

Gender-Based Violence Strategy

Short Version

June 2021 (Draft)

A Transformative Approach

A radical transformation in Greater Manchester's approach to Gender-Based Violence is planned for the next decade. This will help make the city-region a place where people are proud to live, where all children are given the best start in life, and where all voices are heard. We will have a wide-ranging, responsive programme of service delivery that prevents gender-based violence, challenging the attitudes and inequalities that promote it, and enabling those perpetrators who want to change to do so.

We will achieve this by:

- Maximising accountability to victims and survivors across all areas of service provision.
- Mobilising the public, employers, health service, and educational institutions to work alongside the police and criminal justice system to protect victims and prevent violence and harassment.
- Providing accessible, high quality, joined-up victim-focussed services across health care, criminal justice, and other specialist providers.
- Redressing the economic and housing insecurity, and discrimination with regards to sex, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, physical and intellectual abilities, and physical and mental health which facilitate repeat victimisation.
- Supporting all frontline professionals to redress shortcomings in service provision and access the very best international research and evidence, so as to continuously develop best practice for all those working with victims and perpetrators.

- Working with employers, professional bodies and government inspectorates to set new professional standards for tackling gender-based violence and harassment.

Measuring the effectiveness of our interventions and public engagement campaigns, to ensure they increase safety for victims, change attitudes and behaviour, and reduce the prevalence of both gender-based violence and the inequalities underpinning it.

Greater Manchester's 2021-31 Gender-Based Violence Strategy will reduce the demand for the kinds of crisis interventions the police and health service routinely provide when someone has been seriously hurt by investing in actions to stop abuse occurring in the first place and interventions to protect those most at risk of its reoccurrence. Our strategy makes many commitments that we are determined to implement during its lifetime. These commitments represent a starting point and can be strengthened, developed and added to over the lifetime of this strategy.

What is Gender-Based Violence?

The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women¹ defined violence against women and girls as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'. The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence² – often referred to as the 'Istanbul Convention' – expands the definition, requiring the countries that have signed up to it to recognise the 'structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men'.

In Greater Manchester we are adopting the term gender-based violence to convey our commitment to tackling the many forms of abuse, harm and violation that are

directed, at least in part, by sexist expectations and which reinforce the sexual inequalities that most disadvantage women and girls. We use term 'gender-based violence' to convey how the power inequalities associated with gender, in its many articulations, are exploited by perpetrators to reinforce gendered norms through the infliction of harm and the threat of it. This exposes women and girls generally, but not exclusively, to gender-based violence and abuse, including domestic homicides. Consistent with the Istanbul Convention, our strategy recognises that 'women and girls are exposed to a higher risk of gender-based violence' than men – that 'domestic violence affects women disproportionately and that men may also be victims of domestic violence' – and that 'children' – i.e. boys and girls - 'are victims of domestic violence, including as witnesses of violence in the family'.

Pervasive forms of gender-based violence include: domestic abuse and coercive control; rapes and sexual assaults perpetrated by family members, acquaintances and strangers; violence targeting sex workers; the abuse and harassment of women working in the sectors that support victims and respond to perpetrators; street and workplace harassment; stalking on and offline; sexual exploitation and romance frauds; and threatening behaviour directed towards women as mothers, grandmothers, sisters and teachers.

Gender-based violence can include harassment and violence directed at trans, gender-queer and non-binary people who are attacked for not conforming to gender norms. In Greater Manchester we recognise that the trans population is also at increased risk of domestic abuse, not least because of the lack of dedicated service to meet their needs and overcome the stigma associated with it. We are committed to redressing this.

Female genital mutilation is also a form of gender-based violence, typically perpetrated by older women against younger women in the service of particular patriarchal and cultural traditions. Sometimes it is only in the course of routine examinations, for example during pregnancy and childbirth that FGM and the harms caused by sexual abuse become apparent. Hence, it is vital that all our health care

professionals are trained to recognise the signs and understand what to do whether or not the victim makes a disclosure of harm.

It is important to recognise that anyone can become a victim of gender-based violence. But it is also important to understand that gender-based violence is perpetrated predominantly by men against women and that other intersecting forms of inequality reduce access to the support many victims needed to stop perpetrators abusing them. These include social deprivation, poverty, and financial insecurity, as well as disability, homophobia, and structural racism. Foreign nationals often face additional challenges accessing services. These can include: language barriers; doubt that reporting to the police will bring greater protection; and a fear of deportation among those whose immigration status is precarious or irregular.

