

Woman's Trust responds to the launch of the Government's new VAWG strategy

Woman's Trust welcomes the launch of the Government's new Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy today, which sets out to halve VAWG by 2034.

Niki Scordi, Chair of Woman's Trust, a mental health charity supporting women and children's recovery from domestic abuse, said:

"We are pleased that, for the first time, the Government's Strategy acknowledges the importance of prevention through educating men, improving criminal justice outcomes and holding perpetrators to account, and supporting victims and survivors in the community.

"Unfortunately, the Government's plans lack both ambition and adequate investment, offering only limited measures to address the most common form of violence affecting women and girls - domestic abuse - which also impacts men and boys. Domestic abuse represents more than half of all VAWG in the UK, with over 2 million victims each year. Beyond specific domestic abuse incidents, the majority of sexual violence, stalking and harmful practices are committed by intimate partners or family, as part of domestic abuse. After 50 years of campaigning to end domestic abuse, and 30 years of Woman's Trust advocating for mental health support for all survivors, the Government must now go much further, with bold action and substantial investment.

"We are encouraged by the Government's commitment that this marks only a first step, with further action to follow - a point emphasised by Home Office Minister Jess Phillips MP.

"We welcome the recognition of health as a vital pathway for identifying and supporting domestic abuse victims, including investment in GP training to improve referrals for domestic abuse survivors. Yet the Strategy remains focused on physical health impacts and crisis support, rather than addressing the recovery and top priority need for survivors: their mental health. Four out of five victims identify counselling and mental health support as their top priority (DAC, 2023), while one in two women experience mental health needs due to domestic abuse (Woman's Trust, 2025). With domestic abuse-related suicides now outpacing homicides, we cannot again fail to respond to survivors' mental health.

"Following our campaign to make mental health a priority, together with over 100 women's charities nationwide, we are encouraged by the renewed focus to make VAWG a priority in the NHS, and the appointment of Jess Asato MP as VAWG adviser for the Department of Health and Social Care. She has a unique opportunity to ensure women's trauma and poor mental health due to domestic abuse is identified and supported early, including through new neighbourhood health centres, specialist mental health training for professionals, and specialist counselling for survivors. Woman's Trust alone has a waiting list of over 800 women, a pattern reflected

nationwide. We call on the Government to invest £27 million per year to enable an additional 25,000 survivors to access life-saving counselling and mental health support in the community that they desperately need.

“We also welcome the focus on criminal justice, including investment in specialist police units for sexual violence offences. This urgently needs extending to domestic abuse, where victims are failed, with justice secured in fewer than 5 % of reported cases. Action is needed.

“To improve charging and conviction rates and give survivors the justice they deserve, women must have access to counselling and mental health support throughout the process. Currently, this is only available to victims of sexual violence and rape, and denied to domestic abuse survivors. Instead, domestic abuse survivors are re-traumatised and often blamed for not proceeding with prosecutions. The Government must fund counselling and mental health support for all VAWG victims, including domestic abuse, as a priority. The Whole Justice Approach — including specialist Criminal Justice Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts, and specialist counselling - should be implemented and funded nationally, as part of The Ministry of Justice's commitment to put victims at the centre of all responses.

"Finally, prevention through increased focus on educating boys and healthy relationships is a positive step to challenge misogyny and changing societal norms. With one in 5 children affected by domestic abuse and young women and girls' mental health worsening at alarming rates, this needs to be done in conjunction with providing mental health support and counselling, extending our specialist counselling service for girls and children nationally."

Woman's Trust Ambassador, Suzie Kennedy, is a survivor of domestic abuse, a psychotherapist and mental health advocate. She said:

“From my own experience, access to mental health support is the reason I am still here.

“Domestic abuse does not end when the relationship ends. It leaves lasting psychological scars on identity, safety, trust, and self-worth. These legacy harms cannot be resolved through crisis intervention alone.

“Recovery requires sustained, accessible counselling and trauma-informed mental health support. If we are serious about ending the long-term impact of abuse on women, this cannot be achieved without properly funded, free or affordable counselling.

“Prevention, justice, and recovery are inseparable, and counselling is central to all three.”