Rights of Women's Evidence to Justice Committee Inquiry on Access to Justice

About Rights of Women
Rights of Women is a legal rights organisation which specialises in supporting women who are experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), including domestic and sexual violence. In our approach, we recognise the additional barriers posed by the intersection of gender-based abuse, racism, structural inequality and other forms of discrimination and oppression that impact on women's vulnerability, exclusion and marginalisation.

By offering a range of services – including specialist telephone legal advice lines, legal information and training for professionals – we aim to increase women's understanding of their legal rights and improve their access to justice. We empower women to make informed choices where they come into contact with the criminal, family, employment or immigration and asylum legal systems so they can live free from violence.

We provide trauma-informed specialist advice to around 3500 women annually through legal helplines, advocacy and casework. Our services cover areas of law that can provide immediate redress and protection: family law, immigration and asylum law, criminal law and employment law covering sexual harassment at work. All advice is provided by women solicitors or barristers.

Rights of Women is a registered charity 1147913 and Company Limited by Guarantee.

Rights of Women's consultation response
Before answering the specific questions asked in the consultation we would point out that as a women's legal organisation we will confine our responses to law and legal policy issues within our skills and experience.

Foreword: Impact of repeated reviews on frontline organisations

Over many years, we have responded to successive consultations and calls for evidence on legal aid and access to justice including:

- Evidence to the Bach Commission on access to justice (2016)
- Submission to the Government post-implementation review of LASPO (2018)
- Response to the Justice Committee's future of legal aid inquiry (2020)
- Response to the consultation on the legal aid means test review (2022)
- Evidence to Review of Civil Legal Aid (2024)

While we remain committed to providing insight from the frontline, this work represents a significant resource burden for organisations like ours, diverting capacity from direct support to those in need. The repetition of similar exercises across different reviews and inquiries also risks duplication, consultation fatigue, and a sense that systemic issues are being revisited

rather than resolved. We would therefore urge the Committee to consider how evidence already submitted to government reviews can be better utilised, and to press the Ministry of Justice to act on recommendations rather than initiating further cycles of consultation.

Our evidence to the Review of Civil Legal Aid (RoCLA) points to specific elements of the civil legal aid system that are not working as they should, and recommends changes in relation to family law, immigration, and discrimination. We will not repeat the evidence here but urge the Committee to consider it alongside this response.

1. **How does the current state of the legal services and representation market in England and Wales, and associated operating pressures, affect access to justice for clients?**

The current state of legal services means that many of the women who contact us are ineligible for legal aid, and many of those who are eligible are unable to access it in practice. In our evidence to RoCLA, we outlined the numerous barriers that women face when trying to find a legal aid lawyer, prove eligibility, and secure legal aid[1].

For some women, these barriers mean they are unable to access justice at all. Our 2015 research on the impact of evidential requirements for survivors of domestic abuse found that 53% of participants took no action in relation to their family law problem because they could not apply for legal aid[2]. The consequences of this are profound as women are left unable to resolve critical legal and safety issues, leaving them and their children in situations of continued insecurity, risk, and instability.

Even when legal aid is theoretically available, access is limited by systemic pressures in the market. There are shortages of lawyers willing or able to take on legal aid cases, particularly in family and immigration law, leaving clients with few or no options. High caseloads and low remuneration among providers affect the quality of service, and many experienced legal aid practitioners have exited the market entirely. These pressures reduce choice, slow access, and can undermine the quality of representation for those who do secure legal aid.

For survivors who proceed without representation, access to justice is severely undermined. Survivors who act as litigants in person are disadvantaged in their ability to articulate their case, challenge opposing evidence, and safeguard their own and their children's interests. Survivors with additional vulnerabilities, such as mental health and language barriers, experience additional disadvantages when legal support is unavailable or insufficient.

