

Sandwell Violence against Women and Girls (VaWG)

Strategy

2026 - 2030

DRAFT



Foreword

TO BE ADDED

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Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a persistent and far-reaching issue in Sandwell, with serious impacts on individuals, families, and communities. It includes domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and harassment, harmful practices, and online abuse — affecting women and girls of all ages, backgrounds, and circumstances.

This strategy sets out Sandwell’s **whole-system partnership response**, rooted in prevention, protection, recovery, and accountability. It aligns with national policy — including the Tackling VAWG Strategy, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the End-to-End Rape Review, and the Online Safety Act — as well as the [West Midlands VAWG Strategy \(2024\)](#), which commits to halving violence against women and girls within a decade. It also responds to the 2023 Strategic Policing Requirement, which recognises VAWG as a national threat alongside terrorism and serious organised crime.

Shaped by survivor voice, professional insight, and local evidence, Sandwell’s strategy challenges the harmful norms, behaviours, and systems that allow abuse to persist. It strengthens safeguarding and justice pathways, widens access to support, and commits to embedding **trauma-informed practice** across all services.

This strategy sets out how partners in Sandwell will prevent and tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) from 2025–2028. It builds on existing work—especially the Domestic Abuse Strategy—and responds to the Sexual Assault and Abuse Needs Assessment, local data, and what survivors tell us.

Over the next three years, partners will focus on five strategic priorities:

- **Tackle domestic abuse at every level** – from prevention and early help to robust enforcement and long-term recovery.
- **Respond to sexual assault and abuse** – improving access to trauma-informed support, justice, and recovery pathways.
- **Address stalking and harassment** – ensuring early identification, stronger protection, and consistent accountability for perpetrators.
- **Improve Women’s and girls Safety** – creating physical, digital, and emotional environments where women and girls feel safe, respected, and free from fear.
- **Challenge misogyny and harmful attitudes** – tackling the root causes of inequality through education, culture change, and visible leadership.

This means:

- Embedding early intervention and prevention across schools, services, and communities.
- Creating safer spaces — physical, digital, and emotional — where women and girls feel protected and heard.
- Strengthening trauma-informed services that respond with care, dignity, and consistency.
- Challenging attitudes and behaviours that normalise abuse, harassment, and control.
- Holding perpetrators accountable and preventing further harm.
- Listening to women and girls — including those whose voices are often excluded.

National & Regional Drivers

Tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) is now recognised as a **national policing priority** alongside terrorism and serious organised crime. National reforms such as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Online Safety Act 2023, the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, and the Strategic Policing Requirement (2023) set a clear expectation that local areas prevent harm earlier, strengthen victim support, and disrupt perpetrators with accountability across agencies.

Regionally, the **West Midlands Police and Crime Plan (2025–2029)** sets a bold ambition to **halve violence against women and girls**. This is underpinned by a whole-system approach rooted in prevention, evidence, and survivor voice — with a focus on safer streets and transport, tackling online harms, embedding trauma-informed practice, and earlier intervention with children and young people.

For Sandwell, this means:

- Aligning delivery plans with national duties and the regional halving pledge.
- Embedding survivor voice and child-centred safeguarding.
- Prioritising digital VAWG and online safety in schools, youth, and community settings.
- Strengthening trauma-informed pathways and prevention in education, including work with boys and young men.
- Using shared data and VAWG dashboards to track progress, performance, and accountability.

National Duties and Reform

- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** – new legal definitions, protective tools (DAPNs/DAPOs), and a statutory commissioner; duties on councils to provide safe accommodation and support.
- **Online Safety Act 2023** – criminalises cyber-flashing, deepfake pornography, and non-consensual sharing of intimate images; addresses rising tech-enabled abuse.
- **Victims and Prisoners Act 2024** – creates a statutory duty for police, health, and councils to assess need and jointly commission domestic and sexual abuse support; embeds the new Victims' Code.
- **Strategic Policing Requirement 2023** – places VAWG alongside terrorism and serious organised crime as a national policing priority for resources, training, and accountability.
- **Serious Violence Duty 2022** – requires local strategies to address serious violence, recognising links with exploitation and VAWG.

