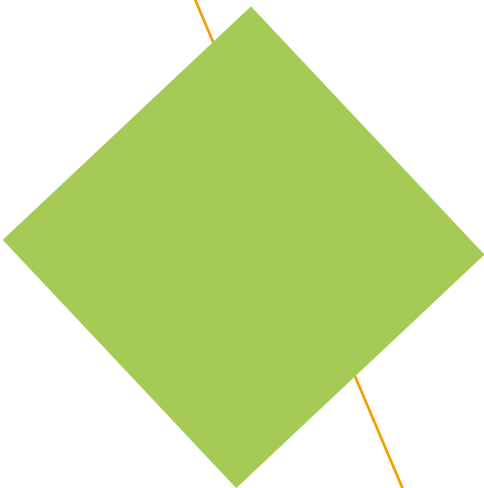
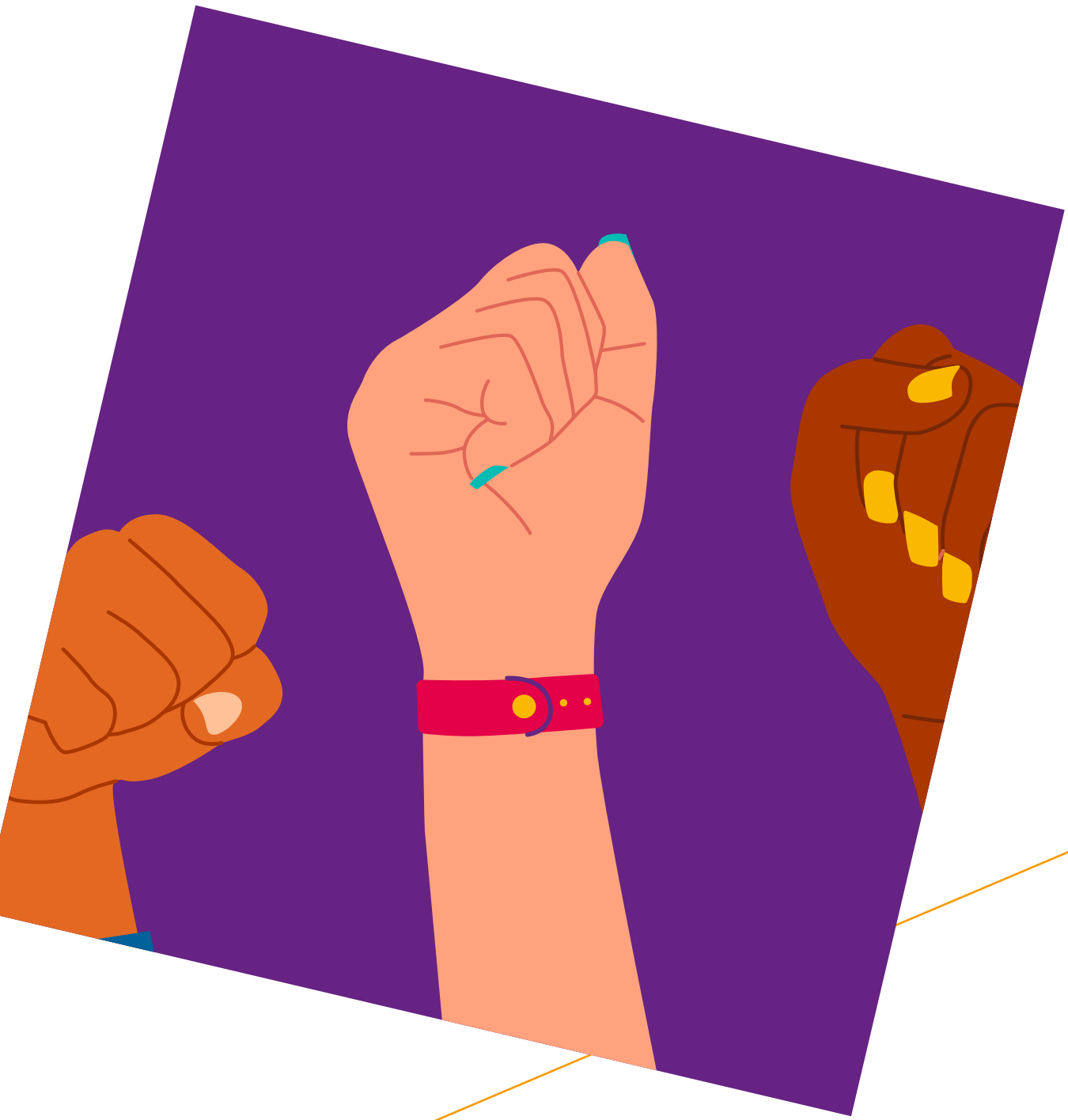


MERTON'S ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Strategy 2022 – 2025





CONTENTS

Foreword	4
The Way Forward: A Call to Action	5
Introduction	6
Definition of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	7
Strategic Context	12
Prevalence of violence against women and girls in Merton	13
What did survivors with lived experience tell us?	14
What is our approach to ending VAWG?	15
Partnership Objective 1: Raise awareness and coordinated partnership working	16
Partnership Objective 2: Prevent VAWG through early intervention	17
Partnership Objective 3: Support victims, survivors and their children	18
Partnership Objective 4: Hold perpetrators to account	19
Partnership Objective 5: Improve the safety of women and girls	20
Governance	21
Appendix 1: List of specialist VAWG services in Merton	22
Appendix 2: List of abbreviations	23

FOREWORD

Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls remains a high priority for Merton's Safer Merton Partnership.

As more victims and survivors come forward to report domestic abuse and VAWG, we need to ensure that they get the support they need. We also want our services to reduce the impact on children and families who experience incidents.

This strategy sets out our partnership commitment to work together to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) including domestic abuse (DA) in Merton.

We want to see an increase in reporting as a result of raised community awareness and victim confidence, but this must go hand in hand with an increase in prosecution and convictions for what can still be hidden crimes.

We want to see early intervention and prevention, working with men and boys to tackle sexist and misogynistic attitudes, and building resilience in families.

We have committed to reviewing and developing our services so that fewer victims reach crisis point and that every victim is able to access co-ordinated support at the right time.

