



City of London Coordinated Community Response to Violence Against Women and Girls

1.0 Introduction

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse were commissioned by the City of London to deliver a review of the response to violence against women and girls, with a focus on the specialist provision. This report presents the review findings: a description of the specialist provision in the City; an overview of the multi-agency approach and how the City delivers a Coordinated Community Response to violence against women and girls. There are areas for development highlighted in a different colour throughout the report, and it concludes with an overview of good practice and the key areas for development, with recommendations.

A driver for this Review was recognition that there were a number of specialist services operating in the City, as well as pan-London provision, and a need to understand the role and scope of these services and how the wider multi-agency response links with them to identify duplication or gaps.

Additionally, the Domestic Abuse Act contains requirements for tier one authorities in relation to safe accommodation for, and strategy in relation to, victims/survivors of domestic abuse. In London the responsibility is held by MOPAC. Conversations are ongoing as to how this will be managed between MOPAC and the boroughs and City. It will be important for the City to have a robust strategic and operational understanding of the response to violence against women and girls in order to work with MOPAC.

1.1 Methodology

The evidence for this review was gathered through:

- Survey of, and meetings with, key stakeholders.
- Desktop review of documents and data.
- Presentation of initial findings to the VAWG Forum to gather feedback.

Althea Cribb, an Associate of Standing Together who has worked in the violence against women and girls' sector for fifteen years, carried out the review and wrote this report.

2.0 Provision of Services

The City of London is unique compared with the rest of London in having a relatively small resident population, but a significant visitor and worker population. As a result, the numbers reporting violence against women and girls are small. Comparing the City with its five neighbouring boroughs (using data provided by London Councils):

Area	City of London	Camden	Hackney	Islington	Tower Hamlets	Westminster
Population (2018¹)	7,700	253,000	282,000	238,000	317,000	254,000
Helpline² calls Q3 20/21	44	215	251	212	308	237
Calls per 1,000 population	5.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9

The table represents one aspect of help-seeking by victims/survivors (calls to national helplines); there are many other ways in which help is sought including police, housing and directly with specialist services. Additionally, it does not account for the 500,000+ workers usually in the City and the many thousands of daily visitors. Nevertheless, it suggests a higher rate of calls from the City per 1,000 population: given underreporting of these types of abuse, this is positive for the City.

2.1 City-Based Services

Vulnerable Victims Advocate

The Vulnerable Victims Advocate (VVA) is currently a two-day a week post provided by Victim Support, funded by the City of London Police Authority; the funding is sought for and agreed on an annual basis. It will increase to a five-day a week post (through job share) in 2021/22 for one year funded through the Proceeds of Crime Act.



The role is based in the Public Protection Unit of the City Police (when Covid-restrictions allow) and works alongside the Victim Support IDVA (see below), also based there.

Operationally the VVA acts as a single point of contact for non-specialist and specialist domestic abuse services in the City for referrals, information, and guidance.

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/in-my-area> [data retrieved 12-April-2021]

² Women's Aid/Refuge (NDAH), Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC), Men's Advice Line (Respect), Women & Girls Network's Sexual Violence Helpline. Funded by London Councils as part of Ascent Partnership.

The VVA provides support and advocacy to people in the City who are experiencing or have experienced crime and are identified as vulnerable. The primary focus is supporting those affected by domestic or sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, hate crime and those with additional vulnerabilities who have been affected by crime. Due to the volume of visitors and workers in the City, the VVA signposts to appropriate services in the victim's home area.

Despite the Covid-lockdown causing a significant reduction in visitors and workers in the City, there was only a small decrease between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The high number of police referrals reflects the good working relationships between the services.

Approximately 83% of referrals were violence against women and girls related: domestic abuse, 'honour'-based abuse, harassment, rape, sexual assault, sexual grooming, and stalking. Referrals are categorised by crime type; therefore, a higher proportion may be VAWG-related, and/or some referrals may involve male victims. It would support the partnership's understanding of the needs met by the VVA to have standardised data collection of VAWG types and non-VAWG crimes so that the data is separated into these two groups.

