



## Represent Women Open Letter: September 2025

### **A call to action: Our MPs must listen to, advocate for and invest in women and girls in the North East and ensure we are represented in the National Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy.**

We are writing to you as a representative and advocacy voice for women led organisations in the North East, to **urge you to champion and safeguard the vital work delivered by organisations supporting women and girls** across our region and to ensure these voices are reflected in the VAWG Strategy.

We believe that **led by and for women and girls services that provide women only spaces and support are vital** to ensure effective, robust and safe VAWG support pathways in the North East. It is these specialist services here in the North East that are best placed to provide the insight needed to shape a VAWG strategy and deliver VAWG services for women and girls in our communities.

#### **North/South divide**

VAWG is significantly worse for women in the North of England due to deep-rooted regional inequalities and systemic neglect. The Woman of the North report highlights higher rates of domestic abuse, poorer mental health, lower life expectancy, and greater economic hardship compared to the South. [Why Do I Have to Hide Away?](#) report by the Angelou Centre and Project Resist evidences how far-right riots in 2024 intensified racism and misogyny, leaving women feeling unsafe and unsupported. These women face systemic racism, culturally insensitive services, and chronic underfunding of “by and for” organisations.

#### **Underfunded, under resourced and under the radar**

Represent Women have heard from our Women’s sector members that the top three concerns in the North East were; funding, an increase in the demand in services and a lack of understanding of the value of the women and girl's sector.

The stark national picture is demonstrated through the 2025 [Underfunded, under resourced, and under the radar: the state of the UK women and girls’ sector report](#),

commissioned by Rosa and conducted by Pro Bono Economics. With over 200 women and girls' organisations surveyed the report provides an insight into the fragility of the vital women and girls sector. Their results showed:

- 91% of organisations reported an increase in demand for services in the past year.
- 44% fear they will not meet future demand.
- 43% say competition for funding is harming collaboration.
- Many organisations rely on short-term funding, with limited access to central government grants or long-term contracts

### **Weaponisation of VAWG**

We have recently seen widespread weaponisation of VAWG as a political and social tool to spur racism, discrimination and prejudice. Myths, misconceptions and willful misrepresentation around VAWG data act as a barrier to justice and may lead to the misdirection of funding and resources. Dangerous misinformation about the causes of VAWG are being endorsed by those in the highest positions of power, Parliament and the media, and are being allowed to spread unchecked.

### **Policy development**

Women are an after-thought in policy development and therefore, the resulting policies can be poorly designed and ineffective. Represent Women recommends that the women and girls sector is consulted with prior to policy development and commissioning and that intersectional gender competence is embedded in public institutions, with disaggregated data collection and transparent accountability mechanisms adopted.

**What we need from you: We need the VAWG strategy to be inclusive and reflective of the needs of women and girls sector in the North East.**

- **Include the voices of the women and girls sector organisations in the North East:** Meet with Represent Women and women's organisations to hear directly from those working on the frontline. Listen to the women's sectors recommendations and ideas in the development of the strategy.
- **Address and stamp out the Weaponisation of VAWG:** Support End Violence to Women and Girls call to action ([Support here](#)) Act on recommendations in the report produced by Angelou Centre and Project Resist. Why Do I Have to Hide Away?- Documenting the impact of the 2024 far-right riots on Black, minoritised and migrant women and children. [Stories of colour - The Angelou Centre](#)
- **Fund and Value the Women's sector:** Recognise and resource the women's VCSE sector as a vital part of the region's social infrastructure and recovery. Ring-fence funding for women's VCSE organisations in the North East, especially those led by and for black, minoritised and migrant communities.
- **Ensure the VAWG strategy adopts a place-based approach to reflect our communities:** Support the development of a national VAWG strategy that reflects the lived realities of women and girls in the North East, especially those facing poverty, racism, ableism, and exclusion.
- **Gendered impact assessments in policy creation:** Support campaigns like [One Million Women and Girls](#), which advocate for governance structures that reflect women's lived experiences across transport, housing, skills, and regeneration. Require gendered impact assessments for all regional and national policies.

## About us:

**Represent Women** is a membership-based representative and advocacy organisation for the women and girls' voluntary and community sector in the North East. Our aim is to influence and inform decision makers using evidence-led approaches which improve the lives of women and girls and sustain the organisations that support them.

**Our vision:** A women and girls VCSE sector that is thriving not just surviving, feels supported, has a strong voice, is recognised and connected, and regional policy that works for, and prioritises, women and girls. We aim to strengthen the sector through collaboration, evidence, and strategic influence.

### **Steering group includes leading women's organisations in the region:**

Tyneside Women's Health, Cleveland Women's Network, Halo, Sangini, Power of Women, WWiN, My Sister's Place, The Millin Charity, Northumberland Women's Workshop, Rape Crisis Tyneside & Northumberland, Women's Health in South Tyneside, The Angelou Centre, Young Women's Outreach Project, Aspire, The Girls Network

We represent a diverse membership of organisations working across the North East including, Sexual and domestic violence, Mental health and wellbeing, Economic empowerment, Arts and culture, Refugee and asylum support, Young women and girls, Black, minoritised and migrant communities

*We look forward to hearing from you and working together for a stronger women and girls sector in the North East that feels supported and heard,*

**Erin Parker Leonard.**

*Director of Policy and Advocacy, Represent Women*

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, appearing to read 'EP Leonard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Represent. Amplify. Advocate. A voice for the women and girls sector. [hello@representwomenne.org.uk](mailto:hello@representwomenne.org.uk)  
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