



**POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**  
for Leicester,  
Leicestershire & Rutland  
Your Communities - Your Commissioner

## **Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Partnership**

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STRATEGY**

**2024 - 2026**



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# Foreword

Violence directed at women and girls is a despicable crime that can have a lifelong impact on those affected.

Offences such as sexual violence, domestic abuse, coercion, stalking and harassment, female genital mutilation and forced marriage have no place in our society. They are not an inevitable part of being female.

For various reasons successful prosecutions can be difficult to achieve. We need to understand and counteract this. Justice must be secured for the thousands of women across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland who are forced to endure the harm brought by these offences.

It is shocking that some women and girls feel they cannot live their lives freely and without fear due to heightened risks, perceived or otherwise, to their safety from violence simply because of their gender. That's why it is vital that we provide more support for victims of such violence and take a hard-line approach to those who offend in this way to deter future offences.

There has been considerable investment in the work to tackle this type of violence, and I am pleased at the significant progress made to date, but there is always more to do.

This Strategy sets out how that work will be delivered, our aims and objectives. It has been developed in consultation with survivors with lived experience of VAWG crimes, young people and stakeholders. The voice of victims will remain critical to the delivery of the strategy. We must listen and learn from their experience.

It aims to ensure a strong infrastructure is in place to robustly pursue perpetrators, increase reporting by victims and to expose hidden crimes of violence for which women and girls suffer in silence and perpetrators remain unpunished.

It draws together the combined expertise of the myriad of partners responsible for different elements of this work to ensure a cohesive response to the problem. It is quite clear: we are united in our determination to tackle the problem effectively.

Together we will work hard to address the attitudes and behaviours that can drive these unacceptable crimes. Intervention will be targeted as early as possible to influence moral grounding and ensure those most at risk of being harmed or causing harm through violence are instilled with positive values in childhood and adolescence.

The importance of this Strategy to all the women and girls living, working and visiting our City and two counties cannot be overemphasised. I will do everything in my power to support this work, to sustain the levels of service and provide the resources to deliver improvements.

We all want to feel safe, and be safe, as we go about our daily lives.

**Rupert Matthews**  
**Police & Crime Commissioner**  
**Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland**

# Executive Summary

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) partnership know that crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual violence including child sexual exploitation, so-called honour-based abuse and gender based physical violence disproportionately affect women and girls. Violence against women and girls can have a major impact on victims in terms of physical health, mental health, loss of employment, substance misuse, lower educational outcomes and ultimately life chances.

In our partnership-wide delivery of this strategy, we will consider the views of women, especially marginalised women and girls and the views of boys and men affected by these issues. We will work to improve our knowledge of what works in tackling violence against women and girls, working towards a whole community approach to affect change and ensure that our work is evidence-led and robustly evaluated.

# Introduction

Partner agencies across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) have been working hard to address the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) for many years and the progress made is significant. Good partnerships already exist including Safeguarding Children Partnerships, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Governance Boards, Safer Communities Boards, Criminal Justice Boards and Community Safety Partnerships.

This strategy outlines the key ways in which LLR's public sector agencies will work together to deliver change, seeking support from charities, the private sector, local communities and most importantly, listening to the voices of women and girls, to improve the lives of people across our city and counties. It has been co-produced with the public, victims and stakeholders across LLR and reflects the views and concerns raised through public consultation exercises carried out by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for LLR (OPCC) in March 2023.

During 2022/23, there were 42,180<sup>1</sup> violent crimes recorded by the police in LLR.

Of those, 13,964<sup>2</sup> cases resulted in injury (of which 49.1% involved female victims) and 28,216 cases resulted in no reported injury (of which 57.6% involved female victims).

There were 38,726 individual female victims, which equates to 6.82% of the female population. 13,656 females (35.2% of victims) reported they had been a victim more than once in the year, indicating that supporting repeat victims should be a priority. During the same period<sup>3</sup>, 1,589 rape offences were recorded as well as 2,697 other sexual offences, 15,145 stalking and harassment offences. Females were disproportionately affected, making up 84.7%, 75.2% and 64.9% of these crime types respectively.

