

Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum (VSCYF)

Violence Reduction & Domestic Abuse

Date: 24 March 2026

Agenda

1. Welcome and Intro
2. Activity Setting
3. Domestic Abuse and Mental Health Project
4. Violence reduction & safety and MyEnds programme
5. Health Spot
6. Supporting Young Girls' Wellbeing - I Matter Too
7. Domestic Abuse Project (Haawa)
8. Young People and Violence Against Women and Girls
9. Youth Justice
10. Partnership discussion and feedback
11. Update on Funding and training opportunities

1. Welcome and intro

Overview:

Welcome and intros

Participants were asked to reflect throughout on:

- What must change across the system
- What is working
- What is missing
- What can be done together

2. Activity setting

Overview:

- Flipchart activity introduced at the start of the session
- Participants asked to contribute thoughts throughout

Focus question:

What must we change across our system to prevent violence and domestic abuse affecting women and young girls?

3. Domestic abuse & mental health partnership project

Overview (Alison, Tower Hamlets CVS):

- Funded through health inequalities funding (NHS England → Local Authority → VCS partners)
- Co-produced with 12 partner organisations
- Focus: domestic abuse and mental health

Key aims:

- Increase awareness
- Reduce incidents of abuse
- Deliver culturally sensitive, trauma-informed support
- Strengthen system-wide collaboration

Delivery model:

- Six core partners delivering frontline services
- Six satellite partners representing different protected characteristics

Key features:

- Internal referral system to avoid long waiting lists
- Integrated support across mental health, housing, and safeguarding
- Quarterly partnership meetings with NHS, GP Care Group, safeguarding and Solace

Stage:

- Programme running ~6 months (early stage)
- Still building connections and engagement

Discussion points:

- Youth focus mainly ages 11–17, with flexibility
- Awareness sessions delivered in age-appropriate ways
- Follow-up support available where needed
- Encouragement for partners to become domestic abuse champions

4. Violence reduction & safety and MyEnds programme (Streets of Growth)

Overview:

- Youth intervention charity focused on serious youth violence, exploitation, and harm reduction
- 25+ years of delivery in Tower Hamlets

Context:

- Young people affected by:
 - Criminal exploitation (CCE)
 - Sexual exploitation (CSE)
 - Gang involvement
- Violence often normalised through home and relationship experiences

AIM+ Programme:

- Ages 15–21
- Up to 2 years + 4-month follow-up

Phased model:

1. Initial engagement (trust building)
2. Behaviour change (CBT-informed work)
3. Progression (employment/training introduced later)

Key principles:

- Do not accept disengagement
- Expect relapse
- Prioritise harm reduction first
- Long-term support needed

Support provided:

- Up to 55 hours 1:1 intervention
- Two contacts per week
- Assigned intervention coach
- Relapse recovery support

Discussion:

- Links raised between ADHD/neurodiversity and risk
- Challenges accessing timely diagnoses
- Need for stronger NHS collaboration

5. Health Spot (Spotlight)

Overview:

- Youth hub supporting ages 11–19 (up to 25 with SEND)
- Provides safe, consistent spaces for young people

Offer:

- Creative arts, music, sports
- Training and employability
- Safe spaces for those affected by violence

Healthspot GP Service:

- Weekly NHS GP access
- Open to young people and families
- Supports early safeguarding identification

Partnership working:

- Works with Streets of Growth, Safe East, and other services

6. Supporting Young Girls' Wellbeing – I Matter Too (SheWise)**Overview:**

- Women-only organisation focusing on culturally specific support

Key programmes:

- Adapted Freedom Programme
- Confidence and skills development
- I Matter 2

I Matter 2:

- Girls aged 13–20
- Delivered in schools and universities

Focus areas:

- Identity and heritage
- Relationships and boundaries
- Recognising red flags
- Social media and body image
- Building confidence beyond appearance

Key strength:

- Based on lived experience and consultation with young girls

7. Domestic Abuse Project (Haawa) - Women's Inclusive Team

Overview:

- Somali-led organisation supporting Black and minority ethnic communities

Wider services:

- Mental health support (community connectors)
- Awareness programmes
- Advice and advocacy
- Nursery and youth engagement

Haawa project support:

- Emotional support
- Safety planning
- Housing and benefits advice
- Legal support
- Advocacy and referrals

Approach:

- Empowerment-led
- Focus on building trust over time

8. Young People and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Overview:

- Strategic role within Public Protection
- Focus on coordination, training, and awareness

Key functions:

- Commission services (e.g. Solace, NIA)
- Deliver training
- Support partnership working

Key initiatives:

- Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop
- Youth VAWG Champions programme
- Planned youth-focused forum

Key message:

- VCS organisations are essential to delivering this work locally

9. Youth Justice

- Limited input due to time
- Discussion touched on:
 - Financial exploitation and coercion
 - Risk of escalation into criminal justice system
 - Importance of early intervention

10. Partnership discussion and feedback**What's working**

- Strong range of programmes
- Mix of prevention and intervention
- Safe spaces for young people
- Increased focus on wellbeing

What's missing

- Early education (especially for boys)
- Better joined-up services
- More support for parents
- Gaps in mental health and diagnostic services
- More focus on online safety

Key issues

- Violence often normalised at home
- Social media means issues don't stop outside school
- Increase in violence among girls
- High levels of time spent online
- Parents often unaware of risks

What we can do together

- Strengthen collaboration
- Link prevention and intervention work
- Increase work in schools and communities
- Involve young people more
- Adapt approaches to current realities

11. Update on funding and training opportunities

- Upcoming training opportunities - Sheba will share details
- Encouragement to engage with available funding and programmes in a joined up way

Next steps

Key actions identified:

- **Improve collaboration between organisations**
By **July 2026**, identify representative organisations across education, youth, health and VAWG services and agree a **lead organisation** to coordinate joint working.
- **Increase early intervention in schools**
By **July 2026**, identify **one opportunity** to deliver or pilot **VAWG-related training** for VCS groups, school staff, including a potential provider and school/cluster.
- **Expand awareness for parents and communities**
By **September 2026**, identify **one priority parent/community group** and partner organisation to support targeted awareness raising- by lead organisation
- **Strengthen communication across services**
By **August 2026**, establish a **simple communication mechanism** (e.g. contact list or regular update) to support information sharing between services.
- **Continue developing youth focused VAWG approaches**
By **July 2026**, convene a **group of organisations around an agreed theme** to explore a **consortium bid**, including **researching potential funders** and confirming a lead.