

Sector Sustainability Shared Standards

Shared values that apply across the VAWG sector

Standards devised and recognised by:



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Introduction to Shared Core Standards

Introduction

These Standards were developed on behalf of Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales, Respect, SafeLives and Women's Aid by the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) at London Metropolitan University.

Recognition of the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is greater than ever before. In the UK, specialist services in the voluntary sector have led innovation and pioneered the development of a range of forms of provision (Kelly & Dubois, 2007) . Networks of services focusing on different forms of VAWG and the needs of different groups of survivors – for example sexual violence, domestic abuse and services for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women survivors of all forms of VAWG – have been established over the last 45 years developing distinct services and specialisms. Specialist VAWG services have many shared goals and practice frameworks and they also have unique specialist areas of expertise.

In 2013 Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales, Respect, SafeLives and Women's Aid formed the VAWG Sustainability Working Group to promote the sustainability of specialist independent, local organisations within the sector, with the aim of aligning a core set of shared standards and articulating the unique specialisms in the sector.

Sector specialisms

Within the VAWG sector in the UK the following areas of specialist expertise have developed and are recognised:

- **Imkaan:** Work with BME women and girl survivors of violence
- **Rape Crisis England & Wales:** Work with women and girl survivors of rape and sexual violence
- **Respect:** Work with male survivors of violence and work with perpetrators
- **Safe Lives:** Work to end domestic abuse and make families safe
- **Women's Aid:** Work to end domestic abuse against women and children.

What are the shared core standards?

Each of the above organisations has a set of quality service standards designed to address their unique specialist work and drive forward quality improvements (NICE, 2014) .

Standards provide benchmarks for service providers, funders and commissioners about the extent and mix of services that should be available, who should provide them, and the principles and practice base from which they should operate (Kelly & Dubois, 2007).

In order to ensure our respective service standards can be used by commissioners in joint commissioning we have developed and agreed a set of shared core standards. These can be used both nationally and locally for joint commissioning purposes.

How these shared core standards for VAWG services should be used

The purpose of these standards is to enable joint commissioning across specialist services in the VAWG sector.

These shared core standards are available to services offering specialist support in relation to VAWG that are affiliated to, members of or accredited by the following national organisations: Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales (and Scotland), Respect (specifically, Domestic Violence Prevention Programmes (DVPPs) and attached Integrated Support Services working with female current and ex-partners), SafeLives and Women's Aid Federation of England. These standards are not intended to 'stand alone'. They have been agreed as designated shared core standards, namely the minimum standards common to all five member organisations.

¹ Kelly, L. & Dubois, L. (2007) Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

² National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014) Quality standards process guide, Manchester: NICE Health and Social Care Directorate.

Guide for commissioners

Introduction

Recognition of the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is greater than ever before. However, support services have developed unevenly, both geographically and in terms of which forms of VAWG and/or service groups they work with (see Coy et al., 2007; 2009). In the UK, specialist services in the voluntary sector have led innovation and pioneered the development of a range of forms of provision (Kelly & Dubois, 2007). However, as services focusing on different forms of VAWG – for example, harmful practices, sexual violence or domestic abuse – have received varying levels of investment, public visibility and government policy attention, they have tended to develop distinct services and specialisms. Despite this, specialist VAWG services have many shared goals and practice frameworks.

Across the VAWG sector, over the past five years, some services and second-tier organisations have developed local or national service standards and/or accreditation frameworks to set benchmarks for the quality of service and to encourage standardisation and consistency of service. The historical diversity of approaches and types of provision within the VAWG sector meant that for some time this process evolved largely in response to the demands and pressures of funders locally, rather than being undertaken by the sector collectively. However, in 2013, Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales, Respect, Safe Lives and Women's Aid formed the VAWG Sustainability Working Group (SWG) to promote the sustainability of specialist independent, local organisations within the sector, with the aim of aligning their existing service standards or accreditation frameworks.

What are standards and how are they measured?

Standards provide benchmarks for service providers, funders and commissioners about the extent and mix of services that should be available, who should provide them, and the principles and practice base from which they should operate (Kelly & Dubois, 2007). Standards may be the minimum basic elements services must seek to provide, or they can be aspirational – not all services may yet meet all of the standards within their current resources but are aiming to do so (Kelly &

Dubois, 2007). Thus, standards are also a way of driving forward quality improvements (NICE, 2014).