We will achieve these outcomes by raising awareness, providing early intervention, supporting victims and their families, and bringing perpetrators to justice.



Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

THE WAY FORWARD: A CALL TO ACTION

This strategy sets out our vision for ending violence against women and girls. This is an ambitious vision which will be realised through a robust action plan.

We are working closely with residents, survivors, and multi-agency partners to develop this in order to address our five strategic objectives:

Partnership Objective 1:

Raise awareness and coordinated partnership working

Partnership Objective 2:

Prevent VAWG through early intervention

Partnership Objective 3:

Support victims, survivors, and their children

Partnership Objective 4:

Hold perpetrators to account

Partnership Objective 5:

Improve the safety of women and girls



An action plan will be published later in the year setting out the steps to be taken. Initial conversations suggest that these actions will include:

- work with schools in a preventative capacity,
- projects helping to make our streets safe,
- focused work with survivors from minoritised backgrounds and those who experience multiple disadvantage,
- focused work on how to meaningfully engage with a diverse range of survivors including children and young people,
- work in changing abuser behaviour,
- a focus on improving systems, processes and referral pathways.

The emphasis of the action plan will be on our coordinated community response and the role we can all play in ending VAWG. The action plan will also build on best practice work that we have been delivering across the borough.

Conclusion

Together we can end violence against women and girls. We believe that partnership working in a coordinated community response can help us achieve this.

This strategy sets out the role we can all play in responding to and ending VAWG.

We welcome professionals, residents, and survivors to join us in achieving our objectives.

Together, we can work to make our borough safer for everyone who is living, studying, working, visiting, and travelling in Merton.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a fundamental human rights violation, which harms the lives of millions.

It is recognised as a worldwide issue of epidemic proportions. Nationally we know that on average two women are killed every week by a current or former partner and one in five women have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16. But VAWG is also something that is happening here in Merton, estimated to be affecting around one in 20 women and girls at some point in their lifetime.

In many instances VAWG remains hidden and under-reported, but it is not inevitable and collectively we can end it. This strategy sets out the role we can all play in ending VAWG as part our coordinated community response

Preventing violence against women and girls is everybody's business. We want to ensure that everyone can identify victims and can intervene early to prevent situations from escalating to crisis point. We also want to ensure that we understand the needs of victims and their families.

This strategy builds on the nationally recognised best practice work that has been happening across our borough.

Survivor is a nationally recognised term to describe someone who has been a victim of abuse but who has continued to live, it is a positive term of empowerment and therefore used throughout the strategy.

This strategy will be accompanied by a robust action plan which will outline the steps we will take as a partnership to achieve our objectives. Our approach will use this strong foundation to continue our priority to end VAWG.

Our strategy recognises many strategies including:

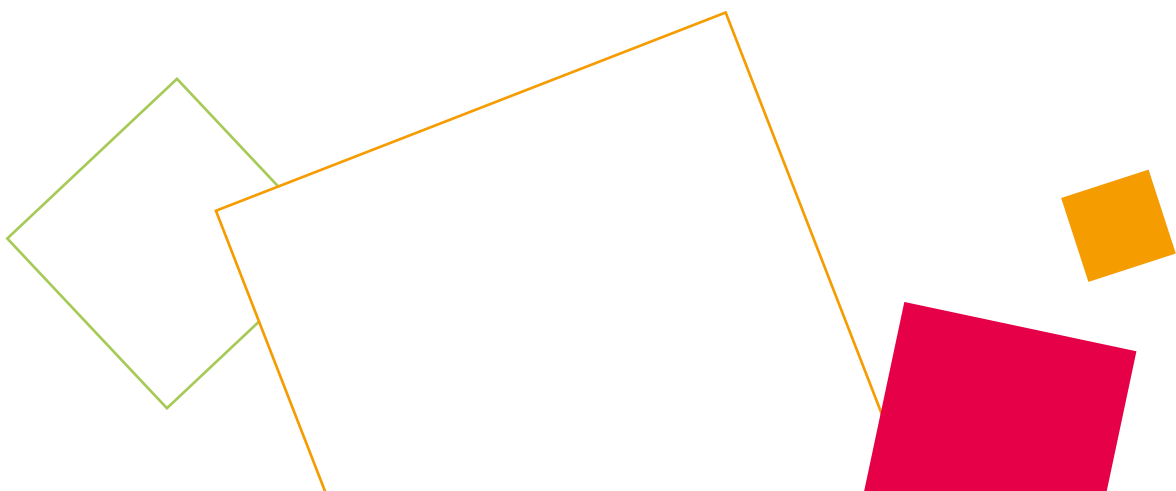
- The Government's 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021,
- Home Office's 'Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations' (NSE) published in December 2016, which outlines the expected standards for local areas when commissioning services.
- Mayor of London – VAWG Strategy 2022
- CLCH
- Probation
- Met Police, Action plan on tackling VAWG
- Mental Health

We have developed five shared partnership objectives that we will all work towards.

Our approach is framed within a VAWG strategy because we know that these crimes are disproportionately gendered. However, we intend to benefit all victims of these crimes.

Men and boys can also be victims of violence and abuse and so supporting men's services will not be excluded from consideration in this strategy. Our strategy puts the victim at the centre of service delivery, has a clear focus on perpetrators, keeping victims safe, and acknowledges the need to raise local awareness of the issues.

In developing this strategy we have consulted with users, elected members and our local partners. Our strategy also acknowledges the gendered nature of VAWG.



DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is the umbrella term used to describe a range of violent and abusive acts and behaviours, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, directed against women and girls. This term is used to describe abuse against all genders but highlights the disproportionate impact on women and girls.

Locally and nationally, we have adopted the United Nations definition of VAWG, which defines VAWG as:

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

There are multiple forms of VAWG, whether physical, sexual, psychological, or economic. This can include violence in public places, such as sexual harassment, or within the private sphere such as intimate partner violence, which can often lead to homicide. Two women are killed every week by a partner or ex-partner in the UK. Some forms of violence are technology based, such as internet stalking, or driven by economic factors such as international trafficking of women and girls. Others are the result of harmful practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, and virginity testing. These abuses can differ in how they are experienced, but all are the result of the misuse of power and control.

