



Joint written evidence submitted by End Violence Against Women and Girls, Latin American Women's Rights Service, Rights of Women, and Southall Black Sisters (PCSCB07)

Briefing on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

House of Commons Committee Stage

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Contact

This is a joint briefing by End Violence Against Women and Girls, Latin American Women's Rights Service, Rights of Women and Southall Black Sisters.

For further briefings from any of our groups, please contact Rights of Women in the first instance who will facilitate as a first point of contact.

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Introduction

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill was debated at second reading on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 March 2021 and has now been sent to a Public Bill Committee, which is expected to report to the House by Thursday 24 June 2021.

The Bill has rightly attracted public outcry – with the mobilisation of a mass movement to resist its oppressive measures and protests taking place across the country. An open letter urging the Government to reconsider the Bill has, at the time of writing, just shy of 96,000 signatures.¹

Parts Three and Four of the Bill, which contain provisions around protest and trespass, have been subject to particular objection. Protest and strike action have been, and continue to be, fundamental in securing women's rights. Many organisations were born out of protest for women's equality and social justice. We draw on the experiences and expertise of the many other activists, groups and organisations which represent minoritised voices and rely on protest as a means by which to raise their voices in a system that refuses to hear them.

We join in solidarity with those who oppose this Bill. As organisations which provide a wide range of services to survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and undertake policy work informed by these experiences, we strongly reject any suggestion that this Bill supports women who have experienced violence to secure safety and justice.

The proposed legislation represents a deeply authoritarian approach to our fundamental rights and freedoms, containing a raft of measures which erode our civil liberties while failing to engage with or address the complex, underlying causes of VAWG. It relies on criminal justice cure-alls which will not positively alter the outcomes experienced by the hundreds of women who contact us for support each week and will exacerbate existing racial inequalities in setting the foundation for further criminalisation of Black and minoritised young people – in defiance of recommendations made by Lammy Review.²

Our Right to Protest

Protest is a women's rights issue and a fundamental principle of democracy. Across the world, every day, women lead the charge in challenging state violence and corruption, fighting for human rights and securing justice for themselves and others who have been mistreated and discriminated against. Protest is firmly embedded in the struggle for women's rights – and particularly the rights of Black and minoritised women, who have always led movements for equality, justice and freedom, but have been marginalised in many mainstream protest movements.³

Equally embedded in our history, and clearly present in recent times, is the state's violent response to protest. In 2020, widespread Black Lives Matters UK protests were met with police

¹ Joint letter (2021). *Open letter to the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Justice*. Available at: <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/petition/add-your-name-defend-right-protest>

² The Lammy Review. *An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf

³ Lindsey. *Black Women Have Consistently Been Trailblazers for Social Change. Why Are They So Often Relegated to the Margins?*. 22 July 2020. Time. Available at: <https://time.com/5869662/black-women-social-change/>

brutality.⁴ Environmental protest saw organisations blacklisted as domestic terrorists.⁵ Sister's Uncut draw on other recent and devastating examples: *"The violent policing of the Sarah Everard vigil, the reckless brutality of police against protestors in Bristol and London (including police pretending to be postmen to gain entry to a protestor's house, handcuffing her while half-naked), the use of mobile fingerprinting technology at protests to harvest public biometric data, and the £10,000 fine given to a nurse protesting the 1% NHS pay rise"*.⁶

These unacceptable state responses to protest are shored up by the provisions of this Bill. The impact of the range of restrictions levied at our freedom of expression is explored more fully by organisations such as Netpol⁷, Liberty⁸ and Big Brother Watch⁹, and we refer Members of Parliament to their materials.

In brief, the measures, found under part three of the Bill, comprise changes to the Public Order Act 1986 and Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the introduction of the offence of Public Nuisance in statute, new legislation on memorials arising out of the demonstrations of summer 2020 and the criminalisation of trespass (also discussed below). Each of these measures demonstrates a creeping and authoritarian control over our ability to assemble and express our collective discontent and, as Netpol point out, *"we know from experience that the police are already quick to impose restrictions and conditions on protests"*.¹⁰

Any attempt by the state to erode our right to protest is a stark warning to those most likely to be impacted by human rights abuses and state violence, including Black and minoritised women, migrant women, Deaf and disabled women and members of the LGBT+ community.