To evidence the shared core standards identified here, shared core indicators have also been set out. Indicators summarise complex data into a meaningful form, abstracting and presenting the most important features needed to support informed decision-making (Expert Group on Indicators to Measure Violence Against Women, 2007). Indicators should be “measurable” in an accurate and accessible way (Ertürk, 2008).

How do these shared core standards for the VAWG sector assist commissioners?

With ever more restricted funding channels, and changes to funding processes in the form of competitive commissioning, VAWG services are increasingly expected to verify their quality and effectiveness (Charities Evaluation Service, 2011). Service standards, accreditation/validation and an outcome-oriented monitoring and evaluation framework are seen as key elements for demonstrating accountability and legitimacy.

These shared core standards have been prepared to aid commissioners in ensuring that high-quality services are being commissioned through the contracting process, and that provision is of a coherent and consistent standard across the VAWG sector.

Developing the shared core standards for VAWG services

This work evolved from discussions that have been held between the five key organisations in the VAWG SWG over two years. An initial independent review of each organisation’s documentation on their respective standards resulted in the identification of ten primary areas where commonalities were apparent. These were described as ‘common principles’. A detailed examination of the individual standards used within each organisation followed, first in isolation to confirm that they mapped onto the common principles, and then alongside each other to tease out the specific elements within each broad principle that were common across organisations. This process identified an additional common principle. Eleven core areas were agreed, with a number of shared standards identified within each. A shared core standard was only designated such where it appeared in the standards documentation of three or more member organisations. Two items were added as ‘aspirational’ standards (see 10.3 and 11.1), which the group wished to use as a basis to scale up their own organisational standards where these fell short of the agreed shared core standard.

The evidential requirements for each of the organisation’s standards that fell within the shared core standards were also reviewed in order to identify shared core indicators.

It was agreed that the shared core standards would be reviewed periodically to take account of updating of each individual organisation’s standards documentation. At the time these shared core standards were collated, the five organisations were at different points in their review cycles, but it was agreed that all would be reviewed within the coming year and updated to reflect the shared core standards, where applicable, for example in respect of the aspirational standards.

How these shared core standards for VAWG services should be used

These shared core standards are applicable to services offering specialist support in relation to VAWG that are affiliated to/members of the following organisations: Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales (and Scotland), Respect (specifically, Integrated Support Services working with female current and ex-partners) and Women's Aid Federation of England. These standards are not intended to 'stand alone'. They have been agreed as designated shared core standards, namely the minimum standards common to all five member organisations. This means they must be supplemented by additional criteria required to run specific VAWG services, whether this is relevant to type of provision (helpline, refuge, advocacy service), the forms of violence dealt with (single, multiple, all forms of VAWG) and/or specific service user groups, e.g. black and minority ethnic (BME), disabled, or lesbian, bisexual and trans (LBT) women. They are intended to apply to services that are specialist VAWG services.

The shared core standards

Below we introduce the 11 areas and the standards which are nested within them (please see table for full details).

1. VAWG is 'gender based'

The UN describes VAWG as "any act of gender-based violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (UN 2006: 12); a definition that has underpinned Westminster government policy. Perpetrators of violence towards women and men are, in the vast majority of cases, men. This does not mean that men are never victims of violence, or that women are not sometimes perpetrators. However, national and international prevalence surveys reveal a clear disproportionality along gender lines. The UN definition further clarifies that VAWG is a gender equality issue, with inequality identified as both a cause and consequence of such violence. In this view, the distribution of victimisation and offending both reflects and reproduces the gender order, and is a fundamental barrier to achieving equality between women and men.

Public perceptions and attitudes shape the social climate in which VAWG takes place. All forms of VAWG share characteristics that are linked to gendered norms and expectations for women and men, and commonly involve patterns of violent or controlling behaviour. Both victim blame and the ways men's behaviour is excused or minimised connect to these wider social norms.