Regional Commitments (West Midlands)

- **Police and Crime Plan 2025–2029:**
- Halving VAWG across the region by 2029.
- More visible policing and safer public spaces (e.g. Safer Streets, transport).
- Trauma-informed practice embedded across all services.
- Stronger early intervention with children and young people, including boys and young men.
- Tackling online harms and supporting younger women and girls.

Local Context: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Sandwell has a long track record of partnership working on VAWG. Alongside national pressures, we see local patterns of hidden harm, intersecting risks, and uneven access to support. Our response needs to be survivor-centred, place-based, and consistent across systems.

Key themes shaping the local picture

- **Hidden harm remains high.** Domestic abuse, sexual violence and coercive control are under-reported, particularly among Black, Asian and minoritised communities.
- **Intersecting vulnerability.** Poverty, insecure housing, poor mental health, disability and immigration status increase both risk and barriers to help.
- **Voice and lived experience.** Survivors and grassroots groups are influencing practice, but we need stronger, routine mechanisms to embed their voice in decision-making.
- **Partnership strengths — and gaps.** Community Safety, Safeguarding and Health partnerships provide a strong platform, but practice is variable and prevention at scale is inconsistent.
- **Commitment to prevention.** There is clear local appetite for earlier help, education, workforce development and place-based action, including safer public and online spaces.
- **Data and insight.** Better sharing and use of data is needed to identify hidden need, understand disproportionality and target resources.

This strategy builds on Sandwell's strengths and sets clear expectations for leadership, survivor voice, measurable delivery, and accountability across the system.

Complex and overlapping harms

- Women and girls experience intersecting risks — domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and harassment, forced marriage and other harmful practices — across home, public and online spaces.

Disproportionality and hidden need

- Harm is often under-reported among ethnic minority women, disabled women, young women, migrant women and those with no recourse to public funds, who face additional barriers to safety and support.

Community voice and survivor insight

- Lived experience is shaping local practice. We will strengthen structures for co-production, independent advocacy and feedback so survivor voice informs commissioning, training and performance.

Strong foundations, shared commitment

- Established partnerships across community safety, safeguarding and health — including PoVE/DASP governance — provide the platform.
- We will align outcomes, data and accountability to deliver consistent prevention and protection borough-wide.

Sandwell Violence against Women and Girls (VaWG)

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is not inevitable. Yet it remains persistent, pervasive, and rooted in inequality. From domestic abuse and sexual violence to street harassment and online harm, women and girls across Sandwell continue to face threats to their safety, dignity, and freedom.

This harm is preventable.

Our response to VAWG is embedded within our wider work on serious violence, exploitation, and harm — shifting responsibility from victims to systems, services, perpetrators, and the cultural conditions that allow abuse to persist.

We are committed to prevention with purpose — not only reducing incidents but dismantling the attitudes, behaviours, and structures that enable violence and misogyny to thrive.

This means:

- Embedding early intervention and prevention across schools, services, and communities
- Creating safer spaces — physical, digital, and emotional — where women and girls feel protected and heard
- Strengthening trauma-informed services that respond with care, dignity, and consistency
- Challenging attitudes and behaviours that normalise abuse, harassment, and control
- Holding perpetrators accountable and preventing further harm
- Listening to women and girls — including those whose voices are often excluded

Key Priorities

1	Tackle Domestic Abuse at Every Level
2	Respond to Sexual Assault and Abuse with Compassion and Clarity
3	Address Stalking and Harassment
4	Improve Women's and girls Safety
5	Challenge Misogyny and Harmful Attitudes

Pillar 1

Domestic Abuse



Pillar 1: Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is the most prevalent form of violence against women and girls in Sandwell — and our strategic, survivor-led response is now embedded in the **Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2028**.

This borough-wide strategy outlines a clear, coordinated approach to tackling domestic abuse through prevention, protection, partnership and provision. Developed through consultation with survivors, local services, and national evidence, it provides the foundation for system-wide change.

Why it matters

- Demand is high and rising (MARAC referrals, repeat victimisation, digital surveillance/coercive control).
- Capacity gaps (e.g., IDVA provision) and inconsistent trauma-informed practice reduce the quality and timeliness of support.
- Children are increasingly experiencing abuse, not only witnessing it, with clear links to health, education and safeguarding demand.