Even survivors who do secure a legal aid lawyer are affected by the chronic underfunding of the system. As we highlighted in our response to Question 6 of RoCLA, inadequate remuneration leads to reduced quality of service and limited capacity among providers. Survivors experience this as re-traumatising: they are left feeling unheard, unsupported, and

[1] Rights of Women, *Evidence to the Civil Legal Aid Review* (February 2024), available at: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Rights-of-Women-Evidence-to-Civil-Legal-Aid-Review.pdf

[2] Rights of Women, *Evidencing Domestic Violence: Nearly 3 Years On* (2015), available at: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/evidencing-domestic-violence-v.pdf

exposed within proceedings. Underfunding also affects case outcomes. A poorly prepared case or advocate can make the difference between a finding of domestic abuse being made or not made - a determination that directly influences whether the arrangements ordered by judges are safe or unsafe.

The fragmentation and complexity of the legal system further compound these challenges. Navigating multiple eligibility gateways, interacting with different sets of proceedings or areas of law simultaneously, and managing digitalised procedures can be overwhelming, particularly for vulnerable clients. Delays, confusion, and hidden costs such as travel, childcare, and lost income can lead clients to abandon proceedings altogether. Collectively, these pressures perpetuate inequality, leaving women, children, and other marginalised groups without access to fair, timely, and safe resolution of their legal problems.

2. **What is the role of supplementary advice services in supporting access to justice?**

Rights of Women is a supplementary advice service and plays a vital role in supporting access to justice by providing immediate, specialist, and trauma-informed support to women navigating the legal system. Our services enable cases to progress, reduce complex advice pathways, and relieve pressures on other organisations by ensuring that women can access timely guidance and information.

Our advice is delivered by women for women, with lawyers who have specialist knowledge of women's legal justice needs and particular expertise in violence against women and girls (VAWG). This enables us to offer support that is not only legally accurate but also sensitive to the impact of abuse. Through this approach, we help survivors to understand their legal options, make informed decisions, and engage with the legal process with greater confidence.

We also produce legal guides and other educational materials that complement our advice services and can act as standalone resources. These materials help to bridge gaps left by limited access to free or affordable legal advice, equipping women with accessible, accurate information and supporting self-advocacy where direct legal support is unavailable. In addition, we provide specialist legal education and training for professionals, enabling them to support and advocate for women affected by VAWG.

Our services are designed to be accessible and tailored to the barriers women face, including geographical isolation, financial constraints, time pressures, language needs, and caring responsibilities. While we recognise that we cannot meet the scale of need alone, we play a crucial role in reducing the burden on survivors through effective signposting to additional resources and partnership services.

Supplementary advice services complement, but cannot replace, the work of legal aid and private providers. We assist women to access legally aided services. Separately, we utilise the evidence we gather around women's access to legal aid for policy influencing to increase access to justice through legal aid provision. In this way, our services strengthen the overall legal support ecosystem, ensuring that more women are able to access justice safely, effectively, and with confidence.

3. **What is the impact of those acting without legal advice and / or representation having on access to justice?**

A growing number of survivors of domestic abuse are having to take part in legal proceedings as litigants in person[3]. The experiences we hear on our advice lines reveal that survivors are being re-traumatised through exposure to the perpetrator, belittlement from the perpetrator and professionals such as judges, undermining their experiences of domestic abuse, and poor safeguarding. This has been highlighted in several reports looking at the experiences of survivors of domestic abuse in the Family Justice system[4].

Acting without legal advice or representation also makes it difficult for survivors to navigate complex procedural rules, present evidence, or challenge opposing arguments, which can lead to delays, mistakes, or unsafe outcomes. At a systemic level, unrepresented parties increase pressures on courts and tribunals, contribute to adjournments, and place additional demand on advice services and charities. The prevalence of unrepresented litigants highlights the urgent need for accessible, adequately funded legal aid and trauma-informed support services to ensure that survivors can participate safely, effectively, and fairly in the justice system.

Our evidence to ROCLA includes several case studies that demonstrate the impact in the immigration case law context at pages 13-25. We have included a couple of examples that demonstrate impact in the family law context below.

Case Study - Sara

Sana and her husband are both litigants in person in financial remedy proceedings. She has experienced domestic abuse, including financial abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour, and physical violence, and there is a non-molestation order in place. With a hearing scheduled in three days, her husband has failed to serve the documents the court directed him to provide. Without these, Sana cannot prepare her case. She has tried contacting the court but has received no response. She is too afraid to contact her husband directly, fearing this would expose her to further abuse. If she had legal representation, her lawyer could correspond safely with her husband (or his lawyer, if instructed) and advise on what applications to make to the court to progress the case, ensuring her rights are protected and the court's time is used effectively.

