

Violence against women, homelessness and housing: A joined up strategy.

solace

24th March | 7pm - 8.30pm | Free online event

A discussion on housing, homelessness and violence against women one year on from the first lockdown.



Florence Eshalomi,
MP



Neil Coyle,
MP



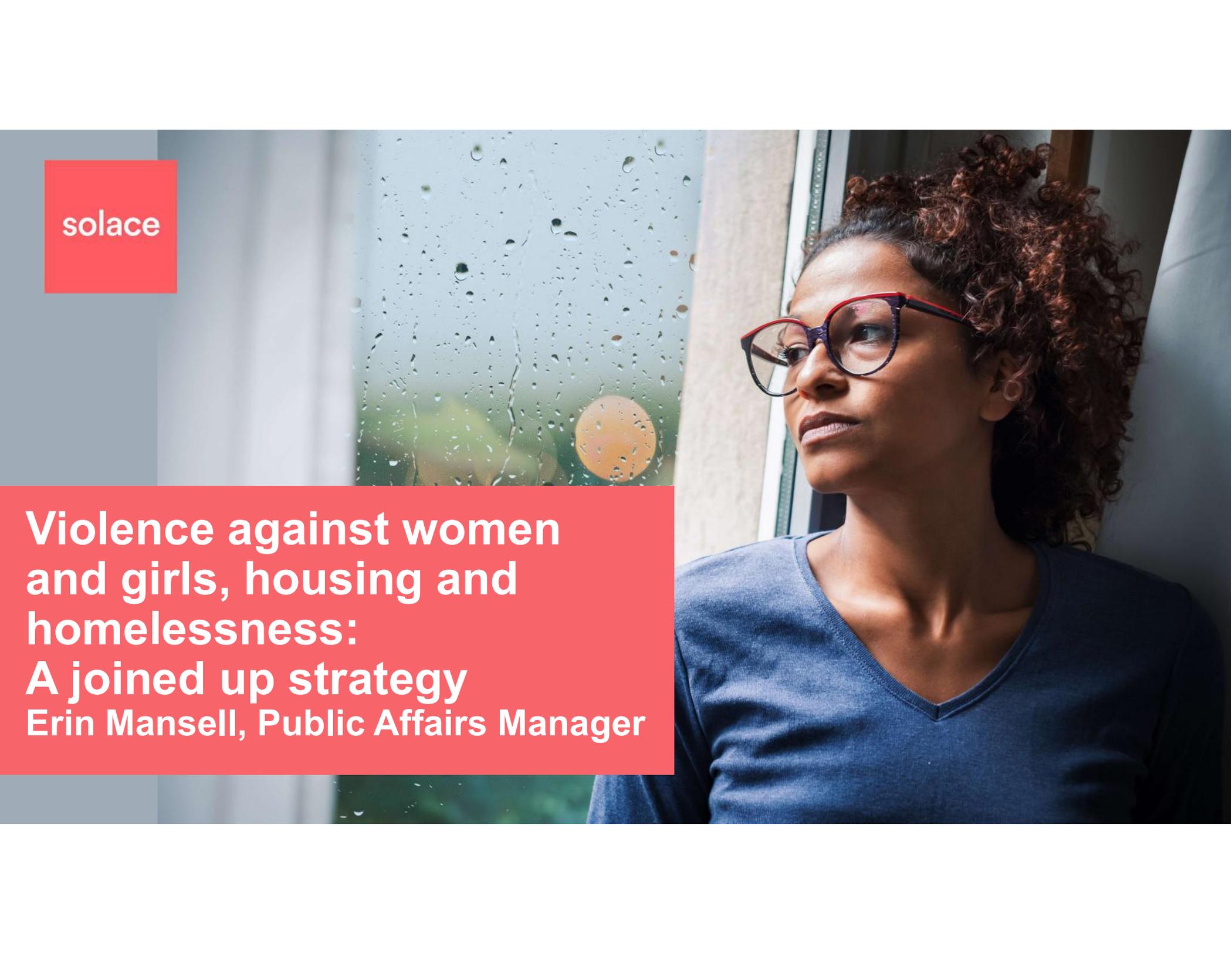
Pragna Patel,
Southall Black Sisters



Fiona Dwyer,
Solace Women's Aid



Sarah Michael,
Solace Ambassador

A woman with curly hair and glasses is looking out a window. The window has raindrops on it, and the background is blurred. The woman is wearing a blue V-neck shirt.

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**Violence against women
and girls, housing and
homelessness:
A joined up strategy**
Erin Mansell, Public Affairs Manager

Lockdown and VAWG



Domestic abuse and VAWG have spiralled

- Calls to our advice line peaked in September 2020 when schools re-opened, **138% increase** compared to April 2020, the quietest month.
- The volume of calls in January and February this year around **the same** as they were in the same months in 2020 despite still being in lockdown.
- In December 2020, we were still turning away **40% of refuge referrals**, a third solely due to capacity.

Barriers to housing

Gatekeeping by housing officers

Gatekeeping practices have not improved during the pandemic and if anything, have worsened.

Respondents to a survey of frontline Solace staff had experienced gatekeeping an **average eight times** over the last three months.

37% said proof of physical violence was requested in most or all applications.

50% said survivors were told there needed to be a police report or the police were called to corroborate in at least half of all applications.

One fifth of respondents said the perpetrator had been called to corroborate

Housing crisis

Context of gatekeeping

- In 2018 there were over **200,000 households** on the waiting list for council housing in London, and **55,000 households** in temporary accommodation.
- Local Housing Allowance no longer covers the **lowest 10% of rents** in most London boroughs
- **65%** of survivors in our services have experienced **jealous or controlling behaviour**, and **43%** have experienced **financial abuse**.



Domestic Abuse Bill

New duty under part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Bill

“ Each relevant local authority in England must assess...the need for accommodation-based support in its area, [and] prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area...

“accommodation-based support” means support, in relation to domestic abuse, provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation.

”

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Domestic Abuse Bill

Gaps and risks

- Women with no recourse to public funds made up **half** of all Referrals turned away from the crisis refuge between May and November 2020.
- **One third** of survivors in our community-based services who exited our services in December and had a housing need moved into **temporary accommodation**
- Experience of VAWG is **near universal** among street homeless women, who often fall through the gaps of VAWG and homelessness strategies.



Recommendations

Key recommendations

- The Government should amend the Domestic Abuse Bill to protect migrant women, clarify the interaction of the duties in the Domestic Abuse Bill and the existing housing and homelessness duties, and exempt VAWG survivors from the benefit cap, 2-child limit and shared accommodation rate for under 35's;
- The Mayor of London and GLA should commission a mix of safe accommodation provided by specialist VAWG services including wholly funded places available for women with no recourse to public funds and including flexible funding to meet survivors' basic needs, and ring-fence a minimum of 20% of any funding for ending rough sleeping for women; and
- Local authorities in London should fund a co-located housing IDVA in their housing departments and ring-fence a minimum of five per cent of social housing lettings, plus five per cent of all permanent new social homes built each year to women and children made homeless through domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

Thank you

**Survivors
need safe,
suitable,
secure
housing.**



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