Links and governance

- Delivers the Community Safety Strategy focus on **prevention, trauma-informed practice, and child-friendly Sandwell**.
- Intersects with **Serious Violence, Prevent, Modern Slavery/Exploitation, and Housing & Homelessness**.
- Governed through **DASP**, with performance tracked via the **VAWG/DA dashboard** and routine partner reviews.

We Will

1

Strengthen Safeguarding and Partnership Working

2

Enhance Safe Accommodation and Housing Pathways

3

Strengthen Early Intervention and Support for Children and Young People

4

Improve Cultural Competency and Step-Down Community Support

5

Embed Stronger Monitoring, System Learning, and Accountability

Sandwell Violence against Women and Girls (VaWG)

What the evidence tells us

- Domestic abuse remains the most reported form of VAWG in Sandwell, with high repeat victimisation rates and increasing complexity linked to coercive control, economic abuse, and digital surveillance.
- MARAC demand is rising, with referral volumes far exceeding expected levels based on population benchmarks.
- Current IDVA capacity is below SafeLives guidance, creating pressure on case management and limiting timely support.
- Adult child-to-parent violence and stalking are increasing, with Sandwell reporting the highest levels of both in the region.
- Sandwell has seen an increase of domestic abuse related deaths by suicide, which coincides with an improved awareness and response from partners.
- There is a rising number of cases where children are directly experiencing abuse, not just witnessing it.
- Family Hubs are emerging as key places for earlier identification and community-based support.
- Referrals into specialist services reflect strong ethnic diversity, broadly aligned with Sandwell's population.
- Victims from a wide range of cultural and community backgrounds have shared positive experiences of support.
- Domestic abuse data is often fragmented, inconsistent, or not fully utilised across agencies.
- Learning from reviews, audits, and case feedback is not always systematically embedded.

The outcomes we want to deliver

1. Quicker, safer journeys for victims and survivors—earlier identification and faster access to coordinated help.
2. Consistent, trauma-informed safeguarding across agencies, with fewer repeat and escalating incidents.
3. Perpetrators identified and managed, with disruption and behaviour-change pathways in place.
4. Children protected and supported, with needs met earlier through family-centred responses.
5. Stronger housing and recovery options, including safe accommodation and peer/step-down support

What we will do

1. Embed MARAC triage and quality standards so risk is assessed early and the right agency leads the right action.
2. Lift IDVA capacity and coverage to align with SafeLives guidance and local need; extend advocate roles across health, housing and courts.
3. Make children visible in every case—consistent recording, early-help routes, and clear step-up/step-down with safeguarding.
4. Strengthen safe accommodation and community recovery, including peer-led and culturally competent support.
5. Turn learning into practice—use DHR/DARDE findings, audits and survivor feedback to change pathways, training and commissioning.

How will we know we're on track

1. More cases triaged within agreed MARAC timeframes; faster first-contact to safety planning.
2. IDVA provision meets guidance; survivor-reported experience and safety scores improve.
3. Reductions in repeat incidents and escalation; more effective perpetrator management evidenced by compliance/disruption data.
4. Increase in early-help/specialist referrals for children experiencing DA; fewer re-referrals.
5. Increased uptake of safe accommodation and step-down/peer services; DAHA (or equivalent) standards maintained.



Pillar 2

Sexual Assault and Abuse

Pillar 2: Sexual Assault, Abuse and Exploitation

Sexual assault and abuse remains one of the most underreported and misunderstood forms of harm within the VAWG landscape. Sandwell's Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy sets a clear ambition: to create a borough where survivors are heard, harm is prevented, and justice and healing are possible for all.

This strategic pillar recognises the need for early intervention, accessible services, partnership accountability, and survivor-led improvement.

Why it matters

- Sexual abuse is widely underreported; disclosure and justice pathways are hard to navigate.
- Responses are inconsistent; long-term recovery support is patchy.
- Impacts are lifelong, affecting mental health, relationships and opportunity.

Our shared vision

A Sandwell where sexual abuse is never normalised, hidden or ignored — and where every survivor has access to safety, support, and justice, regardless of their background or the time since the abuse occurred.