Type of Abuse	What does this mean?
Domestic abuse (including coercive control)	This is when a partner or family member has power and control over their victims and uses abuse to maintain it. Abuse can be physical, emotional, economic, psychological and/or sexual.
Rape and sexual violence	Rape is sex without consent. This means that rape isn't just people being physically forced into a sexual act, it also includes pressure that makes someone feel like they have no choice but to have sex or perform/ receive a sexual act.
Female genital mutilation	This is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non medical reasons.
Early and Forced marriage	This is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so.
So called “honour” based violence	This is abuse and violence which is carried out in order to protect or defend perceived “honour” of the family and/or community. We are clear that there is no honour in honour-based violence.
Faith-based abuse	This is when someone uses religion or faith to justify the abuse of another person, usually a child or vulnerable adult. It could be caused by the perpetrator's belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual, or satanic abuse. It is not caused by religion or faith.
Sexual harassment	This is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which violates someone's dignity, makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or creates a hostile or offensive environment.
Stalking	This is a pattern of persistent and unwanted attention that makes someone feel pestered, scared, anxious, or harassed.
Modern Slavery	This is an umbrella term for human trafficking and servitude. It is used when somebody is forced or controlled to do something, and another person gains from this.
Prostitution and Sexual exploitation	This is where someone is being coerced or forced into selling sex or performing sexual acts. Victim/survivors may also be trafficked into prostitution. Children, young people, and vulnerable adults may also be sexually exploited and coerced into receiving or performing sexual acts. Abuse of children and adults can include sharing pornographic images and the use of technology.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 definition:

Domestic abuse is behaviour between those aged over 16 years who are personally connected to each other, that is they are or have been intimate partners or family members, even after separation. Regardless of age, gender identity or reassignment, religion, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, marital status or background.

Behaviour is considered abusive when it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour, even after separation
- Economic abuse – means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

Includes so called 'honour-based' violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/ or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts to assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

A child who sees, or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also regarded as a victim of domestic abuse in their own right.

As per Domestic Abuse Act 2021

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>



What causes VAWG?

Many different reasons are given as to why VAWG happens. This includes blaming substances, mental ill health, anger issues, growing up in an abusive household, cultural practices, and stress. These issues might have an effect, but none of these issues CAUSE violence or abuse. Instead, evidence has shown that gender inequality is a key driver of VAWG.

The Council of Europe give three factors which lie at the root of the problem:

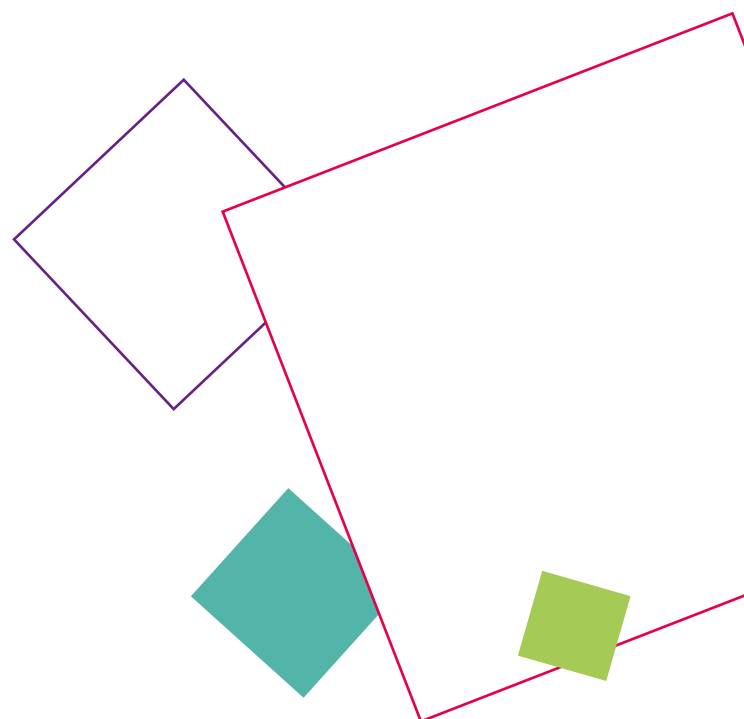
Cultural Factors	Legal Factors	Political Factors
Sexist views and the idea that men can have more power over women and children, results in abuse being used to maintain this power. Gender stereotypes reinforce this inequality and creates an acceptance of violence and abuse.	Although abuse is illegal, sadly we see many victims blamed for the abuse and low sentences for abusers. This results in low reporting and abuse being allowed to continue.	The under-representation of women and minority groups in power and politics means they have fewer opportunities to shape the discussion and to affect changes in policy, or to adopt measures to end VAWG
For example: Sexist attitudes like believing men must be tough, strong, and always in control can result in them exerting control over a partner or family member. These attitudes are harmful to all genders.	For example: Rape convictions remain low and have got worse in recent years, with only 1.6% nationally leading to conviction in 2020. Survivors have told us that this sends a terrible message that rapists can 'get away with it' and allows abuse to continue.	For example: Rape in marriage only became a criminal offence in 1991 and coercive control only became an offence in 2015. Both happened because of lobbying by women's groups

General Recommendation 19, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: UN, 1992.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/what-causes-gender-based-violence>

We also know that experiences of racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism can make people more vulnerable to abuse and they may face additional barriers in accessing support.

We know that disabled people including those with mental ill health, are twice as likely to experience abuse and 80% of trans people have experienced emotional, sexual, or physical abuse from a partner or ex-partner. The Oxford dictionary defines Intersectionality as "the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage". It can also give some people advantage and opportunities that others don't have access to. Our strategy recognises the need for an intersectional approach which understands the barriers people face and how these connect with each other and with their experiences of abuse.



What are some of the common myths about VAWG?

Myth: To stay safe, women should not go out late at night

Women should not have to restrict their lives to be safe. We need to tell abusers to stop the abuse, not tell women to restrict their freedoms. Telling women this is victim blaming.

It is important to note that staying at home doesn't necessarily mean women will be safe either.