These measures bolster not only the state's ability to restrict protest, but also further enable non-state actors to wield disproportionate power in our society. Netpol point out how these powers are ripe for abuse by big employers and corporations who seek to silence trade union activity.¹¹

We call on Members of Parliament to resist each of these measures to curtail our freedom of expression.

We urge Members of Parliament to oppose that Part Three stand part of this Bill.

⁴ Netpol (2020). *Britain Is Not Innocent*. Available at: <https://secureservercdn.net/50.62.198.70/561.6fe.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Britain-is-not-innocent-web-version.pdf>

⁵ Duncan. 'Indefensible': Priti Patel condemned for backing police over decision to put Extinction Rebellion on terror list. 13 January 2020. Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/priti-patel-extinction-rebellion-police-extremism-list-counter-terror-prevent-a9281731.html>

⁶ Sisters Uncut (2021). *Why We're Marching on Mayday*. Available at: <https://www.sistersuncut.org/2021/04/28/why-were-marching-on-mayday/>

⁷ Netpol (2021). *Explainer: What does the new policing bill say about restricting protests?* Available at: <https://netpol.org/2021/04/13/explainer-what-does-the-new-policing-bill-say-about-restricting-protests/>

⁸ Liberty (2021). *Liberty's Briefing on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill for Second Reading in the House of Commons*. Available at: <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Libertys-Briefing-on-the-Police-Crime-Sentencing-and-Courts-Bill-HoC-2nd-reading-March-2021-1.pdf>

⁹ Big Brother Watch and Liberty (2021). *Liberty and Big Brother Watch's Joint Briefing on the Protest Measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill for the "Do Not Restrict Our Rights to Peaceful Protest" Petitions Debate*. Available at: <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberty-and-Big-Brother-Watch-briefing-for-a-petitions-debate-on-the-right-to-protest-and-the-PCSC-Bill-April-2021.pdf>

¹⁰ Netpol (2021). *Explainer: What does the new policing bill say about restricting protests?* Available at: <https://netpol.org/2021/04/13/explainer-what-does-the-new-policing-bill-say-about-restricting-protests/>

¹¹ Ibid

Minoritised and Marginalised Women at the Sharp Edge

When police powers are bolstered still further, communities already experiencing over-policing and over-surveillance are placed at further risk. A disturbing example of this is plain on the face of these proposals, with part four of the Bill seeking to further criminalise Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities through a new criminal offence of trespass with the intent to reside, and the extension of existing powers in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Analysis by Friends Families and Travellers points out that these measures will compound existing inequalities and disproportionately affect specific minority and ethnic communities in a way which likely conflicts with equality and human rights legislation.¹² Lisa Smith, youth editor of Travellers Times and chair of the Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and Other Travellers (ACERT), states that GRT communities *“are being legislatively cleansed from Britain, and this bill must be scrapped before it further eradicates our traditions and destroys our already marginalised communities.”*¹³

The Equality and Human Rights Commission have previously expressed deep concern over increasing powers to evict or ban encampments, stating in their submission to a 2018 consultation: *“We would remind the Government that all powers to remove unauthorised encampments must be exercised with a full awareness of the occupiers’ welfare needs, human rights, and, where applicable, their entitlement to protection under the Equality Act 2010. These cannot be circumvented by new powers.”*¹⁴

Again, we refer to expert voices in this field for a full examination of the impact of these provisions¹⁵, and calls on Members of Parliament to resist their inclusion in the Bill.