We Will

1

Prevent Sexual Abuse Through Education and Early Intervention

2

Equip the Workforce to Recognise and Respond to Harm

3

Improve Justice Outcomes and Hold Perpetrators to Account

4

Tackle Harmful Attitudes and Challenge Cultural Norms

5

Strengthen Victim Pathways and Safeguarding Response

Sexual Violence and Assault

What the evidence tells us

- Sexual offences continue to rise nationally, and Sandwell reflects this trend, with police-recorded offences increasing each year since 2021. This reflects both higher reporting and continued prevalence, underlining the scale of demand on safeguarding, policing, and support services.
- Just over two in five local offences relate to child sexual abuse, with around two-thirds involving non-recent disclosures made by adults. This mirrors national patterns and highlights the need for survivor-led pathways, trauma-informed approaches, and long-term support, as forensic opportunities are often limited.
- Sexual abuse is rarely an isolated crime. Alcohol, drugs, domestic abuse, vulnerable-adult factors, and online-enabled exploitation are often recorded alongside sexual offences. These overlapping risks demand a multi-agency, trauma-informed response and strong pathways for both adult and child safeguarding.
- Prosecution rates for sexual offences are low across England and Wales, and Sandwell mirrors this national picture. Despite many offences having named suspects, cases frequently collapse due to evidential difficulties or lack of victim support. Victims face barriers such as lengthy delays, digital disclosure demands, and the retraumatizing nature of proceedings.
- Survivors often experience significant long-term effects, including trauma, mental health challenges, substance misuse, and impacts on family life and employment. This reinforces the need for accessible specialist support, not just through criminal justice routes but also through health and community-based services.

The outcomes we want to deliver

1. Victims and survivors are identified early, protected quickly, and supported consistently throughout their journey.
2. More survivors feel able to disclose sooner — with fewer reports made after long delays or adult disclosures of childhood harm.
3. Safeguarding and justice responses are trauma-informed and joined-up, reducing re-traumatisation and missed opportunities.
4. Perpetrators are identified and held to account more effectively, with stronger disruption and prosecution pathways.

What we will do

1. Strengthen early-identification and disclosure routes in education, health, family hubs and community settings (including digital).
2. Upskill police, CYP, education, health and VCS workforce in trauma-informed recognition of sexual abuse and adult disclosures.
3. Improve pathways into SARC, ISVA, peer-led and counselling support — including fast-track routes for non-recent cases.
4. Deliver sustained prevention and culture-change activity to challenge harmful norms, sexual harassment and online abuse.
5. Use local data, survivor voice and national learning to continuously improve commissioning, training, and practice.

How will we know we're on track

1. More people are identified and supported at the earliest stage, with increased disclosure in trusted settings.
2. More cases progress through evidential thresholds, with rises in disruption orders and charge/summons outcomes.
3. Sexual assault and abuse dashboard is live and used actively by partners to track performance and drive system change.



Pillar 3

Stalking, Harassment and Online Abuse

Pillar 3: Stalking, Harassment and Online Abuse

Stalking, harassment, and online abuse are increasingly common forms of harm, yet often minimised, misunderstood, or missed altogether. These behaviours can escalate rapidly, create lasting trauma, and significantly undermine victims' sense of safety — both in public and private spaces.

This strategic pillar focuses on early identification, multi-agency safeguarding, and building digital confidence across services. It highlights the need for stronger prevention, enforcement, and support pathways that keep pace with how abuse is experienced today.

Why it matters

- Victims often face prolonged, escalating harm before help is accessed
- Stalking behaviours are frequently misidentified or dismissed as “low risk”
- Technology is used to monitor, humiliate, and control victims — especially women
- Harassment impacts mental health, work, education, and freedom of movement
- There is a growing need for coordinated offline and online safeguarding

Our shared vision

A Sandwell where stalking, harassment, and online abuse are taken seriously at the first sign — and where no one feels unsafe in their home, community, or online. Victims will be believed, protected, and supported, and perpetrators will be held to account wherever harm occurs.