Statistically, women are more likely to be harmed in the home than on the street. Telling women to change behaviour does not address the root cause of abuse and will not result in change.

Myth: Abusers can still be good Parents

Children are recognised as victim/survivors in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 because where children are exposed to domestic abuse this is a form of psychological abuse. They do not have to witness the abuse to be affected by VAWG.

However, many children do see and hear abuse taking place within the home and children may also be physically harmed by the abuser particularly if they are trying to defend the non-abusive parent.

"An estimated 90% of children whose mothers are abused witness the abuse. The effects are traumatic and long-lasting. When a child witnesses domestic abuse this is child abuse. Between 40% and 70% of these children are also direct victims of abuse".
(Women's Aid)

Where there are children the onus should not be put on the mother to protect her children, abusers must be held to account for their behaviour and challenged on their parenting responsibilities.

Myth: Violence against women and girls only affects certain groups of women

Research has repeatedly shown violence can affect women from all social, economic, cultural, and family backgrounds.

There is no evidence to suggest that violence is more prevalent in some communities than others.

Instead, barriers to accessing support can increase vulnerability. Experiencing racism, ableism, or homophobia can influence someone reaching for support. This is why an intersectional approach is important

Myth: Women involved in prostitution cannot be raped or sexually assaulted

Sexual violence is any sexual act that a person did not consent to or is forced into against their will. Women involved in prostitution do experience rape and sexual assault.

Women involved in prostitution face discrimination and are often blamed for the abuse.

This is not acceptable, and we believe everyone should be supported to access support.

Myth: Forced marriage only happens in South Asian communities

Forced marriage affects a wide range of communities from different cultural backgrounds.

It affects men and women all over the world, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

Labelling it as a problem for 'certain' communities creates harmful stereotypes and can create barriers for people accessing support.

Myth: Abuse is the result of an anger problem, use of substances or mental ill-health

There is no research to support this. Abuse and violence are about power and control. Abusers often choose when they abuse, often where there are no witnesses. We know that substances or mental ill health do not cause abuse. Many people who use substances or have a mental health condition do not abuse.

However, substance use or mental ill health can make existing abuse worse. It's important to offer abusers wider support, but there should be no excuse for abuse.

Myth: VAWG is mainly about physical violence

VAWG extends beyond just physical violence.

Instead, VAWG is about the different ways that victims are controlled, intimidated, humiliated, or threatened.

VAWG is about being denied human rights, to achieve this, abusers may use physical violence, but they also use methods such as psychological, emotional, and economic abuse. They may also use reproductive abuse whereby abusers prevent the survivor from making their own choices about pregnancy and having children. These types of abuse can be just as harmful as physical abuse.

Abusers may use children to abuse the non-abusive parent making a partner or ex-partner feel guilty about their children, using the children to relay messages, using children to monitor and report on the survivor's movements, using contact arrangements to harass their partner, or threatening to take children away.

Myth: Leaving an abusive relationship means the abuse will end

There can be many barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, and access to support and resources plays a role. Survivors should not be blamed if they do not leave, this is victim blaming.

We also know that risk escalates when survivors leave so survivors must be supported to leave safely if they choose to.

Even after leaving, survivors can still be at risk.

Survivors recall abusers continuing to stalk them and even using institutions, such as the family courts, to continue abuse. Support for survivors must therefore always be long-term.

Myth: Sexual violence is more likely to be committed by a stranger

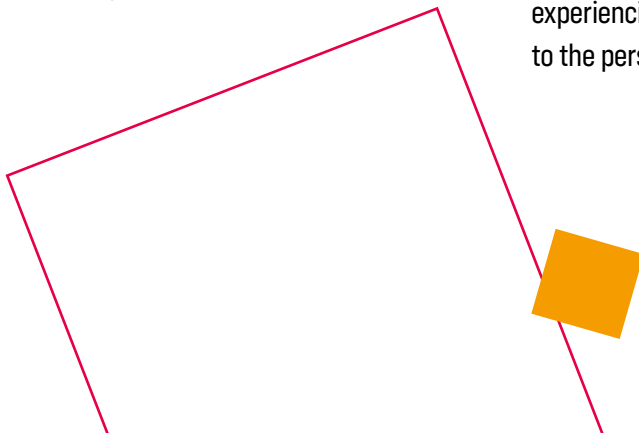
At least two thirds of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor.

According to some studies only 2% of abusers are complete strangers. 97% of women who contacted Rape Crisis said they knew the person who raped them.

Myth: If a young person accepts drink, drugs, or money for sex its their choice to do so

This is a form of exploitation and usually the people supplying alcohol, money and gifts have the power in this relationship and will use this to their advantage.

Often the victims may not recognise what they are experiencing as abuse and may have misplaced loyalty to the person abusing them.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

National Strategic Context

Addressing VAWG is recognised as a priority area regionally, nationally and internationally. The UN Declaration (above) was adopted by the General Assembly in 1993. This was followed by a resolution of intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women in 2009.

In 2022, the Mayor of London published **Tackling Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Strategy for London** – a London-wide plan aimed at ending all forms of violence against women in London.

In 2021, the Government published its **Tackling Violence against women and girls – The safety of women and girls across the country is our priority** – outlining a commitment to make tackling VAWG everyone’s business and outlining plans for increased support for service commissioners to assist women who have experienced violence.

[Tackling violence against women and girls strategy \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Mayor’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018-2021 | London City Hall](#) – due to be refreshed in May 2022

Supporting male victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-male-victims>



In 2021 the Met launched their **VAWG Action Plan**.

“Tackling violence remains our top operational priority, including crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as domestic abuse and sexual violence. Male violence against women and girls has a profound and long-lasting impact on those directly affected, shattering the lives of victims, their families and those closest to them. Such violence also affects local communities and impacts on the public’s confidence in the safety of their area, and in the effectiveness of their police service.

Make no mistake, we in the Met will work relentlessly both to tackle violence perpetrated by men against women and girls, and to rebuild trust in the highest professional standards that we expect in policing.”

Metropolitan Police commissioner

<https://www.met.police.uk/>

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MERTON

It is widely acknowledged that all strands of VAWG are underreported, and that many victims/survivors do not come to the attention of services.

