also be considering the issue of VAWG in the round; including prevention, provision of services, prosecution and justice, and the ongoing support that the victim or survivor may need.

This document should not be used in isolation and we recommend that commissioners also refer to the range of information made available through the resources section. In

² [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

³ [statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales)

addition, it is important for commissioners to engage with specialist service providers, the VAWG sector and the local population.

1.2 Toolkit structure and content

The toolkit is structured in a way that reflects the commissioning cycle (Figure 1). Each section has a common structure that begins with a short summary and ends with some practical points, with suggested resources for exploring a topic in more depth at the end of the toolkit. We acknowledge that in practice, some of these phases may happen simultaneously. Case studies are included to highlight elements of good practice, as well as direct quotes from the VAWG Strategy Call for Evidence and commissioners which informed this work.



Figure 1: The commissioning cycle

Section 2: Definition, policy and legislative framework

- | | |
|-----|----------------------------------------|
| 2.1 | Definition of VAWG |
| 2.2 | Introduction and legislative framework |
| 2.3 | The scale of VAWG |
| 2.4 | Perpetrators |

2.1 Definition of Violence Against Women and Girls

‘Violence against women and girls’ covers a range of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes, including rape and other sexual offences, stalking, domestic abuse, ‘honour’-based abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and ‘honour’ killings), ‘revenge porn’ and ‘upskirting’, as well as many others. These crimes disproportionately affect women and girls. Men and boys can also be victims of violence and abuse, and the approaches set out in this document will benefit all victims of these crime types. This document should be read in conjunction with the most recent iterations of the Tackling VAWG Strategy, Domestic Abuse Plan and the Cross-Government Supporting Male Victims of Crimes Considered VAWG document.⁴

These crimes are deeply harmful, not only because of the detrimental, long-term, effect they can have on victims, survivors and their loved ones, but also because of the impact they can have on wider society. This in turn creates significant social and economic costs.⁵

VAWG will often include many different types of abusive and controlling behaviours which are used intentionally to control another person, be they an adult or a child, or to have power over them. It is rarely a one-off experience, and often gets worse over time. We also know that perpetrators are most likely to be known to the person experiencing the abuse.

Violence and abuse can affect people of all ages, abilities, sexualities and backgrounds, which is why it is imperative for services to meet the diverse needs of victims and survivors. Abuse should also be understood as a cause and consequence of gender inequality, and as a result, it impacts disproportionately on women and girls. At any stage of life it causes varying degrees of harm, vulnerability and disadvantage in a number of overlapping ways. This can include impacts on physical and mental health, damage to self-esteem and confidence, isolation, homelessness, and reduced economic prospects. For example, for victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled and LGBT victims and survivors, these issues can be compounded by multiple inequalities and a broader context of social exclusion and marginalisation.

⁴ [Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#). To note that an updated version of this document will be published in 2022.

⁵ [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), [The economic and social cost of contact child sexual abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Perpetrators often target victims from marginalised groups, even if they don't belong to those groups themselves. Women with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds, for example, can be vulnerable to perpetrators who know that they fear engagement with statutory services and lack information about their rights. It is important that local commissioners are aware of the needs and specific barriers that migrant victims can face and ensure that the appropriate support is available. This includes establishing whether migrant victims have recourse to public funds, which will determine what support services are available, or where to signpost to.

Deaf and disabled people or older people may also experience any form of abuse from those outside of the family network, for example, the perpetrator could be providing some form of care. It will be important to ensure good local links between agencies working with older people and people with disabilities and domestic and sexual abuse services to promote identification and referrals. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 obliges service providers to ensure that people with disabilities can use their services.

LGBT people can also experience specific forms of abuse that may act as barriers to seeking help, such as threats to reveal sexuality or transgender status to family or colleagues. The perpetrators of the abuse may be current or ex-partners or family members.⁶

Every case should be taken seriously, and each individual given access to the specialised, gendered support they need. Any form of violence or abuse is unacceptable.

2.2 Introduction and legislative framework

The Government's VAWG Strategy and Domestic Abuse Plan and the National Statement of Expectations set out the importance of joined up commissioning. The documents make clear that tackling these crimes requires a 'whole-of-society' approach and that agencies, local and national Government, charities, and others must work together to ensure better joint working and more effective interventions. The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 aims to improve arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence as well as protection and support for victims in Wales.

Since this toolkit was first published in 2016, a range of work has been undertaken to support victims and survivors, prevent offending and strengthen the systems in place to address all forms of VAWG.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act')⁷ introduces a number of new measures to strengthen protections for those who have experienced abuse. These include:

⁶ [Commissioning for inclusion - Galop - Galop](#)

⁷ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

- **a statutory definition of domestic abuse**⁸ which recognises the range of abusive behaviours that encompass domestic abuse to ensure it is properly understood by professionals across policing and law enforcement, health, housing, social care and education;
- **recognising children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right** where they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse. As such any applicable duties in the Act toward victims apply fully to children;
- **establishing the position of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales in law** to act as an independent voice for victims and survivors and hold local agencies and Government to account; and
- **a statutory duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children** in refuges and other safe accommodation.⁹

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) are increasing funding for victims of crime, including victims of VAWG, to £185 million by 2024-25. This will, in part, increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) funded by the MoJ to over 1,000. The MoJ has also extended the Rape Support Fund until March 2023 to ensure support services have the funding stability they need to meet demand.

A new Victims' Code¹⁰ was published in 2020 which makes clear the levels of support that victims and survivors can and should expect from the criminal justice system and a new Victims Funding Strategy is being developed to act as a framework to coordinate and align funding for support services across Government. The strategy will introduce national commissioning standards, core metrics and outcomes. As well as this, the Government will introduce a new Victims' Bill, to guarantee that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system.

The MoJ also currently provides Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) with annual grant funding to commission local practical, emotional and therapeutic support services for victims of all crime types. And MoJ's Specialist Fund (2021-22), with Comic Relief, has been building the capacity of smaller, specialist 'by and for'¹¹ organisations supporting survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence who are from ethnic minority backgrounds, are disabled, or who are LGBT.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed a statutory duty on local authority, health and police leaders within a local area to form a new multi-agency safeguarding partnership.¹² These partnerships work together, along with relevant agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. In 2021 the Government also published a first of its kind Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy to tackle all forms of child

⁸ See Part 1: Definition of Domestic Abuse: [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/1/section/1)

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation>

¹⁰ [MoJ Victims Code 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/moj-victims-code-2020)

¹¹ 'By and for' services are specialist services that are designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve (for example survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and LGBT victims).

¹² [Children and Social Work Act 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/11/section/1)

sexual abuse, root out and prevent offending and support victims and survivors to rebuild their lives.¹³

Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill the Government will also place new duties on a range of agencies to work collaboratively to prepare a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence. When defining the scope of these strategies, local areas will be able to consider whether to include domestic abuse and sexual offences along with other types of serious violence.¹⁴

The Health and Care Bill will create 42 Integrated Care Systems (ICS) across England. These will allocate resources, coordinate services and plan in a way that improves population health and reduces inequalities between different groups. Statutory Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) will take on the commissioning functions currently held by CCGs, while Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) will bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services across a geographical area with local authorities and other local partners to collectively plan health and care services to meet the needs of their population.

Responding to and preventing VAWG should be a strategic priority for both ICBs and ICPs and should be the responsibility of all healthcare professionals working within a system. An ICS is expected to have a joined up, collaborative response to VAWG across its geographical footprint.

The Government has tabled an amendment to the Health and Care Bill that will require Integrated Care Boards to set out any steps that the Board proposes to take to address the particular needs of victims of abuse (including domestic abuse and sexual abuse, whether of children or adults)¹⁵.

COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenge for victims and survivors and the services providing them with support. There has been a clear increase in demand for victim services during the pandemic, for example:

- Between April and June 2020, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline logged a total of 40,397 calls and contacts on its database, a 65% increase compared with the first three months of 2020.¹⁶
- The Respect helpline, which supports domestic abuse perpetrators, saw calls increase by 62%.¹⁷
- The Karma Nirvana helpline, which supports victims of 'honour'-based abuse, reported an increase of calls by 64% during 2020 compared to 2019.¹⁸

¹³ [Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/454282/Tackling_Child_Sexual_Abuse_Strategy_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

¹⁴ [draft guidance - serious violence duty \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/454282/draft_guidance_serious_violence_duty.pdf)

¹⁵ At the time of publication this amendment is still subject to passage through the House

¹⁶ [Domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/population-and-demography/health-and-life-expectancy/domestic-abuse-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-england-and-wales)

¹⁷ [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/454282/Tackling_violence_against_women_and_girls_strategy_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

¹⁸ <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/35610/pdf/>

- Calls and webchats to sexual violence and abuse services have significantly increased during the pandemic with combined volumes of contact 167% higher in May 2021 compared to March 2020.¹⁹

In recognition of this, the Government provided an additional £76 million in May 2020 to support victims of domestic and sexual abuse, vulnerable children and their families, and victims of modern slavery, as well as £2 million for immediate support to domestic abuse helplines and online services. In 2020-21, the MoJ provided a £32 million emergency funding package (some of which came from the cross-Government £76 million fund) to support domestic abuse and sexual violence community-based services meet COVID-driven demand across England and Wales.

The emergency funding has been kept in place for 2021-22 to continue to meet the levels of increased demand for domestic abuse and sexual violence victim support services. The ringfenced COVID-19 funds have been combined with additional uplifts received in 2021-22 to support the increased demand for domestic abuse and sexual violence victim support services, which totals £51 million.

NHS England and NHS Improvement also provided £2.5 million to support the voluntary sector with activity and capacity to respond.