We Will

1

Identify and Responding to Stalking and Harassment Early

2

Strengthen Victim Support and Safety Planning

3

Tackle Public Harassment and Misogyny

4

Drive Multi-Agency Action and Enforcement

5

Recognise and Respond to Stalking Within Domestic Abuse

Stalking

What the evidence tells us

- Stalking is one of the fastest growing crime types across the UK, and Sandwell reflects this national rise. Reported offences have continued to increase year-on-year, reflecting both greater awareness and sustained prevalence.
- Stalking is rarely a standalone behaviour: the majority of cases are connected to domestic abuse, often occurring within coercive and controlling relationships, and sometimes exacerbated by factors such as alcohol misuse.
- The evidence shows that stalking is highly correlated with serious harm. Many victims experience prolonged and escalating behaviours before seeking help, yet their experiences are too often minimised or misinterpreted as “low risk.”
- National homicide reviews consistently highlight stalking as a precursor to the most serious forms of violence, emphasising the need for earlier recognition and intervention.
- Patterns of reporting also show the hidden nature of stalking. Many cases are not reported immediately — some victims delay for weeks or months due to fear, shame, or uncertainty over whether the behaviour will be taken seriously.
- Incidents most often occur in private settings or via digital platforms, making them less visible to bystanders and harder to detect.
- Increasingly, perpetrators use technology such as social media, messaging apps, spyware, and location trackers to monitor and harass their victims, enabling persistent abuse “behind closed doors” that disproportionately affects women and girls.

The outcomes we want to deliver

1. Victims are identified earlier, receive timely support, and are protected from escalation.
2. Perpetrators are disrupted and managed using coordinated safeguarding, enforcement and behaviour-change tools.
3. Digital harassment and online abuse are recognised and responded to as seriously as in-person stalking.
4. Partners work together to take public harassment and misogyny seriously, creating safer homes, streets and online spaces.

What we will do

1. Strengthen early identification of stalking, harassment and online abuse in first-response, safeguarding, and MARAC pathways.
2. Increase specialist advocacy and safety-planning support for victims, including digital safety, trauma-informed advice and workplace support.
3. Upskill frontline staff on stalking behaviours, harassment law, and the use of Stalking Protection Orders, Clare’s Law, online evidence and disruption tools.
4. Embed public harassment and misogyny into community safety work — piloting local hotspot enforcement and bystander initiatives.
5. Raise community awareness to challenge minimisation of stalking/harassment and promote safe reporting earlier.

How will we know we’re on track

1. Increased use of stalking risk-assessments, Stalking Protection Orders and safety-planning tools at an earlier stage.
2. More victims engage with specialist support and stay engaged through the justice process.
3. Reduction in repeat/re-escalating stalking and harassment incidents involving the same perpetrator.
4. Introduction of a stalking & harassment dashboard to monitor outcomes and hold partners to account.



Pillar 4

Improve Women's and girls Safety

Pillar 5: Women and Girls Safety

Women and girls face disproportionate risks of violence, harassment, and control across their lives — from street-based abuse and online exploitation to harmful relationships and workplace harassment.

This pillar sets out Sandwell’s commitment to embed safety, equity, and respect for women and girls in every part of public life — from schools and neighbourhoods to transport, services, and the online world.

We will amplify women’s voices, challenge harmful attitudes, and ensure local systems respond earlier and better, creating a borough where women and girls are free to live, move, and thrive without fear.

Why it matters

- Women and girls report high levels of sexual harassment and everyday abuse in public spaces
- Harmful behaviours are often minimised or normalised, especially in education and online platforms
- Marginalised women and girls, including those with disabilities or from ethnic minorities, face added barriers to support
- Early abuse and fear impacts confidence, mental health, and long-term wellbeing
- Tackling women’s safety is core to building a fairer, more inclusive society

Our shared vision

A Sandwell where women and girls are safe, valued, and empowered — with access to support, freedom from harm, and the right to live confidently in every space they occupy.