We urge Members of Parliament to oppose that Part Four stand part of this Bill.
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Failing to Address the Underlying Causes of Violence Against Women and Girls

At every juncture of our crumbling justice system, survivors are let down: when they report to the police and are dismissed or referred to the Home Office for immigration enforcement purposes, when they are exposed to misogynist myths around domestic and sexual violence, when their case is dropped, when the Crown Prosecution Service tell them there is insufficient evidence to prosecute their abuser, when they are told their case will not progress unless they hand over sensitive medical records or phone data, when they are too fearful to attend court, when they are re-traumatised, when their abuser is convicted and sentenced but is not rehabilitated.¹⁶ Most importantly, they are failed before they ever come into contact with the criminal justice system – as participants in a society which has allowed VAWG to become so deeply embedded. Survivors are denied justice and healing at every step of this inadequate

¹² Friends Families and Travellers (2021). *Briefing on new police powers for encampments in Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Part 4*. Available at: <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Briefing-on-new-police-powers-PCSCBill-and-CJPOA-002.pdf>

¹³ Smith. *I'm a Romany Gypsy – the government's Police Bill will criminalise my culture*. 25 April 2021. Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/police-bill-gypsy-traveller-b1836882.html>

¹⁴ ECHR. *Response of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to the Consultation: “Powers for dealing with unauthorised development and encampments”*. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/consultation-response-powers-for-dealing-with-unauthorised-development-and-encampments-june-2018.pdf>

¹⁵ Friends Families and Travellers (2021). *Briefing on new police powers for encampments in Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Part 4*. Available at: <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Briefing-on-new-police-powers-PCSCBill-and-CJPOA-002.pdf>

¹⁶ Collated testimonies from women using our services who have been through various stages of the Criminal Justice System

system, and this is demonstrative not of a system that is broken but a system which works exactly as it was designed – to uphold patriarchal and discriminatory approaches to ‘justice’.

There is a painful irony to the fact that the Government seeks to co-opt the VAWG sector and the women it supports as beneficiaries of this Bill when, just weeks ago, it repeatedly voted down a Lords amendment to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which would have ensured equal protection for migrant women.¹⁷

The framing of this Bill, the lack of consultation around its provisions and the driving forces behind it all do a disservice to this urgent issue. This Bill is not the place to meaningfully address what is needed for a better system. However, we encourage Members of Parliament to utilise this perspective in understanding the damage this Bill exacerbates in our society.

The underlying causes of VAWG are complex. Any attempt to recognise and address those causes requires an intersectional approach must be sensitive to the ways in which the criminal justice system and associated agencies have re-victimised and re-traumatised countless women and disproportionately affecting women with multiple identities such as Black and minoritised women, women with disabilities, and LBTQI+ women.

The Government must listen to the expertise within the VAWG sector, and particularly specialist organisations run by and for Black and minoritised women, to understand what measures require investment – including challenging myths and stereotypes, addressing the socio-economic inequalities which create the conditions for VAWG, equipping vulnerabilised communities to speak out and challenge perpetrator behaviour and providing children and young people with the knowledge, tools and safe environment to end VAWG.

Part of developing a nuanced understanding of the complexity of VAWG is recognising the gendered experience of violence. This recognition must be at the heart of Government efforts to address VAWG – something which is, regrettably, not reflected in the recently proposed, fragmented ‘dual strategies’ approach which sees domestic abuse separated from other forms of VAWG. It is essential that the gendered nature of domestic abuse is recognised, and that approaches to VAWG are introduced that specifically acknowledge and include domestic abuse as a gendered form of violence that is exacerbated by racial, socio-economic and other forms of discrimination.

Polygraph testing

The inclusion of provisions around polygraph testing in this Bill speaks to the Government’s tendency to introduce technological gimmicks as a cure-all to complex social problems. We note the inclusion of similar provisions in the recently passed Domestic Abuse Act¹⁸ – provisions for which there was no call in the VAWG sector, and indeed no consultation.

Far from extending the use of tools which lack an evidential basis and exacerbate discriminatory approaches, we should instead roll back on their use and re-focus on what is actually needed to address the causes of VAWG. It is alarming to see such proposals put forward at the expense of proven and established measures to support the real needs of survivors in relation to safety, justice and accountability.