‘Specialist by and for services have observed a significant increase in demand for support, both from agencies and victims/survivors directly, since the pandemic’

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

2.3 The scale of VAWG

Evidence shows that women and girls disproportionately experience domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence and abuse such as ‘honour’-based abuse and stalking. The statistics below set out the sheer scale of the problem:

- ONS statistics²⁰ for the year ending March 2020 show that 1 in 5 women are victims of sexual assault (or attempted assault) in their lifetime (5% of victims are men)²¹, over 27% of women had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 (14% of men)²², and 20% of women aged 16-74 had experienced stalking since the age of 16 (10% of men).²³

¹⁹ [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/strategies/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls)

²⁰ The face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) was suspended on 17 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It was replaced with the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). The TCSEW was specifically designed to continue measuring crime during this period. Concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding led to domestic abuse questions being excluded from the survey. As a result, domestic abuse estimates are not available for the year ending March 2021.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/latest>

²¹ [Sexual offences prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwalesyearendingmarch2020)

²² [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales)

²³ [Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/stalkingfindingsfromthecrimesurveyforenglandandwales)

- Police recorded crime figures show that the police recorded 872,911 offences (excluding fraud) flagged as domestic abuse-related in the year ending September 2021.
- Due to its high prevalence and prolonged period of abuse, the total social and economic costs of domestic abuse were estimated at £66 billion for the 1,946,000 estimated number of victims identified in England and Wales in the year ending March 2017.²⁴
- Domestic homicide accounts for around a fifth of all homicides²⁵, and it is estimated that the cost of each homicide to society is £2.2 million (2016/17 prices).²⁶
- Combined Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data from March 2017 and 2019 estimates 7.1% children aged 10 to 15 years were living in households where an adult reported experiencing domestic abuse in the previous 12 months.²⁷ The CSEW year ending March 2018 additionally asked victims of partner abuse whether any children in the house heard or saw what happened during the most recent victimisation. Within the 40.9% of cases where at least one child was present in the household, one fifth had seen or hear what happened.²⁸
- Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data for the year ending March 2020 shows that 1.8% of adults aged 16 to 74 (equivalent to 773,000 people) had been a victim of sexual assault²⁹ in the last year; 2.9% of women and 0.7% of men.³⁰ In the same year, there were an estimated 139,000 victims of rape (including attempts), 132,000 of whom were women.³¹
- The CSEW (for the year ending March 2017 and year ending March 2020 combined) showed that fewer than 1 in 6 female victims of rape aged 16 to 59, who had experienced rape since the age of 16, reported to the police.³²
- For the estimated 122,000 rape offences in 2015/16, the Home Office estimated the total socio-economic cost to be £4.8 billion in (circa £5.5 billion in today's prices).³³
- The CSEW 2019/20 estimated that 7.5% of adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced sexual abuse before the age of 16 (3.1 million people).³⁴
- It is estimated that 137,000 women and girls are living with the consequences of FGM in the UK.³⁵ Between April 2015 and September 2021, 28,765 women and girls who

²⁴ [Home Office. The economic and social costs of domestic abuse.](#)

²⁵ [Homicide in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁶ Home Office. 2019. [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) Costs cover all types of homicide.

²⁷ [Childhood vulnerability to victimisation in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁸ [Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁹ Sexual assaults measured by the CSEW combine rape (including attempts), assault by penetration (including attempts), indecent exposure and unwanted sexual touching experienced by people aged over 16.

³⁰ [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview](#) - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

³¹ [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview](#): year ending March 2020 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

³² [Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

³³ [Home Office. The economic and social costs of crime second edition.](#) Note the total costs uprated to 2021/22 prices only account for changes in inflation and do not consider other potential changes in prevalence and estimated unit costs of crime.

³⁴ [Child sexual abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019 -Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

³⁵ [Updating and improving estimates of the prevalence female genital mutilation in England and Wales \(city.ac.uk\)](#)

had undergone FGM were seen at NHS services in England where FGM was relevant to their attendance.³⁶

- Data from the joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Forced Marriage Unit shows that between January and December 2020 the Unit gave advice or support in 759 cases related to possible forced marriage.³⁷
- Ministry of Justice data shows that, to date, over 3000 Forced Marriage Protection Orders and over 700 FGM Protection Orders have been made since their respective introductions in 2008 and 2015.³⁸
- The 2019/20 CSEW estimated that 3.6% of adults aged 16-74 experienced stalking in the last year – equivalent to an estimated 1.5 million victims - 977,000 women and 526,000 men.³⁹
- The CSEW showed that amongst adults aged 16 to 74 in the year ending March 2020, disabled people were more than twice as likely to have been victims of domestic abuse, stalking or rape than people without a disability.⁴⁰
- CSEW data indicates that individuals from ethnic minority groups may be more likely to be a victim of some types of VAWG. For example, for the year ending March 2018 to year ending March 2020 combined, the CSEW showed that those in the Black or Black British and Mixed ethnic groups were more likely than those in the White, Asian or Other ethnic groups to experience sexual assault.⁴¹
- When considering sexual orientation, gay, lesbian or bisexual people were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than heterosexual people. This was also the case for stalking, sexual violence and rape.⁴²
- The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse estimates that at least 15% of girls experience child sexual abuse before the age of 16, compared to 5% of boys (although the majority of child sexual abuse is hidden and never reported or uncovered by an official agency).⁴³

2.4 Perpetrators

The NSE, VAWG Strategy and Domestic Abuse Plan are clear that perpetrators should be held to account for their behaviour in a way that is effective and safe.

³⁶ [Female Genital Mutilation - NHS Digital](#) Where information about when their FGM took place is known, most of these women and girls were under 18 when they underwent FGM. In most cases there is a long gap from when the FGM was undertaken, to when information on that FGM was collected by the NHS. [This is because FGM is most often seen by the NHS when an individual with FGM attends a maternity or obstetric clinic, years later, as an adult]

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2020>

³⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2021>

³⁹ [Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#);

⁴⁰ [Sexual offences prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#); [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#); [Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

⁴¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020/relateddata>

⁴² [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴³ [Measuring the scale and nature of CSA - CSA Centre](#)

Perpetrator interventions, where used appropriately and safely, can help to reduce the severity of further abusive behaviour from the perpetrator, reduce the risk for the adult victim and address the impact abusive behaviour has on any child victims.

In the Domestic Abuse Plan, the Government has set out its intention to devise and publish a set of Government Standards for interventions that work with perpetrators of domestic abuse. These standards will set out the framework for best practice and the minimum expectation of quality for interventions that work with perpetrators, putting the safety of victims and their children at its core. Ideally perpetrator programmes should also be accredited by Respect⁴⁴ where applicable and consider programmes which target the most prolific or highest-harm perpetrators, such as Drive.⁴⁵

There are also other sector standards under which services can be accredited to ensure their commissioned services are safe, effective and deliver good outcomes for survivors and their children (see Annex 2 for further information). In Wales, the Welsh Government has developed a set of standards and guidance in respect of commissioning work with perpetrators of VAWG. The Welsh Government Perpetrator Service Standards⁴⁶ are designed to ensure that VAWG perpetrator services are of high quality and are likely to be effective and minimise risk of further harm to participants, victims/survivors and potential victims/survivors, staff and other relevant individuals.

Commissioners should ensure that any intervention for the perpetrator is done in addition to providing adequate separate support for any associated victims. Perpetrators themselves may have past trauma and/or complex needs and need specialist interventions to ensure they are addressed so that the risk of repeating behaviours is minimised or eliminated as services struggle to balance needs.

A whole-family approach that addresses the needs of both the victims and perpetrators is essential for addressing the root cause of violence or abuse. As the impacts of domestic conflict and violence affect the whole family unit, the support and interventions delivered should be oriented around the family in a holistic way.

⁴⁴ [Respect Standard | Respect](#)

⁴⁵ [About us – Drive Project](#)

⁴⁶ [perpetrator-service-standards.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Part B: The Commissioning Cycle

Section 3: Analyse

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Needs assessment
- 3.3 Mapping provision
- 3.4 Mapping spend
- 3.5 Opportunities for joint commissioning
- 3.6 Pooled budgets
- 3.7 Grant-based funding
- 3.8 Co-production of services
- 3.9 The procurement process
- 3.10 Practice points
- 3.11 Case Study: London Borough of Sutton
- 3.12 Case Study: Surrey



3.1 Introduction

This first section of the toolkit describes the initial approach to commissioning and includes some important aspects: mapping provision, mapping expenditure, opportunities for joint commissioning, pooled budgets and grant-based funding. It provides an overview of some of the activities that underpin a successful collaborative commissioning approach.

At the beginning of the commissioning process, service users, service providers and local communities should have their needs considered, through the development of a needs assessment and formulation of a specification for service delivery models. This will mean that **all groups, particularly the most marginalised, have opportunities to participate in the process through wide, accessible and meaningful consultation**, which may, for example, include taking an active role in the marking of tender documents and interviewing prospective service providers. **Investing in capacity building** should be considered throughout the process. Consultation should involve all those affected by these crimes. The approach to commissioning should be strongly framed in an equalities-based approach, across each aspect of the commissioning cycle, to ensure an equalities-informed consultation. Commissioning should always be transparent and fair and facilitate the involvement of the broadest range of stakeholders.

Wider stakeholders are critical to this stage of the commissioning cycle, including partners in the police, health sector, housing sector, education sector, charities and community organisations. Ensuring **adequate time and resources are allocated** for this consultation

is particularly important when engaging with smaller, specialist services with a small number of employees. These services are likely to have specific expertise on issues affecting local communities and **commissioners should ensure that expertise is sought from a range of ‘by and for’ services** to ensure that they are responding to the diverse needs of victims and survivors.

Engagement of service users should include covering costs (e.g. their travel, childcare and interpreting costs, considering the accessibility of venues and materials) and the timing of consultations should take account of factors such as school hours and religious and community festivals. Commissioners should also take care not to re-traumatise victims and survivors who are sharing their experiences.

3.2 Needs assessment

The needs assessment helps ensure the specific needs of victims, survivors and service users are fully understood so individuals are not placed into a generic service response (which may lead to an escalation of needs and risk and require a more intensive response). It highlights the overarching view of need and should inform strategy development and commissioning intentions – see Section 4.

‘It is incumbent on local areas to know their local population and the needs that arise from it’

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

Conducting a specific VAWG needs assessment also provides an opportunity to **involve current or potential service users in the planning process**. It is important that, where relevant, children and young people are also involved in an appropriate way, for example, through specialist services working with them. The knowledge and experience of service users is vital and will build on what is already known about journeys towards recovery, gaps and missed opportunities and should be supplemented by data from all sources (including local and national specialist services). By doing this, a responsive approach can be taken to the commissioning of services. **Equalities-proofing and sense checking** your needs assessment and resulting recommendations is a critical part of the process to ensure that the data is not misinterpreted or analysed in ways that could cause harm. This includes ensuring compliance with the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (see section 4.3).⁴⁷

Local authority commissioners should be aware when conducting a VAWG needs assessment of the specific legal duties within Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the accompanying Statutory Guidance⁴⁸ to assess the support needs of all domestic abuse victims and their children in safe accommodation from both within and outside of their local area. This could be captured as a chapter in a wider VAWG needs assessment providing it meets the requirements of the new duties.

⁴⁷ [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

⁴⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation>

An effective needs assessment will include the following:

- Survivor experience at different points in their journey.
- Local specialist service experience of, and data around need and gaps – many victims and survivors do not report experiences of violence and abuse to statutory agencies so information from specialist organisations (including ‘by and for’ services which may be able to offer specific expertise on issues affecting local communities), is critical to building understanding.
- Disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data from public sector services – in particular children’s social care, adult social care, housing and homelessness services and substance misuse services.
- Where available, evidence of need taken from the health sector to include A&E, maternity services, mental health services, substance misuse services, health visiting services, sexual health services, Sexual Assault Referral Centres, GPs and pharmacies.
- Demographics of the population and thus estimated demographic levels of need.
- Evidence of need taken, for example, from Domestic Homicide Reviews, serious case reviews, HMICFRS reports on VAWG and child sexual exploitation reports.