There are other ways in which the data could be improved:

- Demographic information recording needs to be standardised to include all protected characteristics, disaggregated by those who are residents, visitors, or workers.
- Record referrals for City residents, separate to referrals for those living outside the City, outside of London and outside the UK. These should be monitored as a group (rather than naming the specific area), as the response here will be different.
- Instead of listing the nationality of the individual referred, it would be more meaningful to record ethnicity (as above), and to monitor those who require an interpreter.
- Expand the 'other' category for referral sources to build a clear picture for which services and organisations are referring in. In this Review nearly all stakeholders referred to the VVA as a point of contact, but it is not clear how translates into referrals.
- The VVA should record referrals that are made to other services in the City or pan-London, including the IDVA and Ascent. This would help to develop data matching to minimise double counting. It would also highlight where there may be unmet need due to an absence of provision, or services being already over-stretched.

Independent Domestic Violence Adviser

Victim Support's Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) is MOPAC funded within the pan-London IDVA provision. The post is 2.5 days a week, based in the Public Protection Unit of the City Police (when Covid-restrictions allow) and works closely with the VVA based there.

The IDVA provides advocacy and crisis support for victims of domestic abuse assessed at high risk of harm and homicide. Referrals are received from police, the VVA, MARAC and through self-referrals.

This review was unable to access data for the IDVA service, and this is a concern. The Policy Officer has requested the data from Victim Support and MOPAC, but it remains unclear where the data would be provided from. Data should be available for the City to understand the level of demand and the type of needs for City residents accessed as at high risk of domestic abuse.

While it can be challenging for services delivered at a pan-London level to provide the exact data a local area may be asking for, discussions need to take place at a strategic level to ensure that the data required can be provided. It would be helpful for the data to be standardised as far as possible with the data collected by the VVA and MARAC.

Bangladeshi Specialist Worker

The VAWG Forum identified low levels of reporting from the Bangladeshi community compared with the number of residents. The service has been commissioned by the Corporation with POCA funding (Proceeds of Crime Act). Solace is currently recruiting to this post, which will provide advocacy, support and community engagement.

Sanctuary Scheme

A Sanctuary Scheme is in place for residents of the City to access. There is a clear pathway for professional referral to the scheme, which provides additional security measures to enable survivors of VAWG to stay safely in their own homes. A dedicated budget is in place, which has no recorded expenditure for 2019/20 or 2020/21. No other data is available on referrals to or use of the Sanctuary Scheme, this should be collected.

2.2 Pan-London Services

The City benefits from provision that is funded pan-London, as well as services commissioned to cover the City and Hackney.

Ascent Partnership

The Ascent Partnership provides advice and counselling to women and girls aged 14+ who are at medium or standard risk of VAWG. The service is funded by London Councils and MOPAC and is pan-London, so accessible to women and girls who live in all London boroughs and the City. Professionals in the City are aware of the services from each individual provider, even if they are not aware that the delivery is part of the Ascent Partnership. Ascent and its members are also involved with the VAWG Forum to ensure they are part of local information sharing and learning.

- *Solace Women's Aid* provide the east London advice hub, through which referrals can be made to the partnership and case work support provided to women.
- *IKWRO* provide one to one counselling and specialist group interventions, including provision for many women in their first language. Delivery in 2020/21 reduced due to Covid.
- *LAWRS* provide advocacy and counselling within the Ending Harmful Practices strand, for which *Asian Women's Resource Centre* is the partnership's lead partner.

- *Rights of Women* provide legal training, guides and legal advice. No training could be delivered in 2020/21 due to Covid. They provide the National Women's Family Law Legal Line.

Solace Advice Hub	IKWRO	Rights of Women	LAWRS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020/21 8 women • 2019/20 3 women • 2018/29 5 women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020/21 2 group and 48 one-to-one counselling sessions • 2019/20 8 group and 61 one-to-one sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/19 and 2019/20 one training session delivered in each 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with 43 women in the city over four years

- *Southall Black Sisters* provide support to women with no recourse to public funds who are victims/survivors of VAWG.
- *Other provision:* Specialist advice for young women (*Women and Girls Network*), women who are involved in prostitution (*Nia*), women who use substances problematically, women who have complex housing situations, disabled women, Deaf women, LBT+ women and learning disabled and/or autistic women.

The targets for Ascent Partnership provision were set in 2017 by London Councils. The grant process will be completed again in 2022, and targets may be reviewed at that point. Currently the level of demand in the City is above targets set, and across London Partnership members are working with increasingly complex cases and higher levels of need. The Ascent Partnership Project Manager discusses issues like these with the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer.

2.3 Other Services Available in / to the City

In addition to locally provided services, and the Ascent Partnership, other pathways are in place for residents and professionals.