Over the next three years, a key priority for the partnership will be to increase this reporting.

Domestic Abuse

- Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) flagged offences account for 13.6% of all recorded crime in Merton. This equates to 8.5 offences/1000 population.
- 80% of DVA flagged offences are classed as Violence Against the Person offences (VAP) which are sub classified as those in which a physical injury occurs and those that don't including stalking and harassment.
- The proportion of Merton DV offences which result in any physical injury (classified as Violence with injury VWI) fell by 6% to 22.5%. The MPS average was down marginally at 24%.
- Around 4% of all DV flagged offences result in a physical injury described as moderate or serious. This is unchanged from the last report.
- The Detection Rate in Merton for DV offences was up 0.2% to 14.6% in 2021.
- Police offences from July 2021 – 2022 – 1,827 (MOPAC dashboard).

Between April 2020 and December 2021

- Merton's IDVA service received 1169 referrals.
- 55 referrals for our Merton refuge service.
- 1044 cases referred to DV Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- One Stop Shop cases were supported virtually by our IDVA service as it was closed face to face March 2020 – November 2021 due to the pandemic.

Forced Marriages

We have reported cases within Merton, even though the numbers are low we will continue to support our victims and survivors of forced marriage.

Victims Of Honour Based Violence (HBV or so called honour based violence)

We have reported cases within Merton, even though the numbers are low we will continue to support our victims and survivors of honour based violence.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

We have reported cases within Merton even, though the numbers are low we will continue to support our victims and survivors of Female Genital Mutilation.

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/female-genital-mutilation>

Sexual Violence

Merton has the third lowest number of sexual offences of the 32 London boroughs in FY2021-22.

The overall proportion of sexual offences increased by 1% from the last report accounting for 3% of all reported crime in Merton.

84% of victims of sexual offences in Merton were female.

Other data sources

The lasting impact of violence against women and girls - Office for National Statistics:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/thelastingimpactofviolenceagainstwomenandgirls/2021-11-24>

Violence against women and girls: Data landscape - Office for National Statistics:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/violenceagainstwomenandgirlsdatalandscape>

MOPAC Dashboard:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/domestic-and-sexual-violence-dashboard>

WHAT DID SURVIVORS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE TELL US?

Survivor is a nationally recognised term to describe someone who has been a victim of abuse but who has continued to live, it is a positive term of empowerment and therefore used throughout the strategy.

- Survivors told us that professionals need to be curious about abuse.
- Survivors should not be stereotyped as there is no 'type' of survivor.
- There needs to be long-term support, not just a response to crisis.
- Support should be made available sooner, not when survivors reach crisis.
- Services need to work together better so that survivors don't have to keep telling their story.
- Schools and education settings need to be part of the coordinated community response to VAWG.

We need to make sure professionals, friends and family can identify abuse and understand how to ask and respond.

Abby's words:

I'd been controlled half my life. I'd been in the relationship with him since I was 13 or 14 years old.

When I was at hospital, when I gave birth, I couldn't tell anyone working there I was being abused. I had all his family there. Even when the midwives took me to a room to ask if I was okay, I would say "No, I'm fine".

The neighbours knew what had been going on, but I'd begged them not to tell anyone. I was scared of social services taking my kids away, and this had stopped me from coming forward sooner.

He manipulated me so much.

Penny's Words:

There was no physical abuse from my ex-husband – it was emotional and fiscal abuse. He would constantly say things like I'm over weight, I'm not a good role model for the children, I'm rubbish, etc. It eroded my self-esteem.

Even though he never hit physically hit me, I always felt in danger.

His body language and tone was so threatening.

He was always gas-lighting, telling me I'm crazy, that it's all in my head.



WHAT IS OUR APPROACH TO ENDING VAWG?

The Coordinated Community Response:

We recognise that real change in responding to and ending VAWG can only be achieved when all agencies, residents, and communities work effectively together.

On a survivor's journey, they are likely to encounter a number of services, organisations, and individuals. Each will hold vital information and can help build a picture of what support is needed so survivors do not have to navigate services to get

the help they need. Ensuring everyone knows the role they play in responding to VAWG and how they work with each other is a process known as the Coordinated Community Response (CCR).

Our CCR approach ensures a whole system response to a whole person. The following diagram shows some of the different agencies and groups who may need to be involved in the response.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 1: RAISE AWARENESS AND COORDINATED PARTNERSHIP WORKING

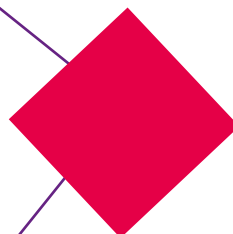
Ambition: Fostering and integrated and coordinated approach to tackling domestic abuse and VAWG (Coordinated partnership working)

We will create a culture change to address the issues that cause VAWG and develop services that meet the intersecting needs of survivors and their families.

An effective partnership will have robust ways of working to ensure it is meeting its objectives, has a shared understanding of what best practice looks like, has respect between agencies and is informed by the voice of survivors.

We will:

- Have shared objectives, vision, joint responsibility, and equality between partners.
- Have clear structures and governance in place, with two way information flow, accountability and space for both strategic and operational input.
- Have a partnership strategy and action plan setting out who is doing what and when, and ensuring that outputs and outcomes are measurable.
- Have partnership and agency-specific policies, protocols and processes to ensure effective project delivery.
- Use data to measure and define success.
- Ensure the partnership has good representation from all agencies – including the voluntary sector.
- There is clear co-ordination across the partnership – supported by the Community Safety Team.
- There is continuous training and a commitment to effective change, awareness raising and skill development across the partnership workforce.
- Have specialist services to respond to VAWG.
- Our approach considers and meets the needs of Merton's diverse community.
- Victims and survivors will be consulted on all areas of the strategy and service provision.
- Work closely with housing departments and organisations to ensure that victim and survivors are safe.
- We will work towards achieving White Ribbon status.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 2: PREVENT VAWG THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

Ambition: Preventing domestic abuse, VAWG and intervening early when people have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse or VAWG (Prevent VAWG & Early Intervention)

Prevention of VAWG must always be our first priority. In order to prevent VAWG we must address the root causes of the problem. As VAWG is the result of gender inequality and discrimination, we will work collaboratively with agencies and communities in tackling the harmful behaviours and attitudes that underpin abuse. This approach must include challenging sexist and misogynistic attitudes.

