

Pan-London Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline

VAWG Lead Drop-in
26.09.23



- We are a group of four experienced partners, committed to providing support for Londoners who are dealing with domestic and sexual violence.
- Our organisations – Respect, Refuge, Rape Crisis South London and the Women and Girls Network offer free, confidential, and accessible services to our callers.
- In this presentation, we will discuss the key trends, types of abuse, and the needs of survivors who are facing domestic and sexual abuse.

Respect
Men's advice line



Refuge
For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

WOMEN & GIRLS

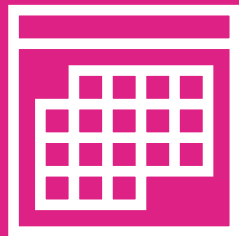
NETWORK

The 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge



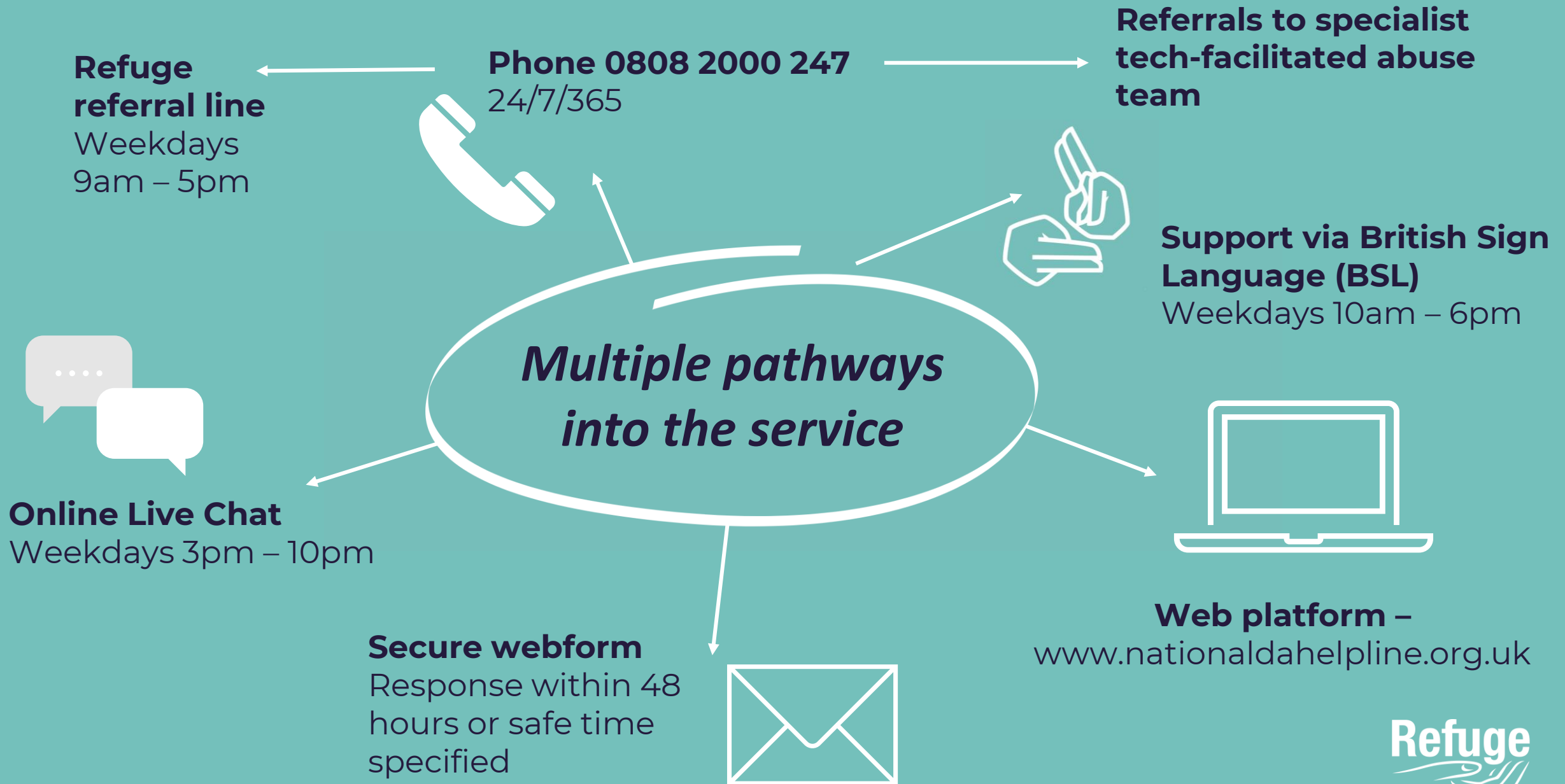
Free, expert, confidential

Practical and emotional
support, 24 hours, 7 days
a week, 365 days a year



By women, for women.

