



Monday - Friday  
9.00am - 5.00pm



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## Tower Hamlets' Violence Against Women and Girls Leaflet

# (VAWG)

This leaflet explains what VAWG is, how to get help for yourself,  
how to help others and where to find additional support



*This leaflet complements but does not supplement the DV leaflet*

## What is VAWG?

The United Nations (UN) defines VAWG as “any act of gender-based violence that is directed at a woman because she is a woman, or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women”. The majority of VAWG is carried out by men against women and girls (although men can also experience violence).

VAWG brings together 9 areas of gender-based violence:

1. Domestic violence
2. Sexual Violence
3. Trafficking
4. Prostitution
5. Sexual Exploitation
6. Female Genital Mutilation
7. So-called ‘honour’ based violence
8. Dowry related abuse
9. Stalking and Harassment

## Domestic violence

The Government defines domestic violence and abuse as:

*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”*

Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial or psychological and consists of a pattern of controlling behaviour which comes from an abuser’s desire to maintain power and control over their partner or family members. It is not caused by alcohol or anger issues.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of their social background, age, gender, faith, ethnicity or sexuality.

**Respect Helpline (Help for perpetrators of abuse)**

**0808 802 4040**

[www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

**Southall Black Sisters**

**020 8571 0800**

[www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)

**Rights of Women (Legal Advice Helpline)**

**020 7251 8887** (Criminal Law)

**020 7251 6577** (Family Law)

**020 7490 7680** (Immigration & Asylum Law)

[www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/adviceline.php](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/adviceline.php)

## National Sources of Support

### National Domestic Violence Helpline

(run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge)

**0808 2000 247**

[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

### Rape Crisis Helpline

**0808 802 9999**

[www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

### Forced Marriage Unit

**020 7008 0151**

### Broken Rainbow (LGBT Helpline)

**0300 999 5428**

[www.brokenrainbow.org.uk](http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk)

### Karma Nirvana (Honour Network Helpline)

**0800 5999 247**

[www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

### Migrant Help (Help for Victims of Trafficking)

**077 6666 8781**

[www.migranthelp.org](http://www.migranthelp.org)

### Men's Advice Line (Help for Male victims of domestic abuse)

**0808 801 0327**

[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

## Sexual Violence

Sexual Violence includes rape and sexual abuse. It can happen to anyone and can be perpetrated by partners, friends, and family members as well as complete strangers. Any sexual contact without consent is considered sexual violence and is a crime. This includes any unwanted sexual touching. Sexual violence can happen anywhere.

## Trafficking and Prostitution

Many women and girls are forced or coerced or deceived into selling sex and/or to continue selling sex. Trafficking includes recruiting and exploiting women and girls from abroad and from within the UK for the purposes of prostitution (or domestic servitude).

## Sexual Exploitation

Sexual Exploitation is linked to trafficking and prostitution in that women and girls can be exploited sexually through trafficking or prostitution. Sexual exploitation affects people of any age, gender, race, ability, or sexual orientation. Sexual exploitation of children and young people is an activity by anyone who has power over young people and uses it to sexually abuse them. This can involve a broad range of exploitative activities, from seemingly 'consensual' relationships and informal exchange of sex for attention, a place to stay, gifts or cigarettes, through to serious organised crime and includes sexual exploitation by gangs.

## Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. This is a crime in the UK even if the person is taken overseas for the mutilation. It is mostly carried out on young girls from infancy to around 15 years.

## So-called 'Honour' based Violence

'Honour' based violence or 'honour' crime is an act of violence explained by the abuser as being committed in order to protect or defend the 'honour' of the family/community. Young women are most likely to experience this type of violence where they are perceived to have acted outside of acceptable behaviour including: wearing makeup, having boyfriends/girlfriends from outside the family/community, becoming pregnant outside of marriage and rejecting a forced marriage.

## Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is one that takes place where one or both of the couple do not consent or lack the capacity to consent. A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage – the difference is that individuals choose to get married with an arranged marriage even though their families play a role in finding their partner.

## Dowry Related Abuse

Some women can experience abuse by their partner or in-laws for not bringing enough of a dowry (money or goods) with them when they get married.

## Stalking and Harassment

Stalking is repeated harassment that causes fear, distress or alarm to the person experiencing it. It can include threatening phone calls, emails, texts and letters, damaging property and following or spying on the person.

## Local Sources of Support

### LBTH DV Team

**0800 279 54 34** (Monday - Friday 09:00am-5:00pm)

The team provides a telephone duty line for both professionals and members of the public on domestic violence cases and issues.  
domesticviolence@towerhamlets.gov.uk

### The Haven Whitechapel

**020 7247 4787**

[www.thehavens.co.uk/whitechapel.php](http://www.thehavens.co.uk/whitechapel.php)

### Victim Support

**020 8555 8254**

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

### Galop (LGBT Service)

**020 7704 2040**

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

### ISVA (Support Sex workers experiencing sexual violence)

**078 52918404**

[Jacqueline.vennard@homerton.nhs.uk](mailto:Jacqueline.vennard@homerton.nhs.uk)

