

# Gender-based Violence Strategy Consultation Report on the findings

## August 2021

### Introduction

The online consultation on the gender-based violence strategy ran from the 22<sup>nd</sup> June – August 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 and received 150 responses. Additionally, several focus groups with certain groups and some interviews with victims of gender-based violence were carried out by GMCA colleagues and an outside research organisation. This report draws together the findings of both these elements of the consultation period.

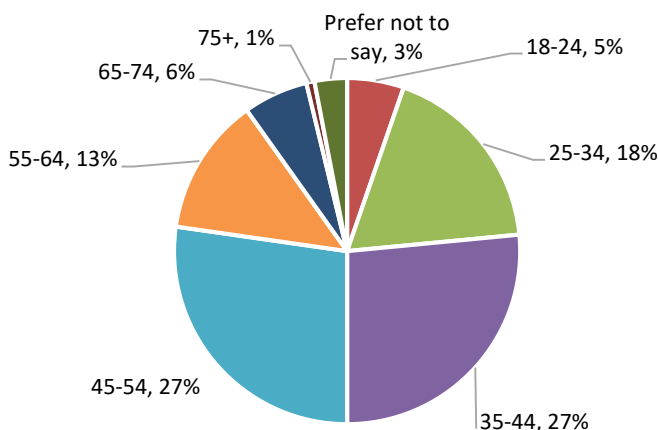
The structure of the report is based around the structure of the online consultation with each section highlighting the commitments that were prioritised by the public as well as some themes that stood out within the online consultation and the focus groups that relate to that section.

### Demographics of respondents

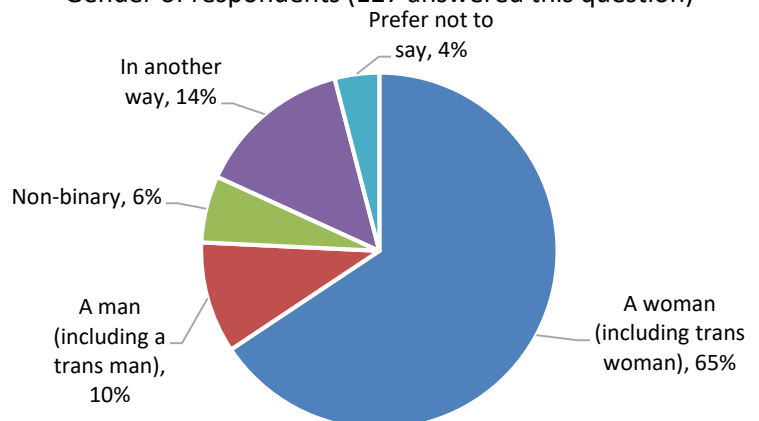
150 responses were received via GM Consult and 127 respondents described their gender. 65% identified as a woman (including trans woman), 10% as a man (including a trans man), 6% as non-binary, 14% in another way and 4% prefer not to say. Of those who answered 'in another way' the vast majority remarked in the free text box that their sex was female. This links to a theme around gender/sex which is explored below.

132 respondents gave their age. 5% were 18-24, 18% 25-34, 27% 35-44, 27% 45-54, 13% 55-64, 6% 65-74 and 1% over 75.

Age of respondent (132 answered this question)



Gender of respondents (127 answered this question)



## **Title and definition**

- 75% of people agreed with the definition overall. 12 men answered this question and only 58% of them agreed with the definition compared to 89% of women (80 women responded).
- All of the focus groups agreed overall with the title and definition.

## **Violence**

15 online responses questioned the use of the word violence rather than abuse or harm as they felt that violence did not incorporate the experiences that women face which aren't necessarily physical violence such as inappropriate comments or touching, psychological abuse and other 'lower-level' acts which are still harmful. They argued that violence has too strong a connection to something physical and did not incorporate the emotional impact. The disability panel focus group, the female and male school student focus groups and the police and probation focus group also picked up on this.

## **More inclusivity**

There were also a large number of responses which wanted the definition to be more inclusive by specifically including trans and non-binary victims within the definition to recognise the fact that they are also at risk of gender-based violence because of their gender identity. The disability panel and some victims of gender-based violence also raised this. Another suggested addition to the definition from victims of gender-based violence that were interviewed was around misuse of religion where perpetrators use the victim's own religion to control or influence their behaviour.

## **Online abuse**

Several people felt that the definition was missing online abuse and harm. This included the sharing of images without consent, online exploitation, and inappropriate comments on social media. Although online harm was mentioned in the strategy a few times, respondents felt that this was not sufficient and that online harm was particularly significant. Each one of the focus groups picked up on this and felt that it should play a larger role within the definition and the strategy. The focus group with police and probation in particular agreed that online harms were becoming worse and more prevalent with more cases being seen in probation so it is important that it is prioritised.