Changing the Story

As some of the best international examples reveal³ it is imperative that we change the story about gender-based violence, from one that relies on enforcing sanctions against a minority of perpetrators to one that is primarily about prevention that is everyone's concern. This is not easy and will require considerable skill, enduring leadership, and most critically the commitment of the many dedicated people who work to support victims and challenge offenders. We are committed to changing the story in Greater Manchester so that gender-based violence is no longer a prevalent social problem for future generations.

Whilst we must maximise effort around prevention, we will also ensure that services for those who have suffered gender-based violence are centred around the people they serve and the places they live. Services will be transformed so that we have a public service model that proactively intervenes early and which responds according to the needs of an individual and their family and recognises strengths that we can all build upon. This means engaging effectively with victims and their families, involving whole communities in which they and perpetrators live to challenge abusive behaviour. We will offer those who have been abused networks of support and

present young people, especially young men, with the guidance and opportunities to develop in ways that do not rely on the development of coercive masculinities.

A new Gender-Based Violence Board will be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of this strategy, which will include preparation and monitoring of detailed action plans. It will also establish the key milestones to be delivered over the next ten years. The Board will therefore include victims and survivors, with lived experiences of abuse, as well as representatives of services provided by and for those who have suffered abuse. Members from these groups will serve as co-chair appointed on an annual basis. The Board will work in tandem with Greater Manchester's Women and Girls Equality and Racial Equality Panels, whilst also taking account of the findings and recommendations of the Greater Manchester Inequalities Commission.

The overarching aim of this strategy is to as far as possible prevent gender-based violence in all its forms from occurring in the first place. We recognise however that the criminal justice system has a role to play. In playing that role, the criminal justice system must treat victims and survivors at all times with dignity, respect and responsiveness. Professionals in all agencies must be trained effectively and receive the best ongoing professional development. Key initial priorities for the Gender Based Violence Board will be to review how domestic abuse cases are managed by Greater Manchester Police and to ensure that responses to gender-based violence are integrated across criminal justice, health, social care and specialist service providers.

Given the prevalence of abuse against women and girls, most often committed by men, this strategy necessarily focuses heavily in that direction. Under the umbrella of this strategy however action plans will also be developed for other forms of gender-based violence. For example, we will develop a plan to address how we effectively meet the needs of male victims, covering the full range of acts of violence, abuse and exploitation in which men or boys are victims, and in which their gender, sexuality and/or intimate relationships are motivating or prevailing factors.

To better support victims and survivors we will take every opportunity to consolidate links between voluntary and statutory service providers and strengthen links between organisations working with ethnic minority communities and LGBTQ+ with organisations that work specifically with men or women. Where it is evidenced that we are not meeting the needs of survivors, particularly those from minoritised or marginalised populations, we will be advised by groups that are run by and for survivors from those populations. Our strategy aims to reduce the pressures on organisations that are at the forefront of delivering specialist services, but which are often overburdened with the pressures of competitive tendering.

It is crucial that we understand what is and is not working to reduce gender-based violence. Therefore we will support effective research and evaluation of our interventions and ensure that it is designed and implemented in dialogue with victims and survivors. We will closely monitor how the prevalence rates for gender-based violence and abuse change in Greater Manchester, how they compare with the national picture and how they are shaped by rates of reporting and public awareness. We will also look closely at how patterns of gender inequality change across our city-region and that we take account of this in the action we take.

Mobilising Greater Manchester

The public, universities, colleges and employers have key roles to play in tackling gender inequality, homophobia and transphobia, sexism and the objectification of women and girls. In the United Kingdom, victims are more likely to disclose domestic abuse to a friend or family member (48%) or a neighbour (14%) than a professional, including the police.⁴ Preventing and addressing gender-based violence therefore requires a concerted public effort, in which everyone understands that they can play a role. It is critical that the public are able to recognise the signs of abuse, feel confident in talking to victims, and know which organisations they can call for support, including support with challenging those who present an ongoing threat. The public need to feel empowered and safe to do so, in order to support the sector in challenging perpetrators and potential perpetrators.

Over the next two years Greater Manchester has committed to a coordinated strategy of public engagement, building on preventative education we have been supporting in schools. Critically, our campaign will be informed by the perspectives of victims and survivors and their diversity. They will seek to open debate about how young men and boys can contribute to reducing gender-based violence, how the public should respond to signs and what can be done to encourage perpetrators to see themselves as such and seek help to change.