‘Community specialist services and refuges must be commissioned using the ‘by and for model’ that reflects the communities they are supporting’

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

However data collection is undertaken, at the conclusion, all commissioners should be able to answer 4 questions:

- What do individuals who are part of the local community identify as their needs?
- What needs are not being met?
- Does the identified need fit with your existing strategy?
- Do commissioners have the knowledge, skills and experience to consult with service users affected by violence and abuse?

If there is a gap in this knowledge, commissioners should **seek expert advice and support from the specialist VAWG sector, including ‘by and for’ services**. If commissioners want to consult in a meaningful and effective way with service users, consideration should be made to how this would be best achieved – one option might be to commission the skills of a specialist sector expert – see Appendix II.

Other issues to be aware of:

While Joint Strategic Needs Assessments can help to identify some needs, they typically focus on health and social care needs. Similarly, Strategic Assessments compiled by Community Safety Partnerships, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Police Forces may focus on police recorded crime data, which does not necessarily represent the

true prevalence of these crimes – for example, police recorded crime data does not capture cases where a victim has not reported to the police. Therefore, a specific needs assessment for VAWG that incorporates these data sources would be the most effective way of analysing the needs of victims and survivors.

Many victims and survivors of VAWG will not tell anyone about what has happened to them. For example, the CSEW for the years ending March 2017 and March 2020 combined, published in March 2021, showed that fewer than one in six (16%) of victims who experienced sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) since the age of 16 years had reported the assault to the police.⁴⁹ Respondents to the Government's victim and survivor survey run as part of the VAWG Strategy Call for Evidence reported seeking support from a wide array of sources, with the most frequent being a friend (72%). Reasons given for not reporting to the police included that they did not believe anything would be done by the criminal justice system (46%), embarrassment (40%), and a fear of not being believed (33%).⁵⁰ These findings echo those found in other research, for example, in a study about rape victims and survivors and the criminal justice system, 95% of those who did not report to the police said the fact they did not think they would be believed was a key reason for their decision.⁵¹

Those who do make a disclosure may not approach statutory services (the police, health professionals etc) for support and may instead rely on a specialist support agency. Conducting a specific VAWG needs assessment will therefore enable gaps to be identified and all information to be gathered about the services that are available to those who need to access them.

'I know how much victims and survivors value the support they receive from independent, specialist domestic abuse services. These services bring a wealth of experience and expertise, and additional value through links with their community, and critically, independence from statutory agencies. It is this independence that builds trust with people subject to domestic abuse, and to advocate effectively on their behalf. I would expect the best areas to commission out their services to specialist third sector providers – including services run by and for marginalised communities – to make use of their expertise and to best support survivors.'

Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022

⁴⁹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesinenglandandwalesoverview/march2020>

⁵⁰ [Tackling violence against women and girls \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91422/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls.pdf)

⁵¹ [OVC-Rape-Survivors-and-the-Criminal-Justice-System.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91422/ovc-rape-survivors-and-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf)

3.3 Mapping provision

Following the needs assessment, existing services need to be mapped locally.

Understanding existing provision (of both commissioned and non-commissioned services) is an integral part of the commissioning cycle. It will help commissioners to identify gaps in service, understand what is needed, by who and when. The mapping exercise should inform future service planning processes. It is important to include all public and voluntary sector services in the mapping exercise.

Through the mapping exercise, commissioners need to ascertain:

- What are the typical pathways for victims and survivors and what are the different levels of need – including crisis point through to long term support and recovery? Pathways might look different for different communities and groups of victims and survivors.
- What are the current criteria and gaps?
- How are services meeting the needs of service users and prioritising their safety, security and dignity?
- Which services are well aligned to the needs of the population?
- Which services and policies need to change to ensure diversity and fair access?
- Is there any duplication and/or gaps in the system? Are there services where quality is not of a high enough standard and survivors' needs are not being met?
- What are the costs of services and are they currently fully covered by funding? How effective are they? Are they good value for money? **Value for money should not be taken to mean the lowest unit cost - commissioners should consider the full cost implications and savings of a service, recognising, for example, that specialist 'by and for' services may have a higher unit cost but deliver support in a way that others cannot, and which can reduce costs to other services further down the line.**⁵²

Through the mapping exercise, commissioners should have a **thorough understanding of strengths and weaknesses of existing provision** and the skills, competencies and capabilities of the workforce (see National Shared Core Standards in Appendix II). The process should also help to identify any potential for innovation and development, through an examination of the evidence base for change and improvement. This will allow commissioners to explore how services might be developed or reconfigured, grounded in an understanding of service users' experiences of available provisions.

⁵² See [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

3.4 Mapping spend

Alongside the process of mapping services, current spend on specialist provision and on responding to VAWG across public services should also be analysed. It is likely that service providers are funded from a variety of different funding streams and commissioners, from PCCs, health and local authorities as well as from grant making trusts and private foundations (as well as conducting their own fundraising). Gathering data from commissioners and service providers will help create a picture of whose budgets pay for existing service provision, the length of provision for different funded services and the total sum of money available to fund services in an area and whether this meets the full cost of the service. This analysis is critical in identifying opportunities for joint commissioning and pooling budgets. It will also support the opportunity to offer stability and opportunities for development in the specialist sector by providing longer-term funding.

Evidence shows that the majority of those accommodated in refuges will be from out of area.⁵³ For many survivors fleeing domestic abuse, their immediate safety from harm will be dependent on access to a safe, secret space outside of the local authority where they are usually resident. Local refuges need to be linked into a national network of provision, as well as being repositories of local knowledge and expertise. Limiting access to refuges based on locality compromises the ability of this national network to function effectively and provide support to all those who need it. Locality caps or restrictions should not be written into tenders.

New duties on local authorities (within Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation came into force on 1 October 2021, to ensure that victims and their children across England can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it. Under the new duties local authorities are required to assess the needs for support within safe accommodation for all victims. Local needs assessments should take into account the need for support and services for all victims, produce strategies based on the needs assessment and to commission sufficient support to meet those identified needs.⁵⁴

Specialist 'by and for' organisations can face challenges in navigating local commissioning processes. The Government has made clear its expectations for the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 duty on local authorities in Statutory Guidance that where possible, commissioning should be conducted on a multi-year basis. The Government has given guidance to commissioning authorities to ensure the process does not exclude smaller voluntary organisations, including 'by and for' services.⁵⁵ The Statutory Guidance is clear that local authority commissioners should seek specialist advice to establish how to ensure the particular needs of specific victims are considered appropriately within the commissioning approach and any competitive award criteria.

Specialist 'by and for' services or refuges in a local area may well be one of a kind nationally, meaning that the implications for cuts or closure are potentially of national

⁵³ [The Domestic Abuse Report 2022: Early Release \(womensaid.org.uk\)](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/resources-publications/the-domestic-abuse-report-2022-early-release/)

⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation>

⁵⁵ [Domestic abuse support within safe accommodation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation)

significance. Victims and survivors of ‘honour’-based abuse and sexual violence may also need a place of immediate safety from harm outside of the local authority where they are usually resident.

There are several examples of local authorities doing good work to implement the new accommodation duty:

- **Wokingham Borough Council** has members of its local partnership board to represent the voices of ethnic minority groups, male, LGBT, deaf, blind and disabled, older victims and children, as well as those with multiple needs such as substance misuse.
- **Nottingham City Council** has engaged an experienced practitioner with a background in delivering specialist women’s domestic abuse services to lead the needs assessment and strategy process. They used Women’s Aid data to inform their final needs assessment.
- **Warwickshire County Council** are looking at longer-term commissioning by awarding Refuge with a seven-year contract (five + two years).

Identifying and responding to VAWG has a significant impact on the budgets of public services. For example, the socio-economic costs of domestic abuse have been estimated to be £66 billion (about £74 billion in today’s prices).⁵⁶ For the estimated 122,000 rape offences in 2015/16, the Home Office estimated the total socio-economic cost to be £4.8 billion in 2015/16 (circa £5.5 billion in today’s prices).⁵⁷

Adopting an ‘invest to save’ approach to commissioning can be achieved through the provision of early intervention and prevention services – see the Women’s Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women’s Aid ‘Change That Lasts’⁵⁸ and SafeLives ‘One Front Door’ and whole family approaches.⁵⁹ The IRIS Programme trains general practice teams to identify and refer women affected by domestic abuse to specialist support via a simple care pathway. Over 25,000 have been referred into IRIS programmes to March 2021. IRISi, (who created the programme) has developed a cost-effectiveness tool to show the programme’s value for money at the local level.⁶⁰ The IRIS programme is estimated to save £14 per woman aged 16 years or older registered in general practice.

3.5 Opportunities for joint commissioning

Identifying opportunities for joint commissioning across PCCs, Integrated Care Boards, public health bodies, Violence Reduction Units (where they are present) and local authorities and others can lead to more joined-up services. **Establishing a VAWG joint commissioning group is good practice.** This group should have a named lead locally and succession planning should be in place to ensure ongoing leadership and accountability. If this is not feasible, talking to other commissioning groups, such as drug

⁵⁶ [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse)

⁵⁷ Home Office. [The economic and social costs of crime second edition - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-second-edition). The total costs uprated to 2021/22 prices only account for changes in inflation and do not consider other potential changes in prevalence and estimated unit costs of crime.

⁵⁸ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/our-approach-change-that-lasts/>

⁵⁹ <http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Getting%20it%20right%20first%20time%20-%20complete%20report.pdf>, [SafeLives’ public health approach to ending domestic abuse | Safelives](https://www.safelives.org.uk/public-health-approach-to-ending-domestic-abuse)

⁶⁰ <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/8/8/e021256.full.pdf>

and alcohol and public health, for example, can yield opportunities for future joint working. In most areas, PCCs will host events to identify priorities for their Police and Crime Plan and this could be an opportunity to start the discussion in relation to joint commissioning of services. PCCs are ideally placed to bring all local commissioners together, including those from health and local authorities, to develop collaborative and joined up commissioning. As part of the MoJ's Grant Agreement with PCCs, PCCs are required to submit regular reports to MoJ on the specifics of who they fund. PCCs are also, as local elected representatives, ideally placed to monitor and hold to account the provision of services locally, notwithstanding the fact that they too will be a commissioner of VAWG services.

Importantly, commissioning services does not just mean procurement and commissioners should seek to identify the most appropriate method – for example, grant based funding, co-production and preferred provider partnerships. As part of the commissioning process, it is important to start with the need, then build a process around it that most effectively meets that need.

3.6 Pooled budgets

3.6.1 What are pooled budgets?

Pooling budgets combines funds from different departments or organisations to tender for services and achieve shared outcomes. It can help to promote integrated services and enable organisations to develop and build on joint working. This is important because funding for VAWG services can often be fragmented, to the detriment of survivor experiences.

