

TEN YEARS, ONE MISSION:

Keeping women and girls' needs
on the agenda

Impact Report 2015 - 2025

July 2025

AGENDA
alliance





WE ARE THE AGENDA ALLIANCE

Messages from our Advisory Network:

- “ I’m based in the North East and women here are being badly failed - we aren’t made to feel our experiences matter. Agenda Alliance connects women across the country, with each other but also with people in power, to make sure our needs aren’t forgotten. I feel there is power in us coming together to make change; together, we have strength in numbers. In this work, I hope to be a voice for other women who are not being heard. **Nici** ”
- “ I became involved with Agenda Alliance as a peer researcher for Breaking Down The Barriers, the final report for the National Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Multiple Disadvantage. We showed how hidden and ignored the scale of abuse against women and girls is. Women feel silenced and isolated, living with the impact for the rest of their lives. It changes us and makes us see the world differently. Agenda’s work creates space for us to be heard, free from shame. **Naima** ”
- “ I became involved with Agenda after being failed by multiple services when being stalked. An organisation who was supporting me in the North East put me in touch. Agenda brings women from all backgrounds together who share the same understanding of being let down by multiple agencies. Together, we build each other up and try to make positive changes for future women who’ve been in our position so they don’t have to face the same challenges. **Rebecca** ”

A DECADE IN NUMBERS

Grown an alliance of over
130

members across
England and Wales

Met with key influencers
and decision makers

144

times to make the case for women
at the sharpest edge of inequality

Published **27**

pieces of research to
evidence the overlooked
needs of women and
girls



Secured a change to policy,
legislation, practice or guidance

**once every
3 months**

Had our work mentioned in Parliament



55 times

10,993

combined followers across
our social media platforms

Contributed to over
200

media stories to shift narratives
and combat stigma

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Agenda was brought together in 2015 to advocate for change for women and girls at risk, following Baroness Corston's 2007 report into women in the criminal justice system.

The report highlighted that interlocking unmet needs, rooted in poverty, trauma and abuse, were driving women and girls into the criminal justice system. The solution for Corston lay in a holistic 'woman-centred' approach, delivered through women's centres and public services better equipped to respond to their needs.

Over the past ten years, Agenda Alliance has worked tirelessly to build this better future for women and girls facing serious adversity. Our vision is one where the systems and services they rely on are not merely reformed, but transformed.

To achieve this, our work has grown to span four key pillars:

Convening power: in ten years, we have grown from a handful of organisations to an alliance of 130 members, spanning every sector relevant to women and their multiple unmet needs.

Well-renowned research: we've built a reputation for publishing trusted evidence that shines a light on the intersectional challenges facing women and girls at the sharpest end of inequality, alongside positive examples of good practice delivered across our membership.

Amplifying voices: we produce our work with and alongside women and girls who are too often overlooked or dismissed, platforming their voices, and advocating for other organisations and services to do the same. We are known for the value we place on meaningful co-production, and the need for sharing lived experience to also translate into tangible recommendations for change.

Campaigning for change: we harness the collective power of our alliance, our research, and women and girls themselves, to influence government, services, and the media, securing shifts across policy, practice and public perception.

Across the last decade, Agenda Alliance has secured significant shifts, raising awareness of the ways public services are causing harm whilst building a cross-sector approach to developing solutions – with the experiences and perspectives of women and girls at its heart.

This report puts forward a selection of key successes, highlighting where we have made significant impact since our formation. However, as a systems-change organisation, we understand that the effect of our more immediate efforts often ripple and build over years into deeper and more radical shifts – even if they're not obvious in the here and now.

We also know we cannot transform the world alone: our achievements sit within a broader ecosystem, reflecting the strength of our members and allies, the courage of the women and girls we work alongside, and the commitment of our partners and supporters.

Indy Cross

Indy Cross
CEO



Our vision

Ending the cycle of trauma and harm so that all women and girls can thrive.

Our mission

We advocate and campaign for systems and services to respond appropriately to women and girls with unmet needs.

Our purpose

We want public services to respond better to the multiple unmet needs of women and girls, taking into account their gender, age, race and trauma.

To strengthen the whole system, we stand in solidarity with the voluntary sector and advocate for them to be empowered.

TEN YEARS, ONE MISSION: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Pioneered an entirely new evidence base, pushing the unmet needs of women and girls at the sharpest end of inequality onto the agenda:



Our foundational report, ***Hidden Hurt (2016)***, revealed 1 in 20 women across England have experienced extensive life-long abuse and violence, and the scale of ongoing adversity and impacts on their life chances.