[3] In 2024 the Law Society reported on figures from the Family Court Statistics Quarterly that showed 29% of survivors of domestic abuse representing themselves in family court, compared with 15% in 2011: https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/contact-or-visit-us/press-office/press-releases/legal-representation-out-of-reach-for-many-survivors-of-domestic-abuse.com

[4] See for example: Ministry of Justice, *Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases* (2020), available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ef3dcade90e075c4e144bfd/assessing-risk-harm-children-parents-pl-childrens-cases-report_.pdf and, SafeLives and Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *Understanding Court Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse* (2021), available at: https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Court-Support-Mapping-Report-DAC-Office-and-SafeLives.pdf

Case Study - Zadie

Zadie is litigant in person in child arrangements proceedings. Her husband is represented by a direct access barrister. The barrister made her feel belittled and intimidated and she felt she wasn't able to present her case as well as her husband. The judge made findings of domestic abuse against the father, but not the most serious ones and Zadie feels this is because she struggled to get her words out or know what is and is not the legally most relevant things to say. At the last hearing, the judge made a decision about child arrangements and asked the father's barrister to type the order. The barrister has added points to the order that weren't discussed at court relating to holidays and handover arrangements, including that she must pay for travel which she cannot afford. The barrister has refused to amend the order and she doesn't know how to stand up for herself.

4. **Without impacting the public purse, what potential funding options would increase access to justice? e.g. an access to justice fund levy, conditional fee arrangements, third party funding.**

We have not undertaken research into alternative funding models and therefore do not propose specific mechanisms. However, we emphasise that any funding arrangement intended to increase access to justice must be sustainable, reliable, and designed with the needs of vulnerable clients in mind.

Services must be affordable, geographically available, and straightforward to navigate. Models must recognise the specific vulnerabilities of survivors of domestic abuse and support the provision of specialist, trauma-informed services that prioritise safety and wellbeing alongside legal outcomes.

5. **If limited funds were available, what would be the priority areas for spending?**

While we have previously highlighted systemic 'pinch points' for survivors of domestic abuse, we are concerned by the framing of this question. It presupposes scarcity and risks normalising the idea that access to justice can only be improved within tight limits. This is at odds with the principle that access to justice is a fundamental right, not a discretionary service.

Framing the issue in terms of "limited funds" also places organisations like ours in an impossible position: we are asked to choose between equally vital areas of need, such as family law, immigration, housing or early advice, when in reality all are underfunded and interconnected. Survivors of domestic abuse rarely experience a single, isolated legal problem. Choosing to fund one area while neglecting others risks leaving women and children in unsafe and precarious situations.

The aim should be how to ensure that legal aid and advice services are adequately and sustainably funded. Access to justice must be treated as core to the rule of law and the protection of rights, not as an optional or "nice to have" area of public spending.

6. **How are the legal services regulators responding to their obligation to improve access to justice under the Legal Services Act 2007?**

This is not our area of expertise. However, we do have concerns about the following:

- Survivors of domestic abuse, and the support services working alongside them, frequently report how difficult it is to find legal aid lawyers, or that there is little or no choice of provider.
- Lawyers are not always sufficiently trained or equipped to provide trauma-informed services to survivor clients.
- Lawyers are not consistently trained in how to respond appropriately when survivors are the opposing party, for example avoiding aggressive or intimidating questioning or correspondence.
- Litigants in person are increasingly turning to McKenzie Friends, including those who charge fees but operate without regulation. While McKenzie Friends can provide valuable emotional and practical support, particularly for survivors of domestic abuse, there are serious risks where unregulated individuals present themselves as professional advisers without accountability. Safeguards are needed to protect survivors from exploitation, while ensuring they are not denied supportive assistance in court.
- With the increasing digitisation of court and tribunal processes, survivors with limited digital access, literacy, or safety concerns may be disadvantaged without safeguards and accessible alternatives.
- Regulators could take a stronger role in supporting public legal education as part of improving access to justice. Survivors often rely on charities for accessible legal information. Regulators could invest in or coordinate more in this space.

