

Supplementary written evidence submitted by Imkaan (TVF0092)

Imkaan is a representative body for Black and minoritised women-led organisations that provide vital, dedicated specialist services—including advice, advocacy, safe housing, and mental health support—to women subjected to domestic abuse and sexual violence. Our network of over 40 members holds specific expertise on issues such as violence in transnational contexts, immigration-based abuse, forced marriage and so-called honour-based abuse and are able to respond holistically to women's needs and experiences including racism and inequality.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Home Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into funding to end Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). In furtherance of our written and oral evidence, we would like to highlight the following key points for the Committee's consideration:

- 1. The government should reform the current competitive funding and commissioning model to ensure 'by and for' services have a fair chance of accessing grants. The government should move towards grant-based approach and create national multi-year ring-fenced funding specifically for 'by and for' services to receive the commissioning.**

During the oral evidence session, the Committee heard from panellists about the challenges of accessing funding to tackle VAWG. As previously outlined in our submission, our members face significant and disproportionate systemic and structural barriers, including institutional discrimination, chronic underfunding, and marginalisation in commissioning processes. Our members describe how funding models favour low-cost delivery over quality, survivor choice, and the unique 'social value' they provide, resulting in their exclusion from essential funding opportunities. Instead, larger, mainstream providers receive recognition and funding, often sidelining or appropriating the grassroots work of specialist Black and minoritised 'by and for' organisations in ways that are tokenistic and are contributing to the loss of community-based specialism and leadership.

During the session, there were discussions around mixed model of commissioning including competitive tendering. We wish to highlight the disproportionate impact this model can have on small, specialist providers. We support Florence Eshalomi MP's remarks, which recognised the structural disadvantage faced by specialist 'by and for' organisations: ".....some organisations have a full-time member of staff whose sole job is to apply for funding, because it is so demanding, whereas smaller specialist groups do not have that at their disposal? "

These inequalities are also found in research by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner who found that ['by and for' services are 6 times less likely to access statutory funding](#).

Furthermore, there is misinterpretation of the definitions of ‘specialist’ and ‘by and for’. Between 2023 to 2025, Home Office distributed £8.5 million in funding for ‘VAWG Support and Specialist Services’ however, it was found that most of the funding went to generic, non- specialist organisations (Violence against Women and Girls Sector, 2023)

The impact is profound—insecure funding undermines staff wellbeing, increases pressure on limited resources amid rising demand, and restricts capacity to influence policy. In 2021 at the start of the COVID crisis, Imkaan estimated that nearly two-thirds of Imkaan members organisations were operating with a financial deficit of 39% and the situation is likely to have worsened through austerity, increases in National Insurance and the cost of living. Service costs in the Black and minoritised sector rose by 33% during 2020-2021 due to increased demand for intensive wrap around support and mental health services – they will have to address this by using any limited levels of reserves they have, making staff redundant, closing waiting lists, cutting life-saving provision. Our members have been operating in “survival mode” since the austerity cuts of 2012, barely sustaining operations year to year, as local authorities consistently fail to support their vital, frontline services.

2. The government should allocate funding to Black and minoritised ‘by and for’ VAWG organisations to recruit mental health staff.

The current funding pathways focus on “high-risk” crisis intervention in the criminal justice system rather than preventative and sustained support. Professor Sylvia Walby has estimated that we spend seven times more on criminal justice system compared to specialist services. This is concerning as women do not only seek justice through criminal justice, but they also seek access to safe housing, mental health support and support for their children.

We appreciate the Committee’s focus on the need for funding prevention work. In this context, we would like to highlight the critical prevention work carried out by Imkaan’s member organisations. We need to recognise the vital role of frontline organisations in early intervention/prevention of repeated violence/femicide. Our members deliver community-based training and awareness programmes that increase knowledge of VAWG and the specific impacts on Black and minoritised women.

Additionally, in [‘Why should our rage be tidy’ report](#), we highlighted that specialist ‘by and for’ women’s organisations provide different services including group based therapeutic support, advocacy with mental health services and support with referral to statutory mental health services. Our members provide trauma-informed, intersectional and holistic support to victim- survivors of VAWG, something that the statutory and generic providers have failed to provide. They play a crucial role in preventing the escalation of mental ill-health among victim-survivors. This is how we see prevention—preventing women from experiencing more violence and escalating into a worse situation due to repeated traumatising and inefficient system.

[A 2012 research](#) at Imkaan showed that more than 85% of Black and minoritised women prefer to receive support from a Black and minoritised VAWG service and 99% state that such a service made them feel safer and protected reinforcing the value of ‘by and for’ support. Findings from the [Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner](#) are consistent with these earlier findings, with survivors reporting higher levels of safety (78%) upon receiving support from a by and for service in comparison to a non- by and for service (48%).

3. Black and minoritised women and girls face a greater risk of being placed in unsuitable and unsafe forms of accommodation.

During the session, the Committee explored the factors that lead to women being turned away from refuge spaces. We wish to draw particular attention to the disadvantages faced by Black and minoritised women, and women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)—groups that are disproportionately excluded from life-saving support.

Most refugees cannot afford to accommodate women with NRPF as they rely on housing benefit as an income stream and therefore, they are turned away from refuges. The No Woman Turned Away (NWTa) project, initiated by Women's Aid provides dedicated support to women experiencing domestic abuse who face multiple barriers in accessing refuge spaces or safe accommodation. Their [recent data showed](#) that compared with 2022, the percentage of women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) who accessed the NWTa project in 2023 increased by 8.5% to 45.1% of women. [42.2% women](#) were from Black and minoritised background. This highlights the systemic racism and discrimination that Black and minoritised survivors of domestic abuse continue to face when trying to access places of safety.

Another [research by Women's Aid](#) found that in 2024, local authorities commissioned only 65.9% of refuge bedspaces provided by Imkaan members, much lower than the national proportion of commissioned bedspaces (86.7%). Despite receiving no funding from local authorities, 'by and for' Black and minoritised women organisations provide many refuge bedspaces. If these non-commissioned services were unavailable, the level of shortfall would increase from 23.3% (1,311 bedspaces) to 32.4% (1,833 bedspaces). Black and minoritised survivors who are disproportionately unable to access refuge accommodation are forced into situations such as remaining with their abusers, or being pushed into exploitative and often unsafe housing or rough sleeping.

[Research by](#) Southall Black Sisters, Latin American Women's Rights Service, Safety4Sisters, Ubuntu Women Shelter and The Angelou Centre has found that when migrant victim-survivors with NRPF are able to access specialist 'by and for' support, net savings are generated to local public services totalling £18,024 per woman over three years – scaled up nationally this amounts to net savings of an estimated £127,015,128 over three years.

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