

Committee(s)	Dated:
Safer City Partnership Group	3 February 2017
Subject: City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy	Public
Report of: Chris Pelham Assistant Director (People) Department of Community and Children's Services	For Decision

Summary

The City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy has been written to set out the priorities for the Corporation on how it will respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The Strategy has been created in consultation with local statutory and community and voluntary sector services, in addition to supporting the vision and principles set out in the Government's Strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and the pan-London response set out by the Mayor's Office of Police & Crime (MOPAC).

Additional to the experiences of women and girls the strategy, and its actions, will be applicable to men and boys who have experienced or been affected by harmful and exploitative behaviour.

The Safer City Partnership Committee is asked to read and sign off the attached City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

Recommendation

The Safer City Partnership Committee is asked to read and sign-off the attached City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

Main Report

1. The Strategy sets out the commitment the Safer City Partnership, the Corporation and partner services have for tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in the City.



2. The Strategy uses the Home Office definition for VAWG: *“any act of gender-based violence that is directed at a woman because she is a woman or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women.”*

3. The strategy follows four key principles:
 - **Prevention and early intervention** – challenging attitudes and behaviour towards women and men which can lead to violence and abuse and act early to prevent harm.
 - **Provision of services** - embedding needs-led and accessible services into our communities to provide help to those who need it, when they need it and ensure communities are aware of our services.
 - **Protection and legal remedies** - delivering appropriate action for women, men and children to keep them safe whether they engage with the criminal justice system or not, including MARAC, civil remedies, use of the sanctuary scheme or emergency accommodation.
 - **Partnership** - Working together we will use our experience and community intelligence to establish strong prevention campaigns and commission appropriate responses for victims, perpetrators and their children.

4. Consultation with local specialist service providers has enabled the development of the priorities the strategy will focus on:
 - Access to support – ensuring the safety and protection of those who need it is key. Awareness of how to engage with services which are accessible and people know what they will get when they do.
 - Raising awareness of ending VAWG – communications plans to raise awareness of prevention and support, with emphasis on residents, children and young people, City workers and local service providers.
 - Ending harmful practice – training and use of risk assessments to talk with services users and professionals about harmful practice.
 - Holding perpetrators to account – making sure perpetrators understand the impacts of their harmful behaviour and helping professionals to engage with perpetrators and assisting with the uptake of specialist support programmes.

- Responding to trafficking, prostitution and sexual exploitation – developing a holistic programme for supporting those involved and making sure those who perpetrate exploitation are brought to justice. Strengthening partnerships with services already working in the City.
 - Addressing harmful attitudes and behaviour at an early age – healthy relationship work in schools and youth services will address issues of consent, coercion, gender awareness and raise awareness of specialist support services.
 - Understanding and responding to the health impact of VAWG – a focus on City health partners to raise awareness of the long term health consequences of abuse and harmful practice.
 - Improving women’s safety on public transport – City will continue to operate the pan-London Safer Travel at Night (STAN) campaign and strengthen good practice between British Transport Police, City of London Police and the Corporation to keep women safe from harassment and harm when travelling.
 - Learning from Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews and specialist service providers – the City will learn from tragic cases of domestic violence homicide and respond by improving services accordingly. A formal review will be conducted independently and the learning shared publicly.
5. The VAWG Strategy identifies other policies linked to VAWG in the City and Hackney, notably on Female Genital Mutilation, Thresholds of Need for safeguarding children, the Adult Safeguarding Policy and the Housing Domestic Abuse Policy. A policy on Children and Domestic Abuse is currently will be signed off in February.
 6. The priorities set out in the Strategy will be used in the development of the next two year action plan (2017-19) for the City of London Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence, which is currently being drafted ready for consultation in February 2017.
 7. The Strategic Action Plan for delivering this work will be presented to the Safer City Partnership Committee after the March Forum has final review.

Decision

8. The Safer City Partnership Committee is asked to read and sign-off the attached City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.



Further details can be obtained from the City of London Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Robin Newman at Robin.Newman@cityoflondon.gov.uk

City of London Safer City Partnership Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy

Introduction

This strategy has been developed in partnership by the City of London Safer City Partnership and sets out its commitment to tackle VAWG. It brings together the work of the agencies involved in the Safer City Partnership - and those who help us to deliver our priorities - to develop and support a coordinated response to VAWG in the City around a shared series of principles and aims.

It has also been developed to support the vision and principles set out by the government and the Mayor of London. In particular it draws upon the Government's strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls¹ and the work of the Mayor's Office of Police and Crime (MOPAC)².