Staffed by experienced VAWG
managers, highly-trained staff
and volunteers. Non-judgmental,
and non-directive. We're here to
listen and empower.



Nationwide demand (FY 22-23)

- More than 133k callers - many of whom contacted multiple times
- Alongside more than 38k digital contacts



Trends: Patterns of Abuse

The data below examines the experiences of UK survivors recorded by helpline advisers between November 1, 2021, and October 31, 2022.

- The most common abuse types survivors disclosed were psychological abuse, controlling behaviour, physical abuse and threats/intimidation.
- 10% of the survivors who called us had experienced threats to kill and 9% had experienced strangulation, which we know is a significant risk indicator for domestic homicide.
- Helpline Advisors recorded factors that increased risk to our callers: 4,320 women told us their perpetrators used drugs or alcohol and 433 told us their perpetrator had already breached protective orders or bail conditions.

Trends: Patterns of Abuse

- We have seen a significant increase in the number of callers who disclosed a disability nationwide from FY 21-22 (1,603 callers) to FY 22-23 (4,642 callers). This trend has continued in the current financial year with 1355 callers recorded to date.
- During the reporting period of Year 3, 302 women informed us that their disability was utilised by their abuser as a tool of control and abuse.

Common Challenges for London Callers: Housing

London callers are facing the following when attempting to access safer accommodation/refuge:

- 1) Language barriers – frequently no access to interpreters out of hours
- 2) Inappropriate advice given to survivors - e.g., unreasonable requests for evidence of abuse, assumption that safe for survivor to return home, not informing survivors of full range of housing rights but instead pushing towards refuge accommodation where not appropriate.
- 3) Housing crisis - Lack of appropriate emergency accommodation

Responding to Challenges: Enhanced Support

- Over the last three months alone, the Helpline team has provided additional follow-up support - beyond our model of one-off phone conversations - for more than 200 callers from across the country.
- In 21% of cases, this was because the woman was facing particular barriers in accessing temporary safe accommodation - e.g. had been referred to a refuge that didn't meet her needs, had been provided with incorrect information around housing rights, such as being told she could only approach the local authority she'd fled.
- In 24% of cases, it was because women were unable to contact the services they needed themselves - most commonly because of language barriers and lack of access to interpretation

Service User Feedback – London Callers

"I found your website very helpful and speaking to you on the phone has given me a lot of reassurance that there is support and that I don't have to go through this alone."

"I have been very scared of what is going to happen next and I am happy to hear there is support there for me"

"So much information and support, I am so glad I reached out."

"Very helpful. I now have more confidence, as I thought I was losing my mind due to the past and continued control and abuse from my ex-partner."

"I feel so much better now after speaking to you, I really needed to hear that from someone who understands what I am going through, thank you"

Respect

Respect
Men's advice line

Registered charity number: 1141636. Company number: 7582438

Men's Advice Line is for men who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse, and for those supporting them: concerned friends or family members, Frontline Workers assisting male victims,

Respect

Respect

Men's advice line

We offer emotional support, practical advice, information and signposting to other vital services that help men keep themselves and their children safe.



Telephone support

0808 8010327

Mon–Fri 10am–5pm

Free from landlines and mobile phones within the UK. Your call will not appear on itemised bills. You can also call free from BT pay phones.



Email support

info@mensadvice.org.uk

Mon–Fri 9am–5pm



Webchat support

Wednesday 10–11:30am

Thursday 2–4pm

OVERALL DEMAND AND ABUSE SUFFERED

Respect

Respect
Men's advice line

DEMAND

2019-20 - Calls: 23,121 & Emails: 4460

2020-21 - Calls: 31,711 & Emails: 7178

2021-22 – Calls: 32,891 & Emails: 6805

2022-23 – Calls: 33,431 & Emails: 5966

Of the overall demand to Men's Advice Line,
26% are callers from London.

MOST COMMON ABUSE EXPERIENCED REPORTED

- 33% Emotional & Psychological abuse
- 32% Coercive Control

FACTORS IMPACTING MALE VICTIMS

- 25% of men reported their mental health was suffering including self-harm and suicidal ideation;
- 20% of male victims had insecure immigration, often weaponised to create fear and control;

The greatest need by 41% is free / low cost legal advice for child contact with some needing advice for divorce and financial separation.