There is a trend towards larger geographical areas as commissioning groups come together to look for greater consistency of provision and to make the most of pooled budgets. However, commissioners need **to make sure that a larger tender has not accidentally skewed the playing field for bidders** by (indirectly or directly) favouring bids from large, generic providers. For example, tenders where there is a specific request for a single, large provider, insufficient time for the delicate work of consortia/partnership forming, or a small number of extremely high-value lots requiring bidders to be in a very strong financial position will limit the ability of local specialist services to put in a bid – to the detriment of the services then available locally.

Specialist local services will likely have developed as a response to the particular needs of the area and contain within them years of specialist knowledge and expertise relevant to the communities they serve. This issue is

particularly relevant for specialist 'by and for' services and organisations embedded in marginalised communities, which can engage with survivors who may be reluctant to make contact with statutory services/non-specialist organisations.

'Local authorities should take the lead in ensuring that local systems work for the most disadvantaged women by coordinating and encouraging local bodies to work together.'

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

Consistency and value does not have to come at the price of accessibility, however. Simple steps to prevent this from happening include:

- Levelling the playing field by cutting down the lot sizes
- Slowing the pace of the process where possible
- Weighting scoring to favour consortia
- Weighting scoring to favour local specialist experience and social value – this includes valuing the local connections and networks that local services bring, which can be critical for accessibility of services ⁶¹
- Setting a suitable cost/quality ratio that prioritises excellence of practice
- Ensuring multiple accessible formats are available

This will provide all suitable-bidders with an opportunity to compete on a more equal footing, widening the number of good quality bids and increasing the odds of identifying best social value locally.⁶²

3.6.2 Why jointly fund or pool budgets?

The biggest advantage to commissioners and service providers of a pooled budget is the ability to align services against a common set of outcomes. In addition, commissioners can mainstream VAWG outcomes into generic commissioning processes. This should support an improvement in the quality and consistency of support to service users, reduce any duplication and in turn, represent better value for the community. It is important to align the quality of services with the Sector Sustainability Shared Standards – see Section 6: ‘Review’.

Instead of having to deliver highly specified services targeting narrow outcomes against fragmented budget codes, service providers can tailor interventions according to the needs of service users and also respond much faster when their needs change. By **focusing on a shared set of goals**, commissioners can improve services.

‘Place greater emphasis on the importance of joined up support, bringing together a wide variety of agencies to improve responses.’

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

Creating pooled budgets has many benefits:

- **Innovation** – funds can pay for integrated models of service delivery. This could result in improved confidence and continuity of support for survivors. It offers the opportunity to create multi-disciplinary teams, rather than separate services so that survivors, including children as victims in their own right, can be offered holistic support.
- **Improved responses** – as there are fewer steps in a process to identify survivors’ needs, an offer of the most appropriate service can be much swifter.
- **Flexibility** – for service providers to invest in bespoke support to meet the needs of survivors facing multiple barriers such as safety, mental health, access to benefits and support through their recovery.

⁶¹ See <https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/we-influence/the-value-of-small>

⁶² <https://locality.org.uk/policy-campaigns/keep-it-local/keep-it-local-principles/>

- **Enabling use of capitation** – to fund service providers to look at holistic needs and achieve shared outcomes, rather than focusing on a specific activity or task.
- **Joined-up working** – collaboration as funding is shared and decisions are made together.

3.7⁶³ Grant-based funding

The rules on grants and contracts can be nuanced and may be challenging to navigate - it is important to seek independent legal, financial and procurement advice on which is most suitable to achieve the intended outcomes. This document does not provide legal advice and should not be relied upon in terms of decision-making for the commissioning of services.

Obtaining independent advice will ensure that you take sound decisions on risks and deliver sustainable outcomes that are compliant with public sector standards and best practice. The National Audit Office's Successful Commissioning Toolkit provides information on the appropriateness of using grants or contracts and can help commissioners to think through the most appropriate approach.⁶⁴ NHS England's Grants for the Voluntary Sector also sets out the benefits and principles of providing grant-based funding.⁶⁵

In some cases, the use of grants is an appropriate approach and is often used when working with local, specialist services and social enterprises. It should be noted that grants are only appropriate when the commissioning body making the grant does not benefit directly from their use.

3.8 Co-production of services

Good commissioning should begin with an understanding that VAWG victims and survivors are experts in their own lives and are integral to the design of services. Equally, specialist service providers have a breadth of expert knowledge and experience to draw on. Commissioners should ensure that the diversity of victims and survivors and their experiences are recognised by making sure that engagement processes are as accessible as possible. Involving victims and survivors and specialist service providers in the whole commissioning process brings a range of benefits for all of those involved:

- Victims and survivors with lived experience can contribute in a meaningful and empowering way.
- Commissioners feel more confident that they will get future services right for survivors.

⁶³ <http://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/successful-commissioning-home/sourcing-providers/>

⁶⁴ [Successful Commissioning Toolkit- \(nao.org.uk\)](http://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning-toolkit/)

⁶⁵ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/nhs-bitesize-grants.rb-170215.pdf>

- Service providers find there are more opportunities to recognise the skills and assets they have and an opportunity to work in equal partnership with statutory services.

3.9 The procurement process

Where a procurement process is followed, public sector contracts for VAWG services can involve a range of approaches, specifically:

- **The open procedure:** services are expected to return a tender by a specified date, when all tenders are evaluated prior to a contract being awarded.

If using this approach:

- ✓ Commissioners should consider what support, expertise, and time VAWG service providers may need to enable them to fully engage in the process, as they could be put at a distinct disadvantage to large organisations which have specific bid writing functions.
- **The restricted procedure:** a two-stage process where interested suppliers complete a questionnaire and a shortlist is drawn up. In the second stage, the shortlisted suppliers are invited to respond to an invitation to tender (ITT). The tenders are then evaluated and the contract awarded.

If using this approach:

- ✓ Commissioners should hold pre-procurement engagement events with the market so that the questionnaire is designed to draw out what is important to victims and survivors and specialist services including 'by and for' service providers, whilst being mindful of commercial sensitivity.
- **Framework agreements:** a process to use where commissioners know they are likely to need particular services, but are unsure about exactly what they'll need or when. If using this approach, commissioners should establish a group of approved suppliers that they can use when necessary.

3.10 Analyse: Practice points

- ✓ Establishing a **commissioning task and finish group** with VAWG experts (e.g. specialist providers and other commissioners) can help to identify sources of and gaps in data as well as providing strategic oversight over the process. Broadly speaking, having access to a **critical friend** from another area or second tier domestic abuse/sexual violence/specialist VAWG organisation and national/local specialists with good understanding of VAWG within an equalities context can be particularly helpful.

- ✓ It is important to **thoroughly map all points of service access in the region**, whether commissioned or not - this will include data gathering from smaller and/or more generic community/voluntary sector organisations that victims and survivors may access for support around welfare, legal, financial, immigration/asylum and/or housing and homelessness issues even where it's not specifically a domestic abuse, sexual abuse or VAWG service. These services are usually key access points for reaching women who experience specific vulnerabilities/marginalisation across all of the protected equality characteristics.
- ✓ Engagement should always be done by those with the skills, knowledge and experience of supporting survivors and of how to communicate with people at risk, including by taking a trauma-informed approach. **Better, richer quality data can be obtained when the individuals/organisations commissioned to undertake these exercises are specialist organisations with direct experience of VAWG and service user engagement.**

- ✓ Considering the needs of participants can help to **secure engagement** e.g.

- providing childcare facilities
- providing resources for interpreting and other communication support, such as British Sign Language and Easy Read formats
- holding sessions in accessible and safe places
- providing materials in accessible formats and advocacy services where appropriate
- running dedicated sessions for different groups in community-based settings
- thinking about different methods of participation

'Responses must be informed by survivors, data and evidence-based driven... and mindful of the multiple barriers and discrimination faced by different survivors'

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

- ✓ Service users themselves can advise on the best way to engage with support from specialist organisations where required to build capacity in the local community.
- ✓ Building appropriate costs into budgets can ensure specialist organisations are **adequately resourced** for the time and knowledge they need to commit to secure engagement and ensure equitable, non-discriminatory and inclusive services are provided.
- ✓ In addition to local specialist VAWG services, there will also be other commissioning functions, such as drug and alcohol, where pockets of good practice will be available. This will provide opportunities to share data and look for ways to introduce **horizontal commissioning**, for example. Triangulation of data across different departments and functions provides a much more robust picture of need.

- ✓ A meaningful needs assessment has to consider the **different backgrounds and experiences of those experiencing violence and abuse**. This includes understanding the different ways in which those across a range of protected characteristics prefer to access support. For example, does the assessment fully consider the distinct needs and experiences of women from ethnic minority backgrounds, older women or young women, LGBT victims, women and girls with disabilities and women and girls who have experienced domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and sexual violence? These experiences are also applicable to male victims, in particular where there are complex needs including frailty and disability.
- ✓ Accessibility of provision across all of the protected characteristics, the nature of service and the outcomes should be a key result of the needs assessment, specifically in relation to what's required. Data will be available to support this from a variety of sources e.g. the police in relation to peak locations and times. Current service providers will also be able to provide data in relation to current capacity, gaps and needs.
- ✓ Needs assessments should **take overlapping issues into consideration** e.g. the rates and nature of domestic abuse, homicide and child protection case conferences where domestic and sexual abuse has been flagged up. Needs assessments have to be holistic and multi-agency in their approach and allocation of resources should match this. It can be achieved by talking to other commissioners, safeguarding board teams, health and wellbeing boards and community safety partnerships.
- ✓ It is important to **collate and cross reference data** from multiple sources, to try and establish levels of need even amongst individuals who do not report to statutory agencies e.g. through independent rape crisis centres and other specialist ethnic minority, VAWG, LGBT and male advice and support organisations.
- ✓ Where information can't be accessed through local specialist services, an external researcher with sufficient knowledge and experience may be able to help fill any gaps.

3.11 Case study: London Borough of Sutton

In 2018, the London Borough of Sutton set out to commission an integrated domestic abuse service, to support all people affected by domestic abuse, that was needs-led, gender-informed and trauma-informed.

As part of a wider, multi-agency and co-produced, place-based plan, the domestic abuse transformation programme was established as a way of developing a Coordinated Community Response (CCR). A thorough needs assessment took place, taking into account multiple sources of data, engagement with specialist services, residents and professionals, and a comprehensive commissioning strategy was developed from these actions.

In 2019, a new three year +one +one service was commissioned. This was a consortium, lead-provider model, with five sub-contracted organisations, including four of six being local, small, specialist providers. This included an umbrella name, a single point of entry/referral and smooth pathways for people accessing services. Services offered include:

- Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) provision
- Coordination of One Stop Shop
- Refuge provision
- Freedom programme⁶⁶
- Peer befriending for survivors by volunteers with lived experience
- Parenting support for families with young children
- Recovery group work for children and young people who had witnessed domestic abuse
- Prevention group programmes for young men and young women
- Behaviour change programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse

The consortium model allowed for a holistic and needs-led service through strengthened partnerships and collaboration, shared added value, and therefore better outcomes for people.

