



Faith and VAWG Coalition

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The role of Communities

“We know that they [communities] are often the first to know about abuse, and that they can act as gate openers or gate closers in terms of help seeking.”

Finding the Cost of Freedom, 2014

Professionals should bear in mind that often, friends and family or ‘informal networks’ hold vital information around the levels of risk. Connections should be developed with associations for voluntary or third sector organisations to help disseminate learning and understanding of training opportunities related to domestic abuse.

London DHR Case Analysis and Review Launch 2020



Coordinated Community Response

Bringing communities together to end domestic abuse

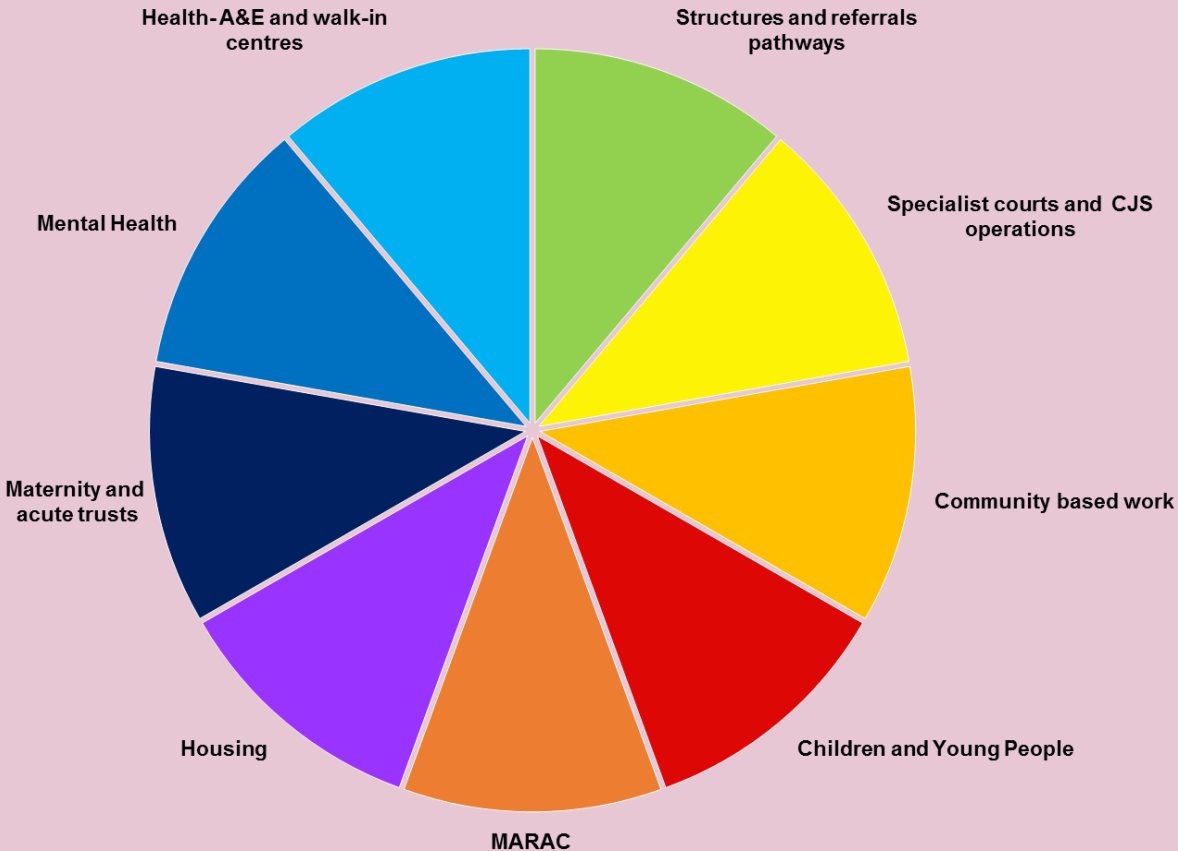
Responsibility for safety should not rest solely with individual victims but also with the community and services.

Perpetrators must be held to account for the harm they inflict and offered routes to change their abusive behaviours.



Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse

We bring communities together to end domestic abuse



- Health
- Housing
- DHR
- MARAC
- Community
- Criminal Justice

How the Faith and VAWG Coalition emerged

The Faith and VAWG Coalition emerged from a conference organised by Standing Together in November 2018.