Providing a response that is sensitive to the gendered dynamics of violence is a crucial component of specialist VAWG services. Putting this into practice can take a range of forms, including offering a service that is delivered by women-only staff, providing a safe space that is only frequented by women, and putting the service user at the centre of the response provided. The importance of these options to women was highlighted in a 2007 poll (Women's Resource Centre, 2007) of 1,000 randomly selected women, of whom 97% thought that women should have the choice of attending a women-only service if they had experienced a sexual assault, and 90% that women should have the choice to

report domestic or sexual violence to a female professional.

Many specialist VAWG services do extend at least some of their services to men. In this case, offering the option of male workers to male service users is common practice. A separate space where male survivors can access services should also be provided.

2. Intersectional approach

An intersectional approach recognises the unique experiences of women and the ways in which difference and disadvantage work across our societies. Intersectionality explains how multiple markers of difference, such as age, class, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation, intersect to inform lived experiences (Mason, 2010) and how these interact to reinforce conditions of inequality and social exclusion – the roots of violence.

This means that some women's experience of VAWG is not only gendered, but can also be connected to factors such as ethnicity, age, class, disability and sexuality. Less favourable treatment along multiple, intersecting lines affects women's experiences, their perspectives on those experiences and their access to support, safety and justice.

In meeting this standard, a service should be able to demonstrate its commitment to removing the barriers which prevent and/or limit both access and utilisation of services by some groups of women. For example, some groups of women are defined as 'hard to reach' and as 'distrustful' of services. Such rhetoric places the responsibility for addressing the barriers with those who are already marginalised and reinforces the idea that some 'communities' are, in and of themselves, social problems. An intersectional approach recognises that 'reach' is structural and thus the responsibility for removing the barrier rests with the organisation. An intersectional approach also recognises that historic and ongoing experiences of discrimination will impact on a woman's sense of trust. It is therefore the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that sensitivity to the gendered dynamics of VAWG does not ignore other areas of inequality that a woman may encounter.

An effective, intersectional approach is not limited to interactions with individual women, but should be at the core of each aspect of an organisation's work, from governance through to evaluation. An intersectional approach should be at the heart of an organisation's broader commitment to anti-discriminatory practice.

3. Diversity and equality

The public sector equality duty within the Equality Act 2010 means that public services must take account of the protected characteristics within the Act, offer fair and effective services, and further the equality aims of the Act, including eliminating discrimination and advancing equality between different groups. The provision of specialist VAWG services offering BME or women-only support is lawful, as such services are vital to alleviating VAWG, which is recognised as a form of discrimination (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011).

To engender trust and reach those who need vital support, services must reflect the populations

they serve. For example, research has consistently shown that survivors prefer to have contact with female professionals. Some groups of women (e.g. older women or disabled women) experience greater marginalisation and isolation, which has further impacts on their experiences of both violence and help-seeking. VAWG services have developed to meet need, and services led by and for specific groups are vital in reaching those who may not otherwise engage with mainstream and general third sector services, and in promoting social inclusion (Women's Resource Centre, 2007). For example, BME women's organisations have tried to address the barriers to accessing services facing BME survivors of VAWG by offering spaces they can identify with, in which they feel accepted, safe and less isolated, as well as having workers with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of gender, racism and discrimination that shape their experiences (Thiara & Roy, 2012).

Monitoring the profile and needs of service users in conjunction with those in the local population can indicate whether, and to what extent, local needs are being met. This can be done in various ways, including analysing existing service data, consulting with women from local communities, or through links with local community based-organisations.

4. Safety

Creating safety has been a central part of responses to VAWG since the first refuges were established (Kelly et al., 2014). Safety can have a variety of connotations and meanings in relation to different forms of VAWG and different women's experiences. For example, in cases of forced marriage, stalking and harassment or domestic violence, ensuring physical safety may be a matter of urgency, as the woman may still be in close contact with the perpetrator(s), whereas for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, it may be that mental health issues create alternate safety needs. There are additional safety considerations for women and girls who have recently arrived in the UK, and who may have insecure immigration status.

Across women's experiences, there may be a distinction between being and feeling safe (Kelly et al., 2014). While some practices, such as risk assessment and monitoring of safety concerns, are important because they provide immediate protection, others may be more concerned with ensuring women feel safe – for example, offering a safe environment in which to speak about their experiences or strengthening support networks. Providing the necessary support and facilitating access to other appropriate services can also help to create longer-term safety (see also 5. Undoing the harms of violence).