What is Violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls is defined as:

*“any act of gender-based violence that is directed at a woman because she is a woman or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women”.*³

This includes physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence, economic abuse and sexual exploitation. VAWG can take place at home, work or in public places such as on the street or public transport, and may be experienced as:

- Domestic abuse
- Sexual violence and rape
- Stalking and sexual harassment
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Honour Based Violence
- Trafficking and sexual exploitation

¹ HM Government, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Strategy 2016 – 2020,

² Mayor of London's Mayor's Office of Police and Crime, London VAWG Strategy Refresh 2013-17

³ United Nations 2008, Secretary General's Report on Violence against women

In addition to the experiences of women and girls the strategy will consider the needs of men and boys who have experienced and/or been affected by the above harmful and exploitative behaviour.

The prevalence of VAWG

The Mayor's Office of Police and Crime (MOPAC) have detailed the prevalence of VAWG across London⁴. Although the data helps to show the scale of the problem across London and nationally, most violence against women goes unreported.

Domestic abuse

In 2015/16 there were 148,000 recorded incidents in London, with over 74,000 of these recorded as criminal offences as per the Home Office Counting Rules. However, nationally the police remain unaware of 81 per cent of domestic abuse victims. 25 per cent of girls experienced some form of physical abuse at least once in their lifetime.

Rape & other sexual offences

In 2012/13, there were 3,043 rape offences, 7,982 serious sexual assaults and 1,780 other sexual offences reported to the MPS in London but this is almost certainly an under count. In the 2011/12 Crime Survey for England & Wales, only 13 per cent of victims of serious sexual assault reported the incident to the police. The same data also shows that 31 per cent of girls reported experience of some form of sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage & 'Honour'-based violence

The MPS investigated 46 allegations of FGM in 2008/09 and 58 in 2009/10. However, no prosecutions have been brought under the legislation prohibiting FGM which has been in place since 1985.

The Forced Marriage Unit also recorded 1,485 cases of forced marriage across the UK in 2012. Of these cases, 21 per cent were identified in London. There were also 180 'honour'-based violence offences reported to the MPS.

⁴ MOPAC, Mayoral Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls, 2013-17, https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/vawg_strategy.pdf

Trafficking and prostitution

In 2012/13 there were 447 trafficking for sexual exploitation offences reported to the MPS, a significant increase from 32 offences five years ago (2007-08). Women in street prostitution are 12 times more likely to be murdered than the rate for all women in same age group in the UK. More than half of women in prostitution have been raped and at least 75 per cent have been physically assaulted at the hands of the pimps and punters.

City of London data

In 2015/16 there were 210 reports of domestic abuse reported to City of London Police, 41 of which were City residents. Of these 41 cases, 16 resulted in notification to Children's Social Care due to children and young people were under 18 years old being in the household. Additionally of the 41 cases reported, 14 were discussed at the City of London MARAC.

In the same period, City of London Police investigated 9 cases of sexual violence, under 5 cases of 'honour'-based violence and under 5 cases of Forced Marriage.

In this time period there were no reported cases of Female Genital Mutilation.

Ending VAWG

The development and delivery of our response to VAWG is underpinned by the following priorities agreed by the Safer City Partnership.

Prevention and early intervention

We will challenge those attitudes and behaviour towards women and men which can lead to violence and abuse and act early to prevent harm. We will do this through effective, sustainable and robust commissioning and training to deliver resources and campaigns to challenge and change attitudes.

Provision of services

We will embed needs-led and accessible services into our communities to provide help to those who need it, when they need it and ensure communities are aware of our services. We will also establish clear pathways for professionals to support victims, perpetrators and their children to access services. This will strengthen the safeguarding response the City can deliver. We will also develop and deliver campaigns and engagement activities designed so residents, workers and visitors will understand how to access them.



Protection and legal remedies

We will deliver the appropriate action for women, men and children to keep them safe whether they report incidents to the police or not. This includes civil remedies, use of the sanctuary scheme or emergency accommodation. We will also enable an effective person-centred response to VAWG using effective criminal and civil justice responses. Those involved in the criminal justice system will be offered clarity on what happens from report to court and offered access to the Witness Service. Agencies will engage with the City of London Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference and share information to keep victims and their children safe.

Partnership

We will work together to share expertise and knowledge to protect, support and care for victims and their children. Working together we will use our experience and community intelligence to establish strong prevention campaigns and commission appropriate responses for victims, perpetrators and their children. We will bring together statutory and community and voluntary sector specialist services to continually develop our expertise strategically, alongside strengthening the delivery of our services, to end violence against women and girls.

