

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Safer City Partnership	23 September 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Update	
<b>Report of:</b> Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer	<b>For Discussion</b>

This report updates Members on the activities of the one-year funded post of the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer. It outlines the work that has been undertaken by the post holder, provides an update on the current position of funding for the post to continue and highlights the City of London Corporation's (City Corporation) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023. The paper seeks approval from Members of the Safer City Partnership for the proposed final version of the strategy and action plan to be published.

### **Summary**

The development of the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan was approved by Summit Group in June 2019. It was highlighted that approval of the strategy and action plan has resource implications, for which funding a VAWG Coordinator was recommended to deliver the strategy and action plan. This recommendation was supported by Summit Group in June 2019. The proposed final version of the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan have been circulated to Summit Group for feedback and comments prior to this SCP meeting. As stated, this paper seeks approval from SCP members for the proposed final version of the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023.

The VAWG Strategy and Action Plan has been written and designed to ensure that the City Corporation is delivering and providing a co-ordinated, effective and efficient level of response and support to people affected by VAWG. This work will be delivered and monitored through the multi-agency VAWG Forum. Furthermore, the strategy has been written in line with the Mayor of London's VAWG Strategy and the new Draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

The title VAWG has been chosen to ensure that the document includes all areas of VAWG. Even though the strategy is titled VAWG, it is clearly stated within the strategy that it has been developed for any person affected by the issues under the heading VAWG, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, race, able or disabled.

The City Corporation currently has a one-year funded Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer delivering on this work which will end in December 2019. Progress has been made on securing funding for a VAWG Coordinator post to continue this work.

### **Key Points:**

- **Key Areas the Post Holder has Focussed on**
- **Continuation of Post**
- **City of London Data**
- **What Will Happen Next**
- **Conclusion**
- **Appendix**

### **Key Areas the Post Holder has Focussed on:**

1. The post holder has been working with a Strategy Officer to develop the City Corporation's VAWG Strategy and Action Plan. Three key outcomes will be prioritised within the strategy and action plan:
  - i. People are prevented from becoming victims of VAWG.
  - ii. People affected by VAWG have access to support services.
  - iii. Perpetrators are held to account.
2. These three outcomes have been chosen to ensure that the strategy encompasses targeted and specific actions for each of these areas, ensuring that the City Corporation is able to provide the most effective and efficient support to all those affected by VAWG. The strategy is targeted at anyone who lives, works or learns within the Square Mile. The strategy and action plan will be accountable to the VAWG Forum, being delivered by the Forum members. The specialist VAWG post will lead on this work.
3. The post holder has facilitated several training days in collaboration with partner services such as Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), Galop and National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV). The training days have been offered for free to front line professionals working with people who may be affected by VAWG. The post holder facilitated a training day in partnership with Galop which was delivered to licensed premises within the City of London. The training was promoted through the City of London's Safety Thirst accreditation scheme and was attended by 18 representatives from different licensed venues. The large attendance and positive feedback that was received regarding the training has encouraged the City of London Corporation's licensing team to offer further training to the venues accredited under the scheme.

4. The post holder is working in partnership with the City of London Police, Hackney Council, Uber and Good Night Out to deliver an awareness campaign and training to licensed venues on the Greater London Authority's 'Women's Safety Charter'. The Charter is aimed at keeping women safe from sexual harassment within the night-time economy. The campaign is due to launch on the 25<sup>th</sup> November which is the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against VAWG. Dependent on funding being approved Good Night Out will deliver training sessions early next year to licensed venues accredited to the Safety Thirst scheme.
  
5. The post holder has been working in partnership with the appointed Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) steering group to set goals to achieve accreditation. Being accredited would mean the City Corporation is aligned with the Mayor's VAWG Strategy 2018-2022, for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse. The steering group meet bi-monthly to ensure the actions are being completed and the work is progressing. The domestic abuse training package is due to begin in September 2019 to all City of London housing estate staff and managers and will be compulsory. The neighbouring London borough Southwark have recently achieved accreditation and at present Islington and Barking and Dagenham have recruited specialist posts dedicated to achieving DAHA. Due to the small number of housing estates the City of London are responsible for, it would not be efficient use of resources to dedicate a full-time post to achieving DAHA. However, this does highlight the importance of achieving DAHA accreditation within local authorities to evidence that they are taking responsibility and action to protect and support their residents from domestic abuse. Accreditation of DAHA is aimed at being achieved by Spring 2020 through the partnership work of the DAHA steering group. The work will be guided and supported by the specialist knowledge of the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer.
  
6. The post holder has been working in partnership with LAWRS to engage with the hidden workforce. A focus group will be held with the service users from LAWRS to hear their views on how to promote services within this community, ensuring they are being supported for VAWG experienced whilst at work within the City of London, but also within their private life outside of the City. The toolkit that was created to 'support employees affected by domestic abuse' has been translated into Spanish and Portuguese and will be translated into other languages to ensure this is not a barrier for City workers to access support. The City of London Corporation, the City of London Police and Victim Support will work in partnership to engage the hidden workforce through community events within the 16 Days of Activism Against VAWG. The post holder is also in preliminary stages of engaging with other communities within the hidden workforce, such as security, bar and club staff and hospital staff, through a night-time surgery.