In the reporting year, 204 honour-based abuse crimes were recorded by the police with 65.1% involving a female victim. 1.4% of female victims were under 16 years old.

The NHS report that 80% of their patients who were identified as being a victim of FGM were aged under 10 when the FGM was carried out.

Age is a factor in the likelihood of females being a victim of domestic abuse, sexual offences, and stalking and harassment, certain ages are disproportionately affected or experience the greatest proportion of offences. The risk is particularly high for females aged between 18 and 34 (who make up 45.1% victims), with the risk then reducing with age.

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<sup>1</sup> Violence with injury offences (Assault with injury, assault causing serious harm) and violence without injury offences (Stalking & Harassment, Malicious Communication, Controlling & Coercive Behaviour)

<sup>2</sup> Resulted in injury - 12,849 from assault with injury offences.

Resulted in no reported injury - over 15,000 Stalking & Harassment cases and over 13,000 violence without injury offences, mainly assault without injury (10,567)

<sup>3</sup> 13,406 female victims of Domestic Abuse, 30.5% of victims fell within the Domestic Abuse thematic.

## **The Home Office defines Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as:**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) 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 'up skirting', as well as many others. These crimes disproportionately affect women and girls. However, men and boys can also be victims of violence and abuse, and the approaches set out will benefit all victims and survivors of these crime types. This is not to negate the importance of the majority provision delivery to be single sex services for victims.

These crimes and behaviours can affect victims of all ages, abilities, sexualities and backgrounds. They take place in every locality across the UK and can happen within current or previous relationships, in families, and in communities. We need to ensure each area has embedded a local infrastructure that raises awareness of VAWG among local agencies and people, robustly pursues perpetrators, supports reporting by victims and survivors and uses multi-agency approaches to understand and meet the needs of victims, survivors and family members to support a process of recovery and to achieve positive life outcomes. The Tackling VAWG Strategy and Domestic Abuse Plan are clear that the Government's long-term, fundamental ambition must be to reduce the prevalence of these crimes, and local areas have a key role to play in achieving this aim.

Our vision is for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to be a place where women and girls can live their lives free from violence and the fear of violence, with prevention at the heart of our services.

Our mission is to support the work of Leicestershire Police and the wider partnership to reduce the occurrence of violence against women and girls and bring perpetrators to justice, working with education, health care and community organisations to increase the support available to victims and survivors across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

## **Our priorities**

This three-year strategy sets out an LLR-wide strategic approach to tackling violence against women and girls. It builds upon the VAWG strategy developed by Leicestershire Police and draws upon our joint evidence base.

The strategy sets out five inter-related priorities. These priorities have been informed by our current knowledge of evidence-based strategies to tackle VAWG and our open-minded approach to building interventions evidenced through co-production, data collection and evaluation. This strategy identifies, alongside the priorities, our intended outcomes and what we will do to achieve them.

Effective prevention must include early intervention to attempt to influence the right values in childhood and adolescence, as well as shifting attitudes to become less accepting of violence and inequality. We will address the attitudes and behaviour that can underpin crimes of violence against women and girls as part of our approach to tackling them.

All women and girls should have the confidence to report offences or incidents where they have felt threatened or harassed and to know that every effort will be made to bring offenders to justice. This won't happen unless victims feel supported, not just when taking the first step of reporting but right throughout investigations, court process and beyond.

Many crimes of violence against women and girls remain hidden and many perpetrators remain unknown. Although we recognise that perpetrators can be male or female, nationally in 2020-2021, 93% of people prosecuted for VAWG offences were male. This compares with 86% of defendants for all types of crime being male. There is some evidence that intervening early can prevent violence from escalating and further offending occurring, and there is some promising evidence from domestic violence perpetrator programmes, which we will build on.