Women and Girls Safety Pillars

1

Listen to Girls and Embedding Youth Voice

2

Embed Safety in Everyday Spaces

3

Early Identification and Tailored Support

4

Challenge Harassment, Misogyny, and Everyday Sexism

5

Coordinate Action Across Systems

Women and Girls Safety

What the evidence tells us

- Women and girls face disproportionate levels of violence, harassment, and abuse in both public and private spaces.
- National surveys show most women and girls adapt their daily routines to feel safe — avoiding public transport at night, changing routes, or limiting social activity.
- Abuse often happens in familiar or private settings, not just in public spaces — with domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking the most common harms.
- Perpetrators are most often known to the victim, reinforcing the importance of tackling abuse within relationships, families, and communities.
- Digital spaces are increasingly unsafe, with online harassment, image-based abuse, and tech-facilitated control rising year on year.
- Girls and young women are disproportionately exposed to harassment in schools, colleges, and public places — normalising harmful behaviours at an early age.
- Black, Asian, minority ethnic women, disabled women, and LGBTQ+ communities face additional intersecting risks and barriers to reporting, leaving many without timely support.
- Confidence in the criminal justice system remains low, with many survivors reporting mistrust, fear of not being believed, or re-traumatisation during the process.
- Trauma-informed, whole-system approaches — spanning schools, communities, policing, health, and justice — are critical to prevention, protection, and long-term change.

The outcomes we want to deliver

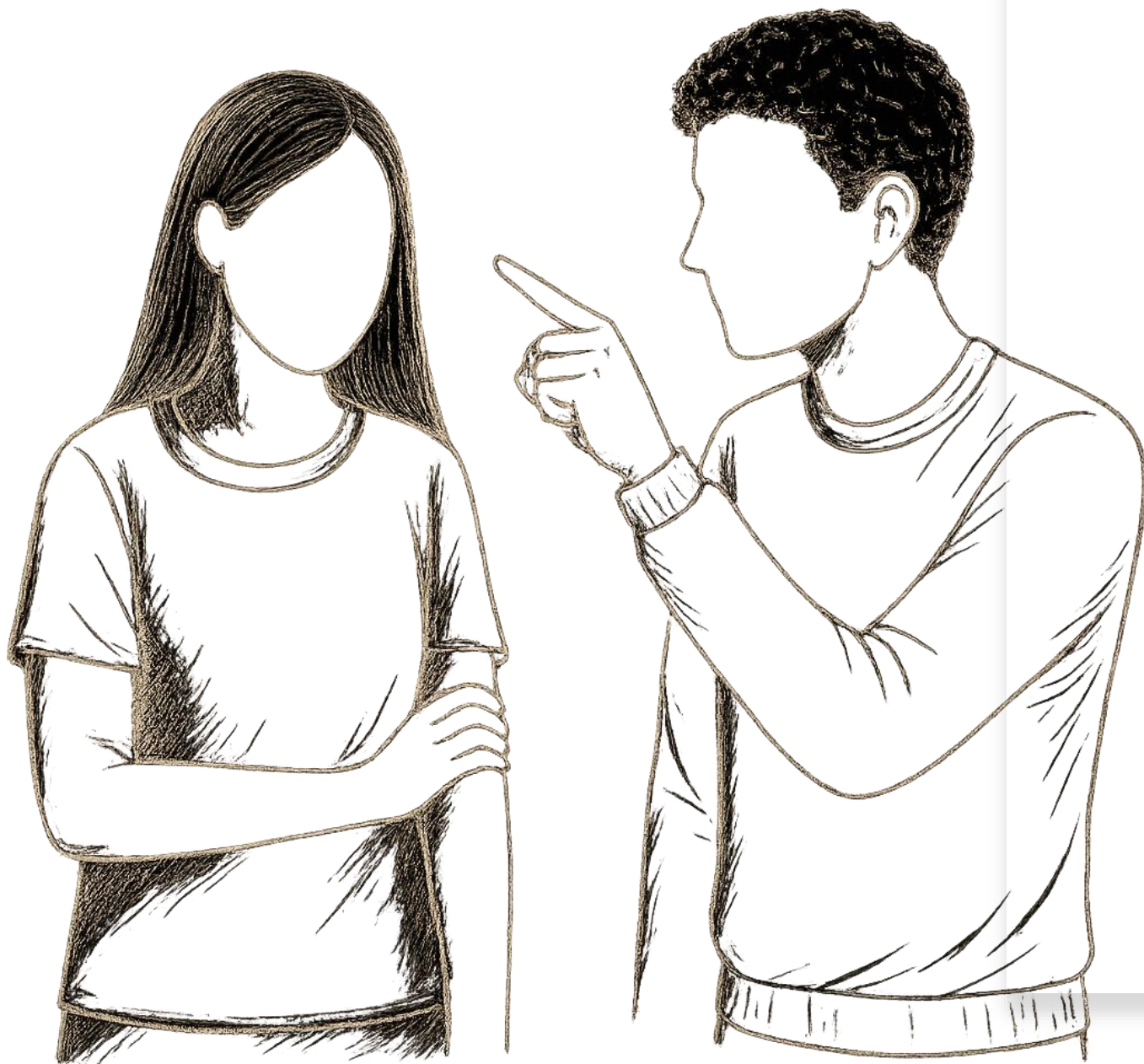
1. Women and girls feel safer and more confident moving freely in public, online, and within their communities.
2. Everyday sexism and harassment are increasingly called out, challenged, and reduced across public spaces.
3. Systems respond earlier and better to girls' concerns, with more reporting routes and tailored support.