RE-OCCURRING THEMES

Respect

Respect

Men's advice line

MASCULINITY

- Physically tough
- In control
- Provider
- Don't show emotions



SERVICE USER FEEDBACK

Respect

Respect
Men's advice line

“It gave me the permission to be kind to myself and to put myself first. The abuse I have experienced is long duration and multi-faceted and the Advisor gave me some incredible resources and insights to start unpacking the emotional and financial chaos that I have been left with”.

“It was wonderful to speak to a kind and caring person, who understands my fears for my son. I have some tools now to help the whole family deal with the situation and more importantly, support my son”.

“I was at breaking point after the last incident. Things have been getting progressively worse over the years but who's going to believe you that your young daughter would be so violent. The call handler was exactly who I needed to speak to at that exact moment. I was so lucky to find the website!”

Who we are

Rape Crisis - 24/7 Rape & Sexual Abuse Support line

Helpline Services remit



Helpline aims

We work with the empowerment model to provide emotional support

We provide specialist information on sexual abuse

We support service users to explore options for themselves

We signpost to other organisations that can provide specialist and/or other support to service users where appropriate

Details

Confidential and anonymous

Brief factual notes

Time boundaries (phone) – 40 mins

Time boundaries (webchat) – 45 mins

Silent calls

Non-directive signposting and information provision

Themes

We receive an increase in calls from survivors of ritual abuse at specific times in the year including 3 dates in September and are anticipating a greater increase in October due to Halloween 'Samhain'

We have received an increase in calls linked with sexual violence perpetrated by police officers when stories are in the news such as Met officer David Carrick

We are anticipating an increase in callers due to freshers week

We have noticed an increase in callers requiring our interpreter service.

Many callers impacted by the Cost-of-living crisis and the difficulty accessing life saving counselling services are choosing between food and paying for private counselling

We have had an increase in callers struggling to access appropriate mental health services that are adequately trained in supporting the impacts of sexual violence and many who experience D.I.D being told they are too complex to treat

We are now receiving nearly double the calls from 12 months ago nationally. From 3000 to nearly 6000 a month and are noticing a greater increase in male callers and supporters of survivors

Feedback

"Speaking to you on this helpline has helped me in my healing process, I am now speaking to other people in my community as a result of being made to feel safe to open up on this helpline, I'm making connections and am excited for the future. I always made a wish when I saw a certain kind of butterfly, and I always used to wish for 'Freedom' from my abusive situations and the resulting harm it has caused, and now I have started wishing for 'Success'. I attributes this shift in mindset to the support I have received"

'I am very grateful. This call means a lot to me, you've done a great job. I am now able to go to bed instead of thinking to end my life'

"you understand, everything you're saying is true... I feel much better than when I first tried to call. I thought I would only be able to say a few words and I've said everything. I said a prayer before I called that someone would help me speak, and you have, thank you"

"It is such a lovely feeling to be able to talk about these things with somebody who understands and doesn't judge me, thank you"

"I have been in and out of counselling all my life ,but without this helpline I would have killed myself you have literally saved my life"

Women and Girls Network



- Women and Girls Network (WGN) was established in 1987 and is a feminist organisation; providing a specialist, holistic response to self identifying women and girls who have experienced, or are at risk of, gender based violence/ Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)
- Our overall aim is to promote, preserve and restore the mental health, safety and wellbeing of women and girls, to empower them to make a total and sustainable recovery from their experiences of violence

Pan London Sexual Violence Helpline Service



- Trained team of specialists, including counsellors, offer 40 minutes of emotional support per call/ web chat session
- Survivors can access the Helpline as a one off or on an on-going basis
- Emotional support provided is trauma informed, strengths based and recovery focused
- You can access the Helpline anonymously.
- Our team speak several languages and can access phone interpreting

Belief, Respect, Choice

Trends, Patterns & Complex Needs



From April 2022- March 2023:

- 32% of survivors have experienced recent (last 12 months) sexual violence/ still experiencing
- 68% of survivors experienced historic (over 12 months ago) sexual violence
- Of these survivors who experienced historic sexual violence, 48% experienced CSA/ CSE
- 27% survivors experiencing current complex mental health needs, suicidal ideation, self-injury/ harm or combination of these at point of call/ web chat

Demand



- April 2019- March 2020: 882 calls trying to access SVHL
- April 2020- March 2021: 3588 calls trying to access SVHL
- April 2021- March 2022: 3029 calls trying to access SVHL
- April 2022- March 2023: 1769 calls & web chats trying to access


The demand for the Sexual Violence Helpline has decreased since the start of the pandemic, but it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Service User Feedback

"Empathy, aftercare and support. The fact that I'm speaking to women and also that I don't have to repeat myself every time I call. They make me feel like I'm not alone."