With this in mind, our priorities are:

- Priority 1 - Preventing violence against women and girls.
- Priority 2 - Responding to violence against women and girls.
- Priority 3 - Supporting victims and survivors.
- Priority 4 - Including people with lived experience in designing our services.
- Priority 5 - Strengthening the VAWG sector across all our communities.

Alongside our overarching priorities the Home Office expects that local strategies and services will:

1. Put the victim/survivor at the centre of service design and delivery.
2. Have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims and survivors safe.
3. Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG.
4. Are locally led and safeguard individuals at every point.
5. Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.

We acknowledge that commissioners should also ensure that they comply with the Victims' Code, which makes clear the levels of support victims and survivors can and should expect from the criminal justice system.

This strategy is the Wider LLR Partnership's response to these expectations. We will be held to account for our delivery of this strategy by the LLR Strategic Partnership Board Executive (SPB Exec) including the Adolescent Safety Sub-Board and by Leicestershire Police's Vulnerability Board. The SPB Exec is a partnership board consisting of stakeholders; local authorities, including district councils, education, health and public health, police, the OPCC and Violence Reduction Network, the prison service, substance misuse services and local community leaders.

This strategy interlinks with other local strategies that support tackling VAWG, including the VRN's Serious Violence Prevention Strategy which identified in its Strategic Needs Assessment the need to:

- Reduce rates of sexual violence amongst children and young people.
- Reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse related serious violence, particularly stalking and harassment.

This strategy will support Leicestershire Police's VAWG Strategy and Delivery Plan which will not accept violence against women and girls, sexism, misogyny, or predatory behaviour and will build trust and confidence through their commitment to victims, communities and public by:

- Ensuring staff recognise and understand the disproportionate impact of violence by males against women and girls.
- Ensuring staff will be supportive, empathetic and compassionate when dealing with victims and others affected by these crimes and behaviours.
- Being committed to responding and recording reports in an appropriate way with suitably trained officers or staff.
- Listening to women and girls harmed by abuse and learning from their lived experiences.
- Relentlessly identifying and pursuing those who perpetrate crimes against women and girls bringing them to justice accordingly.
- Developing effective interventions to prevent victimisation of those at risk or individuals becoming a perpetrator.
- Working with other organisations to ensure the best care and support is available throughout investigations or when independent advice is sought.
- Working with partners to prevent crime and incidents by providing safe spaces in public, private and online.



# Approach

The Partnership has approached our VAWG strategy through a public health lens incorporating its processes, principles and framework. Our work will follow the public health four-step process:

- What is our VAWG problem and what is causing it?
- What is the best way for us to tackle our local issues?
- Have our responses been effective?
- How will we share and embed learning?

In understanding and responding to the risk and protective factors of violence against women and girls, we will operate across all four levels of the public health ecological framework to ensure that strategies address not only individual level factors but also those that occur within relationships, the wider community and societal contexts.

This strategy was developed in consultation through workshops including those with lived experience and young people, which identified there was a need for stronger collaboration and less 'silo' working. Consultations recommended:

- As part of the commissioning strategy consider a collaborative, asset-based approach to commissioned services across LLR for VAWG related services. This should include partner agencies and local organisations.
- Work with CSP's to identify cross border issues where CSP funding can be pooled to provide intervention or support services.
- Consider data sharing across LLR for VAWG related crime.
- Healthy relationships / sexual violence education in local schools including consent workshops.
- Trauma Informed training for all professionals – police, lawyers, judges and social services.
- First responders of sexual assaults to have better training around language and access to specialist officers.

This strategy, based upon these recommendations, will be delivered with continuous lived experience, women and girls and communities' in co-production.

# Priorities

## **Priority 1 - Preventing violence against women and girls.**

No one should ever have to face abuse or harassment because of their gender. We need to change the way people see women and girls and we will work with communities to ensure that those who commit violence against women and girls are held to account.