### East London Rape Crisis

**020 7683 1210**

(Mon/Fri/Sat 10am-12pm and Tues/wed/Thurs 6pm-8pm)  
Drop-in services (no appointment needed)

### Domestic Violence One-Stop-Shop

**020 7375 0520**

Jagonari centre, 183-185 Whitechapel Road, E1 1DN  
Mondays (09:30am - 12:30PM)

### Homeless Person's Unit Drop-in Surgery

**020 7364 7474**

Albert Jacob House, 62 Roman Road, E2 0PG  
Tuesdays (10:00am - 4:00pm)

### Barkantine DV Drop-in Surgery

**020 7791 8080**

Barkantine Medical Practice, 121, Westferry Road, E14 8JH  
Fridays (10:00am - 1:00PM)

## Safety Planning

To help to keep yourself, your friend or your family members safe from harm it is important to develop a safety plan. Safety plans will depend on the individual concerned but as a minimum it is a good idea to consider the following:

- Keep some money and a set of keys in a safe place
- Keep copies of documents you might need including a passport, immigration papers (especially if you fear that you might be forced to get married), injunctions and so on.
- Make calls from a friend's phone or house (or offer the use of yours)
- Keep a pre-paid mobile and charger in a safe place as you might need to leave your own phone
- Pack an emergency bag which includes necessities such as: clothes, money, prescriptions and documents
- Find out about your legal rights (housing, immigration status, children) at the one-stop-shop (see local support services) or the Rights of Women helpline (see national support services)
- Review your safety plan on a regular basis to ensure that it is up to date

## How many women and girls are affected?

VAWG is grossly underreported right across all 9 strands. However, the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that since the age of 16, 29% of women have experienced domestic violence; 20% have experienced sexual assault and 19% have experienced stalking. Approximately 97% of all known victims of interpersonal violence in Tower Hamlets are female - a significant gender bias towards women.

In 2011/2012 in Tower Hamlets there were:

- Over 5000 incidents reported to the Police
- 16 report of forced marriage or 'honour' based violence and 17 reported to the national charity Karma Nirvana
- 122 rape offences and 269 sexual offences
- Approximately 10,000 women will have experienced stalking or harassment

## What is Tower Hamlets' Approach to Tackling VAWG?

Tower Hamlets is committed to tackling all 9 strands of VAWG. In January 2013 we published our VAWG Plan 2013-2015 which is a multi-agency partnership plan aimed at working together with all of the agencies and organisations across the borough to address VAWG and provide support.

The Violence Against Women and Girls Plan builds upon the recognition between partner organisations that success in combatting VAWG requires agencies to work more effectively together. The need for a plan that achieves this is especially significant in the current economic climate where there have been substantial cuts in funding to relevant support services across the Public Sector. The welfare benefit reform commencing in summer 2013 will also increase the challenges faced by survivors of violence in securing access to safe accommodation at an affordable rent close to their jobs, social or family support networks or their children's schools.

There are 4 key objectives which underpin our Plan

- **Develop further understanding of VAWG and its impact**  
- Pulling together existing local information to build a comprehensive picture of VAWG and undertaking research and analysis to fill gaps in knowledge.
- **Prevention of VAWG** - Increasing awareness of the violence against women and girls agenda and challenging attitudes which seek to minimise abuse or blame victims of abuse
- **Support and Protection** - Supporting the victims of abuse, both adults and children, helping them to rebuild their lives
- **Holding Perpetrators to Account for their actions** - Protecting those experiencing violence and abuse and holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour

## How to get help

We know that it can be very difficult to ask for and to find help. Abuse can undermine your confidence and make you feel unable to act. But there are lots of people who can help and advise you on the course of action which is best for you.

If you feel that you or your children are in immediate danger then your first priority must be to keep yourself safe. Call **999** for the police or **112** from a mobile.

It can be very confusing and frightening to think about leaving a relationship or finding support for past violence from a partner or from your family but there is help out there and many forms of support are listed in this guide.

If you have experienced any of the forms of VAWG, there is help and support across the borough - all forms of abuse are wrong and you are never to blame.

If you are being abused, remember:

- You are not to blame for being abused or mistreated.
- You are not the cause of your partner's or your family's abusive behaviour.
- You deserve to be treated with respect.

- You deserve a safe and happy life.
- Your children deserve a safe and happy life.
- You are not alone. ***There are people waiting to help.***

## How to help your friends and family

If you suspect someone has been abused or is currently experiencing abuse

- Talk to her and try to get her to open up
- Don't be judgemental or looked shocked
- Reassure her that the abuse is not her fault
- Don't criticise someone for staying with an abuser or defending the abuser

## Giving Support

- If you need to support your friend or a family member make sure that anything you do to help does not place them at further risk of harm
- If the abuse is from their family do not suggest mediation (family or community) as this can lead to further abuse or risk of harm
- Offer practical support—use of your phone, mobile or address for messages
- Help your friend or family member to safety plan for themselves or their children (see page 8)
- Do not promise to keep things a secret if you think that children are at risk of harm.
- It is important to get specialist support for victims of all forms of VAWG and helplines are available in this guide.