Mapping the Maze (2017) evidenced the 'postcode lottery' of services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage, ensuring women's need for support beyond domestic and sexual violence stayed in view.



We launched the first **National Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Multiple Disadvantage with AVA (2017)**, leading to multiple disadvantage being recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's role.

We shone a light on the challenges facing the most marginalised girls through ***Girls Speak (2020-22)***, driving new focus on the overlooked issue of girls' exclusion from school – especially racist disparities for Black and minoritised girls.



When I've read Agenda's reports, they really do summarise what we find to be true about women's experiences. That's really helpful for us... to have that chance to have really rigorous research that backs up what we know to be best practice.

Cat Millar, Women's Services Manager, Pecan (Agenda Alliance Member)

Campaigned for the links between women's trauma and abuse to be recognised in policy and practice:



Our first campaign, **Women in Mind (2016)**, exposed that only 1 out of 35 mental health trusts had a women's mental health strategy. Agenda went on to co-chair the Department of Health and Social Care's Mental Health Taskforce, securing commitments to gender- and trauma-informed ways of working.



Our report **Underexamined and Underreported (2023)** found women with experience of intimate partner abuse are three times more likely to have made a suicide attempt in the past year. We used its findings to secure recognition of domestic abuse as a specific risk factor in the Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy.



We demanded the Department for Health and Social Care's new Women's Health Strategy (2022) placed a focus on mental health at its core, holding a roundtable on women's mental health with the Minister, sector experts and women and girls' with lived experience. This resulted in the Strategy addressing the life course, and highlighting the relationship between violence, abuse and poor mental health.

Fought the harms of an outdated Mental Health Act:



We began campaigning to change the Mental Health Act in 2017, after our research found 20% of women and girls admitted to mental health facilities were being restrained, and that disproportionate numbers of Black and minoritised women were dying after the use of restraint.

We've tirelessly raised this issue with government: in late 2024, planned reform of the Act, with a focus on addressing racial disparities, was finally announced.



In partnership with Rethink and other mental health charities, **we secured a requirement for training in the appropriate use of restraint in the accompanying statutory guidance to Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018**, and emphasis on the need for age-, gender- and trauma-informed training for staff working in mental health settings with women and girls.



We've convened powerful networks to uplift overlooked and marginalised voices:



Publishing **Double Disadvantage (2016)** with Women in Prison led to a coalition of specialist organisations from across our membership to champion Black, Asian and minoritised women with experience of the criminal justice system.

Now called **Women's Justice Reimagined**, this work fed in to the Lammy Report, a 10-point action plan developed to hold government accountable, and has continued to raise parliamentary profile through a Westminster Hall debate in 2023 and cross-party APPG meetings.



Our **Women's Advisory Network**, a group of women with lived experience of multiple unmet needs, have launched reports in Parliament, spoken to media, developed key messaging for our election campaigning, created co-produced social media content, and shaped our Big Give fundraising.



CHAMPIONING LIVED EXPERIENCE:

Candice* was an expert by experience in the development of our briefing on the needs of women with experience of child removal, commissioned by Greater Manchester. She is now a member of our Advisory Network.

About her involvement with us, Candice says:



I was invited to go to a group in Greater Manchester. I was nervous, but wanted to go because I knew there were other women who had been through what I had. We started talking about our experiences, and how we felt the system did us wrong. **That was the start of my work with Agenda Alliance: they helped me see I wasn't alone.**

It's my words, 'We Need Support', that were the title for the briefing about child removal. Agenda supported me to speak to the Big Issue, about how the council failing to house me in a place large enough prevented me from being reunited with my kids. **Being able to speak up for myself, tell my story, and feel people were listening instead of judging me massively boosted my confidence.** I shared it with everybody; it felt huge in my life. It's made me want to keep getting out there, to build those skills and be a voice for the work we do.

Joining Agenda's Advisory Network has meant I've met women who are all across the country. It gives you that sense of connection, it helps what you've gone through be a little less hard. I thought I was just being bullied by social services but then I met this network of people who've been through similar situations; it made me think, **"Let's get together and fight for all this to change."** **This year, I fought to have the care order on my youngest son overturned; he's back living with me full time now.** It's such a rare success story and it's thanks to Agenda I felt strong enough to do that.