We will do this by:

- Delivering healthy relationships and consent programmes in schools.
- We will work with families to support school initiatives.
- We will work with further and higher education to develop consent resources and workshops.
- We will provide support for children at risk or affected by harm.
- We will develop bystander campaigns to make sure people who witness VAWG know how to speak out and intervene.
- We will work with our partners and local authorities to co-ordinate information campaigns.
- We will source initiatives that address the behaviours and attitudes of those who commit VAWG.
- Embed robust risk assessment processes to identify those offenders presenting the greatest threat of harm, identifying serial perpetrators at an early stage.

What we can achieve:

- Increased safe spaces for children and young people in education.
- More children and young people have a better understanding of healthy relationships and consent.
- Boys and men understand what women have to do to reduce their risk of harm.
- People have the confidence to challenge harmful beliefs and language and understand consent.
- Women and girls have support in their community.
- People who commit VAWG take responsibility for the consequences of their offending behavior.
- Build upon evidence that intervening early can prevent violence from escalating and further offending occurring, making use of domestic violence perpetrator programmes, to embed prevention at the earliest stage.

## **Priority 2 - Responding to violence against women and girls.**

We will increase women and girls trust in our criminal justice system, especially the police. We will increase the access of women and girls to local support services.

We will do this by:

- Increasing the awareness of local support services across professionals and communities.
- Ensure professionals and communities know how to respond to VAWG and take the appropriate action.
- Work across sectors to ensure women and girls are believed, feel believed and understood when they access services.
- Continuously include the voice of women and girls, listening to and incorporating their opinions in our work.
- Improve monitoring of VAWG and the actions taken in response.
- Keep working with our community partners to better respond to and learn about emerging trends, issues, risks and threats.

What we can achieve:

- More women and girls affected by violence are able to access support.
- Reduce the level of harm experienced by women and girls.
- Improve trust and confidence by women and girls in the police and criminal justice system.
- Improve support and better justice for women and girls who have experienced VAWG.
- Develop a faster response by partner agencies to emerging trends, risks and threats.

## **Priority 3 - Supporting victims and survivors.**

We will develop pathways and access for women and girls to receive the right place, right care response. This means receiving high quality services first time, every time, accessible across LLR.

We will do this by:

- Making sure that there are a range of support services in place for survivors.
- Making sure that long-term active support is available where needed.
- Make sure our services are accessible and working together.
- Ensure that victim survivors are given information about the outcome of their case and any appeals, to be given the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement and be informed how it is used in court. Where eligible, under the Victim Contact Scheme, to be informed when an offender is released.

What we can achieve:

- Increasing safety for survivors of VAWG.
- Increasing understanding and awareness among survivors where they can go to get help.
- Increasing mental and physical wellbeing among survivors of VAWG.
- Building and maintaining a strong network of local services.
- Keep the experience of victims and survivors at the heart of partnership wide delivery, keeping them informed, included and supported.

#### **Priority 4 - Including people with lived experience in designing our services.**

We will make sure that our services are evidence-based and informed by people with lived experience and truly reflect the needs of those who have experienced VAWG.

We will do this by:

- Helping communities to prevent VAWG and deliver more accessible services.
- Ensure those with lived experience are included when support services are commissioned and delivered.
- Building and developing partnerships with a range of related services.
- Consulting people with lived experience of VAWG using different methods to ensure we hear all voices.

What we can achieve:

- Better awareness of the needs of marginalised women and girls and the challenges they face.
- A cross-sector environment where the views of VAWG survivors are heard and used to shape local services.
- The development of a network of support services that are inclusive and open to learning, change and improvement.
- Increased trust in service providers among survivors of VAWG.
- Improved access to services, particularly among under-represented groups.

## **Priority 5 - Strengthening the VAWG sector across all our communities.**

We will develop a network of services working to support survivors of VAWG that is strong, capable and able to manage changes and future demand.

We will do this by:

- Understanding the needs and risk by using good quality information and data.
- Develop a shared evidence-base for all delivery partners to use.
- Develop the capacity of delivery agencies.
- Include VAWG in all relevant strategies and policies.
- Develop VAWG policies for local employers to use to ensure safer and more supportive workplaces.