We know that our public spaces are not always safe for women. We will call attention to the harm caused by what is often considered to be low-level, sexist behaviour (for example wolf-whistling, catcalling, stalking and harassing women and girls in public spaces) and verbal abuse towards people on the basis of their appearance, dress, sexuality, cultural values or non-conformity to gender norms.

National research reveals higher rates of domestic abuse victimisation among women from Christian, Hindu and Muslim faiths⁵ and we will take account of this in targeting our public engagement campaigns.

International research reveals that students are the population most likely to be persuaded to take action when they witness someone being exposed to gender-based violence.⁶ We also know that students themselves are disproportionately affected by gender based violence. Survey based research suggests that female students are at twice the risk of sexual violence than other women within the general population and account for around 50,000 cases of sexual abuse or assault across the UK each year.⁷ The prosecution case against Reynhard Sinaga drew international attention to the degree to which men in the student population are at risk of sexual assault, and how reticent this group are to report sexual violations and reach for help. We will therefore work closely with universities and colleges both in terms of research and innovation, but also in respect of the provision of effective internal pastoral support, signposting to local services independent of them and development, promotion and delivery of clear policies and guidelines for reporting cases of sexual misconduct, harassment, assault and rape involving staff and students within and outside of the workplace.

Lower rates of pay for women, the under-representation of women in leadership roles, and poverty cycles, combine with sexual harassment in public spaces and workplaces to render women and girls more vulnerable to gender-based violence than men in other aspects of their lives. 40% of women are estimated to experience sexual harassment in the workplace.⁸ Domestic abuse also impacts upon victims' attendance and performance, yet workplace policies and procedures can prevent victims from coming forward and may inadvertently expose them to harm and unfair disciplinary action. We will therefore work closely with employers to address this.

Supporting Victims and Survivors

Through this strategy we will reform how we respond to the needs of victims and survivors. We will establish a diverse panel of people with lived experiences of gender-based violence who will be fully engaged in designing, commissioning, and reviewing the services that tackle gender-based violence in Greater Manchester. This panel will be one way of giving voice to victims and survivors, as well as ensuring as far as possible that services are as responsive as possible.

We will routinely collate the information, evidence and expertise needed to coproduce, redesign and reform as necessary, the services that victims and survivors of rape and sexual assault need to cope and recover in the immediate, medium and long term. We will be responsive to the needs and priorities of local areas and the service needs of all communities and particular demographic groups within them. We will also review how we support those affected by child sexual exploitation and online grooming.

One thing we are consistently told is that the recovery of victims is hindered by the necessity to continually retell their stories or be reassessed, whether to gain access to services or due to requirements of different parts of the criminal justice system. We will therefore develop a new Trusted Referrer Scheme enabling voluntary organisations, faith groups and schools to refer victims directly to health and criminal justice services. We will also require all of those organisations who supply or provide services to victims, from whatever sector, to have the appropriate skills,

knowledge and experience available, to respond thoughtfully to victims, whatever their circumstances. We will maximise compliance with recognised Violence Against Women and Girls quality standards⁹ under the umbrella of a new Greater Manchester Advocacy Standards Framework.

We want to ensure that our services are accessible to all and this is something we will look closely at. We know that this is an issue for women from ethnic minority communities, people from sexual minorities, trans and gender-queer people, older people and those with learning difficulties.

We know that fear of criminalisation deters a range of women from seeking support, including women whose immigration status is insecure and/or have no recourse to public funds, women with drug or alcohol problems, sex workers and women who have retaliated against perpetrators who are subjecting them to coercive control. In Greater Manchester we do not consider these to be reasons to deny women sanctuary and protection and are committed to offering them the very best service provision. We will work closely with all our local authorities to ensure all our services are accessible to all: including women who not speak English fluently, older women, and those with disabilities.

In Greater Manchester we are, however, committed to being open with victims about what the criminal justice system can and cannot achieve and reducing the additional pressures we know the system places on them. Where victims look to the criminal justice system we will ensure that they are kept informed at every stage in alignment with the statutory Victim's Code.

The very real risk of homelessness is an enduring problem for many women who are abused by intimate partners, and a problem that is much more acute for those on low incomes or in precarious employment. Eradicating homelessness is essential if we are to protect the women and children living in poverty from harmful behaviour and as such we are committed to ensure support is provided to find alternative housing or safe refuge as soon as possible. Where it is appropriate and safe to do so, we will seek to ensure women impacted by gender-based violence are able to stay in their

own homes. Over the coming years we will endeavour to comply with the principles set out by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance¹⁰ that advocate for ‘an enabling environment where survivors know they will be listened to’ and housing providers ‘recognise that’ tenants ‘may be disadvantaged by multiple oppressions.’