In the network, we all have our own experiences, we learn from each other and it helps to understand people's differences. I've learned about all the other women Agenda fights for, and what Agenda does in government: I wasn't interested in politics at all before but now I notice things differently. **Every meeting has made me want to do better, to go out there and fight my corner, knowing that Agenda and the network's there to support us.**

That's how it's gone; **it's the best thing I ever did going to that first Manchester meeting.**

*Name has been anonymised

Built the first national project to advocate for the needs of young women in contact with the criminal justice system:



Our Young Women's Justice Project, developed in partnership with Alliance for Youth Justice, has led to:

- 1 Secretary of State for Justice Shabana Mahmood naming young women's needs as a core strand of work when launching the Women's Justice Board in 2024.
- 2 Informing dedicated provision for criminalised young women in the new young adult hub delivered by the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.
- 3 Informing the development of Young Women's custody programmes in multiple women's prisons.
- 4 Influencing Police Crime Commissioners and local Criminal Justice Boards to explore how regional networks tackling violence against women and girls could extend to include the needs of criminalised girls and young women
- 5 Securing an amendment alongside sector partners to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to ensure the government monitors the equality impacts of Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) on criminalisation of girls and young women.
- 6 An announcement by the previous government of a new Ministry of Justice strategy on Young Adult Women.

I have found it an absolute joy, as one of a small group of founders, to see Agenda Alliance thrive and grow. It is now the 'go to' organisation for practitioners and policy makers wanting to centre girls and women - and second to none in bringing the voices and experiences of girls and young women in particular to the widest possible audiences.

Liz Hogarth OBE, Independent Advisor, and former Ministry of Justice lead on women in the criminal justice system

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS:

Daddyless Daughters joined Agenda Alliance as members in 2024. They offer trauma-informed support for girls and young women aged 11 to 25 in South East London affected by abuse and adversity.

Their CEO, Aliyah Ali, says:



When the first Young Women's Justice Project report came out, I had all these lightbulb moments: we developed our **Sister Squad mentoring programme** in response to its findings.

I knew I had to reach out and get involved. The team were so welcoming and keen to understand our work. We acted as a key stakeholder on the next phase, **helping Daddyless Daughters be seen at a national and governmental level, offering us credibility and opening up doors.**

The girls involved fed back that having their voices platformed in Agenda's focus groups, research, and being offered media opportunities strengthened their sense of self-belief and understanding of the connections between their experiences. They felt comfortable and properly represented; **seeing how therapeutically Agenda approached the co-production process has actually supported the way we now approach focus groups internally.**

We were recently funded by Commonweal to deliver a feasibility study for Prosperity House, a potentially transformative trauma-informed housing project for care-experienced and criminalised young women. Agenda co-produced the initial research and proposal with us: **getting this first stage over the line wouldn't have been possible for us without working with Agenda.**

As a grassroots organisation, **it's very difficult for us to stay on top of all the themes that are relevant to the lives of the young women we work with. Agenda does that on our behalf,** supporting us to shape our service delivery with strong evidence, strengthen the language we use, and connect with new partners.

Being part of the Alliance has helped reimagine what campaigning looks like for us – I've become more ambitious about influencing government and was moved to set up a Young Women's Advisory Board internally. Here's to ten more years!

Built an organisational speciality in place-based working to harness the potential of local communities:



Since publishing **Making Places Work for Women** (2018), we've convened regional networks of key experts and decision-makers to utilise the devolved power of local communities to secure change for women and girls.

We've invested in building deep local relationships to secure change close to the ground, especially across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

This work put forward a road-map for tackling women's disadvantage for metro mayors and regional decision-makers, advocated for a gendered approach to tackling homelessness during Covid-19, and centred the voices of women facing child removal.

This meant **we delivered workable recommendations responding to women's local context directly into the hands of GMCA officials,** frontline statutory and voluntary sector staff, and specialist women and girls' services, to drive forward change across all 10 boroughs.

Our three briefings focused on Greater Manchester:

- Devolution and Women's Disadvantage (2021)
- Tackling Women's Multiple Disadvantage (2021)
- We Need Support (2024)



By implementing the findings from this briefing, we hope that Greater Manchester can become somewhere that mothers facing this trauma, and their children, are treated with compassion and can access the support they need.

Kate Green, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester for policing, crime, criminal justice and fire

We built on this work to maximise the opportunities of the newly established North-East Mayoral Combined Authority:

Our report **Dismantling Disadvantage** (2023) revealed women in the North-East are 1.7 times more likely to die early as a result of suicide, addiction or murder by a partner or family member than across the rest of England & Wales.

Its evidence contributed to Newcastle Council commissioning a specialist women's drug and alcohol addiction worker in a women's centre.

We developed this project into a new regional network, **Transforming Together**, to implement genuine systems-change for women experiencing some of the most extreme regional disparities in the UK, securing support from the new Mayor of the North East.