## **More clarity**

A few people also commented on the inaccessibility or vagueness of the definition. They felt that it needed to be clearer so that victims could see that a commitment was being made to them. There was a recommendation that a more accessible shorter version of the definition could be used alongside the more detailed definition. The police and probation focus group and some of the interviewed victims of gender-based violence also commented that romance fraud was not a clear term and could be easily conflated with other forms of emotional abuse so wanted greater detail around what this incorporated. Three interviewees also did not know the meaning of the word misogyny so felt that this needed clarification.

## **Male victims**

Some responses wanted a stronger mention of male victims of domestic abuse within the definition and felt that the strategy had a role in challenging the idea that men can't be victims of domestic abuse and should encourage them to identify as victims. Victims of gender-based violence that took part in interviews felt that it was good that men and boys were included in the definition but that the focus on women and girls was correct. On the other hand, the focus group with younger men felt that men were presented as an afterthought.

## **Alternatives**

There were a few suggestions of alternative titles. Most were in favour of 'Violence against Women and Girls'

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as this is a widely recognised term that recognises that women/girls are the majority of victims.

- Violence against women & girls
- Tackling sexist abuse/violence and challenging regressive gendered stereotypes
- Gender-based and domestic violence Strategy
- Gender-based violence and abuse strategy

## Key priorities

- 81% of respondents agreed with the key priorities (77% of men and 92% of women). 18-24 year olds were the least likely to agree (57%) although there was a small sample size of only 7 respondents in this age group. 25-34 year olds were the second least likely to agree (70% agreed with the priorities out of 23).
- People ranked Priority 1 as the most important “Tackle the attitudes and underlying inequalities that foster gender-based violence”.
- Priority 3 came second “Make it as easy as possible for victims and survivors to access the support and guidance they need, and providing high quality, joined up victim-focused services across health care, criminal justice and other specialist providers”.
- Priority 11 came third “Maximise accountability to victims and survivors, especially with regard to police and justice outcomes; while working with the public, especially young people, to tackle the norms, attitudes and inequalities that enable, justify and excuse gender-based violence; protecting those at risk of harm; and working with those at risk of perpetrating it”
- Victims of gender-based violence ranked priority 3 and priority 11 highly but also felt that priority 6 “Reduce the risk of homelessness that forces many victims and their children to endure domestic abuse and increase the options for rehousing perpetrators to minimise the harm caused to victims” was a high priority

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 7	Priority 8	Priority 9	Priority 10	Priority 11
Top Choice	35%	14%	21%	3%	1%	7%	1%	0%	0%	2%	16%
Within Top 2	47%	30%	45%	10%	4%	20%	4%	6%	2%	6%	24%
Within Top 3	58%	37%	63%	13%	7%	37%	9%	10%	6%	11%	45%

## **Sex or gender**

A considerable proportion of responses wanted this strategy to use the term ‘sex-based violence’ rather than gender-based violence. They felt that it was a person’s biological sex rather than their gender that put them at risk of violence. Several remarked on the fact that sex rather than gender is a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010 and so it is essential that sex is prioritised in policy, accurately recorded and monitored.

This rhetoric of sex rather than gender was strongly linked to an argument for single sex-based services. These respondents want services to be available on the basis of biological sex (i.e. the gender assigned to you at birth) and felt that opening up services to trans women would put females at risk. Some argued that separate services for men and trans women were needed alongside female only services.

**Training**

Training was one of the most raised themes and is relevant to several sections within this report. People felt that there needed to be a mass roll out of training around identifying the signs of abuse within a wide variety of workplaces including schools, hospitals, GPs and care homes with a particular focus on coercive control. Some raised the importance of this training being kept up to date with any technological advancements which could affect how victims experience gender-based violence.

**Language**

Other responses focused on the language and wording and expressed that the priorities were very broad and in general the priorities and commitments were quite vague. People were unclear about how change was going to be implemented and wanted more specific actions rather than broad aims. Some of the gender-based violence victims that were interviewed felt that whilst it was important to reflect and learn as outlined in priority 7, this should not be at the expense of actions and practical help.

Several felt that the consultation and the strategy document was not accessible as the language was very ‘public sector speak’ and used ‘buzzwords’ or ‘jargon’. The focus group with younger men thought that the terminology was out of date and not relevant to the modern day. They mentioned the use of words such as ‘misogyny’ ‘homicides’ and ‘exploitation’ and thought that these were not within the general dialect, particularly of younger people.

**Service delivery**

Others argued that there was not enough of a focus on services for victims of gender-based violence within the priorities. For example, one response commented that the priorities concentrated on system improvements, education and interagency working but had little about the best approaches to working with victims and the services which are crucial for supporting individuals. Others felt that there was too greater focus on campaigning and the police rather than services for victims and that the service delivery model was not well developed.

**Prevention**

A few comments focused on the need for the priorities to include more around prevention and new ways of understanding why gender-based violence happens. The focus group with younger women similarly felt that the priorities were mainly ‘aftercare’ and that there needed to be a greater focus on prevention.