What we can achieve:

- Improve the understanding of gender-specific needs and risks and use this in how our services are developed and delivered.
- Implement a shared evidence base that all agencies can use.
- Ensure that services are fit for purpose, safe and effective.
- Prioritize tackling VAWG as part of all public sector policies and strategies.
- Making sure employers know about VAWG and what they can do in their workplace.

## Delivery

To ensure this strategy is achieved, an under-pinning action plan will be developed by statutory partners in conjunction with voluntary bodies and victim service providers. Regular consultation will be undertaken to ensure the plan reflects the ongoing thoughts and concerns of the public and victims. Progress will be overseen through the local Strategic Partnership Executive Board who will ensure the plan remains relevant, complementing existing workstreams and not duplicating work that is already taking place and ensuring we are meeting our targets and taking action where we are not.

When developing the plan, partners will be mindful of the need to support other local and national strategies including, but not exhaustive of, Leicester Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022-25, Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-2025 and Rutland County Council Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024. Nationally to include the Home Office and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) strategies for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls as well as the Victims' Bill, Women's Health Strategy, National Disability Strategy and the Hate Crime Strategy. The plan will also be designed to dovetail with other local plans developed through existing partnership boards.

The partnership will be mindful of national and local changes and will review and refresh this strategy on an annual basis to ensure local activity remains consistent with national expectations and national workstreams.

We will use existing data and information from across all agencies to develop a comprehensive LLR-wide Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) problem profile, to help understand and address the problem, particularly its impact on victims with protected characteristics.

We will work with Leicestershire Police in sharing data and in identifying emerging trends, issues risks and threats and developing LLR-wide responses.

# Monitoring and Evaluation

## Performance Monitoring

We will monitor local trends in VAWG on a quarterly basis and provide quarterly reports to the SPB Exec Board. Through our monitoring systems we will track and monitor system-level progress towards reducing risk factors, strengthening protective factors and reducing VAWG overall.

Through the development of an outcome-based delivery plan, alongside ongoing co-production the partnership will set measurable outcomes, both quantitative and qualitative in design.

We will monitor through the OPCC and Police's crime data and through contract management of commissioned services, partnership providers and statutory partners to support VAWG reduction.

## Insights and Feedback

We aim to embed opportunities for different beneficiary groups – including young people, families, community members, victims, perpetrators, and professionals – to share their insights and to shape services and interventions. We will collaborate with our partners to strengthen their community involvement work to ensure that diverse voices are listened to. Through embedded horizon scanning the partnership will incorporate new evidence based ways of working and/or design and test innovative approaches to ensure our delivery continues to meet needs and demand.

## Knowledge Exchange

We have adopted a reciprocal approach to knowledge exchange by facilitating opportunities for beneficiary groups to share grassroots insights, we will use a range of accessible approaches to share new evidence and learning from within and beyond the OPCC and our wider partners. This will include insight reports, presentations at local, regional and national events, and an evidence-based resource set for use by all partners across LLR.

## Evaluation

We will continue to improve the robustness of evaluations we conduct, including:

- Process Evaluations - When implementing new interventions, we will conduct process evaluations to assess how they're being delivered and what's working well or needs improving.
- Impact Evaluations - Where possible we will undertake impact evaluations to provide an objective assessment of what difference supported interventions are making. We will support partners to evaluate new and existing interventions including developing monitoring frameworks and evaluation plans.

The Partnership will review this strategy annually and publish a report of progress on the OPCC website.

Through the Strategic Partnership Executive Board, in February 2024, this strategy was approved and is supported by the following agencies:

- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Violence Reduction Network
- Leicestershire Police
- District Councils (Charnwood, Hinkley and Bosworth, Blaby, Harborough, Melton and Oadby and Wigston)
- Probation Service LLR
- Leicestershire Fire and Rescue
- Community Leaders Network
- NHS Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland Integrated Care Board
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Rutland County Council
- University Hospital Leicester
- East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
- HMP Leicester
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Combatting Drugs Partnership
- Voluntary Action Leics
- Public Health
- Turning Point





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