Sutton was clear that the commissioning of services had to be based on an analysis of need and interventions which were evidenced-based and proven to deliver improved outcomes. They were not prescriptive about what services should look like, but rather what was expected from commissioned services based on evidence for improved outcomes in domestic abuse and, significantly, the outcomes key stakeholders told them they wanted services to achieve.

3.12 Case study: Surrey

Domestic abuse (DA) services in Surrey were grant-funded until 2019, when the **Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Surrey Police and Surrey County Council** pooled funding to co-commission services according to jointly agreed outcomes through a procurement process.

SafeLives undertook an assessment of need and provision and a new Surrey Against Domestic Abuse Strategy, based on the Women's Aid 'Change That Lasts'⁶⁷ approach, informed the service specification and outcome framework. A consultation was also used to gather views from survivors and stakeholders and the results highlighted opportunities for a Coordinated Community Response (CCR). Commissioners also held sessions for interested providers, large and small, to address concerns and answer questions related to the process.

⁶⁶ The freedom programme is a 12-week programme that seeks to improve understanding of domestic abuse amongst participants, explaining about the dynamics of domestic abuse, including controlling and coercive behaviour.

⁶⁷ [Our approach: Change That Lasts - Womens Aid](#)

Four local specialist DA services in a lead provider model were successful, with the contract commencing in 2020. The four small charities embedded in local communities deliver quality services together in a way that matters to survivors. Each brings unique qualities to the partnership (for example, one service provides refuge accommodation).

Commissioners in Surrey also work closely with the specialist sector to ensure that their expertise is utilised and domestic abuse services participate in (and co-chair) strategic boards and ensure that the rights and safety of adult and child survivors are front and centre in decision making. Together, providers and commissioners have:

- developed a county-wide VAWG Strategy;
- expanded the IRIS programme⁶⁸;
- introduced specialist IDVA provision for victims with protected characteristics and children and located IDVAs within hospitals;
- introduced stalking advocates; and
- introduced interventions for young people exhibiting violence in their relationships and for perpetrators of VAWG offences.

During the pandemic, regular partnership meetings were also arranged for services to raise issues and enable joint problem solving. Services were awarded local emergency funding and the partnership worked together to formulate processes to increase safety for survivors and develop messaging to reach out to those unseen.

Sample needs assessment

Local plans and monitoring frameworks	
Data sources	Data
✓ Local Safeguarding Partnership	Number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan and/or number of contacts to children’s social care or MASH, due to domestic abuse and child sexual abuse and exploitation
✓ Local Safeguarding Adult Board	Serious Case Review; breakdown of client groups e.g. learning disability, older people, people from ethnic minority backgrounds etc.
✓ Health and Wellbeing Board	Care and Health Improvement Programme (CHIP) data tools and resources ⁶⁹
✓ Joint strategic needs assessment	MOSAIC data or similar
✓ Police and Crime Plan	Crime data/specialist VAWG services data
✓ Drug and Alcohol Service	Number of victims and perpetrators accessing domestic abuse/substance misuse issues Number of sexual violence victims including adult child sexual abuse survivors accessing drug and alcohol services

⁶⁸ [IRISi - Social enterprise to improve the healthcare response to gender based violence](#)

⁶⁹ [Health and wellbeing systems | Local Government Association](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mental Health Service ✓ Acute Hospital Trust - A&E ✓ Acute Hospital Trust - Midwifery/Women's Unit/Maternity ✓ GP safeguarding 	See NICE Guidance ⁷⁰
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MARAC data 	See SafeLives website ⁷¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ SARC data 	Number of people accessing SARC and onward referrals made to Rape Crisis Centres (to note that people will also access Rape Crisis services through referrals from the police, local authorities, education, the voluntary sector and wider health services, as well as self-refer).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CJS data – CPS and SDVC ✓ Civil Court data 	Number of non-molestation orders, occupation orders, successful convictions. Number of rape convictions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Domestic Homicide Review 	Outcomes and recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Housing and homelessness 	Number of households owed a prevention, relief or main duty as a result of domestic abuse.
Specialist services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Service user forums 	Qualitative data and case studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All VAWG Helplines 	Number of calls, peak times, type of help required, profile of calls, onward referrals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Service level data evidencing needs and outcomes 	Need, service use, demand, numbers and types of referrals barriers to access, types of specialist services accessed and why, outcomes and impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Service data from smaller specialist community based/voluntary sector self-help groups/welfare organisations e.g. organisations supporting victims from ethnic minority backgrounds, young people, older people, LGBT people, female and male victims, disabled people, refugees/asylum seeking populations etc. 	Experience of specific vulnerabilities and marginalisation across all of the protected characteristics and barriers to access. Proportion of self-referrals may also provide helpful data and give insight into those who are not accessing statutory agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equalities Impact Assessment related to protected characteristics 	
Information/evidence from national sources and academic research	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Crime Survey England and Wales 	The CSEW is a victim-based survey which includes crimes often not reported or recorded by police. It measures long-term trends in domestic abuse, sexual assault, including rape, and stalking. It is the most reliable measure available for assessing

⁷⁰ www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50

⁷¹ <http://www.safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/latest-marac-data>

	prevalence of these crimes, as it uses a consistent methodology that is not affected by changes in recording practices and police activity or by changes in the propensity of victims to report to the police. However, the current methodology has some limitations, such as being limited to those victims who are aged 16 to 74, and the data available does not always allow for detailed disaggregation by victim characteristics. ⁷²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Home Office VAWG Strategy ✓ Home Office Domestic Abuse Plan ✓ Home Office Supporting Male Victims document 	
✓ Office for National Statistics	Age profile, demographic profile and trends
✓ Universities	Academic research with well-established perspectives on domestic abuse and sexual violence e.g. University of Bristol, London Metropolitan University, Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU), University of Warwick (SWELL), UCLAN, Durham University Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse, Evidence-Based Domestic Abuse Research Network
Gaps in data collection	
[Include any gaps in your data collection in this section]	

⁷² Questions related to these offences had to be suspended following ethical considerations made when moving to the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (May 2020)

Section 4: Plan

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Developing a strategy
- 4.3 Public Sector Equality Duty
- 4.4 Design of a (service) specification
- 4.5 Practice points
- 4.6 Case study: Essex PCC



4.1 Introduction

This section of the toolkit outlines the next steps in the commissioning cycle and includes:

- Developing a strategy
- Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment
- Design of a (service) specification

All elements of the decision-making process (development of the strategy) **need to be clearly articulated**, available in a range of accessible formats, in plain language and communicated widely. Service users can be part of the decision-making process through services they access, by taking part in service user focus groups or through involvement in topic specific decision-making panels, with funded support if required.

4.2 Developing a strategy

Fundamentally, a strategy is a document used to communicate the vision, aims and priorities for a response to VAWG - usually over a period of years. The strategy needs to establish what resources are required and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, including at a senior leadership level. Prior to the production of a strategy, it is important to do a reality-check, ascertain feedback and meet survivors, service providers, community members and other stakeholders. Commissioners and strategic leads should be confident that the strategy will **meet the needs of the local community both in the short and longer term**. This will include the need of some local survivors to access safety in other parts of the country and the provision of reciprocal services for survivors fleeing other areas into the local community. In addition, there should be a clear governance framework and lines of accountability to support the development and implementation of the strategy.

'Encourage local areas to work together to respond to the changing nature of all forms of VAWG in their area - recognising the diversity of survivor experiences'

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

During the development of a strategy, there are a few considerations:

- **The vision:** what needs to be achieved? Setting a vision that is future proof is critical. How will the strategy prevent VAWG and challenge attitudes towards violence and abuse?
- **The nature and context of VAWG:** what is the scale of the issues and what are the root causes? How will survivors of violence and abuse be identified and what levels of support will be provided?
- **The impact of VAWG:** all stakeholders need to understand the impact of VAWG for individuals, families and for services. How will services work in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for victims and survivors and their families? How will local services contribute to, and secure access for survivors to, the national network of VAWG services?
- **The perpetrators:** a proactive and robust multi-agency approach needs to be taken towards perpetrators. How will perpetrators be brought to justice? Is work underway to increase knowledge, information sharing and understanding of who is doing what to whom and why? What systems are in place to assess and manage the risk posed by perpetrators and what routes have been identified for referral into appropriate behavior change opportunities and non-criminal justice interventions?

Strategies can also include defined local commissioning priorities and principles. When developing commissioning arrangements, some useful considerations include:

- **Consulting** with key stakeholders in accessible formats to inform decision-making and establish a fair and equitable approach to commissioning services that meet the needs of those affected. Smaller organisations with fewer resources will need adequate time to respond.
- Underpinning the commissioning strategy with a commitment to **multi-agency working**, including how different commissioners of VAWG services will operate across the landscape
- Developing **proportionate approaches** to contract monitoring and quality assurance e.g. developing a balanced scorecard, with reference to and use of national outcomes data collection and quality standards generated by the VAWG sector
- Developing and communicating accessible practitioner and survivor referral and support pathways so that navigation of support is based on choice and flexibility
- Developing and implementing an accessible **communications strategy** to assist in the recognition of VAWG and **'make it everybody's business'**, referral routes to services and an understanding of what support is available to meet need

- Ensuring that practitioners and managers have appropriate workforce development opportunities that are underpinned by VAWG national standards

Some risk factors might impact on the delivery of a commissioning strategy. They include:

- A lack of **meaningful engagement** about the challenges of commissioning VAWG services and collaborating with specialist services to find solutions.

Mitigating the risk:

✓ **Allocating time and resources for regular and meaningful engagement**

- Insecure and insufficient **funding arrangements** that destabilise the expertise harnessed within VAWG services.

Mitigating the risk:

✓ **Allocating longer term funding**

- Commissioning decisions being made outside of a joint commissioning approach that undermine confidence across the VAWG sector.

‘We have diverse staff, and we’re all disabled people – this is really important because it means that survivors recognise themselves [in us] and are able to trust us to help them’

VAWG Call for Evidence Focus Group participant, 2021

Mitigating the risk:

✓ **Using a more joined-up approach**

- Inconsistent or overburden on application of contract management from different commissioners – particularly for the VAWG services that are small, community-based and service user-led.

Mitigating the risk:

✓ **Taking a proportionate approach**

- A lack of equalities analysis (see section 4.3) resulting in VAWG affecting certain groups not being adequately addressed

Mitigating the risk:

✓ **Carrying out meaningful engagement with ‘by and for’ organisations**

Local authority commissioners should be aware when developing a strategy of the specific legal requirement within Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to prepare and publish strategies for support in safe accommodation, based on the needs assessments referred to at Section 3.2 above. This could be captured as a chapter within a wider multi-agency VAWG Strategy providing it meets the requirements of the new duties.