¹⁷ Step Up Migrant Women (2021). *Step Up Migrant Women responds to clauses to the Domestic Abuse Bill on data-sharing*. Available at: <https://stepupmigrantwomen.org/2021/04/27/step-up-migrant-women-responds-to-clauses-to-the-domestic-abuse-bill-on-data-sharing/>

¹⁸ Home Office (2021). *Policy paper: Mandatory polygraph tests factsheet*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/mandatory-polygraph-tests-factsheet>

Mobile phone extraction

We do not support the inclusion of provisions around Mobile Phone Extraction in this Bill.

There has been a hard-fought campaign against intrusive and unnecessary data collection practices in relation to victims of crime (see, for example, Big Brother Watch's campaign End Digital Strip Searches and their report 'Digital Strip Searches: the police's data investigations of victims'¹⁹). In 2018, Privacy International lodged a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office²⁰ highlighting the myriad of rights risks presented by police practices around the extraction of data from mobile phones, which led to a critical ICO report on the subject.²¹

This Bill, for the first time, seeks to put these invasive practices on a statutory footing – but the proposals fail to adequately protect the rights of victims when it comes to mining their phone data (data that relates not only to them, but their friends, relatives, colleagues and communities).

There is nothing in the Bill which promotes a strictly limited approach to data collection. There must be sufficient safeguards to ensure that police officers and others do not simply snatch all the data that is available from a device – something entirely absent from the provisions of the Bill as currently drafted.

The list of people authorised to collect data from devices is also alarming – it should not, under any circumstances, include employees of Common Council of the City of London and immigration officers, a provision for which there is no proportionate justification. The authorisation of these powers for immigration officers is an extension of the Government's 'hostile' or 'compliant' agenda – which the Home Office committed to reviewing in response to the Windrush Lessons Learned report.²²

There is also a notable absence of a robust system of redress where powers to extract data have been misused. In light of the ICO's findings that highly sensitive personal data held was not always encrypted and then copied onto CDs, DVDs and USB drives and transported by unsecured means, it is clear that such redress processes are sorely needed – although, of course, provision to end such practices is necessary in the first instance.

It is clear that there is a great deal of work to be done in order to carefully balance the privacy rights of survivors against a suspect's right to fair trial and, in our view, existing guidance provides more protection to survivors than these provisions. We are also awaiting a specific ICO investigation into the use of mobile phone extraction against rape survivors, and the Government is advised to await this report before proposing legislation pertaining to the use of this technology.

¹⁹ Big Brother Watch (2019). *Digital Strip Searches: The police's data investigations of victims*. Available at: <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Digital-Strip-Searches-Final.pdf>

²⁰ Privacy International (2021). *Press release: Privacy International issues complaint to UK Information Commissioner about police downloading data from phones of suspects, witnesses and even victims of crime without consent*. Available at: <https://privacyinternational.org/press-release/1755/press-release-privacy-international-issues-complaint-uk-information-commissioner#:~:text=Privacy%20International%20has%20today%20a,even%20victim%20of%20a%20crime>

²¹ Privacy International (2020). *Press release: Critical ICO report says the Police must stop taking data from victims' phones without better safeguards*. Available at: <https://privacyinternational.org/press-release/3941/press-release-critical-ico-report-says-police-must-stop-taking-data-victims>

²² Home Office. *Windrush Lessons Learned Review response: comprehensive improvement plan*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-lessons-learned-review-response-comprehensive-improvement-plan>

Any law relating to mobile phone extraction must provide adequate safeguards that minimise the invasion of privacy to which survivors are subjected and provide a clear route of redress where practices fall short of this standard.

Mobile phone extraction must not be carried out by immigration officers – such powers must be restricted to police officers of appropriate seniority.

The wider issue of the basis for such processing, including the problems presented by a model relying on consent, must also be fully investigated.