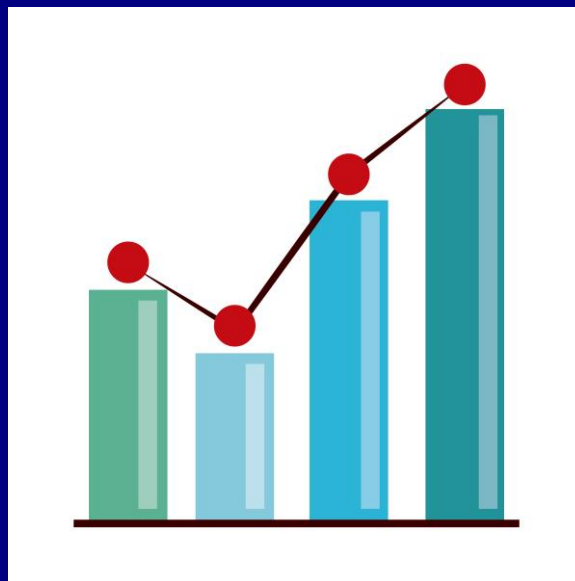
"WGN helpline has given me the clarity & empowerment to see I am a survivor. With their help I can see what I deserved and I have clarity to heal."

"Empathy, kindness and an amazing listening. Felt like I had been heard for once."



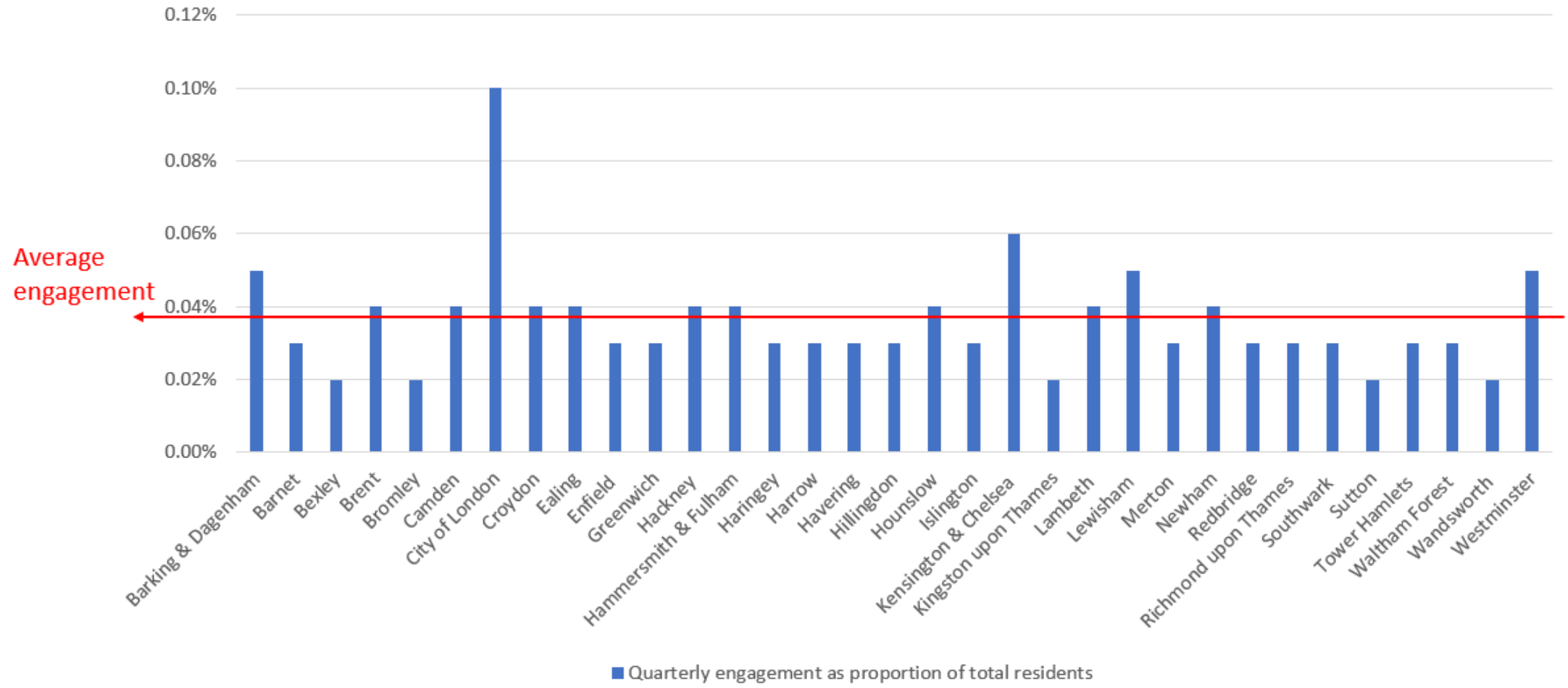
“If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive.”