4.2.1 Developing the strategy: Practice points

- ✓ Pulling together a diverse group of victims, survivors, practitioners and others is essential to help plan the approach - **diversity leads to a better strategy.**
- ✓ A commitment is needed from all key stakeholders. Service providers and survivors need to be involved to understand their perception of the future.

- ✓ Thinking about execution before the process begins is important – it doesn't matter how good the strategy is if it isn't executed. Implementation is the phase that turns strategies and plans into action. It is vital to think about measures of success – how is capacity within the VAWG sector being built and how are the national VAWG outcomes being used?
- ✓ Making the strategy actionable is key – it must contain clearly articulated goals, action steps, responsibilities, accountabilities, resources and deadlines. Everyone must understand the plan and their role in delivering it.
- ✓ The strategy shouldn't be written as a finished article – good strategies are fluid and are shaped over time and are responsive to changes in need.
- ✓ Communicating the plan is essential to the future success of implementation. There should be opportunities for a wide audience to be involved in the communication, from local authority Councillors, service providers, representatives from all partner agencies, service users and the wider community. Communicating the plan in an accessible format and through different media will help to ensure maximum engagement.

4.3 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 provides for the Public Sector Equality Duty - this means that public bodies have to consider the potential impact on all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work. It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

'Public Sector Equality Duty and equality impact assessments [should be] routinely used by local authorities and other statutory agencies to ensure that women are treated equally'

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

An example of this would be actively encouraging a range of individuals to engage with the commissioning process.

It is important that equality and diversity considerations are taken into account across VAWG commissioning processes, given the disproportionate impact these crimes can have on different groups in society. Completing an Equality Impact Assessment is one way of demonstrating you have considered whether and how a policy or decision will impact on people differently depending on their protected characteristics.⁷³

⁷³ Further information on protected characteristics can be found here [Protected characteristics | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/protected-characteristics)

The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. However, keeping a record of how decisions were reached will help show how you have considered the Duty, and it is good practice to do this.⁷⁴

A key consideration when having due regard to the factors set out in the PSED should be to assess the extent to which the methods of assisting survivors to actively and meaningfully participate in the local community might need to be adapted depending on the characteristics of those survivors, and how changes in policy could potentially negatively or positively impact in their participation in public life.

It is important to recognise there are a range of equalities considerations. For example, due to various factors, services may inadvertently overlook the needs of some groups, for example, young women with disabilities or a young woman with disabilities from an ethnic minority community. It is also important to consider spatial disparities that may create barriers in access, for example, rural vs urban populations, a lack of specialist support services for women from ethnic minority backgrounds and girls and adult survivors of child sexual abuse. When considering the impact of a service on different ethnicities, it is important to avoid undertaking assessments framed around a single category of 'black and minority ethnic', as this can result in a homogenous understanding that renders it more difficult to assess any emerging issues between different minority groups.

4.4 Design of a (service) specification

Following the publication of the VAWG commissioning intentions, one of the key documents is the specification detailed within the contract. Some of the important features of a VAWG specification are set out below.

4.4.1 Introduction

A service specification should start with a brief description of the nature and scope of the service required, the user group for whom the service will be provided and the overall purpose and aims of the service. This should include a breakdown of victims and survivors of VAWG who also have additional needs, such as:

- mental health problems
- drug or alcohol dependencies
- disability
- language barriers
- insecure immigration status
- no recourse to public funds

Locally agreed principles or values underpinning the service are normally included at this point as well as relevant information about partnership working in this area. It may also be useful to include an explanation/definition of any technical terms used in the document as well as the recent background of the service or client group, for example is it a new service or existing one?

⁷⁴ Further information on whether or not such assessments are needed can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-ministers-on-public-sector-equality-duty-assessments>

It should be made clear at the outset if the service specification is based on any national standards and related targets, or other national or local guidance as appropriate or a local analysis of needs.

4.4.2 Description of service to be provided

This section should give a fuller description of the size and nature of the service required and should be focused on the needs assessment (Section 3: Analyse), including information about:

- The different client groups requiring services e.g. those facing multiple barriers, victims from ethnic minority backgrounds, children and older victims, deaf and disabled victims, LGBT victims, male victims and perpetrators
- The geographical location and spread of services – to respond to accessibility issues and support needs
- How it is intended that survivors and other service users will be referred or will access the service e.g. during peak incident times such as evenings and weekends
- Any eligibility criteria for the service that will operate

4.4.3 Specific standards and targets for the service

This section should detail the specific outcome and output targets to be achieved. It is necessary to differentiate between those that are requirements and those where the provider has some flexibility. It is good practice to get a balance between outcomes, outputs and inputs. Outcomes need to be restricted to three or four vital issues, which are meaningful, measurable and linked to national outcomes frameworks.

To help the service provider understand how these factors fit with the overall service requirements, it may be possible to include model care pathways for the different client groups e.g. survivors facing multiple barriers, survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled survivors, LGBT survivors etc.

Services should be commissioned based on relevant national standards for that service. Examples of minimum practices and policy requirements in a specification should relate specifically to the National Shared Core Standards⁷⁵.

4.4.4. Monitoring arrangements

Monitoring arrangements should closely link with Section 3: Analyse, and provide the means by which commissioners can satisfy themselves that service delivery meets the agreed levels and standards and needs of a local area in a proportionate way. Commissioners should be cognisant of the fact that these services are supporting people facing complex challenges and that recovery isn't therefore always linear.

⁷⁵ [Shared-Standards-Whole-Document-Final-30.11.2016.pdf \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

The specification should make clear the expectations of the commissioner in terms of the service provider attending meetings and sharing information, including taking forward learning on how services are using what they are finding out about the impact of their service and experiences of survivors to feed into their ongoing work. Including a schedule of meetings and the main agenda items as an appendix of the specification can be helpful.

As well as the performance indicators that the provider will be expected to report on, any other monitoring arrangements need to be outlined such as monitoring visits, complaints or the possibility of spot checks.

Failure to comply with service quality and other matters is normally contained in the contract or schedule detailing the agreement conditions and should not be contained in the service specification.

It is important to recognise that commissioners may be disseminating funding to multiple service providers which they in turn need to report on, and it is therefore beneficial for the type of information being collected and reported on to be consistent.

4.5 Design of a (service) specification: Practice points

- ✓ When commissioning services, the expertise within the VAWG sector, such as **specialist provision for women from ethnic minority backgrounds and specialist women's sexual abuse provision**, should be recognised. For example, commissioning should actively identify 'by and for' provision with a proven track record of work in the local area/community.
- ✓ The VAWG sector has developed effective, **innovative solutions** over a number of decades to complex issues and should be given the freedom to **nurture and grow** their service offer during the lifetime of the funding arrangement.
- ✓ The nature, length and size of the agreement should **preserve the specialism within the sector** and their presence within the community.
- ✓ Services should be monitored and evaluated using a recommended Outcomes Framework – see section 6.

4.6 Case Study: Essex PCC

In January 2016, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Essex awarded a contract of 5 years, at an overall value of £3.4 million to a consortium of local rape crisis centres to provide specialist support to adult and child victims and survivors of rape and sexual abuse across the county.

SERICC – Rape and Abuse Specialist Services, Southend-on-Sea Rape Crisis (SOS Rape Crisis Centre) and CARA (Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse) are independent charities that have joined together to form the 'Synergy' Essex Rape Crisis Partnership (ERCP) to

provide specialist support services to adults and children affected by sexual abuse, including rape and sexual assault, and to adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Whilst violence against women and girls has increased in prominence in recent years, the origins of this work were from a needs assessment undertaken originally in 2014 and refreshed in 2017 which identified geographic gaps of specialist sexual abuse support and in terms of the difference in scale between capacity of support services and individuals seeking to gain access.

A key recommendation from the needs assessment conducted and from conversations with service providers and victims was that services must be accessible, flexible and tailored to individuals' needs. The PCC's approach has been to integrate support for victims, including counselling, advocacy, therapy and a "one-front door" triage service, into a single contract to ensure consistency and clarity of support pathways. This approach mitigated the risks associated with a multitude of piece-meal grants, annual funding rounds and multiple funders/commissioners. The result meant support organisations were free to focus on investing in, developing and delivering support.

The single 5-year contract has provided the space and opportunity for new innovative approaches. This has included a navigator service - a specialist entry triage service that victims and survivors can contact to access support.

In addition to commissioning these support services for victims, Essex PCC has collaborated with other criminal justice and community safety partners to develop a partnership strategy to reduce sexual abuse including a new focus on perpetrators, the criminal justice system and prevention.

Section 5: Do

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Market development
- 5.3 Capacity building
- 5.4 Commissioning for market diversity
- 5.5 Practice points
- 5.6 Case study: Wolverhampton City Council



5.1 Introduction

This section of the toolkit identifies some of the key aspects of the implementation phase of commissioning, to include:

- Market development
- Capacity building
- Co-production
- Commissioning for market diversity

5.2 Market development

The Care Act 2014 introduced duties on local authorities in England to facilitate a vibrant, diverse and sustainable market for high quality care and support in their area, for the benefit of their whole population, regardless of how the services are funded. Although this primarily relates to regulated and registered activity, the same principles can be applied to the provision of VAWG services. In the main, commissioners should seek to identify what existing skills and sector expertise exists within their area. These relationships should be nurtured on an ongoing basis not simply at the point of commissioning.

It is important that there is **local agreement on what ‘good’ looks like** and how this will be achieved. Soft market testing or pre-market engagement – an informal conversation with stakeholders - is particularly helpful in gauging interest in a proposed service and helping to shape it to ensure that it would be deliverable once commissioned. It may be that the VAWG sector, including smaller organisations, need some support with infrastructure and understanding procurement. **Co-production with a diverse range of providers from the VAWG sector is essential.** It is critical for commissioners to recognise that the sector itself includes larger, smaller and specialist ‘by and for’ providers, many of whom are least resourced yet provide high quality services to individuals affected by VAWG. Co-production which recognises and engages across this diversity will make provision more effective, by working in partnership with the people who use their services.

5.3 Capacity building

Whatever the funding mechanism adopted and award route chosen, getting the best possible social value and value for money means **giving all potential providers an equal chance** to show how they compare, and how they can do a good job of meeting requirements. This will most likely include bids from local, well-established services with a strong track record, as well as newly formed or innovative organisations that have come together to fill a void locally. A competitive tender process will in many cases also draw in bids from larger or national organisations, which may be brand new to the area and looking to extend their reach. A fair and equitable process should work for all of these players and allow for an assessment of how well they are able to deliver effective local services, allowing a choice of a diverse range of well-considered bids.

As a rule, **the more complex the tender process, the more resource-intensive it can be for bidders**. This is less of a problem for larger organisations, which may well have a dedicated bid-writing team.