Moving towards prevention

While the provisions contained in the Bill pertaining to protest represent a dire undermining of our freedom of expression, the provisions relating to policing and prisons more generally, including the imposition of longer prison sentences, also give rise to significant cause for concern. It is clear that this Bill is *“aimed at strengthening the use of surveillance, force and criminalisation techniques in the poor black and multicultural working-class neighbourhoods of this country, as well as the targeting of Gypsies and Travellers”*.²³

A coalition of criminal justice and race equality organisations, has written to the Prime Minister²⁴ warning that the government’s plans for policing and sentencing under this Bill will further entrench racial inequality in the criminal justice system – and a report commissioned by the Prison Reform Trust in 2020 warned that increasing sentence severity only adds to pressures on overcrowded and overstretched prisons across England and Wales, without bringing down crime or improving public confidence.²⁵ Chris Philp, the Minister currently responsible for sentencing, recently accepted that *“harsher sentencing tends to be associated with limited or no general deterrent effect”*.²⁶

We urge caution around the introduction of measures ostensibly focused on addressing VAWG which, in reality, focus on policing and prisons rather than prevention. Such measures are unlikely to reduce violence and harm in practice and create conditions that allow institutions to abuse their powers, perpetuate VAWG and re-traumatise survivors.

The reality is that the vast majority of people who commit VAWG will not be prosecuted, and policing and imprisonment are highly discriminatory in their targeting.²⁷ There has been a marked decline in prosecutions for rape – over the past five years, cases reported to police have risen sharply, but the proportion progressing to a prosecution in that time has more than halved.²⁸ In the year to the end of March 2020, 58,856 cases of rape were recorded by police forces in England and Wales. These led to just 2,102 prosecutions, compared with 3,043 in the previous 12 months.²⁹ The decline in prosecutions for rape, despite efforts to address the

²³ Fekete (2021). *Policing in the Brexit State – Back to the 1980s*. Institute of Race Relations. Available at: <https://irr.org.uk/article/policing-in-the-brexit-state-back-to-the-1980s/>

²⁴ Joint letter (2021). *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill could deep deepen racial inequality in the criminal justice system*. Available at: http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Parliament/PCSC%20Bill/Open%20letter%20to%20Prime%20Minister_FINAL.pdf

²⁵ Prison Reform Trust (2020). *Punitive prison policies risk repeating past mistakes*. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/vw/1/ItemID/791>

²⁶ Dathan. *Longer jail terms don’t stop crime, admits Chris Philp, justice minister*. 10 March 2021. The Times. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/longer-jail-terms-dont-stop-crime-admits-chris-philp-justice-minister-g2jz9s8ng>

²⁷ These issues are explored in a report by the Centre for Women’s Justice, End Violence Against Women coalition, Imkaan, and Rape Crisis England & Wales, in their response to the England & Wales Government’s ‘End to End’ Review of the Criminal Justice System’s Response to Rape. See: <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/C-Decriminalisation-of-Rape-Report-CWJ-EVAW-IMKAAN-RCEW-NOV-2020.pdf>

²⁸ Crown Prosecution Service. *CPS data summary Quarter 4 2019-2020*. Available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-data-summary-quarter-4-2019-2020>

²⁹ Ibid

issue, lead Regan and Kelly to suggest that *“legal reforms and changes in the investigation and prosecution of rape have had little, if any, impact on convictions”*.³⁰ It should also be noted that any changes to the law relating to VAWG, symbolic as they may be, do not indicate an inevitable change in public attitudes, or the approaches of the state.

Rather than focusing, yet again, on criminal justice measures, the focus should instead be on examining and addressing the misogynistic and discriminatory assumptions of the law and its systems. A continued reliance on the criminal justice system to protect women is ultimately an acceptance of the social, legal, and political structures that underpin male privilege and use of violence, focusing as it does on individualising this harm rather than addressing these structural issues.

The role of the state

Addressing the underlying causes of VAWG requires an acceptance of the misogyny which lies at the heart of our society and is perpetuated by the state – and a deep understanding of the intersectional nature of that discrimination. Housing, equal pay, education, employment, access to healthcare, parental policies, provision for mental health support, welfare benefits and addressing inequalities based on race, faith, migrant status, disability, sexuality, gender identity, class status and age are all areas which require Government action.