Key actions

In support of the priorities outline above, we have identified a number of key actions:

1. Access to support

Ensuring the safety and effective protection of women and girls is paramount. Integral to this is service users being aware of how to engage with services and for the City to be clear its support services are accessible and people know what they are going to get when they do.

A referral pathway has been created for all professionals with a step-by-step process detailing how people will be supported if a disclosure of domestic abuse is made. The next stage is to embed this in standard practice and develop similar models to include sexual violence and harmful practices.

Being clear on the demographics of our communities and working in partnership with service providers in the City who have trusted relationships will enable a consistent delivery of services.

2. Raising awareness of ending VAWG



Internal and external communication campaigns will be used throughout the year to raise awareness of prevention and support around VAWG with an emphasis on four key themes:

- Residents
- Children and young people
- City workers
- Partnerships and service providers

All plans will be developed in consultation with different departments in the Corporation and Police along with community and voluntary sector specialist providers to allow clarity on messages and ensuring they are applicable and accessible to our community audiences.

3. Ending harmful practice

The City will embed robust risk assessments for identifying harmful practice along with a clear process for ensuring they are offered specialist support and protection. Training on understanding the law around harmful practice will be offered to all staff in the City, with a focus on police, advocacy services, youth services, social care and health and professionals who are more likely to come in to contact with those affected.

We will also work strategically and operationally with specialist services to embed awareness of harmful practice in policy and in the delivery of our work, through having a greater understanding of the law, how to ask questions relating to harmful practice and awareness of services who can help.

Staff will also be aware that men and boys can experience forced marriage and honour based violence and the role they play in ending FGM.

4. Holding perpetrators to account

Making sure those that cause harm understand the impacts and implications on victims, their children and themselves is an important step forward in ending violence.

Services will be identified to support people and specialist training will be offered to service providers who work with perpetrators in order to be skilled and confident to engage and champion the positive outcomes of perpetrator programmes.

5. Responding to trafficking, prostitution and sexual exploitation

Working with a range of services we will develop a holistic programme to supporting those involved in trafficking, prostitution and sexual exploitation to address physical, sexual and mental health needs along with other needs such as substance use and housing.

Those who perpetrate exploitation will be brought to justice using criminal and civil remedies whilst maintaining protection and support for those who have been harmed.

Instilling third party reporting and working with services such as Open Doors, Terrence Higgins Trust and Ugly Mugs in the City will make sure those at risk have access to support and help based on their needs.

6. Addressing harmful attitudes and behavior at an early age

Education with young people will focus on schools and the City's youth provision encompassing a range of subjects such as gender awareness, gender-based violence and what this means.

Healthy relationships work will give emphasis to coercion, abuse and consent in addition to raising awareness of specialist support for help whether someone is a victim or causing harm.

7. Understanding and responding to the health impact of VAWG

Working with health partners we will raise awareness and embed a clear understanding of the long term consequences of violence for women and girls, helping practitioners to identify violence and respond appropriately.

Services will be commissioned to support the ending of violence and enable those affected to obtain services in line with their needs.

Use of commissioned services will be reported into the Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Forum who will make sure they are governed with a robust and sustainable methodology.

8. Improving women's safety on public transport

The City will continue to operate the pan-London Safer Travel at Night (STAN) campaign, with particular attention on key times of the year such as the festive season.

City of London Police Licensing will continue its oversight of licensed mini-cabs in ensuring the staff have DBS clearance.

City of London Police will work alongside Transport for London and British Transport Police to ensure robust action is taken against perpetrators and allow victims to have full access to appropriate services.

9. Learning from Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews and specialist service providers



To ensure the City of London learns from tragic cases of domestic violence homicide and improves its services accordingly, we will always conduct a Domestic Violence Homicide Review. This will be delivered by an independent Chair who will lead senior managers from the statutory and community and voluntary sector to understand the learning outcomes.

All outcomes will be published and learning reviews will be conducted with staff. An action plan to implement recommendations from the review will be developed and will be the responsibility of the Safer City Partnership.

A toolkit on how to respond to a Domestic Violence Homicide will be developed by the Community Safety Team for all staff and service providers on the City of London.

Governance and delivery

Work on ending VAWG will be governed by the City of London Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Forum which reports on the delivery of the strategic action plan through quarterly reports to the Safer City Partnership.

The MARAC and Engagement Group report to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Forum and information on these groups are included in the quarterly report.