Regional and national organisations may have more experience of the tender process itself – something that can be difficult for local organisations to accrue if they have not lived through repeated local cycles of commissioning. Part of creating a more equal playing field for competitive tenders includes the structure of the tender itself and the processes for scoring bids (for example creating smaller lots and having a suitable cost/value ratio). A proportionate approach is critical, making the process as simple and accessible to engage in as possible. Taking a proportionate approach can also reduce pressures on commissioners, by only asking for information that is needed.

VAWG interconnects with many other sectors and survivors draw on other services (mental health, substance misuse, children’s services, legal, housing, etc). Positive established relationships in this web of services is better for service users and more cost effective for commissioners than a new provider needing time to become established and this should be valued and scored accordingly.

The pace and structure of the tender process itself is also important to consider to avoid accidentally ruling out specialist providers who could be best placed to deliver good value locally – smaller organisations with fewer resources will need time to respond to bids as they will not have specialist teams dedicated to bid writing as and when they are published. Their participation will also be supported by giving sufficient notice ahead of any upcoming commissioning process.

As set out above, the term ‘value for money’ should not be taken to mean the lowest unit cost - commissioners should consider the full cost implications and savings of a service,

‘Larger providers are better able to compete for competitive bids, which primarily focus on generic domestic abuse services... Specialist providers for black and minority ethnic women and children tend to be smaller and unable to compete’

VAWG Call for Evidence response, 2021

recognising, for example, that specialist ‘by and for’ services may have a higher unit cost but deliver support in a way that others can’t and which can reduce costs to other services further down the line.

5.4 Commissioning for market diversity

When developing an inclusive commissioning approach, it is important to understand the current service offer and how this meets the needs of diverse groups. All service users or potential service users should have **meaningful choice**, which can be provided through a diverse market. Co-production is a good way of understanding what service users and service providers need from the market and by having those conversations, commissioners can work towards a more diverse offer. This will enable commissioners to gain a better understanding of the different specialisms that can be delivered and the difference these make to those accessing services. Commissioners should be upfront about what is being offered through the development of a market position statement and the publication of what services are available, in addition to identifying and addressing barriers to market entry for niche providers.

5.5 Do: Practice points

- ✓ The pace of a process is a big factor in levelling the playing field. Providing **wide and early notice of all procurement opportunities**, and making sure that the commissioning timetable is long enough to encourage bids from smaller providers (either individually or in consortia) is vital. The proposed mobilisation timescale may also have an impact on the ability of smaller providers or consortia to bid.
- ✓ Allowing enough **space to answer questions** is also key. This includes running provider briefings, ‘Meet the Buyer’ events and publishing a named contact for enquiries from potential providers. Answering questions and holding open events is in keeping with providing an open and fair process. Commissioners should take care to ensure that all bidders have access to the same information,
- ✓ **Transparency** is important, in addition to being clear about evaluation criteria at the start of the process.
- ✓ Providing **helpful feedback** about unsuccessful bids is a useful learning experience for some providers, as tenders come around relatively rarely.
- ✓ Gagging orders for unsuccessful applicants go against the Compact⁷⁶ and ought not to be used.
- ✓ Making sure all documentation is accessible, concise, free of jargon and includes a clear overview of the relevant objectives and timescales will help ensure quality and relevant bids.

⁷⁶ [The Compact- \(nao.org.uk\)](http://nao.org.uk)

- ✓ Consider investing in support from an independent organisation to develop the capacity building and skills of local providers e.g. bid-writing workshops - if there are opportunities for consortia or subcontracting, this can be invaluable, since developing strong consortia and partnership arrangements can be time and resource intensive.
- ✓ Where bidders are proposing to work with specialist services as sub-contractors, ensure the assessment process takes steps to ensure that these sub-contractors are aware of their inclusion in the bid and where funding is awarded, follow this through to the management regime to ensure funding and referrals are reaching the specialist services as expected.

5.6 Case Study: Wolverhampton City Council

In response to the rise in reported cases of domestic abuse during COVID-19, Wolverhampton City Council sought to increase specialist support available to survivors of domestic abuse. The Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands pledged to invest more in specialist provision in the area to ensure that survivors could access the right support from organisations best equipped to meet their needs.

To ensure that the additional funding was spent effectively, local authority leaders deferred to the expertise of specialist providers in the local area to inform the commissioning process. The local authority consulted specialist domestic abuse services regularly to strengthen their understanding of local need. Through meaningful engagement, the council gathered qualitative data on the experiences of front-line domestic abuse practitioners during the pandemic. Local authority leaders sought to establish strong working partnerships with specialist services in the area. The council's commitment to meaningful and active engagement was shown through a dedication to go beyond only requesting data for the needs assessment. In one instance, specialist services were invited to sit on the recruitment panel when hiring a new Domestic Abuse lead. The pursuit of sincere and ongoing partnerships with local stakeholders meant that specialist providers felt involved in the decision-making process in relation to domestic abuse services. Close involvement of specialist organisations also strengthened the council's understanding of domestic abuse as well as the value of specialist domestic abuse services.

Specialist domestic abuse providers were able to support the council in building an accurate assessment of need and pursue flexible commissioning, which was based on survivor outcomes. Engagement with front-line domestic abuse staff showed that increased funding for survivors with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) as well as women from ethnic minority backgrounds was needed. Insights from local discussions were used to ensure that services were responding to the needs of survivors. Following the new duties placed on local authorities to fund support for survivors in safe accommodation, as well as additional emergency funding during COVID-19, the local authority ensured that flexibility was integrated into the commissioning process. Local discussions also looked at

ways to enhance existing specialist support, gathering data on a range of provision, including counselling and the emotional wellbeing of survivors in refuges.

Discussions with local frontline practitioners also demonstrated a need to enhance specialist support in the area for survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds. In response to the findings, the council looked at innovative ways to strengthen co-production and consultation. This led to the commissioner providing funding to local services to establish a forum for those from ethnic minority backgrounds, dedicated to supporting women survivors of domestic abuse. National insights from Women's Aid Federation of England's No Woman Turned Away Project, were also used to provide critical context in the needs assessment conducted in 2021.⁷⁷

This approach enabled the council to improve the sustainability of specialist services in the area and ensured that the most vulnerable survivors of domestic abuse could access the support they need. Commissioned services were able to increase the provision of bed spaces for NRPF survivors by 10% and specialist support for survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds was embedded into existing contracts. Moreover, the council maintained ongoing engagement with specialist providers to inform the shaping of future contracts. This ensured that the service specifications accurately reflected the changing need of survivors accessing specialist support and that funding was used to increase the capacity of specialist organisations best equipped to support survivors.

⁷⁷ Women's Aid. (2020) *Nowhere to Turn for Children and Young People: Documenting the Journeys of Children and Young People into Refuges*. Bristol: Women's Aid.

Section 6: Review

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 National Shared Standards
- 6.3 Outcome measurement
- 6.4 Practice points
- 6.5 Case study: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



6.1 Introduction

This final section of the toolkit focuses on reviewing the impact of services, which should be part of a continuous cycle of measuring outcomes for service users. It includes an outline of service standards and the commonality between them.

It is good practice to review and reflect on all aspects of service provision, but a good indicator of successful outcomes is measuring the service user journey.

6.2 National Shared Standards

A set of National Sector Sustainability Shared Standards were developed in 2016 by members of a VAWG Sustainability Working Group: Imkaan, Rape Crisis England & Wales, Respect, SafeLives and Women's Aid.⁷⁸ Each of these organisations has a set of quality service standards designed to address their unique specialist work, namely:

- **Imkaan:** work with women and girls from ethnic minority backgrounds who have experienced violence and abuse
- **Rape Crisis England & Wales:** member centres work with survivors of rape, sexual violence, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation (to note that not all Rape Crisis Centres provide services to men and boys or children)
- **Respect:** work with male survivors and perpetrators
- **SafeLives:** work to end domestic abuse for everyone
- **Women's Aid:** work to end domestic abuse against women and children

Individually, such standards can drive forward quality improvements (NICE, 2014)⁷⁹ and provide benchmarks for service providers, funders and commissioners about the extent and mix of services that should be available, who should provide them, and the principles and practice base from which they should operate.

The shared standards support commissioners to ensure the independent standards can be used both nationally and locally for joint commissioning purposes. They are not

⁷⁸ [Shared-Standards-Whole-Documents-Final-30.11.2016.pdf \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

⁷⁹ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014) *Quality standards process guide*, Manchester: NICE Health and Social Care Directorate.

intended to ‘stand-alone’ but have been agreed as designated shared core standards, namely the minimum standards common to all five member organisations.

In Wales, the Welsh Government has supported the development of Welsh Women’s Aid National Quality Service Standards for specialist services.⁸⁰

The following service standards have also been developed for services supporting male victims and survivors:

- Male Domestic Abuse Network: Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Domestic Abuse⁸¹
- Male Survivors Partnership: Male Service Standards for organisations working with men and boys affected by sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation⁸²

Ideally perpetrator programmes should also be accredited by Respect⁸³ where applicable and consider programmes which target the most prolific or highest-harm perpetrators, such as Drive.⁸⁴

The forthcoming Victims Funding Strategy will also aim to introduce national commissioning standards for all victim support services, including VAWG services. They will sit alongside existing standards and are expected to work in conjunction with them, providing a strong quality of service expectation.

6.3 Outcome measurement

Outcomes are the results, benefits and changes arising from the work that has been commissioned and might include outcomes for survivors, including children as victims in their own right, and the local community (for example, an increase in safety as measured by reduced victimisation). It is imperative for commissioners to measure outcomes and value for money effectively because:

- They allow commissioners to establish the extent to which service providers are effective in delivering desired changes and in contributing to the overall strategy locally – this learning is vital in supporting the continuous improvement of services. Some outcomes from service delivery may be unexpected, surprising, or even negative. It also provides an opportunity to identify emerging needs and to feed into future commissioning.
- A robust evaluation of outcomes allows providers to feed-back on what didn’t work, in addition to describing their progress against the outcomes agreed at the start of the funding.
- It can enable useful comparison and benchmarking service performance if an outcome measurement framework that stretches across all VAWG services is developed with service providers.

⁸⁰ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/WWA-NQSS-Introduction-2021-1.pdf>

⁸¹ [Service Standards - Male Domestic Abuse Network \(mdan.org.uk\)](#)

⁸² [Male Service Standards - MSP - The Male Survivors Partnership](#)

⁸³ [Respect Standard | Respect](#)

⁸⁴ [About us – Drive Project](#)

- Additionally, as part of the Victims Funding Strategy, the Government will aim to detail national core outcomes (and associated metrics) for victim support services, that should be considered by commissioners.