**Funding and measuring change**

One theme that was raised a lot throughout the focus groups and the online consultation was around funding and the lack of detail around how this strategy was going to be resourced. Lots were fearful that without proper funding, the ambitions of this strategy would not come to fruition.

In addition, some responses centred around how the commitments in this strategy were going to be measured and how this would be used to evaluate the success and implement changes to delivery.

**Mobilising GM**

- 77% agreed that these are the right commitments to mobilise GM against gender-based violence. This included 77% of men and 88% women that agreed.
- 35-44 year olds were the least likely to agree. 60% of 35-44 year olds agreed compared to 88% of 45-54 year olds and 74% of 25-34 year olds)
- Commitment 1 ranked the highest “Develop a programme of public engagement that highlights how attitudes and inequalities contribute to gender-based violence, including a campaign directed at men and boys”

- Commitment 4 was prioritised as second “Introduce a discrete emergency contact system for passengers using public transport and help Local Authorities to secure public space protection orders”
- The third most highly ranked was commitment 5 “Promote best practice processes for employers with respect to recording and responding to domestic abuse and sexual harassment, safeguarding those at risk of stalking and equipping workers to call out discriminatory attitudes and abusive behaviours without fear of repercussions”

## Campaigns

The need for all campaigns to be accessible was brought up several times. This included multilingual campaigns in a variety of different spaces such as hospitals, GPs, toilets of hospitality venues, police stations. One comment did, however, remark that these campaigns may only work in reaching those who are already engaged, easily accessible and digitally savvy rather than those on the margins who have a greater need. They wanted greater investment in engagement to ensure these hard to reach groups were also accessed.

The younger women focus group thought that campaigns should be timely and related to current topics, such as big football tournaments. They did, however, also feel that campaigns should go throughout the year as a constant reminder rather than there being two big campaigns a year. On the other hand the focus group with younger men questioned the benefit of a campaign directed towards men and boys and thought that it may cause offense to a lot of men and boys that do not participate in the areas of concern highlighted by the campaign. They didn't want the campaign to come across as accusatory.

## Discourse

A couple of comments focused on the need for a change in discourse around gender-based violence which supports the creation of new norms that allow change to happen. In education and in frontline services, they felt that deep thought and consideration was needed around how we speak about, produce materials about and train others about these forms of violence, these inequalities and the individuals that are affected by it. A greater focus, therefore, on population level behaviour change and a challenge to ways of thinking for Greater Manchester that would change the discourse was needed in this strategy. They felt that the effects of this change in discourse and how people think about this topic should be measured and evaluated as part of this strategy.

## Safety on transport

The female school student focus group felt that having more police on public transport would make people feel safer and they thought that police at every other stop could work.

Introducing a discrete emergency contact system on public transport was considered a tangible commitment and people thought that this would make it easy to measure. They wanted more examples like this where they could grasp an action that was going to happen.

## Pornography

Several responses wanted a greater inclusion of the harmful effects of pornography to be included within the strategy. They argued that the increasingly sexualised mainstream pornographic culture was normalising violence and that this strategy should aim to raise awareness of the influence that pornography has, for example with young people. Some wanted Greater Manchester to lobby government to introduce measures to make it more difficult to access online pornography.

The focus group with female school students highlighted the issue of pornography amongst young boys and were concerned by the violence involved and the extent to which boys found this funny or were proud to have watched it. The girls felt that educating in year 6 or earlier was important to increase awareness.

**Sex work**

People shared various views around sex work, much of which opposed one another. Some felt that the strategy should push for the closure of strip clubs and brothels as they felt that sex work was inherently harmful for women.

Others felt that those working in the sex industry needed to have their voices heard and felt that mentioning sex work only a couple of times within the strategy was not sufficient. They wanted a commitment to working to combat violence against sex workers that was guided by sex workers themselves as they felt that there needed to be tailored services for this group of people.

A small number were worried about the association with White Ribbon as they opposed their campaigns to prevent strip clubs and felt that creating licenced spaces for strippers was safer than banning them. This was also raised in the focus group with younger women. A small number of responses wanted to see more engagement with sex-positive attitudes around normalising nudity and discussion of consent.

**Training for employers**

The focus group with younger men considered preventing violence and harassment in the workplace as a priority and they wanted to see training for employers that would help them identify issues and know what to do if someone was experiencing gender-based violence in the workplace.

**Further clarification**

Several responses wanted further details around the commitment to 'Anticipate the demand generated by enhanced public awareness'.

Some comments struggled to understand the inclusion of commitment 6 around the pay gap and how this fitted with a gender-based violence strategy.

Another response suggested that 'third' be replace with VCSE sector in commitment 7 "Ensure all third and public sector professionals have access to the best professional development programmes about gender-based violence and are committed to challenging the sexism, racism and homophobia that contribute to it". They thought this would be better for a lay person to understand and it also aligns with other Greater Manchester strategies wording.