In 2024 we responded[5] to the Government's/OISC's consultation on changes to OISC's fee structure. We submitted that the proposals, and in particular the proposal to introduce charging for 'not-for-profit' services, would:

1. Indirectly affect vulnerable victim-survivors of abuse, who may find it increasingly difficult to access free legal advice and representation; and
2. Have a potentially devastating impact on some migrant advice charities, which may be forced to close their immigration services for financial reasons.

[5] Rights of Women, *Response to OISC Consultation* (June 2024), available at: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/5.6.2024-Response-to-OISC-consultation-on-fee-structure.pdf

It was unsurprising that 91% of responses[6] to the consultation were negative, opposing the introduction of charges to the not-for-profit sector.

It is also worth noting that access to justice for women and survivors of domestic abuse cannot be separated from the wider inequalities many of them face. Gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, immigration status and language barriers often intersect, compounding the challenges of navigating the legal system and securing representation. Regulators have an important role in ensuring that these structural inequalities are recognised and addressed in how legal services are delivered and supervised. This includes promoting training and standards that reflect the needs of marginalised groups, monitoring equitable access across communities, and ensuring that digital processes do not further entrench disadvantage.

7. How is pro bono work and free legal advice being used to support access to justice and what reliance is placed on it?

We have set out how our pro bono and free legal advice services as a supplementary advice service support access to justice in our response to Question 2.

For many survivors, our service is their only source of legal support. Those who are able to reach us often express deep gratitude, describing our service as the only one that made them feel heard, understood, and provided them with relevant, practical advice. At the same time, demand regularly exceeds our capacity, meaning that some survivors struggle to get through. This reliance on pro bono and free services highlights the gaps in publicly funded provision and the urgent need for sustainable legal aid and advice services that can meet the scale of need.

While legal charities provide vital free and pro bono advice, they are not a substitute for legal aid and cannot fully meet the needs that legal aid providers address. Charities are not resourced or structured to provide the sustained, comprehensive legal representation that full-service law firms deliver, including the ability to commission expert evidence and manage complex cases over time.

Over the last ten years, there has been an increase in the creation of new, independent legal advisers within specialist domestic abuse organisations, aimed at supporting migrant victim survivors of gender-based violence and addressing unmet legal needs. These organisations are operating at full capacity to provide holistic support and legal representation to individuals while simultaneously struggling to maintain and sustain their services. Evidence indicates that many of these organisations are already at breaking point. We are therefore concerned that reliance on these overstretched services will increase at the same time as the availability of legal aid providers continues to decline.

[6] Home Office, *Consultation on Changes to the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner's Fee Structure: Response* (March 2025), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/office-of-the-immigration-services-commissioners-fee-structure/outcome/consultation-on-changes-to-the-office-of-the-immigration-services-commissioners-fee-structure-response

8. **How can advice, legal support or non-court dispute resolution, such as mediation and restorative justice, help the early resolution of disputes?**

Early legal advice and support

We have set out the benefits of early legal advice in our response to question 17 of RoCLA[7].

Women survivors who call our family law advice line sometimes feel they have no option but court because mediation is unsafe and unsuitable. Early legal support could help the negotiate with the other party safely, without resorting to the family courts. The Harm Report[8] highlighted an observation that "*the unavailability of legal representation takes alleged perpetrators down a litigious path, where they feel they have to deny the abuse and fight to get contact with their children rather than being supported to acknowledge their behaviour, gain insight and engage with help*." This supports the view that early legal advice for all parties who cannot afford to pay would benefit survivors of domestic abuse.

The harsh reality is that vulnerable applicants with complex immigration cases are much more likely to have successful outcomes if they receive early legal advice or are able to access legal aid. Vulnerable women asylum seekers who have fled their home countries due to gender-based violence are likely to require expert evidence funded as disbursements by the Legal Aid Agency, as well as requiring support to navigate complex asylum law and procedures.

It is also worth noting that migrant victim survivors of VAWG access to the vital services that are needed after leaving an abusive relationship are largely dependent on their immigration status and without the lifeline of legal advice and or representation many women and children will experience injustices and not receive the support they need, when they need it.