What we will do

1. Co-design safety improvements in public spaces with girls and women — including lighting, CCTV, transport, and youth spaces.
2. Deliver public campaigns and school-based work to tackle misogyny, normalised harassment, and harmful peer cultures.
3. Train frontline staff (e.g. transport, education, security, enforcement, youth workers) to recognise and respond effectively to public/online harassment.
4. Improve early reporting systems and safety pathways across settings (schools, streets, online platforms), with clear links to support.

How will we know we're on track

1. Increased reporting and disclosure of harassment and safety concerns by women and girls through local systems.
2. Surveyed improvements in girls' perceptions of safety, confidence, and trust in services.
3. Visible improvements to 'hot spot' environments, informed by lived experience feedback and audit tools.
4. Growth in local action led by girls' voices (e.g. projects, policy influence, co-designed solutions).



Pillar 5

Misogyny and Cultural Change

Pillar 4: Misogyny and Cultural Change

Misogyny — the ingrained prejudice and contempt for women and girls — underpins many forms of violence, harassment, and discrimination. It shows up in attitudes, language, media, systems, and behaviours, often going unchallenged or minimised.

This pillar sets out Sandwell’s commitment to confront and dismantle the cultural norms, social messages, and systemic inequalities that enable abuse.

We will lead with education, amplify survivor and community voices, and drive cultural change across institutions, services, and society to build a borough rooted in equality, dignity, and respect.

Why it matters

- Misogynistic attitudes fuel abuse, harassment, and gender-based inequality
- Victim-blaming and harmful myths silence survivors and excuse perpetrators
- Everyday sexism in schools, workplaces, and communities reinforces harmful norms
- Young people are increasingly exposed to misogynistic content online and via influencers
- Long-term change requires cultural and systemic transformation, not just services

Our shared vision

A Sandwell where misogyny is never tolerated — where gender equity is championed, respect is the norm, and all residents play a part in creating safer, more equal communities.

Misogyny and Cultural Change Pillars

1

Embed Gender Equity Across Systems

2

Challenge Misogyny in Education and Youth Settings

3

Challenge Everyday Sexism and Victim-Blaming

4

Lobby for National Recognition of Misogyny as a Crime

5

Coordinate Action Across Systems

Misogyny and Cultural Change

What the evidence tells us

- Misogyny underpins many forms of abuse against women and girls — from harassment in public places, to coercive control, sexual assault, and domestic homicide.
- Research shows that everyday sexist “jokes”, harassment, and online misogyny normalise abuse and create an environment where more serious violence can escalate.
- National evidence (including from the End Violence Against Women Coalition and UN Women) highlights the need for cultural change alongside enforcement — tackling attitudes, stereotypes, and social norms that excuse or minimise male violence.
- Campaigns such as White Ribbon, “This Is Not Consent”, and “Ask for Angela” demonstrate how culture change can be embedded in both local communities and frontline services.
- Education and early intervention are critical: engaging boys and young men in schools, colleges, sports clubs, and online spaces is one of the most effective ways to challenge harmful attitudes before they become embedded.
- Embedding culture change within workplaces and public services (e.g. mandatory VAWG training, bystander interventions, trauma-informed practice) ensures that agencies model the behaviours expected in the community.
- Culture change is long-term — but evidence shows it reduces tolerance for harassment, increases reporting, and strengthens community solidarity with victims.