Once patterns of violence are entrenched the harder it is to break the cycle of abuse, support victims to recovery and independence, and deter perpetrators. We recognise that abuse can happen at any stage of a person's life, this strategy will take a life course approach to ensure all victims – and their families – have access to the right support at the right time to help them live free from domestic violence and abuse.

We will:

- We will make prevention and early intervention a core foundation of our approach to tackling VAWG.
- We will work with partners to identify domestic abuse and VAWG early.
- We will train professionals, so they understand the dynamics of VAWG.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 3: SUPPORT VICTIMS, SURVIVORS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Ambition: Providing accessible, evidence based, holistic support to people who have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse and VAWG (Supporting victims & survivors and their children, improve outcomes)

We understand that survivors not only need specialist support for the abuse they have experienced, but may also need support with housing, mental health, substance use, child care, immigration, and other support. We are determined to create a joined-up approach with services working together, so that survivors are provided the right support at the right time.

There will be a continued focus on improving outcomes for victims and their children – to ensure they can access the right support at the right time by the right service. We will ensure that the victim is at the centre of service delivery and will ensure that services are flexible and responsive to the victim's experience and voice.

We will:

- Provide an IDVA service for Victim and Survivors of domestic Abuse.
- We will provide a refuge for women fleeing to our borough.
- We will work with partners to ensure victim/ survivors and their children are safe.
- We will have a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to ensure high risk cases are known and discussed with our partners.
- We will have a One Stop Shop so victims and survivors can access support.
- We will offer victims and survivors local and national support services to support them.
- We will ensure that victims and survivors of VAWG have access to services.
- We will work in partnership with Children's services to ensure that victim/ survivor and children's safety is not just the responsibility of the victim/ survivor and the perpetrator is part of the safety planning ensuring the victim and children are safe.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 4: HOLD PERPETRATORS TO ACCOUNT

Ambition: Implementing effective systems and interventions for working with perpetrators or those at risk of becoming perpetrators (hold perpetrators to account)

Ending VAWG can only happen if perpetrators stop their abuse.

Where abuse does happen, perpetrators must be brought to justice. We will continue to ensure that effective sanctions are taken against perpetrators, and that they are prevented from influencing children and other vulnerable people from becoming perpetrators in turn.

We will:

- Increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice for violence against women and girls.
- Improve processes and victim care across the criminal justice system to reduce the number of cases failing.
- Reduce repeat victimisation of women and girls.
- Increase women's confidence in the police so as to improve the reporting of crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls within London.
- See an increase in reporting to police, but a decrease in women being abused, i.e. the proportion of women experiencing these crimes in each year (measured through reporting in the Crime Survey in England and Wales); and
- Work in partnership, and with the wider Met, in the management of serial and dangerous perpetrators.
- Partnership working through MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Agency) will control and monitor perpetrators to reduce repeat victimisation.
- Use GPS tagging to control and monitor our highest risk Domestic Abuse offenders.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORT VICTIMS, SURVIVORS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Ambition: For women and girls to feel safer and be safer within the borough

Working with partners, we aim to reassure women and girls in public spaces and protect them from victimisation. We will increase our understanding of key locations where women feel unsafe and work with partners to design-in safety, as well as increase police visibility and enforcement in these hotspots.

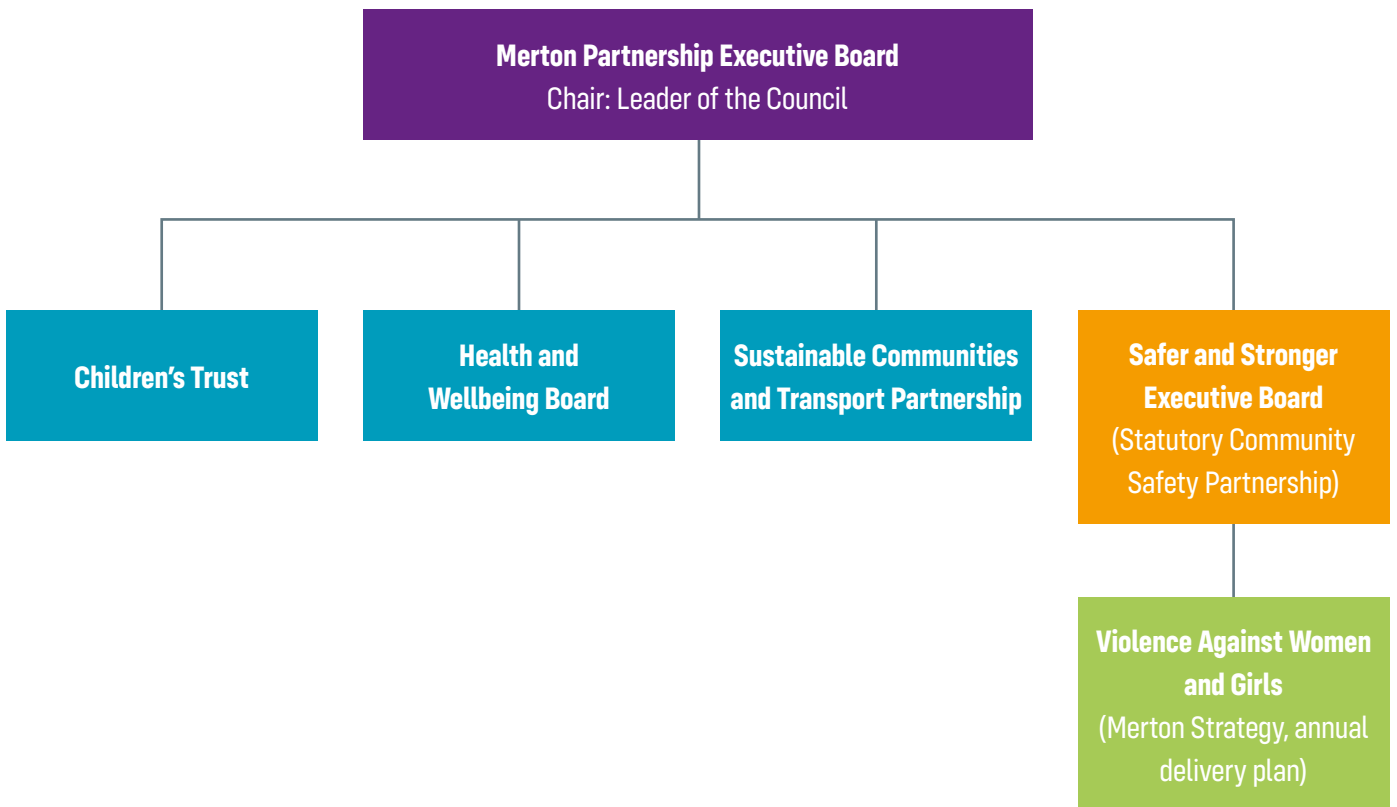
We will:

