

Local Elections

How to influence your local councillors

Women's Aid Federation of England will be running its flagship campaign to **#SaveOurServices**. This resource provides Women's Aid members with tips and guidance on getting councillors to prioritise violence against women and girls (VAWG) in local manifestos and ultimately to fund local specialist domestic abuse services.

01 Map the power

You can find who your local councillor is [here!](https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors)

www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors

Conduct some power mapping

Every local council is different and how they operate will depend on their organisational culture, traditions and individuals in your area. Identify which areas of the council are relevant to your aims. Use the diagrams below to work out what different types of councils are responsible for.

The local government structure:



There are two types of council stakeholders you need to know about:

Elected representatives	Council officers
Councillors	Council officers act as civil servants of local government.
Cabinet members e.g. Community Safety, Adults and Health and Children's leads	Within council officer roles, ' Community Safety Leads ' are most likely to have domestic abuse in their portfolio. However, this will vary and in some cases it may sit with 'Children and Families Leads'.
Leaders	Director level officers such as Director of Social Services, Directors of Children's Services and the Deputy Chief Executive.

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02 Build your power base

Increase visibility of your service and its work

Make contact with key decision-makers in your area, particularly the cabinet leader, introducing your organisation and its work. Invite them to visit your service to have the opportunity to see the life-saving work you provide to survivors and to understand the funding needs of your service. You can also invite them to any survivor-led events. Explain why survivors need **specialist** domestic abuse support.

If you need support with any of this, please contact domesticabuseact@womensaid.org.uk

03 Engage with the decision-makers

Link your goals

Link your advocacy 'asks' to the political goals of local councillors. Women's Aid economic analysis shows, for every pound invested in domestic abuse support services we will see a saving to the public purse of at least £9. You can use findings from this report to help make your case (ResPublica report: Investing to save: the economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support). You can also draw on survivor testimonies to demonstrate why your service is critical to the local community.

Think about who you're talking to and 'what makes them tick?'

A third (33%) of young women in the 16-24 age group placed violence against women and girls as their second most important priority, followed by health. Remind local councillors up for re-election and prospective new council candidates of how your priorities align.

Why not attend a council meeting to talk about local need, your service, and the current funding challenges you face?

04 Present an 'offer'

Check Women's Aid's Local Manifesto' for suggested useful language

- Set out your key asks for councillors on domestic abuse service provision and commissioning - see the Women's Aid local election manifesto for examples of key asks.
- Keep them simple and achievable (they need to be issues that *local government* can address - not central government!)
- You can also share useful documents with key decision-makers that will help them to achieve these desired outcomes.
- Research or guidance resources can also help local councillors or officers to address specific issues in their local area.

Always encourage continued contact and build an ongoing relationship.

Always have a call to action

Perhaps you want the issue to be discussed with other councillors? Or for them to propose or support a motion? Or to sign a pledge? **Be clear about your call to action - what do you want the councillor to do?**

Example: Trafford Domestic Abuse Service shared **Women's Aid's statutory duty factsheet** with their local councillors to help them understand their new duties and as a result, played a key role in the local partnership boards which informed the overall commissioning under **Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021**.