We remain committed to ensuring that women and children at risk of abuse are promptly assisted in finding alternative housing or refuge, that is suitable and safe and will work with partner organisations with expertise in serving minoritised populations to ensure assessment procedures take full account of survivors’ social, emotional and economic needs and anticipate the risks of targeted forms of abuse and harassment in particular localities. We will establish a system of co-operation across the city-region that guarantees victims and survivors of domestic abuse receive access to housing and a high standard of support care and support services when they are transferred across local authority areas. We will also ensure that emergency housing provision is available for men who are victims of domestic abuse and trans people, our own research revealing that they are at increased risk of homelessness when subject to abuse from partners and other family members.¹¹

Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People

Children and young people experience many different forms of gender-based violence, including: day-to-day sexist behaviour, stalking and sexual harassment, hate crime and online abuse, sexual assault, sexual and criminal exploitation, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and ‘honour’ based violence. They are also at high risk of peer abuse and dating violence, with young men who are abusive in their teens at risk of becoming serial perpetrators of domestic abuse in early adulthood.

Protecting young people from gender-based violence within and outside of the home, and doing everything possible to prevent it becoming a feature of the lives of subsequent generations, is a top priority within the Greater Manchester Children and Young People’s Plan. This has established a Standards Board focussed on sharing

evidence of what works to improve safeguarding practice supported across all ten of Greater Manchester's local councils and is supported by a £7.43 million Targeted Innovation and Reform Grant. The Greater Manchester Safeguarding Alliance is deploying this investment to develop an evidence and strengths-based approach to supporting children and young people in the communities where they live.

In Greater Manchester, we have and will continue to invest in early help models, through a combination of local investment and national programmes. Children and young people sometimes perpetrate abuse on their peer groups. By intervening early, challenging gender stereotypes and victim blaming, we can reduce the chances of abusive behaviours becoming a pattern of coercive control in later life.

A key part of our approach will be to work closely with schools, colleges and other educational settings to implement preventative education to change harmful attitudes and behaviours. We will work closely with the Greater Manchester Parenting Working Group to explore ways to tackle stereotyping and precursors to gender-based violence. And we will work closely with the Alliance for Learning Teaching School, to develop a range of targeted resources that address gender stereotyping and abusive behaviours, including online abuse. We will ensure that teachers are invited to the many training events for professionals tackling gender-based violence and abuse held in the city-region and we will liaise with head teachers to ensure examples of best practice within schools are shared and celebrated.

We will continue to support the many third sector organisations that come into schools and colleges to inform young people about dating violence, peer abuse and bullying, mental health, alcohol and substance use, sexual diversity, sexual health services, and services for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. It is important that professionals delivering relationship education confront the gendered nature of boys' controlling behaviour, often borne from issues of trust, biographically-informed insecurities and sexual jealousies.

We will specially tailor our educational initiatives to the needs of autistic pupils and those with learning disabilities, recognising that some of these children are at higher

risk of exploitation, grooming and abuse than their peers, and need particular guidance on how to navigate the physical, emotional and sensory aspects of relationships.

A core focus of our work with young people, but especially young men and boys, will be to identify how bystanders can respond in non-confrontational ways when they see others exposed to gender-based violence. We will work with local third sector organisations to make sure young people have access to support services that specialise in engaging with young people to promote gender and sexual equality.

An essential part of addressing gender-based violence involves working with families where there is, or has been, domestic abuse in the home. Children who experience or witness domestic abuse suffer many long-term effects and are at increased risk of a range of harms, including mental illness, substance use, developmental problems, and victimisation by peers and adults. We know that teenagers and young adults are the age groups most at risk of domestic abuse and peer on peer abuse and that their needs are different to older age groups. We will ensure that support services are properly signposted in all educational contexts, including schools, pupil referral units, colleges and universities.

In response to the threat of child sexual exploitation Greater Manchester has invested in a Complex Safeguarding programme that involves the integration of key services including police and social services across our ten districts. The programme provides support to children who have been abused or who are at risk of it, in order to keep them safe. Over the next ten years we will continue to develop the programmes we have established to protect the most vulnerable young people.