Some were unfamiliar with the term neurodivergent and felt this needed explanation.

**Supporting victims and survivors**

- 89% of respondents agreed with these commitments. This was 75% of men and 97% of women.
- Commitment 2 was ranked the highest "A review of how domestic abuse cases are managed by Greater Manchester Police to ensure victims in the criminal justice system are offered the very best service, kept informed, treated with dignity and listened to"
- Commitment 1 was ranked second highest "The introduction of a new Trusted Referrer's Scheme that will enable voluntary sector organisations, faith groups and schools to refer victims directly to health and criminal justice services to help reduce the need for victims to repeat their stories"
- Commitment 7 was ranked third highest "Ensure our victim's services are fully signposted and accessible to all, irrespective of whether the complainant has contacted the police, has no recourse to public funds, and whatever their immigration status, complying with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's call for 'firewall' services to protect those victims of gender-based violence who are of interest to immigration enforcement"
- Victims of gender-based violence that were interviewed also felt that commitment 10 "Develop and evaluate integrated approaches to housing and law enforcement that prioritise moving perpetrators rather than victims wherever possible" was a priority as often perpetrators used the threat of homelessness as a weapon against the victim.



## **Men**

Some responses focused on the gender bias within the strategy and felt that male victims were not included enough. Lots focused on the low reporting rates from male victims but understood this as a consequence of toxic gender norms which prevent men from seeing themselves as victims. They thought that the real numbers of male victims was likely to be much higher, and more on par with female victims. Although the definition does include male victims, some thought that the rest of the document excluded them.

On the other hand, a small number of people were frustrated by the inclusion of men and boys at all, as they felt that the stark statistics that suggest such high victimisation rates for women and girls was enough for this strategy to prioritise women and girls rather than include the caveat that sometimes men and boys are victims too.

## **Equality and Diversity**

A large number of responses focused on the need for greater commitment to long-term funding for specialist 'by and for' services for black and minoritised women, older women, disabled women and LGBTQI+ people. They argued that many women and girls do not access the criminal justice system but instead seek support to rebuild their lives from community-based specialist services and that sustainable provision of these services was essential.

People commended the recognition of LGBT abuse as a subcategory but felt that there was not the same recognition of the challenges and different experiences that women from ethnic minorities experience. They wanted greater detail around how these women would be supported. One suggestion was the addition of an 'inclusion' section which would look at the needs of specific groups. Similarly, the disabled panel felt that a specific section on disabled people and gender-based violence was needed and that they could draft a response if that was needed.

There were also a couple of comments which discussed the role of the GMCA and the work it needs to do to ensure that it represents the diverse populations in Greater Manchester. They mentioned the lack of diversity within senior positions and the impact that this has on how communities engage with policy and change. In addition, they felt that the GMCA needed to review their selection processes for commissioned services so that community based applicants who are connected to the diverse communities within Greater Manchester were commissioned and didn't lose out to larger organisations which don't have the same community ties. They felt that the GMCA often draws on the skills of diverse communities without actually funding them.

Some discussion within the disabled panel focus group focused on the issue that lots of disabled people face which is that the person abusing them is also their carer. They highlighted the role that GMCA could play in lobbying the government to make an amendment to the DA bill that would take away the carers defence (that the victim was restrained as part of their caring role).

They also raised the issue that there are no accessible refuge spaces for disabled people who are seeking to escape violence. There is a need for accessible women's centres and accessible safe houses or accommodation as often these have no wheelchair access. The national shortage of accessible housing means that people are stuck with no alternative place to live and forced to remain in abusive situations.

In addition, the disabled panel would like to see more information about domestic abuse that was in plain English or easy read material. They found that some services require people to self-refer using online forms but that this was not accessible for all.

## **Co-design**

Several responses felt that the lived experiences of victims and survivors had not been incorporated into the strategy and that this was a gap. Some argued that rather than looking at staff, system and service solutions that work within the parameters of the existing offer, there was an option to be more radical and transformational by putting those with lived experiences at the heart of the design, development and

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commission decisions. This was seen as a missed opportunity to create change and develop community-led approaches.

The lack of involvement of the VCSE sector who provide support to these individuals in the writing of this strategy was also commented on several times. Respondents felt that these VCSE and grass roots groups were experts in the field and could provide information on what works and needed to be brought on as allies within this strategy. Others felt that the highly specialised training developed and delivered by the VCSE sector needed to be recognised.

### **Accountability to victims**

A few responses commented on the poor experience that some victims have, experiencing long wait times and poor practice. They felt that there needed to be more accountability from services and a route for victims to complain if they are not happy with the service they have received.

### **Interviews with Victims**

The findings from the interviews with victims of gender-based violence expressed that what is most important for the strategy to make a difference is a focus on ease of reporting, accessibility of services for all, followed by practical help. Ease of reporting and speed of access to services will encourage more reporting whilst training of frontline staff to enable signposting to relevant support services will also boost access to support. After this, the focus should be on the practical elements of support such as housing and finance.