Support for Victims Presenting to Primary Care

Nia delivers IRIS (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) in City and Hackney. IRIS aims to improve the quality of care provided by General Practices to women experiencing domestic abuse through training and education for Practice staff and a referral pathway to advocacy for women.

Children and Young People

Specialist support for children and young people in relation to violence against women and girls can be accessed through the Victim Support East London Children and Young People's Service.

Children's Social Care refer to family therapy for children and young people along, or with one or both parents. A Clinical Psychologist also supports the team. The Ascent Partnership provision works with girls aged 14 and over, and has services aimed at young women (see above). The partnership would benefit from a greater understanding of what is provided by these services

across the spectrum of violence against women and girls, with particular reference to those that may not be reached by mainstream services such as FGM and sexual exploitation.

Perpetrators

There is no dedicated perpetrator provision in the City of London. This was identified as a priority within the VAWG Strategy and work is ongoing within the action plan to identify need, and options for provision. Children's Social Care are able to spot purchase places on groups with DVIP. This review was unable to establish how many places have been purchased.

This is a challenging area to identify need, due to low levels of help-seeking by those concerned about their behaviours. Essential partners in developing an understanding of potential need due to the likelihood that they are working with perpetrators are substance misuse services, the General Practice, mental health services, housing and children's social care.

In addition to this, professionals from a number of different services identified a gap in responding to victims of domestic abuse who wish to remain with their partner. This is a challenging area to respond to safely, but interventions are being developed that the City could learn from, in partnership with Respect Accredited perpetrator programmes, for example SafeLives Whole Picture/Connect projects³ and Drive⁴.

3.0 Multi-Agency Response

There is a strong multi-agency response to VAWG in the City. Stakeholders commented that the size of the City enables them to develop and maintain effective working relationships across services and departments. The VAWG Forum is instrumental in bringing organisations together.

The Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer, located in the Community Safety Team at the City of London Corporation, was referred to frequently as playing a key role in bringing partners together and ensuring an appropriate and consistent response to VAWG. This part time post is held by the part-time Vulnerable Victims Advocate. This enhances the single point of contact role: professionals can seek advice for specific situations, and gain information and guidance on their overall response, and the City's strategic and operational approach.

A single point of contact is positive in many ways. It can also represent a single point of failure, should the post be lost, or the post holder be unavailable for any reason. The Community Safety Officer provides coordination for the MARAC (see below) and supports the VAWG Forum and works alongside the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer. This is an important operational

³ <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20Whole%20Picture%20-%20SafeLives'%20Strategy.pdf> [accessed 25-April-2021]

⁴ <http://driveproject.org.uk> [accessed 25-April-2021]

role as well as being an alternative point of contact for professionals. If the Policy Officer were full-time this would minimise risks to delivery related to their availability of strategic and operational support and actions.

Domestic abuse training is available by request for practitioners in the Corporation and its partners. It is delivered by the VVA. Training is also available through the City and Hackney Safeguarding Board. Members of the Ascent Partnership can be commissioned to deliver specific training. All staff and managers who work on the City estates are scheduled to receive domestic abuse training as soon as this is possible in line with Covid-restrictions. This is the only mandatory training.

3.1 City of London Police

It has been clear through this review that for the City police, violence against women and girls is a high priority within its vulnerability agenda. The police fund the VVA, and the post is co-located with the IDVA in the police station, which enhances partnership working and supports prompt and appropriate referrals.

Data is collated by the City police and presented to partners under the heading 'Domestic Abuse'. This data is presented as an infographic and could be developed and enhanced to present a clearer picture of reporting by residents, workers and visitors covering the whole spectrum of VAWG.

The infographics contain data on 'Why – Reasons'. It is not clear where this information comes from, such as the victim, the alleged perpetrator, or the officer's perception. The wording suggests reasons can be identified for the perpetration of VAWG-related crimes and include 'family bereavement', 'mental health' or 'withdrawing from drugs'. This perspective is contrary to our understanding of VAWG in the context of the control, power and coercion exercised by perpetrators. This should be discussed by the partnership within a wider review of effective data collection and analysis.

There are other ways in which the data could be improved:

- Differentiate the data by crimes and non-crime incidents.
- Cover all forms of VAWG and present this data separately to non-VAWG incidents/crimes.
- Present data on victims and alleged perpetrators separately, including demographic data, protected characteristics, and vulnerabilities such as substance misuse, mental health.
- Specify the relationships between victims and alleged perpetrators for different crime types and non-crime incidents, as above, separating VAWG and non-VAWG.
- Disaggregate the data to show the needs of residents separately to non-residents.
- Present data on identified risk levels for domestic abuse.