Another aspect of safety within specialist services is that of service providers themselves. This includes ensuring staff are equipped to work with service users and engage in safe working practices – through being appropriately recruited, trained and supported – and ensuring that workplaces are secure environments, including where staff must conduct home visits and other forms of lone working.

5. Dignity and respect

It is now widely accepted that VAWG violates the human rights of women and girls, and this is enshrined in international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation No. 19, 1992, and the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention. Locating VAWG within a human rights-based framework alerts us to the ways it impacts on fundamental rights, including the right to life, liberty, bodily integrity and dignity.

Staff within all services should strive to treat service users with dignity, respect and sensitivity, and this should be reinforced in training. It is particularly important to create an environment in which survivors can feel believed and not judged, as there is a history in institutional responses to VAWG of victim blaming, minimising women's experiences and a tendency to disbelieve those reporting. It is also critical that staff are aware of how groups of women can be stereotyped, further marginalised and 'othered' within policy, programming and service-delivery. Thus groups of BME women are more likely to be seen as aggressive, or passive, than their counterparts; or the violence that they have been subjected to may be framed within the singular context of 'culture' rather than within a broader framework of gender inequality and VAWG.

Agencies and practitioners should be aware that there are institutional barriers which impact on perceptions of a woman's credibility. For example, women who are subject to immigration control may be believed by support agencies, but may have their credibility challenged/disputed within a largely adversarial immigration and asylum system. As such, staff will need to ensure that the woman receives support in relation to immigration and asylum processes. This should include ensuring appropriate advocacy as well as emotional and other support that recognises how such processes can compound a woman's experiences of abuse and increase her vulnerability.

6. Undoing the harms of violence

In Britain, for over three decades specialised voluntary sector services have provided safe spaces in which women have been able to overcome shame and stigma, name and talk about their experiences without fear, be believed and respected, explore their options, seek justice, repair some of the harm the violence has caused and move on with their lives (Coy et al., 2009). Key to this has been an empowerment approach, which seeks to restore control to women and girls, which abuse has removed. In this sense, there is a commitment to not replacing the control of perpetrators with control by experts/professionals. Creating an environment in which survivors can exercise self-determination is part of rebuilding the self in the aftermath of abuse.

In practice, an empowerment approach means respecting women's autonomy and right to make decisions (e.g. about whether or not to report an incident to the police, and the type of support they wish to receive), and may involve providing access to information about their rights and options. This feeds into the 'holistic' service model that many women's organisations seek to offer – combining short and longer-term support, practical and emotional support, advocacy, advice and counselling.

7. Integrative pathways between specialised agencies

Over the past two decades, the multi-faceted nature of VAWG as a social, criminal, public health, economic and human rights issue has been recognised. In response, drawing inspiration particularly from work developed in North America, the concept of joint working to address VAWG, especially domestic violence, has taken hold in the UK, and is sometimes described as a Coordinated Community Response (CCR). This collaborative model of working places accountability on the perpetrator and involves the participation of a range of different sectors and stakeholders. The benefits to more joined up working on VAWG include making connections with issues related to VAWG, and improving referral processes between agencies with different specialisms.

Partnership working in the context of specialist VAWG support services is about clarity in relation to the aims and parameters of individual services, finding ways to pool strengths through creating efficient referral pathways and sharing expertise, and advocating within multi-agency settings on behalf of VAWG support service users and their needs. Supportive partnerships also entail promoting and protecting specialisms within the sector by respecting the range of skills and capacities that have developed within agencies, often over decades and, wherever possible, taking a non-competitive approach, e.g. through building consortiums.

8. Prevention

The beliefs and norms that underpin violence against women are resistant to change, meaning that primary prevention requires long-term investment. While prevention is at the heart of UN approaches to VAWG, with elimination the eventual goal, efforts are often ad hoc with an emphasis on awareness-raising rather than primary prevention. However, NGOs have led the field in developing curricula and interventions at the local level (Ertürk, 2008). Specialist VAWG organisations often perform multiple functions in addition to their primary support roles, including being 'agents of social change' (Women's Aid & Imkaan, 2014). While their frontline work involves supporting survivors, many also work to challenge norms, raise awareness among professionals, educate children and young people and hold perpetrators to account (Women's Aid & Imkaan, 2014). This vital work also needs to be recognised and supported by commissioners, but not at the expense of funding frontline services.