- We will review and look at improve our public spaces in the borough.
- We will work with licenced premises to ensure they are keeping women safe.
- We will provide a communication plan.
- We will expand the Ask for Angela campaign, working with Safer Sounds and bars, clubs and other night time-economy venues. This will build on the comprehensive Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) training to frontline officers that took place in venues across London in the summer.
- We will promote the Mayor's Women's Night Safety Charter and encourage businesses to sign up.
- Have a violence against women and girls problem profile within the Police to drive problem solving.
- Include violence against women and girls sector organisations in their key partnerships, known as a key individual network.
- Work in partnership to tackle identified violence against women and girls concerns.
- Work in partnership, and with the wider Met, in the management of serial and dangerous perpetrators.



GOVERNANCE

This strategy will be overseen by Merton's VAWG Strategic Board – a sub group of Merton's Safer and Stronger Executive board (the statutory board overseeing delivery of Merton's Community Safety Partnership, which includes a priority on responding to and preventing violence against women and girls)



APPENDIX 1: LIST OF SERVICES WITHIN MERTON



Victim Support
who provides the Merton Independent Domestic Violence Advocate service and manages the One Stop Shop



Hestia
who provide Merton's refuge accommodation for women



The Salvation Army
who provides The Link Café for victims



Refuge
who provide Merton's Complex Needs Independent Domestic Violence Advocate service



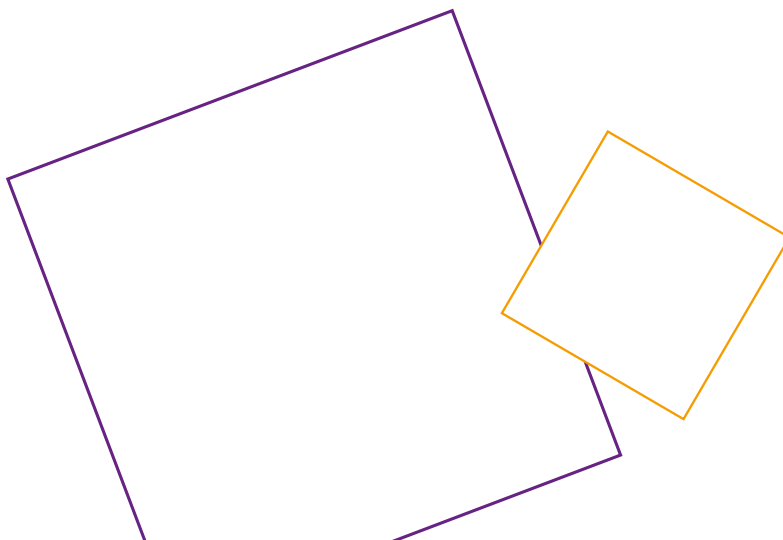
Solace
who provide a pan London service for victims and survivors of domestic abuse



Women in Prison
who provide a Pan London service and work in Merton supporting Women who have been in prison or at risk of going to prison