Migrant women are also likely to have multiple barriers in navigating immigration processes on their own such as illiteracy, language, mental health and trauma. We have had ample experience of supporting migrant victim survivors whose perpetrator partners have taken control of their personal devices such as phone and laptops and accessed their emails, which further amplifies their need for support. In the first instance and at an early stage, victim-survivors would need support to regain control of their devices and indefinitely block perpetrators from future access to their devices to prevent perpetrators from being alerted that they have submitted independent immigration applications.

Mediation

Whilst non-court dispute resolution (NCDR) can be effective in early resolution for private family law disputes, this is usually not the case where there are allegations of domestic abuse. The experiences we hear on our advice line indicate that NCDR can be harmful, and

[7] Rights of Women, *Evidence to the Civil Legal Aid Review* (February 2024), available at: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Rights-of-Women-Evidence-to-Civil-Legal-Aid-Review.pdf

[8] Ministry of Justice, *Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases* (2020), available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ef3dcade90e075c4e144bfd/assessing-risk-harm-children-parents-pl-childrens-cases-report_.pdf

increase costs, delay and trauma for survivors of domestic abuse. We provided more detailed evidence on this in our response to the Government's consultation on supporting early resolution of private family law arrangements[9]. We would strongly oppose measures which force or pressure survivors of domestic abuse into mediation or NCDR.

9. What role is there for digital innovation and data collection in supporting access to justice?

With the right investment, frontline advice services could harness digital tools and resources to transform access to legal information and support - reaching more people, more effectively, and breaking down barriers that currently leave survivors without help.

Case Study – FLOWS

FLOWS (Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors) is a national legal support service that helps women facing domestic abuse access urgent protection through the family courts. It is jointly delivered by RCJ Advice and Rights of Women, alongside a network of partners and law firms. It includes:

CourtNav – an award-winning digital platform that helps people apply for non-molestation and occupation orders;

FLOWS Forum – an expert advice forum with more than 1,977 members;

FLOWS Answers – an online service provides tailored criminal law advice to questions submitted by survivors;

SupportNav – an online guidance tool that helps survivors navigate legal information and connects them to other services.

A recent impact report concluded that "*FLOWS is a pathway that transforms individual experiences, strengthens the work of professionals, and contributes to a more resilient justice system. What has emerged so far is not only evidence of reach and impact, but a set of insights that can inform how justice is delivered more widely — humane, accessible, and collaborative.*"[10]

[9] Rights of Women, *Response to: Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements - a consultation on resolving private family disputes earlier through family mediation* (2023), available at: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/rowresponsetomojcompulsorymediatationconsultation.pdf

[10] RCJ Advice and Rights of Women, *Completed Flows Impact Report* (2025), available at:: https://sr-flows-craft.s3.amazonaws.com/images/Completed-Flows-Impact-Report-PDF.pdf

Case study – Use of a Case Management System

Our case management system has been crucial in producing data that helps us identify themes and trends on our advice lines. For example, analysis of our immigration advice data revealed a clear need for more than one-off advice. Using this evidence, we secured short-term funding to provide specialist advocacy at critical points in survivors' lives. This intervention made a tangible difference to women navigating complex immigration and asylum processes. However, our case management data also showed that these needs were rarely resolved in a single intervention: survivors often required sustained support, which we were not funded to provide but nevertheless delivered in crisis situations.

This demonstrates the need for ongoing investment in digital infrastructure and data systems within frontline advice services, alongside sustainable funding models, to ensure that survivors of abuse can access the sustained legal support they require.

Any move towards digital innovation must take account of digital exclusion. Many survivors face barriers such as limited access to devices or the internet, low digital literacy, or safety concerns about using shared or monitored technology. A reliance on digital tools alone risks deepening existing inequalities and leaving the most vulnerable without support. Investment in digital solutions must therefore go hand in hand with ensuring safe, accessible, and non-digital routes to advice and representation.

Additionally on a related note, while AI tools may offer potential to support access to information, their use in legal advice for survivors must be approached with caution. Survivors without legal representation may be at risk of relying on AI-generated guidance, which is not guaranteed to be accurate or tailored to complex, individual circumstances. Over-reliance on such tools in the absence of access to legal aid could also create new barriers and complexities in cases or new difficulties within court processes. For example, over reliance on AI may pose challenges in survivors identifying appropriate available support services (if they rely solely on one source of information rather than utilising for example, recommended services, search engines or professional signposting) and diminished trust in expert advice if it contradicts AI guidance. Policy and investment should therefore prioritise innovative, human-centred solutions that complement digital tools, ensuring survivors can access expert legal support safely and reliably, rather than substituting it. This approach safeguards the quality of legal support, survivors' confidence in the justice system and potential future burdens on the justice system.