— Brené Brown

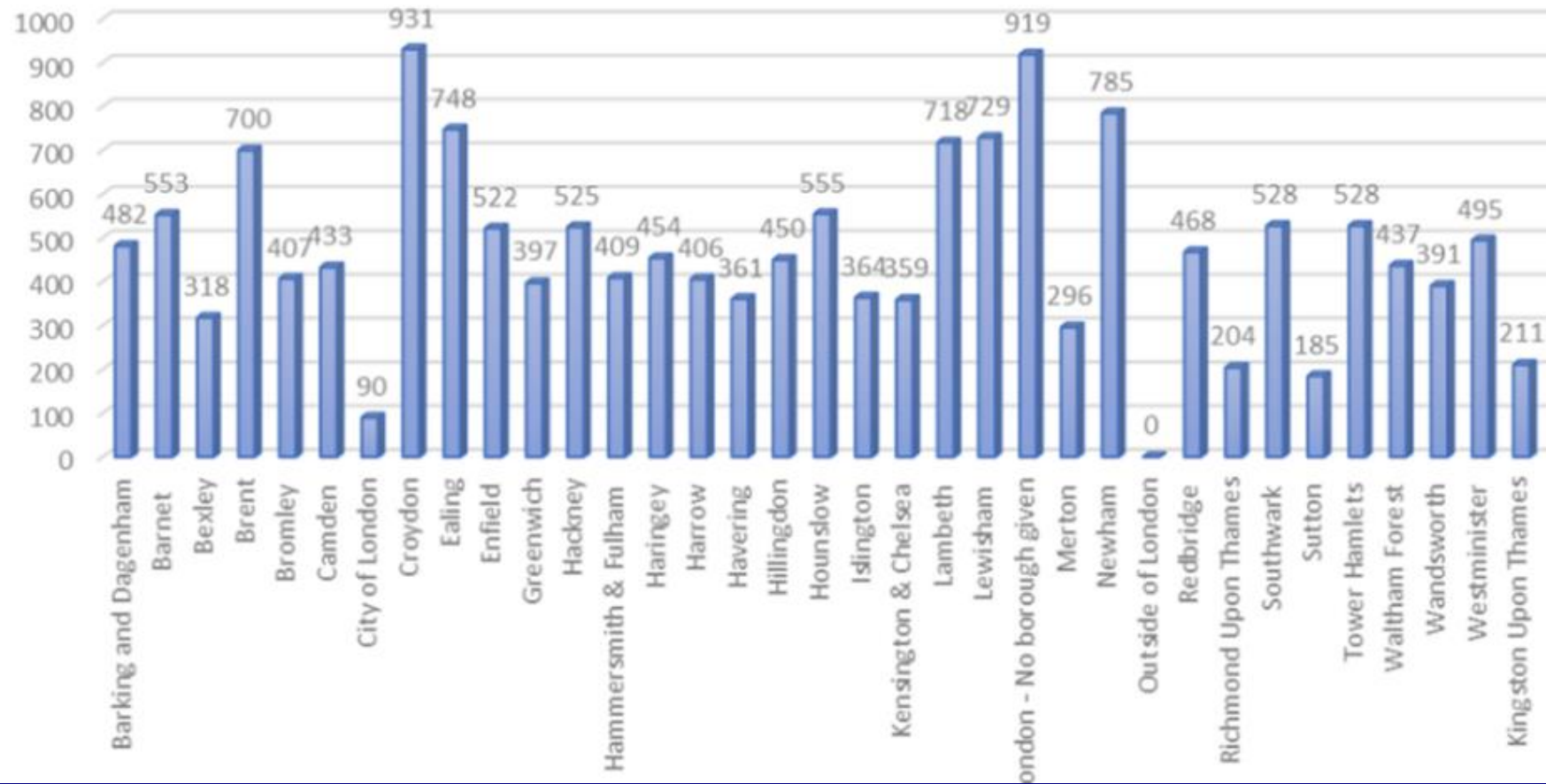


Pan-London Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline Statistics

Quarterly engagement as proportion of total residents – FY 22-23



The Total Number of Pan-London Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline Users from January 2022 to June 2023



Q&A