9. User participation and engagement

Service user involvement and participation help promote a culture of empowerment. When survivors are directly involved in organisational decision-making, services benefit from their expertise, insights and knowledge. Survivors may be involved in various ways, from contributing to evaluation and feedback, to participating in a survivors' forum or reference group, to being represented on the management board. This approach is increasingly reflected in other public services, such as the health service, with patient involvement in the commissioning and design of services, and greater choice and control over treatment (Department of Health, 2011).

10. Outcomes

An outcome measure is “a measure of change, the difference from one point in time (usually before an intervention) to another point in time (usually following an intervention)” (Kendal cited in Department of Health, 2011: 48). There has been an increasing emphasis on outcome measurement and outcome-focused commissioning across all public services in recent years (Callanan et al., 2012). Regular outcome-based monitoring has the potential to enable services to become more effective for their users, and contribute to planning and service development, as well as tracking the progress of individual service users. Monitoring and evaluation should aid learning and service development as much as it should evaluate performance for internal and external stakeholders such as funders. Outcomes measurement can also contribute significantly to the ongoing development of the broader knowledge and evidence base on violence against women and girls and inform wider social change.

There are currently no standardised outcome measures for VAWG services (Department of Health, 2011), although all organisations within the VAWG SWG have been at the forefront in developing outcome frameworks for their respective members whilst working to streamline their efforts (see Women’s Aid and Imkaan, 2014). Building on the work culminating in these shared core standards, there are ongoing conversations within the VAWG SWG about developing shared outcomes.

Services should perform regular outcomes monitoring to ensure that needs and objectives are met at the level of both the individual and the service. Outcome measures should be informed by survivors themselves to ensure they are meaningful, and the collection and analysis of such information should, where possible, be fed into the developing knowledge base.

11. Governance and leadership

Women’s NGOs have been at the forefront of developing and promoting women’s leadership, offering opportunities that have led many to enter public life and public service. This is a taken-for-granted contribution of such services, but it should not be underestimated or undermined by commissioning. This also has a particular resonance for specialist BME VAWG organisations which have promoted leadership by black women (Larasi, 2013) and ensuring that staff, as far as possible, reflect the diversity of their service users. Because of the centrality of power and control in VAWG, it is important that VAWG specialist organisations and governance structures model a positive relationship to power – for example, ensuring that there are clear processes in place if current/former service users wish to approach the board.

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Shared core standards with indicators

Overarching principle	Core shared standard	Proposed core shared indicators
1. Understanding how violence and abuse are gender based	1.1 The service has an understanding of the ways in which violence and abuse are gender based	<p>1.1.1 Clear statement of organisational values containing gendered understanding of VAWG which appears in agency documentation (e.g. website, mission statement, business plan, promotional materials, where relevant).</p> <p>1.1.2 Training provided (e.g. to staff, volunteers, board members) reflects these core values.</p>
	1.2 The service provides a response that is sensitive to the gendered nature of violence	<p>1.2.1 A safe women-only space is provided for female survivors to access services.</p> <p>1.2.2 A separate safe space is provided for male survivors (if applicable) in which they can access services.</p> <p>1.2.3 All survivors are offered the opportunity to access a female practitioner.</p>
2. Intersectional approach	2.1 The service recognises the impact of multiple, intersecting oppressions and works to ensure that a non-discriminatory service is available and accessible to all who may need it	<p>2.1.1 Mission statement and values reflect multiple, intersecting systems of oppression and subjugation of women and girls including patriarchy, racism and homophobia.</p> <p>2.1.2 Policy and service plans are embedded in a robust equalities framework. In some cases, this may be focused on specific population(s).</p> <p>2.1.3 Engagement and utilisation rates are monitored and a strategy is in place to address low engagement across equality strands.</p> <p>2.1.4 Language and practice is anti-oppressive and robust complaints procedures exist to challenge racism and other forms of discrimination.</p> <p>2.1.5 Work is undertaken with other agencies to increase understanding of and responsiveness to survivors' needs and to address discriminatory practices.</p> <p>2.1.6 Resources and expertise are allocated to cover the costs involved in delivering these (e.g. interpreting, translations, adaptations to cater for disability).</p>
3. Diversity and equality	3.1 The organisation monitors and responds to diversity of need within the population	<p>3.1.1 Regular monitoring is conducted of the profile and needs of service users and the wider population across all equality strands.</p> <p>3.1.2 The service can demonstrate how it has responded to diversity of need in service planning and delivery.</p>