The data reporting should be standardised for each quarter, so that effective comparisons can be made by the partnership.

3.2 Housing

The Corporation is working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation⁵, which is a positive step towards ensuring the best response to victims/survivors, and perpetrators, of domestic abuse in the City. The existing response is survivor centred.

A Steering Group is in place involving Housing and Community Safety; partners will be invited shortly. Housing work closely with the Community Safety Officer (MARAC Coordinator) and the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer. Lockdown has interrupted some elements of the accreditation process such as training, the commitment remains, and the process continues.

Housing collects data on the number of households moved due to domestic abuse. In 2020/21 five households were moved, an increase from 2019/20 (one) and 2018/19 (two).

Through the work towards Accreditation, a focus on the DAHA Whole Housing Approach (<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/>) would enhance the collective response to those in need of housing support more widely. This will take place alongside understanding the Domestic Abuse Act requirements for the provision of safe accommodation, preparing the City for liaison with MOPAC which has the statutory responsibility.

The Guinness Partnership operate in the City and have a representative on the Safer City Partnership. They logged 47 domestic abuse cases in the City in 2020, an increase from 2019 (29 cases) and 2018 (30 cases). The Guinness Partnership have a dedicated National Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Team to respond to residents and are DAHA Accredited.

The Homelessness Team have good working relationships with domestic abuse partners including the VVA. There is a proactive response to rough sleepers in the City and the Team refers to MARAC. This can be challenging as the Team is often working with the perpetrator and the victim who continue to be in a relationship. This is an area for the partnership to discuss and develop.

3.3 Children's and Adult's Social Care

Children's and Adults' Social Care participate in the City VAWG Forum. The partnership structure for both is via City and Hackney Safeguarding Boards⁶. These offer an opportunity for the VAWG Forum, or a more strategic structure, to make the links across all forms of VAWG (not just domestic abuse) and how they intersect with the duties of children's and adults' social care.

In situations of domestic abuse, Adults' Social Care raise safeguarding concerns and follow the Making Safeguarding Personal guidance. This involves contacting the victim if it is safe to do so and

⁵ <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/accreditation-for-housing-providers/>

⁶ NB: City and Hackney Children's Safeguarding Board [Domestic Violence at Home](#) webpage does not list City services; the [Domestic Violence and Abuse](#) webpage has a link to 'City of London – Domestic Abuse Services' that does not work.

completing a DASH. However, this would usually be completed by the Vulnerable Victims Advocate. ASC would refer to MARAC and liaise with partner agencies including police if required. ASC would consider the needs of the perpetrator as to whether anything could be put in place to support with reducing the risk of abuse.

As with other services, a challenge for ASC is working in situations in which the victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse continue to be in a relationship. This can be done, ideally with a multi-agency approach, with a focus on reducing risk within the situation.

It is essential that Children's Social Care work in a non-judgemental way with non-abusing parents and their children, while holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviours. The Safe and Together model is an internationally well-regarded way of working with families in which a parent is being abuse to the other parent (<https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com>).

The VAWG strategy refers to ensuring "children and young people witnessing/victims of abuse are supported" (p20) and also refers to children "who live with domestic abuse" (p29). The new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states children are victims of domestic abuse, not 'witnesses' or passively 'living with' abuse. It is also important to name the abuser, not "households with domestic abuse", to create a culture that holds perpetrators to account for their abuse. This language should be reviewed across the partnership.

There is no mandatory training for social workers and associated social care staff in the City, although they do access the training on offer when they can. The VVA role will be full time in 2021/22, this could be an opportunity to explore co-location with social care services, to increase referrals and knowledge transfer in these areas. Mandatory training would also be beneficial.

3.4 Health

As outlined above, Nia provides the IRIS Project in City and Hackney: there is one General Practice in the City, but many residents are registered with practices in other boroughs.

A MARAC Liaison Nurse supports primary care involvement with the MARAC. This is effective in the City's General Practice, due to IRIS. It is more challenging in relation to residents who are registered with GPs outside of the City where IRIS is not in place.