In the City of London there are a number of specialist VAWG services. These include:

- Victim Support – offering support, through the Vulnerable Victim Advocate, to all victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence (as well as hate crime).
- The Ascent Project, made up of:
 - Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation – offering counselling and advice to women who have experienced ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage, child marriage and female genital mutilation.
 - Solace Women’s Aid – offering accommodation, advice and support to women and girls who have experienced domestic abuse and sexual violence.
 - Imece Women’s Centre – offering advice, information and counselling to women and girls.
 - Latin American Women’s Rights Service – offering advice, counselling and outreach services.
- Nia Project – offering East London Rape Crisis support for women who have experienced sexual violence and rape in addition to the Iris Programme with the Neaman Practice to offer advocacy to women experiencing domestic abuse.
- Public Protection Unit – in City of London Police we have a unit that specialises in investigating and support people who have experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence, exploitation, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, stalking, harassment and hate crime.

In addition to these services, we also have services that specialise in other areas where VAWG may be a contributing factor, for example the CityAdvice service run by Toynbee Hall. Those service providers have been trained in identifying domestic abuse and know how to respond consistently to a disclosure.

Implementing change

The Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Forum is responsible for overseeing the completion of a strategic action plan which is governed by the Safer City Partnership, reporting on progress quarterly.

There is currently a strategic action plan until March 2017. A new plan is being developed and will be in consultation between December 2016 and February 2017, for formal sign off in March 2017.

For the two-year strategic action for 2017 to 2019, the Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Forum will concentrate on:

- Information sharing, notably who we are providing a service in order to create a clearer understanding of the needs of our service users.
- Engagement with residents, children, City workers and professionals, building on successes from previous years to embed a consistent message across all demographics about healthy relationships, prevention of abuse and what support is on offer for those experiencing, or causing, harm.
- Sustainability of service provision, to make sure long term plans for keeping people safe and aware are strategic, being confident Corporation staff who engage with the public are trained to respond effectively

Review

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis alongside the two year action plan.

The review will be presented to the Safer City Partnership through existing governance arrangements and made available to the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board, City and Hackney Safeguarding Adult's Board and the City Health and Wellbeing Board.

Links with other relevant City of London policies

The VAWG strategy links with other related policies:

- City of London Housing Domestic Abuse Policy



- Tackling and Preventing Female Genital Mutilation – City and Hackney Strategy 2016-19 (<http://www.chscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FGM-strategy21.pdf>)
- City of London Thresholds of Need (www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/children-and-families/Documents/Thresholds-of-need.pdf)
- City of London Adult Safeguarding Policy (www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/adult-social-care/Pages/safeguarding-adults.aspx)
- The London Multi Agency Adult safeguarding policy and procedures (<http://londonadass.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/LONDON-MULTI-AGENCY-ADULT-SAFEGUARDING-POLICY-AND-PROCEDURES.pdf>)
- City of London Children and Domestic Abuse Policy (*currently under-development*)

Appendix 1: Definitions

For more information on the City of London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, please contact the Community Safety Team at safercity@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Domestic abuse – is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between anyone over 16 years who are or have been intimately involved or are family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Rape – is when someone has penetrative sex with another person against their will. This includes vaginal, anal and oral penetration.

Sexual violence/abuse/assault- is any sort of sexual contact and behaviour that is unwanted, causing pain, fear, intimidation or humiliation.

Sexual harassment – is a type of behaviour which is ‘meant to’ or has the ‘effect of either’ violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual exploitation – is the abuse of a vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes including profiting financially, socially or politically from the exploitation of another.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) - is the partial or total removal of the female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. This is illegal under UK law.

Trafficking – selling or trading human beings for sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, servitude or removal of organs.

Forced Marriage - is when someone faces physical pressure to marry (eg threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (eg if you’re made to feel like you’re bringing shame on your family).

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales. This includes:

- taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
- marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not).⁵

Honour Based Violence – is any act of violence, predominantly against women and girls, which is committed by family or community member/s in order to defend their perceived honour. It is normally collectively planned and carried out by the victim's family, sometimes with the involvement of the wider community.⁶

Stalking - is a particular behaviour consisting of the repeated "following" and harassment of another person. It includes a series of actions that, although when isolated may seem normal and constitute legal behaviour, become menacing causing anxiety or fear of harm. For example, constantly waiting for someone outside their place of work.

⁵ Taken from Forced Marriage Unit, www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage

⁶ Taken from Iranian & Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, www.ikwro.org.uk