Overarching principle	Core shared standard	Proposed core shared indicators
4. Enhancing safety of service users and staff, and promoting safe practices	4.1 The service seeks to expand the safety of all women (and children, where applicable) and develops models of practice which facilitate this	<p>4.1.1 There is a protocol outlining any risk that the perpetrator poses to the survivor and any children and responds to safety concerns</p> <p>4.1.2 A procedure is in place for systematically assessing the risk that the perpetrator poses to the survivor and any children and for periodically reviewing the safety of survivors and their children (if applicable)</p>
	4.2 The service offers a safe space for service users, linked to intersectional gender analysis	<p>4.2.1 Services are delivered in a women-only space that is safe and appropriate.</p> <p>4.2.2 Where the service is a helpline, this will mean a female helpline worker/volunteer.</p> <p>4.2.3 Male survivors (where relevant) can access services in a separate safe and appropriate space.</p>
	4.3 The service ensures a safe working environment for staff	4.3.1 A policy or procedure is in place to assess and manage the safety of staff both in the workplace and when working outside the site of normal service delivery.
	4.4 The service ensures the safe and reflective practice of its staff through systems for recruitment, training and skills, and appropriate staff support and supervision	<p>4.4.1 The service takes steps to ensure staff are suitably skilled and equipped to work with VAWG survivors before beginning work with them.</p> <p>4.4.2 Staff have regular supervision sessions at which safety issues can also be raised.</p>
	4.5 The service works to enhance practices in other agencies to more consistently prioritise the safety and well-being of women and girls	<p>4.5.1 The service can evidence its contribution to integrative working with other agencies (through referral protocols, service level agreements etc).</p> <p>4.5.2 Partnership agreements reflect the specific needs of the service's own users.</p>
	4.6 The service has a confidentiality policy that protects service users' safety and security	<p>4.6.1 A policy is in place that outlines how the confidentiality and security of service users' personal data will be protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act.</p> <p>4.6.2 Hard copies of case files are stored in secure filing cabinets.</p> <p>4.6.3 Online service user records are stored securely (e.g. on password protected devices).</p> <p>4.6.4 Where information is shared between collaborating agencies, this is relevant and proportionate and is governed by a protocol that protects the interests and privacy rights of service users.</p>

Overarching principle	Core shared standard	Proposed core shared indicators
5. Dignity and respect	5.1 Service users are treated by staff with dignity and respect within a culture of belief	<p>5.1.1 Staff code of conduct prioritises a respectful and believing response to service users.</p> <p>5.1.2 Staff language and practice is anti-oppressive.</p> <p>5.1.3 Service user feedback demonstrates that service users feel listened to and believed.</p>
6. Undoing the harms of violence, enhancing women and girls' freedoms and well-being	6.1 The organisation empowers the service user to re-establish control and direction in their own lives	<p>6.1.1 Service provision is targeted to meet the survivor's specific needs.</p> <p>6.1.2 Individual support plans are in place for all service users.</p> <p>6.1.3 Service users are enabled to make their own choices about the support or intervention they receive.</p> <p>6.1.4 Service user feedback indicates an enhanced awareness of their rights to lives free of violence and discrimination.</p> <p>6.1.5 Outcome measurements include indicators on well-being and regaining control.</p>
7. Integrative partnerships between specialised services	7.1 The organisation has a clear, written statement of its purpose and values. Service users are informed about the scope, limitations and independence of the services being provided	<p>7.1.1 Positive partnerships between specialist VAWG services preserve and promote specialisms within agencies around particular forms of VAWG and intersectionality. VAWG services respect what they can learn from each other.</p> <p>7.1.2 Policies, plans and promotional materials clearly state the independence of the specialist service, and define whom the service is for and the scope of the service provided.</p>
	7.2 The service is actively involved in productive partnerships with other agencies and engages in joint working on VAWG	<p>7.2.1 The diverse and varied needs of the population(s) served are represented and articulated within multi-agency forums.</p> <p>7.2.2 Up-to-date information about the specialist service is shared with others.</p> <p>7.2.3 Partnerships are formalised in a written protocol or Service Level Agreement (SLA) and are reviewed regularly.</p> <p>7.2.4 Service user groups, autonomous survivor forums and individual service users who have moved on to independence are supported to engage in strategic consultations and discussion.</p>