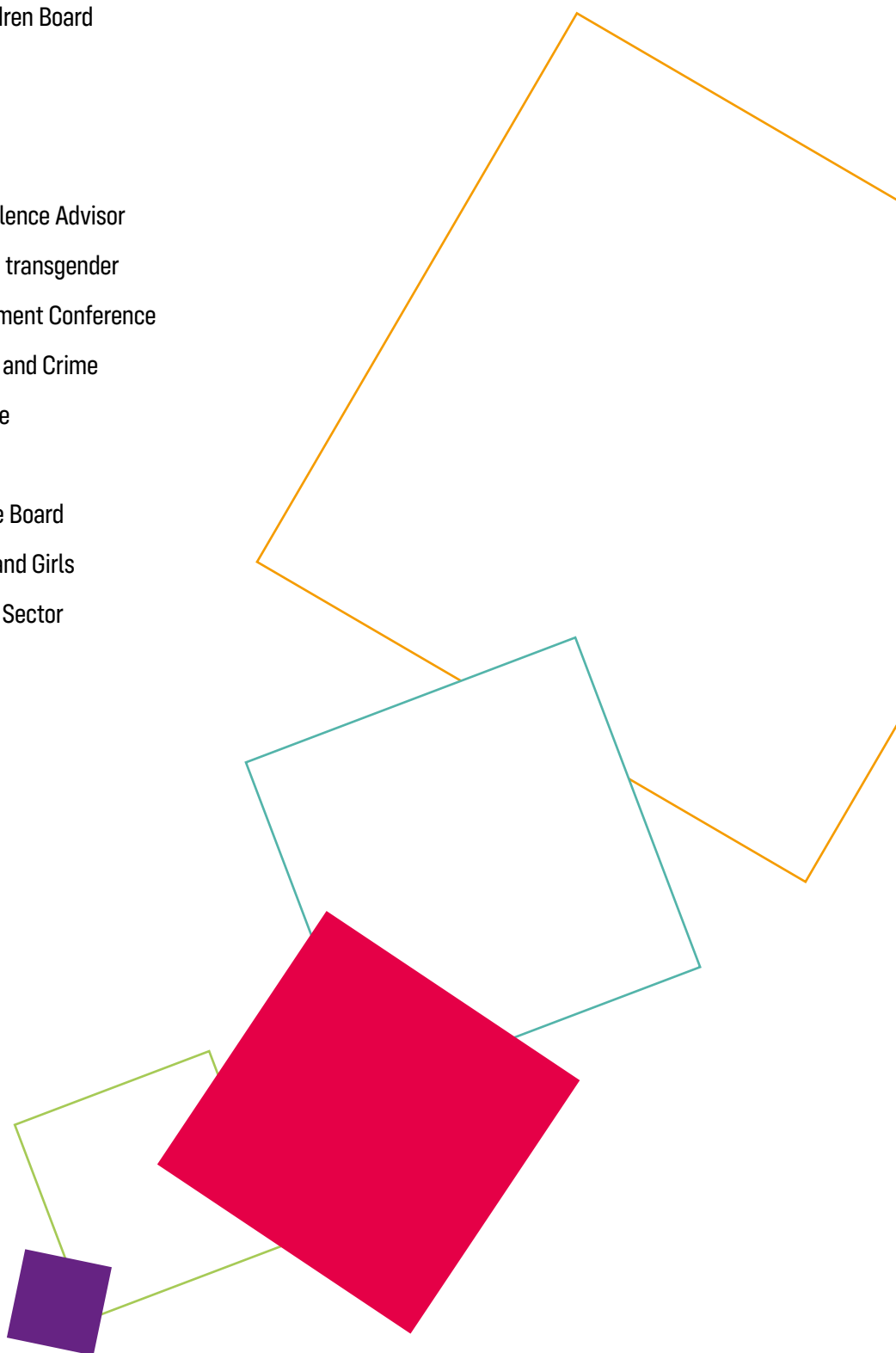


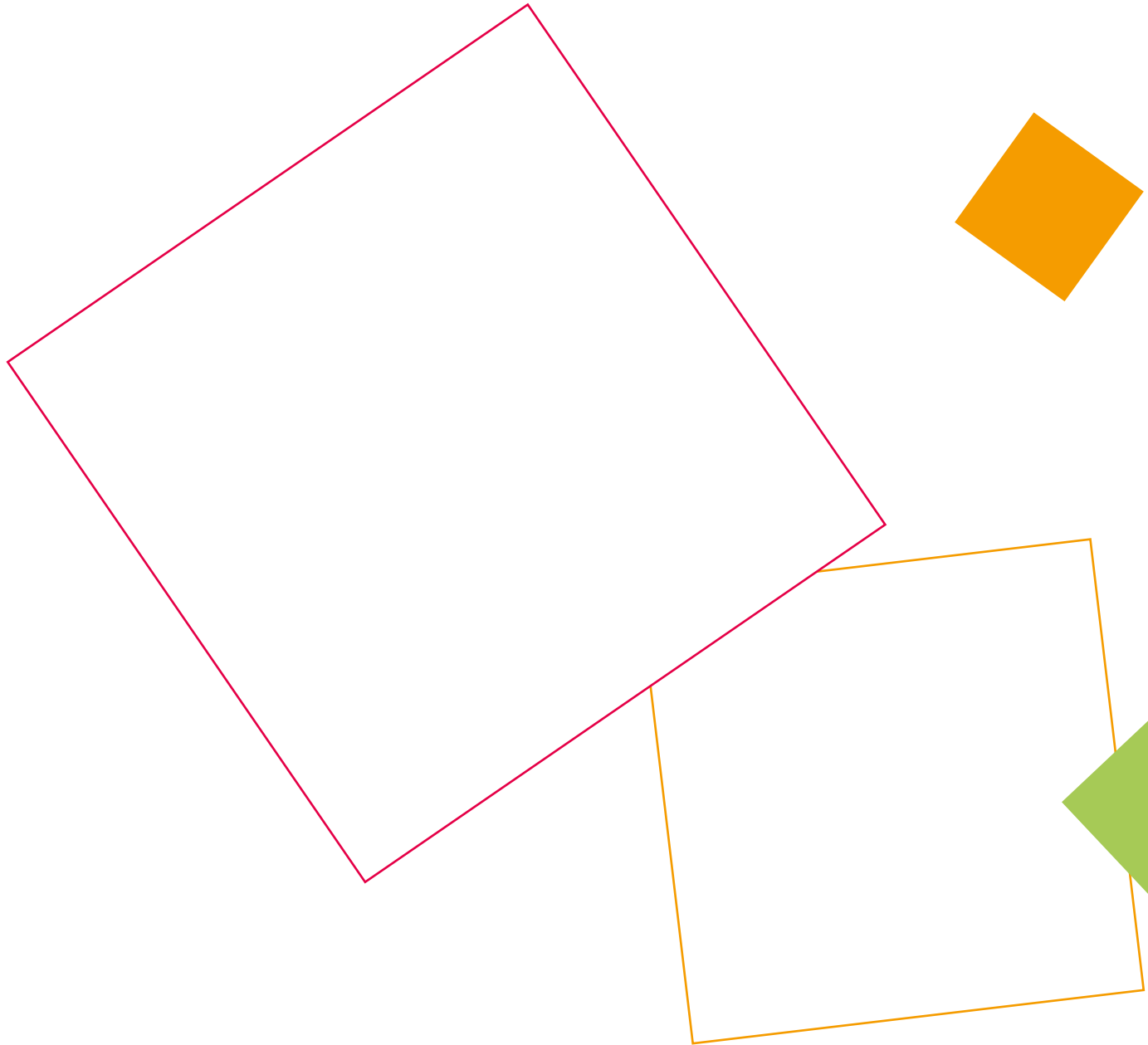
Inner Strength Network
supporting women and girls and their families to overcome difficult moments in their lives.



APPENDIX 2: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
SWLMHT	South West London Mental Health Trust
MSAB	Merton Safeguarding Adults Board
MSCB	Merton Safeguarding Children Board
ICB	Integrated Care Board
CJS	Criminal Justice System
DA	Domestic Abuse
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NHS	National Health Service
SSEB	Safer & Stronger Executive Board
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector





MERTON'S ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Strategy 2022 – 2025

This strategy produced by Safer Merton, Merton's Community Safety team in partnership with the Violence Against Women and Girls strategic board and partners.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/safer-merton>

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/domestic-violence>

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/vawg>