The outcomes we want to deliver

1. Harmful attitudes and behaviours rooted in misogyny are consistently challenged and reduced across Sandwell.
2. Women and girls experience greater dignity, respect, and equality across public life, workplaces, education, and services.
3. Young people develop healthier beliefs and behaviours around gender, respect, consent, and relationships.
4. Survivors and communities feel empowered to speak out against sexism and victim-blaming without fear of judgement.

What we will do

1. Develop a tailored toolkit – produce practical resources for Professionals, Young people and Parents and carers.
2. Launch the toolkit with a webinar – a borough-wide event to raise awareness, share best practice, and highlight how the toolkit can be used across schools, community groups, and frontline services.
3. Embed learning into wider culture change work – using the toolkit as a catalyst for ongoing training, campaigns, and conversations across sectors.

How will we know we're on track

1. Increased reporting of sexism, harassment or misogyny across schools, workplaces, and communities, showing improved confidence to speak out.
2. Evidence of local and regional progress towards recognising misogyny as an aggravating factor in policing, justice, and VAWG responses.

VaWG Plan on a page

Pillar	Sub-Pillar 1	Sub-Pillar 2	Sub-Pillar 3	Sub-Pillar 4	Sub-Pillar 5
1. Tackle Domestic Abuse at Every Level	Strengthen Safeguarding and Partnership Working	Enhance Safe Accommodation and Housing Pathways	Strengthen Early Intervention and Support for Children and Young People	Improve Cultural Competency and Step-Down Community Support	Embed Stronger Monitoring, System Learning, and Accountability
2. Respond to Sexual Assault and Abuse	Prevent Sexual Abuse Through Education and Early Intervention	Equip the Workforce to Recognise and Respond to Harm	Improve Justice Outcomes and Holding Perpetrators to Account	Tackle Harmful Attitudes and Challenge Cultural Norms	Strengthen Victim Pathways and Safeguarding Response
3. Address Stalking, and Harassment	Identify and Respond to Stalking and Harassment Early	Strengthen Victim Support and Safety Planning	Tackle Public Harassment and Misogyny	Drive Multi-Agency Action and Enforcement	Recognise and Respond to Stalking Within Domestic Abuse
4. Improve Women and Girls Safety	Listen to Girls and Embed Youth Voice	Embed Safety in Everyday Spaces	Early Identification and Tailored Support	Challenge Harassment, Misogyny, and Everyday Sexism	Coordinate Action Across Systems
5. Challenge Misogyny and Harmful attitudes	Embed Gender Equity Across Systems	Challenge Misogyny in Education and Youth Settings	Challenge Everyday Sexism and Victim-Blaming	Lobby for National Recognition of Misogyny as a Crime	Coordinate Action Across Systems

Conclusion



Violence against women and girls is not inevitable. It is preventable — and tackling it requires more than individual responses; it demands cultural, structural, and systemic change. This strategy sets out Sandwell’s collective ambition to prevent harm before it occurs, protect and support victims and survivors, hold perpetrators to account, and embed accountability across all agencies.

We recognise that VAWG is now a national policing priority alongside terrorism and serious organised crime, and that our local response must be equally robust, evidence-driven, and survivor-centred. By aligning with national reforms and the West Midlands’ regional pledge to halve VAWG, Sandwell is committing to drive meaningful, measurable change.

Our five priorities — tackling domestic abuse, responding to sexual assault and abuse, addressing stalking and harassment, making Sandwell’s streets and spaces safer, and challenging misogyny and harmful attitudes — reflect the breadth of harms women and girls face. They also reflect our determination to act with urgency, partnership, and purpose.

Delivery will be underpinned by trauma-informed practice, strong data and governance, and the voices of survivors shaping every stage of our work. Success will mean more women and girls feeling safe at home, in relationships, online, and in public spaces; it will mean earlier intervention, stronger outcomes in the justice system, and a culture that no longer tolerates misogyny or abuse.

Together, we can make Sandwell a place where women and girls are free to live, work, study, and thrive without fear.