6.4 Review: Practice points

- ✓ The perfect should not be the enemy of the good. VAWG services are challenging environments in which to collect detailed data on outcomes, as there are issues around confidentiality, managing clients in crisis, time, resource and skills pressures and being able to follow-up safely to understand if outcomes were sustained over time. Consulting with providers to co-create a robust, workable and proportionate approach that will deliver useful data without absorbing too much resource or interfering with service provision is essential.
- ✓ Consulting with service providers about relevant outcomes and practical ways of measuring progress should be done early on in the process. These service-specific outcomes ought to link up logically with the wider strategic objectives in the local strategy.
- ✓ Collating data that is relevant to understanding the types of providers that service users prefer to access informs service design e.g. for specialist VAWG providers working across different communities, they are likely to provide services that demonstrate broader outcomes linked to increasing resilience, independence, social inclusion and justice.
- ✓ Less is sometimes more when it comes to data quality. The amount of data required and the frequency of reporting ought to be proportionate to the size and strategic importance of the funding. Even when it comes to larger arrangements, asking frontline services to collect a smaller, more tightly focused basket of outcome metrics will deliver better data than large swathes of data, not all of which may be essential to decision making.
- ✓ Agreeing on the specific outcomes and metrics to be achieved in consultation with service providers and service users allows better understanding of what metrics are most valuable in terms of holding particular services to account. Unrealistic or poorly defined outcomes will yield confusing and unhelpful data.
- ✓ There is no point in reinventing the wheel when it comes to outcome measurement. Rape Crisis England & Wales, Imkaan, Women's Aid Federation of England, Welsh Women's Aid, SafeLives, Respect, the Male Survivor Partnership and the ManKind Initiative have all developed national outcome frameworks and data collection tools specifically tailored to the needs of VAWG providers in a range of settings (see Appendix II). Applying these tried and tested systems locally will save time and effort. Some of these frameworks are linked to national 'shared measurement' programmes, which will allow the comparison of local data regionally and nationally.

- ✓ Including a narrative learning section in the monitoring return can allow providers space to feed-back about what didn't work so well. Completing lots of workbooks with similar, but slightly different sets of data is time consuming for providers and limiting for commissioners. If jointly commissioning services, there needs to be a standardised reporting procedure. This will allow all commissioning bodies to collect the data they need as simply as possible, as well as allowing for useful comparison.

6.5 Case Study: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly commission an integrated domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV) service, providing safety, support and recovery to people impacted by or experiencing DASV and people engaging in abusive behaviours and education and training to professionals and schools and colleges. The service is gender informed but gender inclusive and caters to the needs of children, young people and adults.

The service is commissioned by the Safer Cornwall Partnership and is funded by a pooled budget; with a strategic commissioning team sat within the Community Safety Team of Cornwall Council, leading on delivery.

The pooled budget and joint commissioning model ensures that the service meets the need of all key partners' strategic objectives and client demographics and has assisted Safer Cornwall in determining a joined up approach to wider commissioning, procurement and spend. It has led to the creation of the Joint Strategic, Commissioning and Operational Group, which now informs all projects, procurement and strategies across Community Safety, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Health and Housing in Cornwall; in turn reducing repeat spending, gaps in provision and more needs led, trauma informed strategies and services.

The success of the commissioning model and the integrated DASV services is underpinned by the focus on community engagement and the views and needs of members of the community who have lived experience in DASV. Everything that is delivered is done so taking into account the recommendations and feedback from service users and the wider community.

Appendix 1: Key to vocabulary and acronyms

‘By and for’ services: Specialist services that are led, designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve (for example, victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and LGBT victims).

CCR: Coordinated Community Response

CSEW: Crime Survey for England and Wales

CSP: Community Safety Partnership

DLUHC: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

EIA: Equality Impact Assessment

FGM: Female genital mutilation

FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

HMICFRS: Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

IDVA: Independent Domestic Violence Adviser

ICBs: Integrated Care Boards

ICPs: Integrated Care Partnerships

ICSSs: Integrated Care Systems

ISVA: Independent Sexual Violence Adviser

ITT: Invitation to tender

LAs: Local authorities

LGBT: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other minority sexual orientations and gender identities.

MARAC: Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

MASH: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

MoJ: Ministry of Justice

NSE: National Statement of Expectations

ONS: Office for National Statistics

PCC: Police and Crime Commissioner

SARC: Sexual Assault Referral Centre

Specialist service: A service which is specifically designed and whose *primary purpose* is to support someone who is, or has been affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence and/or any other form of VAWG.

VAWG: violence against women and girls. The term ‘violence against women and girls’ refers to acts of violence or abuse that disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviours covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, ‘honour’-based abuse (including female genital mutilation forced marriage, and ‘honour’ killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online. While we use the term ‘violence against women and girls’, this refers to all victims of any of these offences, including men and boys.

Appendix 2: Resources

The following documents may be useful for further reading:

Government documents

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

[Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Domestic Abuse: Draft Statutory Guidance

[Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Supporting Male Victims of Crimes Considered VAWG⁸⁵

[Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

New duties on local authorities to provide domestic abuse support in safe accommodation in England: Statutory Guidance

[Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁸⁵ To note that an updated version of this document will be published in 2022.

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy

[Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Victims Strategy

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/746930/victim-strategy.pdf

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales

[MoJ Victims Code 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

The End-to-end Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions

[The end-to-end rape review report on findings and actions \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Serious Violence Duty

[draft guidance - serious violence duty \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Serious Violence Duty: strategic needs assessment guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Community-centred public health: taking a whole system approach

[Community-centred public health: taking a whole system approach](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Health and wellbeing: a guide to community-centred approaches

[Health and wellbeing: a guide to community-centred approaches](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Health inequalities: place-based approaches to reduce inequalities

[Health inequalities: place-based approaches to reduce inequalities](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A collaborative commissioning toolkit for services in Wales

[vawdasv-toolkit_wales_web.pdf \(lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk\)](https://lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk)

Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>

Guidance for Local Strategies (Wales)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/guidance-for-local-strategies.pdf>

Welsh Government Perpetrator Service Standards

[perpetrator-service-standards.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Social Value Act

[Social Value Act: information and resources - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Public Sector Equality Duty

[Public sector equality duty - GOV.UK](#)

Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales

[Equality impact assessments | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

Female Genital Mutilation Statutory Guidance

[Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Forced Marriage Statutory Guidance

[The right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Commissioning Framework for Child Sexual Abuse Support

[Commissioning framework for child sexual abuse support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Child House: Local Partnerships Guidance

[Child sexual abuse: Child House - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

NHS England: Grants for the voluntary sector

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/nhs-bitesize-grants.rb-170215.pdf>

Review of Data Sharing: Migrant Victims and Witnesses of Crime

[Review of data sharing: migrant victims and witnesses of crime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Commissioning Framework for Adult and Paediatric Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) Services

[SARCs-service-spec-contract-template-and-paed-framework.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

HMICFRS reports

Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse

[improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse.pdf \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

The Depths of Dishonour: Hidden Voices and Shameful Crimes

[the-depths-of-dishonour.pdf \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

Police response to Violence Against Women and Girls Final Inspection Report
[Inspection into how effectively the police engage with women and girls: Final report \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspections/vawg-final-report/)

Review of policing domestic abuse during the pandemic 2021
[Review of policing domestic abuse during the pandemic: 2021 \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspections/policing-domestic-abuse-during-the-pandemic-2021/)

A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape
[A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape: Phase one: From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspections/joint-thematic-inspection-of-the-police-and-crown-prosecution-service-s-response-to-rape-phase-one-from-report-to-police-or-cps-decision-to-take-no-further-action/)

The Police Response to Domestic Abuse an Update Report 2019
[The police response to domestic abuse: An update report \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspections/police-response-to-domestic-abuse-an-update-report-2019/)

Further resources

NPCC and College of Policing: Policing violence against women and girls: National framework for delivery: Year 1
[Policing violence against women and girls - National framework for delivery: Year 1 \(college.police.uk\)](https://college.police.uk/policing-violence-against-women-and-girls-national-framework-for-delivery-year-1/)

NICE guidance: Domestic violence and abuse – multi-agency working
[Overview | Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working | Guidance | NICE](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ta66)

Local Government Authority: Integrated commissioning and provision
[Integrated commissioning and provision | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/integrated-commissioning-and-provision)

Local Government Authority: Commissioning Resources
[Commissioning resources | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/commissioning-resources)

National Audit Office: Successful Commissioning Toolkit
[Successful Commissioning Toolkit- \(nao.org.uk\)](https://www.nao.org.uk/resources/publications-and-reports/successful-commissioning-toolkit/)

Lloyds Bank Foundation: The Value of Small
[The Value of Small \(lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/the-value-of-small/)

Sector Sustainability Shared Standards
[Shared-Standards-Whole-Document-Final-30.11.2016.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](https://www.netdna-ssl.com/netdna-ssl.com/Shared-Standards-Whole-Document-Final-30.11.2016.pdf)

Standing Together:
[In Search of Excellence — Standing Together](https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/in-search-of-excellence/)
[Pathfinder recommendations - Health - Pathfinder — Standing Together](https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/pathfinder-recommendations-health-pathfinder/)

Galop: Commissioning for Inclusion

[LGBT Commissioning Guidance final.pdf \(mcusercontent.com\)](#)

Rape Crisis England and Wales:

National Service Standards: [rcnss_partners_final.pdf \(rapecrisis.org.uk\)](#)

The Courage, resilience, and innovation of Rape Crisis Centres during the Covid-19 pandemic: [Holding It Together \(rapecrisis.org.uk\)](#)

Women's Aid:

National Quality Standards: [National standards 2019 \(edited 2021\) \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

Commissioning guide (developed by Women's Aid and Imkaan): [Working with commissioners - Womens Aid](#)

National outcomes framework: [On Track - Womens Aid](#)

Imkaan:

Accredited Quality Standards: [Commissioners Pack Single Parts.indd \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#)

Safe Minimum Practice Standards:

[2016+ +Imkaan+ +Safe+Minimum+Practice+Standards.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

SafeLives:

[Commissioning support | Safelives](#)

[Leading Lights: accreditation for domestic abuse services | Safelives](#)

Insights for Domestic Abuse Services: [Insights for domestic abuse services | Safelives](#)

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation

[Our research & publications - daha - Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](#)

The Respect Standard (accreditation for work with perpetrators of domestic abuse)

[Respect Standard FINAL.pdf \(hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

Evaluation of the Drive Project –Pilot to Address High-risk, High-harm Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

[DriveYear3_UoBEvaluationReport_Final.pdf \(driveproject.org.uk\)](#)

The Respect Male Victims Toolkit

[Respect-Toolkit-for-Work-with-Male-Victims-of-Domestic-Abuse-2019.pdf \(hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

Male Domestic Abuse Network Service Standards

[Service Standards - Male Domestic Abuse Network \(mdan.org.uk\)](#)

The Male Survivors Partnership Service Standards

[Male Service Standards - MSP - The Male Survivors Partnership](#)