Overarching principle	Core shared standard	Proposed core shared indicators
	7.3 The organisation has a protocol for signposting or referring to appropriate organisations	<p>7.3.1 Service users are signposted or referred to other services when their needs fall outside the remit or where they have additional needs.</p> <p>7.3.2 Appropriate multi-agency responses to the needs of the population(s) served are facilitated on a case-by-case basis through integrative partnership working and collaboration.</p> <p>7.3.3 Up-to-date information is held about the safety and suitability of other relevant services.</p> <p>7.3.4 Concerns about other services are recorded and addressed.</p> <p>7.3.5 Work is undertaken with other agencies to promote, support and improve their response to victims of VAWG accessing those agencies.</p> <p>7.3.6 There is a clear pathway into and out of the organisation.</p>
8. Prevention	8.1 The organisation promotes and engages in preventative work to end violence against women and girls	<p>8.1.1 There is a service commitment to using mechanisms that highlight the need to prevent specific forms of violence against women and targets those that are under-represented in services.</p> <p>8.1.2 There is evidence of the service's engagement in local preventative work, including: via websites and social media; in school, college and other youth-based settings; in community and agency settings; and through the creation of space for survivors to speak out (such as peer projects).</p>
9. Service user participation and engagement	9.1 The organisation empowers women and girls to actively engage in the evaluation and strategic development of the service; and informs them of changes made as a result	<p>9.1.1 A strategy is in place to involve women and girls in the evaluation and strategic development of the service.</p> <p>9.1.2 A range of mechanisms exist through which women and girls can do this.</p> <p>9.1.3 A structure is in place for collating and analysing feedback; complaints are fed through the relevant system.</p> <p>9.1.4 A process is in place to feed back to women and girls the outcome of their participation.</p>
	9.2 The service supports women and girls to be active participants in wider social issues affecting their lives	<p>9.2.1 Women and girls are empowered to build their skills and knowledge of democratic and social change processes (e.g. through group work).</p> <p>9.2.2 Women and girls are invited to take part in policy consultations and campaigning.</p>

Overarching principle	Core shared standard	Proposed core shared indicators
10. Outcomes	10.1 The organisation monitors the outcomes and relevance of services, ensuring that they are accessible to all sections of the community	<p>10.1.1 Services routinely collect outcome data and can evidence how they use it to develop service provision and address gaps/unmet needs for the population(s) they work with.</p> <p>10.1.2 Actions are assigned to address gaps identified.</p> <p>10.1.3 Staff members are trained to understand the importance of monitoring progress towards outcomes, and the methods and skills for doing so.</p>
	10.2 Monitoring methods are meaningful for service users and they are able to express themselves	<p>10.2.1 Outcome measures are survivor-identified.</p> <p>10.2.2 The methods used to engage women and girls provide them with the opportunity to share their own narratives of change.</p>
	10.3 Outcomes contribute to local and national evidence gathering on VAWG	<p>10.3.1 Outcomes measurement is recognised as a mechanism through which the service can contribute to the knowledge and evidence base on violence against women and girls.</p> <p>10.3.2 Services participate in the efforts of second-tier organisations to build the evidence base.</p>
11. Governance and leadership	11.1 Specialist services model a positive use of power across their structures	<p>11.1.1 Mechanisms are in place to allow service users, volunteers and staff at all levels to communicate directly with the board and contribute to decision-making processes.</p> <p>11.1.2 Robust complaints, grievance and whistleblowing policies are in place.</p> <p>11.1.3 Service users and staff are informed of their rights to have a voice in the service and the mechanisms available to them to exercise those rights.</p>
	11.2 Key positions of responsibility are held by women and staff reflect the diversity of service users	<p>11.2.1 Specialist services are led and governed by women who represent the diversity of the women and girls who access the service.</p> <p>11.2.2 Strategies are in place to address under-representation.</p>