### **Specific remarks**

In relation to commitment 10 "Develop and evaluate integrated approaches to housing and law enforcement that prioritise moving perpetrators rather than victims wherever possible" a few responses commented that this should be on a case-by-case basis as some victims may want to leave the area where they have felt unsafe or where they worry that their abuser will return.

### **Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People**

- 90% of respondents that answered this question agreed that these were the right key commitments for supporting children and young people. 75% of men and 97% of women agreed
- 35-44 year olds least likely to agree (76% agreed).
- Commitment 3 was ranked highest "Increasing investment in children and young people's mental health services so that mental health support for children and young people becomes readily accessible through educational institutions, while relieving pressure on police and emergency services"
- Commitment 4 came second in the ranking "Mapping the range of provisions for therapeutic services for children and young people who are living in homes affected by domestic abuse and extending access to pre-existing adult services to older teenagers at risk of intimate partner violence and/or peer-on-peer abuse"
- Commitment 1 was the third highest ranked "Extending Operation Encompass so that schools are notified the next morning when the police attend domestic abuse incidents where anyone under 18 is present"

### **Education**

There was a strong response around children and young people and lots of this focused around schools and education settings. Lots felt that all education settings including academies, free schools, private schools and alternative education settings needed to have a standardised approach which centred around teaching children about respect regardless of difference.

Sex and relationship education was considered a priority so that young people are taught from a young age what a healthy and respectful relationship looks like. Some responses thought that this sex and relationship



education should be taught by trained specialists rather than normal teachers so that the right messages are made clear. The male school student focus group also expressed this sentiment.

The female school student focus group discussed on the need to educate boys around feeling safe to speak out and moving away from punishment and more towards changing attitudes. They also felt that learning about gender-based violence as well as relationship and sex education should not be restricted to one day and should focus on a series of study sessions throughout the year. They felt that science teachers taking these lessons did not work as the boys failed to take it seriously.

The focus group with younger women also expressed agreement that education around what a healthy relationship looks like needs to be given at a younger age so that young people don't believe any abuse they have witnessed at home is acceptable. Similarly, the focus group with younger men focused on the need for more education around consent.

The focus group with male school students also thought that educating children and young people will help victims to open up as they may realise that they are not alone and this will make them more comfortable to report. They also felt that educating people about 'red flags' was important so that underlying attitudes can be changed.

The Youth Combined Authority suggested working in predominantly male spaces and reaching out to young boys there such as cadets, boxing clubs and football clubs. They thought that boys and young men needed to begin to question the language that was being used within their own friendship groups.

The focus group with younger women recommended that universities should offer a mandatory course around gender based violence at the start of the Freshers week as a part of a standard safety inductions such as fire safety talks and would mean everyone would be reached, not just those that opted in.

## **Detecting abuse**

A couple of responses remarked that the strategy lacked any reference to school being spaces where children make disclosures because teachers are often trusted individuals. They wanted this recognised and the appropriate training to ensure that teachers knew how to respond.

Another response discussed having a greater trauma-informed response in schools so that the impact of witnessing or being a victim of abuse was understood and taken into account around a children's behaviour to prevent them being excluded. They felt that working with children who were victims needed to be prioritised rather than resorting to exclusion.

## **GBV in schools**

Some responses felt that there needed to be more attention given to the sexual assault or harassment within schools amongst students, especially considering the findings of the Ofsted report. Staff training around awareness and the tackling of sexist or abusive behaviour amongst young people was felt to be a need.

In line with the Ofsted Review into sexual abuse in schools, one respondent felt that it was important for the strategy to explicitly state Greater Manchester's commitment to supporting schools deliver a "whole school approach" to preventing sexual harassment and assault in education and other youth settings.

## **Prevention**

One comment suggested that this section should be renamed 'prevention' to be in line with the government's VAWG Strategy and the Istanbul Convention. They thought that prevention more accurately describes the intention of working with young people of preventing gender-based violence in the future.

## **Responding Effectively to Perpetrators**

- 76% of people agree with these commitments (77% of males and 92% of females).
- Younger people (under 35) who answered the consultation have stronger agreement to these commitments compared to over 35 year olds.
- Commitment 1 was ranked the highest “Extending the geographical reach of provision for men who have been abusive in heterosexual relationships
- Commitment 5 was prioritised as second most important “Develop a framework for facilitating restorative justice options for young people and very vulnerable adults who have perpetrated gender-based violence in the context of being victims themselves”
- Commitment 6 was ranked third most important “Evaluate and develop post-sentence restorative options to help victims recover from serious and complex cases and road-test new approaches that enable them to make perpetrators understand the harms they have caused”

### **More perpetrator work**

Some responses wanted greater focus on working with perpetrators to prevent gender-based violence from continuing. This includes a better understanding of why perpetrators are using violence and joining up the services that can support them such as perpetrator programmes, substance misuse services and mental health support.

