



HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls: Funding Inquiry

April 2025

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWN UK) is a national Muslim women's organisation in Britain (www.mwnuk.co.uk) that has been advancing equality, promoting women's empowerment, and connecting voices since 2003. We are a small national charity (reg. no. 1155092) that works to improve social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls. Our membership also includes women of other faiths or of no faith and men who support our work. We find out about the experiences of Muslim women and girls through research and our helpline enquiries. We identify policy and practice gaps and use this information to inform decision makers in government as well as informing our community campaigns at a grassroots level.

We also develop resources and train women, so they are better aware of their rights. We have a separate website for our national helpline (www.mwnhelpline.co.uk) that provides advice and support on a range of issues including domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, female genital mutilation, hate crimes, discrimination, mental health etc.

1.) On what basis do bodies that provide funding for tackling VAWG currently prioritise funding decisions?

Funding bodies such as government departments, police forces, and voluntary sector funders typically make decisions based on factors like alignment with mainstream service models (e.g., refuge provision, casework), the ability to demonstrate standardised outputs and outcomes, organisational size, track record, and capacity to manage large grants. These bodies also value "neutrality" and adherence to statutory frameworks. However, this approach can disadvantage smaller charities such as those led by and for Muslim women. By and for smaller charities, despite providing deeply embedded support, often struggle to meet the rigid criteria used by funders. VAWG in minority communities often has far graver consequences, including higher mortality rates, yet receives less attention and funding. For example, despite domestic homicides being 22% higher among BAME women and elevated

suicide rates among survivors, organisations like MWNUK, which provide critical services for Muslim women, face significant barriers to accessing funding. This results in a lack of support for organisations providing vital services within these communities.

2.) What is the link between how VAWG is measured and how services are funded? How should VAWG be measured?

VAWG should be measured using survivor-defined goals and culturally relevant indicators, placing emphasis on intersectionality—including religion, ethnicity, and immigration status. It's vital to consider outcomes like mental wellbeing, language access, and faith- culturally sensitive informed support. By-and-for organisations, which provide tailored services based on lived experience, are best suited to track these nuanced outcomes but are often overlooked due to the dominance of mainstream metrics.

3.) How are outcomes of services tackling VAWG being assessed by organisations that deliver frontline services, funding bodies, or government departments?

Typically, outcomes are assessed based on the volume of service users, speed of outcomes (e.g., how quickly a survivor leaves an abusive environment), engagement with the police or legal systems, and standardised reporting templates. This focus on quick, quantifiable results disadvantages by-and-for services, whose outcomes are often long-term, relational, and culturally specific. By-and-for organisations track progress through trust-building and community-based markers of change. However, as the funding model prioritises mainstream services, organisations such as MWNUK, which address the specific needs of Muslim women, face difficulty in accessing funding to continue their essential work. This structural barrier is exacerbated by the tendency of funding bodies to prioritize certain BAME organisations over others based on favouritism rather than need.

4.) How should the Government prioritise funding in a VAWG strategy?

The Government must move away from a “one-size-fits-all” approach to a model that centres equity and lived experience. Long-term, unrestricted funding should be provided to by-and-for organisations, with a focus on supporting core costs, not just short-term projects. Intersectionality, including gender, race, faith, migration status, and class, should be central to funding decisions. The Government should prioritise survivor-defined outcomes, focusing on holistic safety, not just criminal justice pathways. Importantly, advocacy, research, and policy work—especially when rooted in helpline and casework data—must be recognised as core interventions. This approach would require a shift in how VAWG is conceptualised, ensuring that community-rooted and preventative work is central to the strategy. The lack of adequate funding for organisations like MWNUK, which supports Muslim women, is a stark example of the current funding model's failure. MWNUK’s helpline, the only service in the UK specifically for Muslim women, plays a crucial role and needs at least £100,000 annually to continue offering its essential services.

5.) How adequate is the coordination of funding for tackling VAWG? Are there examples of good partnerships?

Funding coordination for tackling VAWG remains fragmented and unequal, often reinforcing power imbalances. By-and-for organisations may be invited into partnerships for token inclusion, without being given meaningful decision-making power. Larger, mainstream charities may receive funding to deliver "targeted" services without being held accountable to the communities they serve which raises questions about how funding decisions are made, and whether they are based on need or favouritism. Such practices create significant barriers for smaller organisations like MWNUK, which is actively saving lives and addressing urgent needs within the Muslim community. The current funding model, with its high-income thresholds, forces smaller organisations to form coalitions, wasting time and resources that could be better spent on direct service delivery. However, equitable partnerships do exist, where funding is shared transparently, and cultural knowledge is respected. Still, these partnerships remain the exception, and without structural accountability, funding coordination often results in symbolic inclusion rather than systemic equity.

6.) What are the scale and nature of the challenges for accessing funding for tackling VAWG?

The challenges in accessing funding are both systemic and practical. Systemically, funding models tend to favour larger, white-led, mainstream organisations, with smaller, community-based organisations like MWNUK facing discrimination due to anti-Muslim bias and the preference for mainstream service models. Furthermore, smaller organisations often struggle with the high-income thresholds and lack of transparency in funding decisions. The funding process is also competitive and bureaucratic, with application processes that are inaccessible for many smaller charities. Domestic abuse in minority ethnic communities, particularly among Muslim women, does not receive the attention or funding it deserves, despite the higher mortality and suicide rates among survivors. This creates a cycle of underfunding, burnout, and marginalisation, even though by-and-for services are often the most effective, culturally competent, and innovative in tackling violence.

On behalf of Muslim Women's Network UK,

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