Residents can access several hospitals for acute care, all outside of the City: The Royal London Hospital (Tower Hamlets), University College Hospital (Camden), St Thomas' Hospital (Lambeth), Guy's Hospital (Southwark), Homerton University Hospital (Hackney). This presents a challenge for the partnership in understanding the health needs of domestic abuse victims/survivors.

Safeguarding Children at Homerton University Hospital are part of the VAWG Partnership, as well as the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board. They log MARAC cases on their system as part of involvement with this process.

Further information was requested from other health partners for this review but was not received, this could be considered as the VAWG Forum and Strategy develops.

3.5 Mental Health and Substance Misuse

Talk Changes (Homerton Hospital) offers talking therapies to adults registered with a General Practice in the City or in Hackney. It is a confidential NHS Service.

City and Hackney Mind provides community advocacy, counselling, education services and employment support, therapeutic day services and welfare rights advice.

City residents aged between 11 and 19 years old can access free and anonymous online counselling and emotional support through Kooth.

Turning Point provide substance misuse services for the City, and new post of Women's Worker has been created, to develop self-referral opportunities and women-only spaces within the service. They provide a drop-in, along with Open Doors (part of Homerton University Hospital Community Sexual Health Services, working with those involved in prostitution), in Hackney. These services present an opportunity to work in partnership to identify the needs of this client group, to raise the profile of this provision, and for closer working with the City VAWG provision.

4.0 Coordinated Community Response

“The Coordinated Community Response enables a whole system response to a whole person. It shifts responsibility for safety away from individual survivors to the community and services existing to support them.”

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse ‘In Search of Excellence’ (2020)

There is recognition of the need for a whole system response to VAWG in the City. This is particularly strong in relation to operational responses to victims/survivors. A VAWG Strategy and Action Plan are in place, monitored by the VAWG Forum.

A CCR brings together services including health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice along with communities, to ensure local systems keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account, and

prevent violence against women and girls. A CCR addresses prevention, early intervention, crisis, and long-term recovery and safety, working with a wide range of services, pathways, and systems.

All these elements are in evidence in the City: either already provided or contained within the VAWG Strategy as an area of development.

4.1 Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

The VAWG Strategy has a clear vision and aim. It links directly to the Corporate Plan and gathered data and intelligence to inform priorities. It links with the MOPAC strategy and sets out the local City arrangements including work that takes place with neighbouring boroughs. The strategy and partnership recognise all forms of VAWG, although at times this is conflated with domestic abuse. The priorities have been translated into an action plan, which is monitored by the VAWG Forum. The VAWG Strategy and Action Plan are wide ranging and ambitious, covering prevention, provision and holding perpetrators accountable. Most areas for action are the responsibility of the Policy Officer and the Community Safety Officer in the Corporation. This should be reviewed to establish other partners that should take the lead, or work alongside the Policy Officer. This would remove pressure from that role, as well as widening the responsibility and accountability for actions. Progress would also be supported by the Policy Officer role becoming full time.

One area of development is to address the language used within the Strategy: there are repeated references to ‘incident’ of violence against women and girls. While this may be appropriate for some forms of VAWG such as FGM and some sexual violence, and reflects how VAWG can be reported to police, it is not appropriate for domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and grooming, and ‘honour’-based abuse. These types of abuse and violence are ongoing, a constant in terms of the lived experience of victims and involving patterns of coercion and controlling behaviours by perpetrators. The partnership should review the way in which VAWG is discussed and described, to ensure that these understandings are built into strategy, policies, procedures, and training.

There are actions in the action plan that would benefit from being reworded to become more precise to enable measurement of outcomes. One example is the action “Partners to be aware of the Continuum of Needs Model when working with families with children, when domestic abuse and /or sexual violence is identified as a risk factor, and to take a lead professional role or refer to the City of London Children and Families Social Care and Early Help Service dependent upon the presenting needs.” The progress of this action is ‘ongoing’; but does not state how the partnership will establish that awareness is in place, and that responses are in line with the action. This could be achieved, for example, through annual audits of case files, or feedback through case supervision.

4.2 Violence Against Women and Girls Forum

The Forum meets quarterly. It has high levels of attendance from specialist and multi-agency representatives. It is coordinated by the Policy Officer and the Community Safety Officer, and chaired by the Assistant Director People, Department of Community & Children's Services.

The Forum is highly regarded by members. The meetings contain updates on service provision, reviews of data, and updates on the progress of the Action Plan. The Forum works to understand gaps and trends in the City and identify how to address these.