Greater Manchester is committed to developing a trauma informed workforce, which recognises the warning signs and long-term impacts of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences.¹² Building on the findings of the independent review of Operation Augusta¹³ we are committed to developing a community wide approach to preventing child sexual and criminal exploitation, and safeguarding young people at risk.

Responding Effectively to Perpetrators

One in four women in the UK will experience some form of sexual assault or domestic abuse in their lifetime.¹⁴ In Greater Manchester, we recognise that the vast majority of perpetrators of gender-based violence are men, who are often the partners or ex-partners of their victims. We know that there needs to be systemic change among men in general if we are to tackle gender-based violence for future generations, which is why we are aligning our specialist work with perpetrators with a wider strategy of primary prevention and early intervention that mobilises public engagement.

Greater Manchester needs a whole-system approach to those who perpetrate gender-based violence, which responds consistently to both those engaged by the criminal justice system and statutory enforcement services, and perpetrators who are identified through voluntary, community and/or civil law routes. In Greater Manchester we understand that in order to respond effectively to perpetrators, practitioners need to be able to listen carefully to what victims and survivors share about their experiences, as well as what offenders say about their motivations and problems. This is why all our work with perpetrators will be routinely appraised by the Gender-Based Violence Board.

From 2021 we will ensure that we map and evaluate gender-based violence related perpetrator programmes across Greater Manchester, to assist with the development of a GM perpetrator programme framework that will seek to deliver programmes for all who need them on both a voluntary and compulsory basis. We have already secured funding to pilot a range of new interventions which work within a whole family approach. All of our interventions with perpetrators will comply with Respect Accreditation Standards¹⁵ and be rigorously evaluated to ensure they are effective and responsive.

To be effective, our interventions will need a highly skilled workforce to address the gendered and emotional antecedents implicated in abuse, as well as to improve the

ethnic and sexual diversity among those doing direct work with perpetrators. We will also commission research to explore how we can better respond to offenders with learning difficulties and autism.

The Greater Manchester Justice Devolution Deal is enabling us to build strong integrated networks of organisations that can reduce the perpetration of gender-based violence, while ensuring the safety of victims. We have launched a number of pilots including the widely acclaimed DRIVE programme for high risk and high perpetrators, and community based perpetrator programmes in a number of districts utilising funding secured from the Home Office.

We know that some victims continue to live with someone who has hurt them, and some want support in helping to mediate conflict, secure an apology, or re-establish the trust needed to ensure safe childcare arrangements. From 2021 we will work with Greater Manchester partners to develop standard approaches for both 'out of Court' interventions and community programmes focused on gender based violence.

Improving Policing and Criminal Justice

Effectively tackling gender-based violence, as this strategy outlines, is about far more than simply the criminal justice system. However we want to ensure that this system is as effective as possible in serving the needs of victims and survivors.

The criminal justice system involves a variety of different organisations including the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and National Probation Service. It is not always easy for victims to understand how these aspects of the system work together. Victims are also often made to recount their experiences multiple times, do not receive the criminal justice outcomes they expect, or end up feeling re-victimised by court processes in which their experiences are cast in doubt. From 2021, victims of gender-based violence must receive a vastly improved experience of criminal justice.

The 2020 HMICFRS inspection of Greater Manchester Police emphasised the need to 'overcome deficiencies in service to vulnerable victims', particularly victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault and sexual exploitation.¹⁶ In Greater Manchester we must radically improve victims' experiences of the criminal justice system. The Deputy Mayor, on behalf of the Mayor as police and crime commissioner, will closely scrutinise and assess the performance of Greater Manchester Police and hold the Chief Constable to account on behalf of the public, as well as ensuring the Force has the necessary support.

In its recent review of hate crime laws, The Law Commission made a recommendation¹⁷ to add gender to the protected characteristics recognised under hate crime laws. The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act will also require police services to record misogynistic incidents in the same way they do racist and homophobic ones, and we will work with Greater Manchester Police to effectively implement this.

We will provide enhanced training to our call handlers and responding officers so that they are fully versed in the nature of stalking, harassment and coercive control and how these crimes can make reporting difficult. We are also working with wider criminal justice partners to expedite compliance with the statutory Victim's Code of Practice ahead of the introduction of the new Victim's Law.

Some victims withdraw their support for prosecutions the police wish to pursue. This is often for a number of reasons, but some victims lack confidence in the criminal justice process and/or worry that their own safety will be jeopardized if the perpetrator goes to court. We are committed to increasing confidence so that this becomes one less thing for victims to worry about.