The Government must also acknowledge and seek to address the role the state has played in perpetuating VAWG and the power that its institutions have as a key driver of this harm (see the examples drawn on above, including the policing of the vigil for Sarah Everard and Home Office hostile environment policies, as well as proposals set out for example in the New Plan for Immigration, which create the conditions for the abuse and exploitation of migrant women). There are *“structural causes of violence, including the state’s role in passing laws and policies that entrench inequality or enable discrimination to flourish.”*³¹

The future of the VAWG sector

It will not be via this Bill that the dangerous underfunding of the VAWG sector is addressed – and the approach outlined in this Bill is the antithesis to the holistic and well-evidenced approach which would be needed to address the prevalence of VAWG in our society.

We take this opportunity to remind Members of Parliament ahead of committee stage that there are many opportunities to resource this essential work which do not rely on the provisions contained within this Bill. Most sorely in need of specific and ring-fenced funds are specialist by-and-for organisations and their essential work to support Black and minoritised women, migrant women, Deaf and disabled women and LGBTQ+ survivors. These organisations must be recognised for their vital work and funded accordingly.

Conclusion

Far from reforming our justice system and supporting survivors of VAWG, this Bill entrenches a reliance on powerful institutions with histories of discriminatory approaches and weak accountability mechanisms. It is a law-and-order response that does nothing to address the underlying causes of offending while threatening our ability to express dissent about the state’s complicity in VAWG by fundamentally undermining our right to protest.

³⁰ Regan and Kelly (2003). *Rape: Still a Forgotten Issue*. Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University

³¹ Lamble (2021). *The false promise of hate crime laws*. Available at: <https://abolitionistfutures.com/latest-news/the-false-promise-of-hate-crime-laws>

VAWG is endemic in our state and society, and further enabled by systemic racism. The Government should not rush through legislation which exacerbates inequality and contains only tokenistic gestures for addressing the real issues. In a society where women are disbelieved and shamed within a criminal justice system which is supposed to protect them, we demand better – an approach to VAWG built on a rigorous evidence base which centres and empowers all survivors, without discrimination.

**End Violence Against Women and Girls
Latin American Women's Rights Service
Rights of Women
Southall Black Sisters**

May 2021

About us

The End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW)

EVAW is a coalition of more than 100 specialist women's support services, researchers, activists, survivors and NGOs working to end violence against women and girls in all its forms. Established in 2005, we campaign for every level of government to adopt better, more joined up approaches to ending and preventing violence against women and girls, and we challenge the wider cultural attitudes that tolerate and condone this abuse.

Latin American Women's Rights Service

The Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) is a feminist and human rights organisation led by and for Latin American migrant women in the UK. We support the multiple immediate and long-term needs of Latin American migrant women exposed to intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender, race and migration status, and to violations of their fundamental human rights. We work with women and girls facing violence, exploitation and trafficking, and those enduring difficult living and working conditions in low-paid jobs and facing barriers to social protection.

Our programmes promote economic security and access to social protection by providing information and advice; tackle VAWG through support and advocacy and trauma informed counselling; identifies and supports victims of labour exploitation and trafficking; and bridges inequalities and fosters inclusion through community outreach programmes.

Rights of Women

Rights of Women is a legal rights organisation which specialises in supporting women who are experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), including domestic and sexual violence. In our approach, we recognise the additional barriers posed by the intersection of gender-based abuse, racism, structural inequality and other forms of discrimination and oppression that impact on women's vulnerability, exclusion and marginalisation.

By offering a range of services – including specialist telephone legal advice lines, legal information and training for professionals – we aim to increase women's understanding of their legal rights and improve their access to justice. We empower women to make informed choices where they come into contact with the criminal, family, employment or immigration and asylum legal systems so they can live free from violence.

Southall Black Sisters

Southall Black Sisters (SBS) is one of the UK's leading women's organisations for black and minority ethnic (BME) women. Established in 1979, we operate an advice, advocacy and campaigning centre. The bulk of our work is directed at assisting women and children – the overwhelming victims of domestic and other forms of gender-related violence – to obtain effective protection and assert their fundamental human rights. We draw on our casework experience to develop our policy and campaigns work and legal interventions, which by its very nature addresses issues of multiple or intersectional discrimination, involving the simultaneous experience of race, gender and other forms of discrimination. Whilst based in West London, we have a national reach. For more information see <https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/about/>.