A few responses also mentioned the need to intervene earlier with those showing warning signs. People pointed to the escalation of offences such as exposure and voyeurism to more serious violent crimes.

One of the victims of gender-based violence felt that there should be compulsory course for perpetrators to demonstrate and help them understand the impact of their actions.

### **Involvement of perpetrators**

On the other hand, some responses felt that the focus on perpetrators was too large and that the resources associated with this strategy should go towards supporting victims and that it was not the onus of victims to educate perpetrators.

### **Restorative Justice**

There were a lot of responses received which expressed concerns with the use of restorative justice for domestic abuse victims. They felt that this could give perpetrators access to their victims to continue the abuse and control. This could be unnoticeable to those outside of the relationship, for example through subtle signalling. They argued that survivors are often retraumatised and the work they have done to rebuild their lives is rolled back.

### **Specific remarks**

One response stated that they would like the role of the VCSE sector added to commitment 2.

## **Improving Policing**

- 90% of people think they are the right commitments to improve the policing response
- 90% of men and 93% of women
- 25-44 year olds have less agreement in these commitments than other age groups
- Commitment 2 was ranked the highest “Ensure all frontline police officers know how to request to talk to victims on their own so that they feel safe to disclose abuse and speak clearly to children exposed to abuse”
- Commitment 3 was considered the second most important “Ensure that abuse cases involving serious harm and risk are subject to bail conditions that protect victims and that risk assessments are revised and the Crown Prosecution Service notified before suspects’ bail statuses change or they are released under investigation

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- Commitment 5 came third “Seek sustained improvement in the quality of police investigations and their outcomes in cases of gender-based violence”

## Worries around priorities

Some responses commented that the priorities around the police should be common practice and were concerned that they were being presented as goals as this was setting a very low bar for GMP. Others recommended speaking with victims around what they would like from the police and other front-line services.

## Involvement of police

There was strong opposition to the heavy involvement of the police within the strategy as people felt that the trust in GMP and the police more generally had been broken. One response argued that with the country being so polarised and the police nationally being handed more powers which potentially criminalise civilians, having the police as central to this strategy seemed misplaced. Some felt that in order to provide suitable support to victims, the police needed to tackle issues of sexism, racism and homophobia within the force.

A few responses recommended setting up a task force within police forces that focuses on ending gender-based violence by dismantling myths and helping officers to support victims in a positive way. This links to several responses which discussed the issue of police not believing victims. Many felt that that the police fail to treat victims with respect and trust and are biased in who they consider to be a victim.

## Alternatives

There were a couple of suggestions for alternatives to a police-led approach. Firstly, a commitment to offering alternatives to the criminal justice route by centring community-driven transformative interventions and secondly, it was suggested that police may not be the best front line agency for tackling this problem and creating a Domestic Abuse Specialist team/mental health/ trauma team would get better results and free up police time for other things .

## Training

The need for training in the police force was brought up a lot. Some focused on the need for training around lived experiences of gender-based violence and bias training to ensure that everyone is getting the right response no matter what their background is.

Others felt that there was a strong need for the police to better understand coercive control and the specifics of the current law as well as how to spot it and what could count as evidence in court if the victim chooses to pursue a criminal justice outcome. In addition, one response wanted further training on evidence-led prosecution which does not rely on a victim testifying

Others wanted further training for the police around how women can become criminalised as a result of domestic abuse and sexual violence as well as the ‘low-level’ crimes such as exposure, voyeurism or stalking which need intervening with early on to prevent them escalating into abuse, violence and even homicide.

## GBV within the police

Some responses wanted greater recognition of the levels of violence against women that is committed by police officers and the culture of covering this up that may exist. The disability panel focus group also discussed the levels of domestic abuse within the police and the trivialisation of some complaints. They also felt that institutional misogyny needed to be investigated, for example women in the police struggling with the macho culture and not taken as seriously when in management positions in comparison to males. This institutional misogyny shapes the organisation and needs to be broken apart to drive change within the police.

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### **Police and probation focus group**

The focus group thought the commitments were positive and should improve outcomes in domestic abuse cases but expressed that resources was an issue and would have an impact.

They felt that priority 5 was particularly important as the police need to be better data-led to identify where issues are and where things have gone wrong to identify solutions.

They also mentioned the importance of asking victims what they would like to happen. For example, asking when they attend an incident if there are any practical things that need doing, any services that they would like support from e.g. housing.