7. The post holder has been working in partnership with the City of London Police and Shiva to engage hotels in raising awareness of VAWG issues amongst their staff, in order to prevent incidents of VAWG taking place on the hotel premises and protect hotel guests and staff from VAWG.
8. The post holder is working in partnership with Lloyds Banking Group to engage businesses in tackling domestic abuse within the workplace. Lloyds Banking Group are hosting an event to engage businesses in providing support to employees affected by domestic abuse. 75% of people who experience domestic abuse are targeted at work (Business in the Community). Further engagement with businesses is needed as the City of London Police have identified a trend that City of London workers feel safer and better able to report domestic abuse within their working day as it does not disrupt their normal routine.
9. These pieces of work being delivered or implemented at present are highlighted within the recently developed VAWG Strategy and Action Plan. It is important that this work is captured within the strategy and action plan to ensure it is reflective of all people who live, work and learn within the City of London.

**Continuation of Post:**

10. Progress has been made on securing funding for the specialist VAWG post to continue, resulting in a dedicated person to deliver the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan. If funding is secured the post will continue as a part time role 3 days per week. The post holder will:
  - Drive and implement the City of London VAWG Strategy and Action Plan.
  - Ensure partnership working across the City Corporation, City Police and voluntary sector services.
  - Working with partners to achieve the DAHA accreditation.
  - Facilitate and promote training for people within the City of London on a range of VAWG issues.
  - Deliver campaigns within the City of London to raise awareness of VAWG amongst different communities (working in partnership with organisations and neighbouring boroughs where appropriate).
  - Highlight and promote the national VAWG awareness days across the City of London.
  - Engage hotels to ensure staff are trained on spotting and responding to VAWG.
  - Engage businesses to support employees affected by VAWG.
  - Work with schools within the City of London to ensure children and staff are educated/trained and supported.

- Collate VAWG data from partner agencies through the VAWG Forum.
- Use data collated from the Forum to ensure the VAWG Strategy is updated and refreshed according to trends identified in the data.

11. The post holder will not deliver the role of the MARAC Coordinator due to time constraints and using the 3 working days to focus on the work listed above. Being based within the Community Safety Team, the post holder will provide support and guidance to the Community Safety Officer who will continue to deliver the role of the MARAC Coordinator. The newly appointed 0.5 Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) will deliver training and promotion around the MARAC to increase awareness and referrals.

### **City of London Data:**

12. It is evidenced within the Mayor of London's VAWG Strategy 2018-2022 that VAWG incidents are significantly underreported. This is heightened for people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, due to already facing barriers when reporting and seeking support for VAWG. Considering that there is a relatively small resident population within the City of London, there is a significant number of people from a BAME background. Around 40% of the City of London children and 26% (ONS, 2017) of people working within the City of London are from a BAME background, as well as the large Bangladeshi community. A significant amount of work is needed to ensure that the different communities feel confident reporting acts of VAWG and receive the support they need.

13. The Asian Women's Resource Centre have supported 72 women within the City of London from April 2015 to present who have experienced some form of VAWG. They stated that 46 of these women were victims of prostitution, one woman a victim of rape, one a victim of forced marriage and 27 women were victims of domestic abuse. Out of the 76 women, 10 experienced honour-based violence. These figures may appear to be low considering the timescale, however, during this timeframe the City of London Police have received a very low number of reports of these crimes in comparison with the recorded figures in the UK. The Force Intelligence Bureau has indicated that it is likely there will be more incidents of forced marriage and honour-based violence than are reported due to the vast number of individuals working in the City of London from different cultural backgrounds.

14. There has however been a notable increase in the number of people reporting domestic abuse within the City of London. Data from the City of London Police shows that in 2018 there were 140 domestic crimes reported, this is an increase of 36 crimes since 2017. These are mainly stalking and harassment, common assault and assault occasioning actual bodily harm. 30% of these crimes occurred in a residential property, 22% on the street, 12% within an office building and 10% in a hotel premise. One of the main reasons for the increase in crimes is the national and political movement on VAWG, which is putting domestic abuse in the spotlight. All four of these areas where crimes

are taking place have been identified within the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan with an aim to tackle these issues.

15. The City of London Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) has seen an increase in the number of cases being referred from the homelessness organisation St Mungo's. 50% of cases referred in 2019 have been from St Mungo's, this indicates a need for engagement and support with the rough sleeper population within the City of London. It also highlights a need for specialist domestic abuse training to be offered to St Mungo's so they are competent in assessing risk and identifying cases needed to be referred into MARAC. This increase may be a result of the DA, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer also acting as the Vulnerable Victims Advocate (VVA) 2 days per week being based within the Guildhall. The post holder carrying out both roles has strengthened partnership working due to visibility and engagement. This is highlighted within the strategy and action plan.

### **What Will Happen Next?**

16. The implementation and delivery of the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan is dependent on securing the funding for the continuation of the VAWG post. There are two potential options for the future of VAWG work within the City of London:

- Funding is secured for the continuation of the post meaning that work around VAWG continues to develop and the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan will be implemented and delivered.
- No post is funded and work currently being delivered and implemented by the post holder is at risk of not progressing. There will be no dedicated post to implement and deliver the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan.

### **Conclusion**

17. Within this paper the post holder has outlined work being delivered on VAWG within the City of London. It has been noted that the delivery of the VAWG Strategy and Action Plan is dependent upon securing funding for the specialist post. The views of the SCP members are essential in supporting the publication of the strategy and action plan to ensure all the gaps and risk areas identified are reduced and prevented.

### **Ayesha Fordham**

Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer

E: [ayesha.fordham@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:ayesha.fordham@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

### **Appendix**

18. Proposed Final Version: VAWG Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023