10. How could the current system of legal aid be improved to provide a cost-efficient and cost-controlled service, with suitably remunerated legal practice across civil, criminal and family law?

We are not in a position to suggest specific funding models, as this is not an area we have researched or tested. However, we emphasise that efforts to achieve "cost-efficiency" over recent decades have in practice amounted to cost-cutting at the expense of service users. A genuinely cost-efficient system would recognise that early and effective representation prevents escalation, reduces pressure on the courts and other public services, and ultimately saves money. Crucially, efficiency must never be achieved by compromising the needs of

service users; it must mean investment in accessible, high-quality legal aid provision that enables them to secure justice.

Our evidence to previous enquiries that are relevant to efficiency includes[11]:

- Introduce a sustainable remuneration model that attracts and retains solicitors and barristers, supports a sufficient number of providers, and enables delivery of high-quality services to clients who are often vulnerable and have complex needs.
- Reduce the excessive administrative burdens on both clients and providers in preparing applications and billing, to free up resources for delivering advice and representation.
- Reform the limitations, including cost limitations, placed on legal aid certificates to reduce delays and the unnecessary work involved in securing extensions.
- In family law, amend and expand the domestic abuse gateway evidence criteria and empower legal aid providers to certify applicants as compliant, so that survivors are not delayed by rigid evidential requirements or wasted time securing documentation with unnecessarily specific wording.

11. What has been the impact of the Legal Aid Agency cyber-attack, revealed in April 2025, on recipients and providers of legal aid work, and how have the Legal Aid Agency and Ministry of Justice responded?

The cyber-attack has intensified issues survivors were already facing due to chronic underinvestment in legal aid. One impact we hear most frequently on our family law advice lines is that legal aid providers are unable to take on new cases until the CCMS system is fully restored. This increases survivors' reliance on services such as ours for advice. Survivors must then weigh whether they can afford (both financially and in terms of their safety) to wait until legal aid providers can take their case, or whether they must try to navigate the process as litigants in person until representation becomes available.

Case study – Clara

Clara is a disabled survivor of domestic abuse who is still living in the family home with the perpetrator. Her husband has applied for divorce, which is due to be finalised this weekend. She has been trying for months to find a legal aid lawyer to help her apply for financial remedy orders so that she can live separately, but has been told no providers can take her case until the CCMS portal is back online. Clara is panicking about the impact the divorce will have on her ability to secure financial orders, and her disability prevents her from navigating the application process herself.

In the short term, we understand the LAA has implemented a contingency payment system to support legal aid providers. We understand this has placed firms in a precarious financial

[11] https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Rights-of-Women-Evidence-to-Civil-Legal-Aid-Review.pdf

position, leading to increased stress and uncertainty about the future. The reliance on estimated costs, with the promise of future adjustments, has further contributed to the instability within the sector. This approach, while intended to provide immediate relief, has inadvertently introduced new financial uncertainties, potentially leading to further precarity among legal aid providers in the future. For women survivors of domestic abuse, this instability risks delayed or reduced access to legally aided support, leaving them without timely advice or representation at critical points in their cases and increasing the likelihood of negative legal and personal outcomes.

In addition to the immediate operational disruption, there is grave concern about the potential long-term impact on survivors of domestic abuse. Because of the domestic abuse gateway, the Legal Aid Agency inevitably holds sensitive personal data including addresses, contact details, case histories and potentially identifying them as survivors of domestic abuse. If this data were accessed, it could be misused by abusers or others. To our knowledge, neither the Legal Aid Agency nor the Ministry of Justice has issued public guidance specifically addressing the unique concerns and risks to survivors of domestic abuse (beyond advice to the general public). We cannot be confident that targeted safeguards and protection for survivors of domestic abuse is being proactively prioritised.

Rights of Women

30 September 2025