### **Criminal Justice**

- 91% agreed that these were the right commitments around the wider criminal justice system. 97% of women agreed compared to 78% of men.
- Commitment 8 was ranked the most important “The National Probation Service will:
  - Invest in victim liaison services and the upskilling of frontline staff to fulfil the Victim Contact Scheme that requires probation staff to keep victims informed about the disposals of those who abused them are subject to
  - Ensure perpetrators receive the most appropriate sentences by collating relevant information for inclusion in pre-sentence reports
  - Deliver a range of effective and responsive group work and one-to-one interventions that address the complex needs of those supervised by them
  - Work across sectors to ensure the transference of skills and expertise amongst those working with perpetrators of gender-based violence, and that knowledge is shared between those specialising in domestic abuse interventions and those working with sex offenders and hate crime offenders”
- Commitment 1 came second “Ensure victims and witnesses are regularly consulted on how the criminal justice response to gender-based violence can be improved”
- Commitment 3 was considered the third most important “All criminal justice personnel are trained in the powers that new criminal and civil litigation confer, with an immediate focus on the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Act and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, commonly known as Clare’s Law, and an enduring focus on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults”

### **Decriminalising women**

Several responses focused on the fact that women can become criminalised as a result of their domestic abuse and they wanted a stronger commitment to diverting these women from the criminal justice system where possible and prioritising community-based and supportive sentencing for those who present no risk or harm to others and where a short custodial sentence would be damaging for both them and their children. Some mentioned using the Womens Problem-Solving Court and Women MATTA.

### **Focus group with police and probation**

This group suggested that the statutory Victim Liaison Service which is managed by probation could be extended to incorporate gender-based violence cases where there is a clear and obvious high harm threshold met but on the basis of cumulative harm. Cases currently only get included where custodial sentence exceeds 12 months.

They also felt that positive criminal justice outcomes should be a higher priority and that severity of sentence is not always reflective of the crime. They thought making improvements to this would give victims the confidence to report crimes knowing there will be an appropriate outcome.

They also commented that the wording in commitment 7 wasn’t clear.

**Integrating Health and Social Care**

- 88% of respondents agreed with these commitments to integrate health and social care into the responses to GBV.
- 18-34 year olds had higher agreement than the average (100% for 18-24 year olds and 94% for 25-34 year olds).
- Commitment 8 was ranked the highest “Develop new training to enhance understanding of gender-based violence among social workers and Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCAS) officers, with specific focus on the need to support mothers who have lived with abuse, develop systems that do not allow abusive men to evade intervention; and upskill those working with young people in the principles of practices of contextual safeguarding”
- Commitment 1 was prioritised as second most important “Introduce minimum standards for domestic abuse training for clinical and clerical staff working in primary care”
- Commitment 2 was ranked third most important “Extend the provision of hospital based Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) to enable early identification of potential victims”

**Adopting a whole health approach**

A recommendation was made that Greater Manchester adopts a whole health approach which joins up local health partners, acute health, mental health and primary care with local domestic abuse specialist services. IRISi, a social enterprise established to promote and improve the healthcare response to gender-based violence was put forward as an organisation that has expertise in engaging health professionals in gender-based violence interventions.

**Transphobia in services**

Whilst a specific commitment around trans people was welcomed within this section, some responses felt that the strategy failed to mention the transphobia within some domestic abuse and women’s sector organisations.

**Key points**

- The online consultation received 150 responses and 75% of people agreed that the definition was correct, alongside each of the focus groups.
- The most commonly raised issue with the definition and title were around the use of the word violence as people felt that this did not incorporate the psychological and emotional impact of gender-based violence. They thought that abuse or harm were more appropriate terms.
- Making the definition more inclusive was also considered a priority, by including trans and non-binary victims explicitly.
- In addition, there was a strong response around the need for greater commitment to minority groups such as disabled people and ethnic minorities. There was a call for more ‘by and for’ services for black and ethnic minorities, older victims, disabled victims and LGBTQI+ people that would provide community-based specialist support that was tailored to the victim.
- Another key area which people felt was not given enough attention within the definition and the strategy as a whole was online abuse. They wanted more detail around how the strategy was going to tackle the sharing of indecent images without consent, inappropriate comments on social media and online exploitation.
- Men and male victims were also a recurrent theme within the consultation. Whilst some felt that male victims had been left out of the strategy, or only included as an afterthought, others felt that women

and girls needed to be the priority and that resources should not be used on men when the women's sector is already massively underfunded.

- Young people were considered a priority as people felt that changing attitudes from a young age by educating young people was important for preventing gender-based violence in the future.
- Training was repeatedly brought up throughout the comments within the online consultation. For example, people felt there needed to be greater training for teachers around spotting signs of gender-based violence within schools, further training for front line workers around coercive control and how to spot the signs and more training for the police around bias.
- There was also a strong sense that victims voices had been left out of this strategy as well as the organisations that work with them. The women's sector was considered experts in this area and it was questioned why they had not been integral to the writing of this strategy.
- People also felt that the strategy was vague and lacked tangible actions. It has broad aims and commitments but they wanted to know how these were going to happen. Information around the funding of this strategy was also something that people identified was missing. Without proper resource, people expressed that this strategy would not be able to deliver on its commitments.