The Terms of Reference for the Forum outlines a strategic function that is not currently matched by the content of the meetings, which tend to be more operationally focused. The Forum in its current format delivers an important function that is valued by members and should not be lost.

The City would benefit from reviewing how the strategic function could be developed to ensure leadership and shared ownership, across the Corporation and partner agencies, of the strategy and action plan, and the funding of services. The information sharing at the Forum about services, good practice, gaps and trends is essential, and would feed into the strategic function.

A smaller, more focused strategic function would enable the partnership to hold services to account in relation to training, referrals to specialist services and the MARAC, and actions within the action plan. It would also bring commissioning and funding into a shared place, developing ownership of the VAWG response across the required organisations and departments.

4.3 MARAC

The City MARAC is chaired by the City Police. The coordination is carried out by the Community Safety Officer in the Corporation, alongside their role supporting the VAWG Forum and delivery of the VAWG Strategy Action Plan.

There is high regard for the MARAC from providers and referrers; it is seen as well organised and providing an effective information sharing and action planning space for victims of domestic abuse at high risk of significant harm or homicide.

The MARAC was identified as of particular importance for discussing victims who are homeless and sleeping rough, as often they do not want referrals into services, but their needs and risk can be high. The MARAC coordinator links with the Rough Sleeper bi-weekly task and action group, and this has been recognised as having improved appropriate information sharing between services.

The MARAC coordinator connects with the Community MARAC, which addresses issues of anti-social behaviour and safeguarding, to ensure domestic abuse is recognised and responded to appropriately.

There was an increase in referrals during the Covid lockdowns because providers and other professionals were not seeing victims/survivors and therefore concerns were raised.

The MARAC Coordinator reports to the VAWG Forum, identifying good practice, challenges or trends. Due to the low numbers, the updates are more anecdotal than data driven.

Despite the low numbers, standardised data collection and sharing with the partnership is important. As outlined elsewhere in this review, gathering data on referrals, demographic information, protected characteristics and the needs of victims/survivors, children and perpetrators is essential to enable the partnership to understand provision and identify unmet need.

4.4 Specialist Domestic Abuse Court

A Specialist Domestic Abuse Court is provided through Westminster Magistrates' Court covering both City and Westminster. Support for witnesses is provided by the VVA, the IDVA, or the Victim Support Witness Service. The partnership would benefit from receiving any data that may be collected on victims attending court and their support needs.

4.5 Support for Employees

A HR Domestic Abuse and Stalking Policy is in place for the Corporation. This outlines the response and support provided to victims/survivors and outlines how employees who are perpetrators of abuse will be held accountable for their behaviour.

The VAWG Strategy and Action Plan identifies the need to work with businesses to ensure that employees in the City are responded to and supported safely and appropriately. The work that was planned will restart once Covid-restrictions allow.

Given the very high numbers of workers that would usually be coming into the City, the VAWG Strategy recognises this is an important area of work to ensure safeguarding and support is provided. With the use of new technologies having increased significantly during Covid-restrictions, these could be used to facilitate awareness raising and training to ensure the best use of time by the key personnel involved in this area of work.

4.6 Survivor Consultation

The scope of this Review did not extend to survivor consultation, but it is a core element of a Coordinated Community Response.

The VAWG Forum should gather information from specialist providers on what service user feedback that they gather. If mechanisms for feedback are not in place for specialist City services (VVA and IDVA) then this should be developed, for example through an online survey link that can be shared easily, or through building it into the case closure / end of contact process.

In addition to gathering feedback from service users, opportunities for consultation with residents, visitors and workers are also important, whether they access local services or not. A permanently available, advertised online link is one option for doing this. Meaningful co-production of services and strategies involves actively seeking participants to contribute their thoughts and feedback in

ways that are accessible and have a real impact on the decisions made in the City, e.g., through regular meetings or groups.

5.0 Strengths and Good Practice

There is strong commitment in the City to providing an effective, whole system response to violence against women and girls. Reporting numbers are low, but stakeholders are aware that VAWG is under reported and therefore a great deal of focus and priority is placed on the response.

A strong partnership approach is in evidence through the MARAC and the VAWG Forum where attendance is consistently high and fully engaged.

High quality provision is in place from the Vulnerable Victims Advocate, the IDVA and the Ascent Partnership. The VVA is seen as a point of contact for professionals, which is supported by the VVA's role as the Policy Officer. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive single point of contact is a real asset for the City.