Our place-based expertise meant, in 2025, we have secured a 10-year grant from City Bridge Trust to carry out long-term systems change work in London.

We've collaborated with commissioners and funders to more directly meet the needs of women and girls:

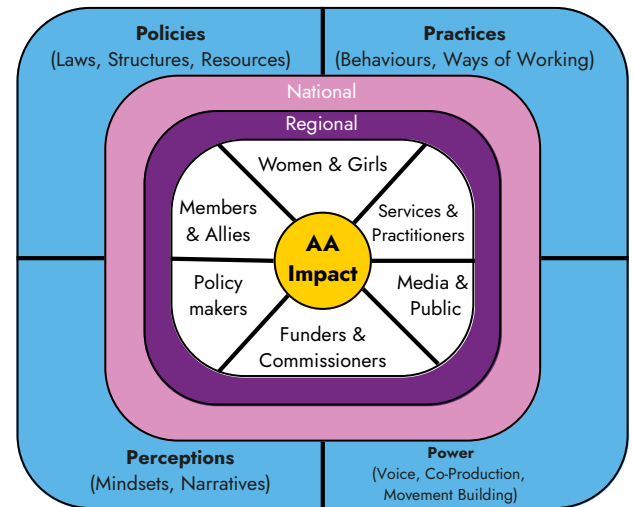
- 1 In partnership with Mind, we allocated £1.8m of Tampon Tax funding to create **the first national women-only peer support programme, Women Side by Side**, supporting over 4,000 women across England and Wales.
- 2 We shared our evidence with the Triangle Trust to inform their first funding programme supporting **trauma-informed interventions for young women in the justice system**.
- 3 We supported the Pilgrim Trust to shape their age-specific Young Women's Mental Health Fund, ensuring **targeted funding for age and gender-responsive mental health support**.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IMPACT OVER THE NEXT DECADE

Systems-change work is complex, long-term, and sometimes non-linear.

To better understand our impact, as well as to continually learn and improve, our new measurement tools **embrace the complexity of our work**, help us **capture what really matters**, and support us to **make sense** of our contribution to systemic change over the next ten years.

Our barometer of influence sets out the incremental impacts we seek to make towards nourishing systemic change for women and girls with multiple, unmet needs.



Our impact matrix

Our **theory of engagement** focuses on the **human-centred changes** that are needed to achieve systemic change, for example, the behaviours and mindsets of key stakeholders that increase their levels of interest and engagement with the issue and our suggested solutions.

We are also focused on shifting the **hidden power dynamics** around decision-making by amplifying the voices of women and girls, promoting co-production and supporting movement building.

We believe that shifting **perceptions, power and practices** that can act as barriers to policy change, will help secure the changes to policies, laws and investments we want to see.



WE HAVE DONE SO MUCH – TOGETHER

- **Thanks to our alliance members** – for participating and contributing to our events, focus groups and partnership projects. The more engaged you are, the more you will gain from the alliance and the more we can do to help your organisation and the wider sector.
- **Thanks to practitioners** – for taking on board our training, resources and support to provide more gender-specific and trauma-informed services. We hope our work can be a catalyst for continued learning and embedding new ways of working, such as peer research, co-design and co-commissioning for your work going forward.
- **Thanks to women and girls** – for your courage, compassion and confidence in wanting to help other women and girls who have unmet needs. You bravely step out of your comfort zones through public speaking and meeting professionals and policy makers. Your voice is vital.
- **Thanks to policymakers** – for listening to women and girls with unmet needs, and taking action. They need to be at the centre of developing policies in the future.
- **Thanks to our funders** – for understanding systems change takes time and our need to be adaptable to the changing environment. Over a decade important successes can be won and systems can be shifted towards better meeting the needs of women and girls. Building on the momentum and investing in the sector, especially grassroots organisations, will enable more organisations deliver services and also engage in influencing work.
- **Thanks to the media** – for helping us to sensitively amplify the voices of women and girls, and for giving us opportunities to raise awareness with professionals, policy makers and the public about our research and recommendations for change. Stigma is a huge issue, and solution-focused, constructive reporting of issues can help to shift mindsets and tackle bias and discrimination.
- **Thanks to our staff and Board of Trustees** – old and new! You have all played a vital role in getting us to where we are and should be very proud of the impact we have made together.



Join us:

As we enter the next decade, we invite you to walk alongside us, our members, and the women and girls we exist for, to be part of building a world where every woman and girl can thrive.

Campaign, convene and amplify their voices with us.

- Become a monthly donor
- Partner as a corporate ally
- Fund one of our projects with women and girls

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