## **Rankings of priorities and commitments**

### Key priorities

- **Priority 1:** Tackle the attitudes and underlying inequalities that foster gender-based violence
- **Priority 3:** Make it as easy as possible for victims and survivors to access the support and guidance they need, and providing high quality, joined up victim-focused services across health care, criminal justice and other specialist providers
- **Priority 11:** Maximise accountability to victims and survivors, especially with regard to police and justice outcomes; while working with the public, especially young people, to tackle the norms, attitudes and inequalities that enable, justify and excuse gender-based violence; protecting those at risk of harm; and working with those at risk of perpetrating it.

### Mobilising GM

- **Commitment 1:** Developing a programme of public engagement that highlights how attitudes and inequalities contribute to gender-based violence, including a campaign directed at boys and men.
- **Commitment 4:** Introducing a discrete emergency contact system for passengers using public transport and helping Local Authorities to secure public space protection orders.
- **Commitment 5:** Promote best practice processes for employers with respect to recording and responding to domestic abuse and sexual harassment, safeguarding those at risk of stalking and equipping workers to call out discriminatory attitudes and abusive behaviours without fear of repercussions

### Supporting victims and survivors

- **Commitment 2:** A review of how domestic abuse cases are managed by Greater Manchester Police to ensure victims in the criminal justice system are offered the very best service, kept informed, treated with dignity and listened to
- **Commitment 1:** The introduction of a new Trusted Referrer's Scheme that will enable voluntary sector organisations, faith groups and schools to refer victims directly to health and criminal justice services to help reduce the need for victims to repeat their stories
- **Commitment 7:** Ensure our victim's services are fully signposted and accessible to all, irrespective of whether the complainant has contacted the police, has no recourse to public funds, and whatever their immigration status, complying with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's call for 'firewall' services to protect those victims of gender-based violence who are of interest to immigration enforcement



## Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People

- **Commitment 3:** Increasing investment in children and young people's mental health services so that mental health support for children and young people becomes readily accessible through educational institutions, while relieving pressure on police and emergency services
- **Commitment 4:** Mapping the range of provisions for therapeutic services for children and young people who are living in homes affected by domestic abuse and extending access to pre-existing adult services to older teenagers at risk of intimate partner violence and/or peer-on-peer abuse
- **Commitment 1:** Extending Operation Encompass so that schools are notified the next morning when the police attend domestic abuse incidents where anyone under 18 is present

## Responding Effectively to Perpetrators

- **Commitment 1:** Extending the geographical reach of provision for men who have been abusive in heterosexual relationships
- **Commitment 5:** Develop a framework for facilitating restorative justice options for young people and very vulnerable adults who have perpetrated gender-based violence in the context of being victims themselves
- **Commitment 6:** Evaluate and develop post-sentence restorative options to help victims recover from serious and complex cases and road-test new approaches that enable them to make perpetrators understand the harms they have caused

## Improving Policing

- **Commitment 2:** Ensure all frontline police officers know how to request to talk to victims on their own so that they feel safe to disclose abuse and speak clearly to children exposed to abuse
- **Commitment 3:** Ensure that abuse cases involving serious harm and risk are subject to bail conditions that protect victims and that risk assessments are revised and the Crown Prosecution Service notified before suspects' bail statuses change or they are released under investigation
- **Commitment 5:** Seek sustained improvement in the quality of police investigations and their outcomes in cases of gender-based violence

## Criminal Justice

- **Commitment 8:** The National Probation Service will:
  - Invest in victim liaison services and the upskilling of frontline staff to fulfil the Victim Contact Scheme that requires probation staff to keep victims informed about the disposals of those who abused them are subject to
  - Ensure perpetrators receive the most appropriate sentences by collating relevant information for inclusion in pre-sentence reports
  - Deliver a range of effective and responsive group work and one-to-one interventions that address the complex needs of those supervised by them
  - Work across sectors to ensure the transference of skills and expertise amongst those working with perpetrators of gender-based violence, and that knowledge is shared between those specialising in domestic abuse interventions and those working with sex offenders and hate crime offenders
- **Commitment 1:** Ensure victims and witnesses are regularly consulted on how the criminal justice response to gender-based violence can be improved
- **Commitment 3:** All criminal justice personnel are trained in the powers that new criminal and civil litigation confer, with an immediate focus on the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Act and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, commonly known as Clare's Law, and an enduring focus on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

## Integrating Health and Social Care

- **Commitment 8:** Develop new training to enhance understanding of gender-based violence among social workers and Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCAS) officers, with specific focus on the need to support mothers who have lived with abuse, develop systems that do not allow abusive men to evade intervention; and upskill those working with young people in the principles of practices of contextual safeguarding

- **Commitment 1:** Introduce minimum standards for domestic abuse training for clinical and clerical staff working in primary care
- **Commitment 2** Extend the provision of hospital based Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) to enable early identification of potential victims