We know that perpetrators of gender-based violence sometimes seek to point blame at victims and try to use the criminal justice and legal system to abuse and control them further, sometimes resulting in the arrest of women who are repeat victims and/or who are highly traumatised.¹⁸ The Domestic Abuse Act will confer new powers to tackle this issue and Greater Manchester Police will develop further policy and establish a review system to assess how the new law is working in practice.

From 2021 a programme of learning and development will be implemented to ensure all frontline police officers understand the difference between domestic abuse, 'honour' based violence, and elder abuse, and how these present specific risks. Similarly, we will ensure that officers are conversant of Home Office guidelines in dealing with incidents and circumstances where children and young people are abusive towards their parents.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse and violent and sexual offenders who live in the community are managed via community supervision and multi-agency forums that include representation from the police, social services, and prison and probation service. We will extend and strengthen this work during 2021 and utilise the benefits provided by reforms of the probation framework that will see a Greater Manchester region of the National Probation Service created. This will enable us to enhance our provision for managing convicted perpetrators of gender-based violence, which extends beyond domestic abuse, to include, for example, perpetrators of sex offences and hate crime.

Greater Manchester is at the forefront of tackling some of the most serious forms of gender-based exploitation that disproportionately affect the least protected women and girls living in the UK. Women whose immigration status is insecure, who are care leavers, who have learning difficulties, and/or who have significant debts, are especially susceptible to the forms of exploitation that are collectively referred to as 'modern slavery'.¹⁹ Over the next ten years we will continue to develop our flagship partnership approach, *Programme Challenger*, through which the organisations of the Combined Authority, Police and National Health Service work closely with community groups, charities, faith based organisations and businesses, in order to protect victims of modern slavery and sexual exploitation and pursue those who exploit them.

Integrating Health & Social Care

The NHS is often the first point of contact for people who have experienced domestic abuse, sexual assaults or other forms of gender-based violence, though not all

victims attend with obvious signs of abuse or injury. Health professionals therefore play a crucial role in identifying and signposting the appropriate services victims require at moments of crisis.

Many victims also present to other health professionals – including GPs, midwives, and health visitors – because of enduring problems with their physical or mental health that derive from the experience of abuse. These can be ongoing or historical, caused directly by physical and/or psychological abuse, or indirectly by the trauma of having to revisit the past because of the demands created by the criminal justice system or even everyday life events.

In Greater Manchester, health services are committed to dealing with the immediate, medium, and long-term needs of victims of gender-based violence and to do so in line with their statutory duties to reduce health inequalities in service provision. There are three key aspects of this work:

- Recognising the signs of abuse, proactively supporting victims, and using professional curiosity to enquire as to whether their support needs are being met.
- Providing immediate healthcare treatment and information.
- Referring victims on to specialist or support services.

It takes time and professional diligence to support some victims with disclosing what has happened to them and the enduring threats they face. This is why we are extending specialist training and advocacy programmes across GP practices in Greater Manchester in collaboration with third sector organisations specialising in Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). It is a critical part of the Greater Manchester strategy to recognise the early signs of abuse and ensure victims are referred to appropriate support services tailored to their particular needs.

One thing we must ensure is that it becomes standard practice for women who are victims of gender-based violence to be seen in the health settings with which they are most familiar. This is particularly important for women who are at risk of 'honour' based violence and female genital mutilation, who face additional barriers in

reaching specialist services. We will therefore raise awareness across health service providers to make sure they have the facilities and cultural sensitivity to ensure this is the case. We will also ensure all health care professionals know how to fast-track victims of stalking, strangulation, and sexual assault to specialist medical and psychotherapeutic services.

For some victims, it is important that their long-term needs are met by organisations that understand the specific ways in which gender-based violence is experienced by people from their demographic group, or in spaces in which people from the demographic group that abused them are excluded. In Greater Manchester, we understand these needs, which is why we invest in dedicated services for women, men, and LGBTQ+ and sexual health organisations. We recognise that more needs to be done to help victims navigate these services. We know, also, that waiting lists for therapeutic services have sometimes been long in Greater Manchester and that the concentration of provision in the city centre is a barrier to accessing support for some victims of gender-based violence. This is particularly true of the long-term sick and disabled, who are most at risk from gender-based violence.

We will also review our provision for older people. National research²⁰ has revealed that older women are at much greater risk of domestic homicide than men, and that violence against older women is perpetrated by sons almost as frequently as it is by male partners and ex partners.

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