



Royal College
of Midwives

**Position
Statement**

violence

against women and girls



The Royal College of Midwives position

The RCM recognises that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a significant threat to maternal and infant wellbeing, as well as to wider public health. Midwives have a key role,^{9,10} to play in identifying and supporting women to get appropriate help and support and be treated with compassion, respect, and dignity.

In order to deliver this, we need the following to be in place:

- ▶ A co-ordinated multi-agency approach to prevention and response that brings together health, social care, law enforcement, the voluntary sector and wider society.
- ▶ Adequate funding for local services to address the short and long-term consequences of violence against women and girls, including psychological therapies.
- ▶ Appropriate training and support to enable midwives to routinely enquire about all forms of violence against women and girls. This should include how to access resources such as referral pathways, support services, multi-agency risk assessment conferences and independent domestic violence advisors.
- ▶ Employer-provided support and services for midwives who may themselves be victims of violence and abuse.



Background

VAWG includes domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, coercive control, rape and sexual violence, so-called 'honour based' abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). Domestic abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or economic and can include controlling or coercive behaviour.

Domestic abuse often starts or intensifies during pregnancy or after giving birth, and is a significant contributing factor to maternal and fetal mortality and morbidity. It increases the risk of miscarriage, infection, premature birth, and mental health problems. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021² recognises children under the age of 18 who witness the abuse as victims in their own right. VAWG exerts an immediate and long-term toll on the lives of victims and survivors, their children and families. It also has a significant impact on society, costing an estimated £78 billion⁴ over a three-year period. This sum includes health, social care, legal, criminal justice and housing costs. The NHS contributes more than any other agency.

Sadly VAWG exists across all parts of society. It is always hard for its victims and survivors to speak out and ask for help, but there are additional barriers for women from some minority communities. Midwives need to be alert to this, aware of the many ways in which VAWG can manifest, and sensitive to the varying needs of all women who are experiencing or have survived VAWG.

In the year ending March 2022:

- ▶ More than two women a week were killed⁴ by a current or former male partner.
- ▶ 6.9% of women, around 1.7 million, reported domestic abuse¹ and 3.3% experienced sexual assault.¹
- ▶ Over 108,000 cases of victims at the highest risk of serious harm or murder, involving over 138,000 children were seen at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (Maracs)⁵ across the UK.



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Additional resource

Office for Statistics Regulation. Reporting the costs of domestic abuse.
Reporting the costs of domestic abuse – Office for Statistics Regulation
(statisticsauthority.gov.uk)






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