There was an overwhelming interest and turnout for the conference which identified a gap in the sector



The first meeting of the Coalition took place in May 2019 and we officially launched in March 2020



Why the Coalition is necessary

- To Build bridges
- There was a need for a professional and strategic space
- To allow a more strategic, regular, and structural approach to tackling VAWG
- To highlight the voices of Faith-based, Black and Minoritised communities



The F word

In the communities you serve faith and culture can be used to explain or support unhealthy or abusive family relationships.

Can you think of any?

Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse can take four main forms:

- Forcing the victim to partake in spiritual or religious practices against their will
- Preventing the victim from partaking in spiritual or religious practices or ridiculing their religious, cultural or spiritual beliefs and or forcing them to convert to a new religion
- Using a twisted and weaponised form of religious or spiritual teaching or ‘cherry picking’ elements of sacred texts or religious tradition or custom in order to gain and maintain control of the victim or to coerce the victim into staying in a relationship with an abuser.
- Using religious, cultural or spiritual ideas or beliefs as a reason to cause harm to a victim.



What Spiritual Abuse may look like:

“As a Christian he may use the Bible to justify his behaviour and demand her acceptance of it. ‘The Bible tells you to submit’. ‘You have to forgive me’. ‘If you were a better wife, I wouldn’t have to hurt you’”

Natalie Collins - Letters to a Broken Church

Abuse can occur within intimate partner relationships or within families. It can occur as part of a patterns of abusive behaviour or as a standalone form of abuse.



Keeping The Faith Report

What survivors from faith communities want us to know

Many survivors from faith backgrounds have reported that secular specialist services and society, in general, are unable to understand their experiences of abuse, and the barriers to accessing support. Often the unique role religion and spirituality play in their lives and how these manifests in their communities, experiences of abuse and healing is little if understood at all.



Keeping The Faith Report

What survivors from faith communities want us to know:

Findings

What women of faith want their faith and community leaders to know?

- Faith communities play a unique and vital role
- Faith leaders should be aware that men's abuse is escalating during this pandemic

What women of faith want the government and Specialist Services to know about how they can be supported and empowered?

- Faith and religion can be sources of comfort.
- Urgent need to understand how culture, religious tradition and holy scripture can be used as tools of abuse by perpetrators.
- One of the most important obstacles facing survivors of faith is finding a safe space.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has made visible the multiple intersections of inequality and discrimination that migrant women face.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a concerning increase in stalking.



Keeping The Faith Report

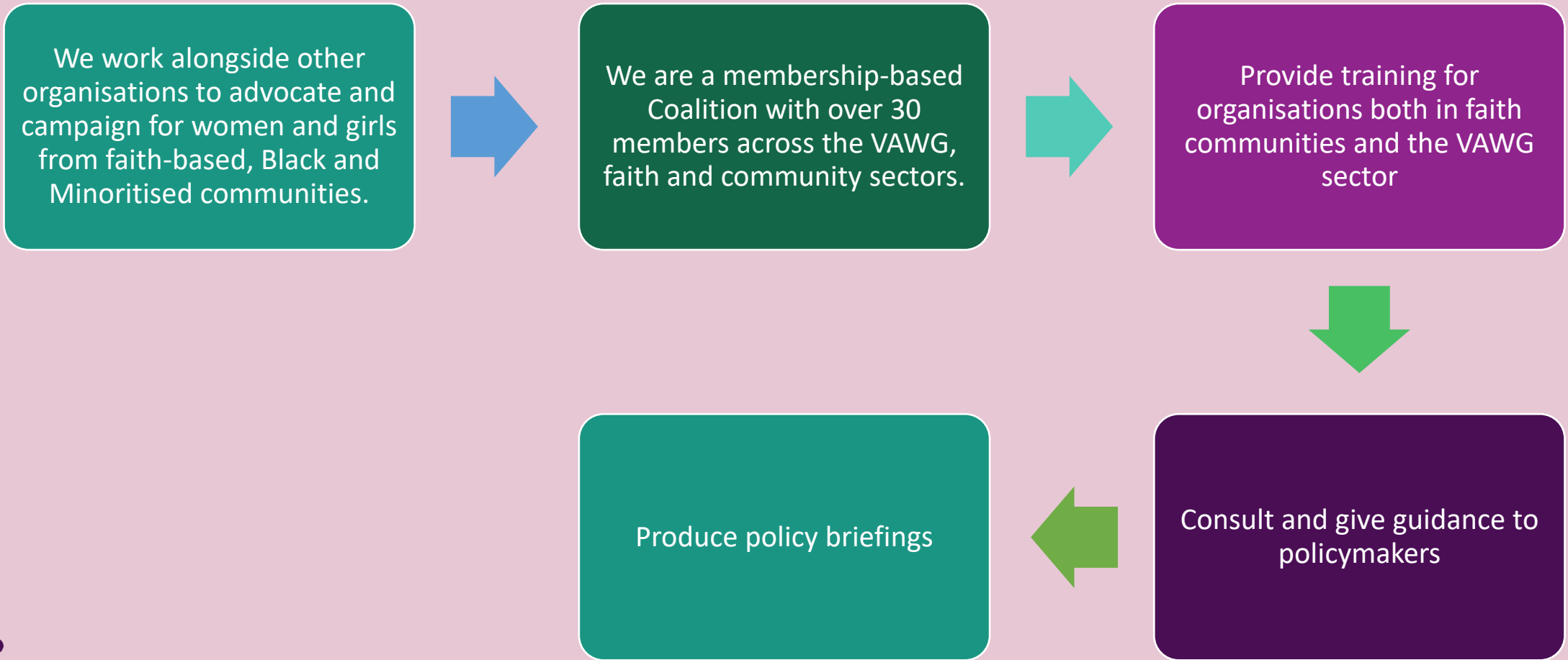
What survivors from faith communities want us to know:

Recommendations

- 1** Create and support spaces like the Faith and VAWG Coalition that understand and appreciate the complexity of the relationship between faith and domestic abuse.
- 2** Faith communities including leaders should be seen as allies in the fight against VAWG and domestic abuse.
- 3** Local and central government should evidence the value with which they hold 'by and for' organisations and their work by adequately resourcing them and removing barriers to funding.



What we do



Specialist Support Services

And the services they provide

Jewish Women's Aid

- Holistic and culturally sensitive
- Advocacy
- Emotional support
- Counselling, group work,
- Helplines + web chat
- Children's therapy

Muslim Women's Network

- Islamic feminism
- The MWN Helpline
- MWN Hub

FORWARD

- African women-led women's rights organisation
- end violence against women and girls.
- FGM
- Child and Forced Marriage
- Training

Back In Control Consultancy

- African and Afro Caribbean women
- All Faiths
- Free one-to-one and group advice to individuals and families

Welsh Women's Aid

- VAWG
- Women and Children
- Live fear free helpline

Muslim Youth Helpline

- Helpline service for young Muslims
- Faith-sensitive support

Latin American Women's Rights Service

- Human rights, feminist organisation
- For Latin American migrant women living in the UK
- Counselling
- Advice

Black Churches Domestic Abuse Forum

- Christian/Pentecostal
- Black/African and Caribbean
- VAWG in Pentecostal Churches

Restored

- Christian Charity
- Survivors' Network
- VAWG
- Restored Beacon Churches
- Bespoke Training

Juno Women's Aid

- Refuge
- Programmes in English & community languages
- DSV Helpline
- Survivor advocacy
- Support services for women, children and teens



Specialist Support Services

And the services they provide

Respond

[Support for survivors with learning disability]

- Therapy services
- Specialist support services
- Training & development

The Traveller Movement [Gypsy, Roma & travellers]

- Information & support
- Policy and publications
- Community projects

Sikh women's Aid [survivors' of Sikh community]

- One-to-one support for survivors
- DA awareness course
- Child sexual exploitation and grooming awareness

Survivors Voices [adult survivors of child SA]

- Survivor-led research & policy
- Training & consultancy
- Creative, self-help, peer-led initiatives

Maa Shanti

[Supports South Asian mothers & DA survivors]

- Wellbeing & skills supports
- Training for professionals & Community

Inclusive Mosque Initiative [Intersectional feminist mosque]

- Creating inclusive, safer places for marginalised Muslims i.e Muslims who identify as LGBTQ+

Respect

- Work with perpetrators, male victims, young people who use violence

Campaign & advocacy

- AVA
- Rene Cassin
- The SHIFT
- Voicing Voices





Faith and VAWG Coalition

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Recent Publications