Gaps are recognised and work is undertaken to identify funding to meet these, as evidenced by the establishment of a Bangladeshi Specialist Worker post.

The response of the Rough Sleepers Team is positive in their recognition of domestic abuse victims and survivors, and the joint working that take place through and outside the MARAC.

The City of London Housing Service is working towards DAHA Accreditation, which will enhance what is already a survivor-centred approach.

6.0 Areas for Development

Areas for development and suggestions have been included where appropriate throughout this report. This section presents the three overarching areas of learning for the partnership; they should be read with reference to the relevant sections of this report.

6.1 Ensure effective strategic governance

This review has shown there is commitment to a Coordinated Community Response to violence against women and girls in the City. The operational response is effective, but it is not clear how the ownership of the strategic approach and operational response is shared across Corporation departments and other key services.

This presents a risk to the CCR in the City as it is potentially dependant on committed individuals, rather than built into partnership structures. It also has an impact on commissioning and funding of specialist services, in that it falls to a small number of people to seek and secure funding every year.

Recommendation: The Safer City Partnership and VAWG Forum should establish a strategic function (this could be a group) that is smaller than the VAWG Forum and focused on strategic leadership and ownership of the VAWG Strategy and agenda; but informed by the expertise and experience of the wider VAWG Forum membership. This development, and the progress of the Strategy, would be supported by moving the Policy Officer to a full-time post.

Recommendation: Review and if necessary, develop survivor and public consultation and co-production mechanisms within the coordinated community response.

6.2 Standardised and comprehensive dataset

As outlined above, data collection takes place in the City, but development of this would tell a more effective story of the need and demand for specialist VAWG and non-specialist services.

Recommendation: Develop a standardised and comprehensive dataset covering all relevant services and all forms of violence against women and girls.

Standardising the data collected as far as possible (given the different focus and response of different services) would support the partnership in collating and analysing the data. For all services this should include demographic data, all protected characteristics, and areas of vulnerability such as mental health, substance misuse and care and support needs.

Specialist services in the City (the VVA, IDVA, MARAC) should record and monitor the types of support needed by victims/survivors, to enable the partnership to understand how needs are being met and any gaps in provision. Collection of demographic and protected characteristics data, and by VAWG type, enables comparison with population data to build an understanding of areas of under reporting. See section 2.1 for more detail on recommended data collection for the VVA, and section 3.1 on police data.

The partnership would also benefit from gathering data from the wider partnership:

- Sanctuary Scheme: referrals (number and demographics), types of security provided.
- Children's Social Care: number of referrals, Child in Need and Child Protection cases in which VAWG is a factor (specifying type); referrals out to specialist services for the victim/survivor, child(ren), and perpetrator, including to community perpetrator programmes.
- Adult Social Care: number of referrals/safeguarding concerns involving VAWG (specifying type); referrals out to specialist services for the victim/survivor or perpetrator.

- Housing: data is gathered on the number of moves that have taken place due to domestic abuse; further data will be developed in line with DAHA Accreditation; explore data collection in relation to other forms of VAWG.
- Homelessness and rough sleeper team: Numbers of referrals and those being supported who are VAWG victims or perpetrators (specifying type), including where both are accessing the service (including couples); referrals out to specialist services for the victim/survivor or perpetrator.
- Substance misuse service: Numbers of referrals and those being supported who are VAWG victims or perpetrators (specifying type), including where both are accessing the service (including couples); referrals out to specialist services for the victim/survivor or perpetrator.
- Mental health services: Numbers of referrals and those being supported who are VAWG victims or perpetrators (specifying type), including where both are accessing the service (including couples); referrals out to specialist services for the victim/survivor or perpetrator.
- Acute and other secondary health services such as midwifery: data gathering is more challenging here (see above section on health) but should be explored, learning how other boroughs work with acute services to understand the need in relation to VAWG. Ideally capturing the number of Emergency Department attendances by VAWG victims (specifying type), disclosures to midwifery and sexual health services.
- Specialist Domestic Abuse Court: City cases being heard, outcomes, support that has been provided to victims/survivors.

6.3 Enhance the multi-agency response

There are opportunities to enhance the existing response of non-VAWG-specialist services. The uplift of the VVA role to a full-time post presents a potential opportunity to extend the joint working or co-location with other services in addition to police (as and when restrictions also allow), for example with children's social care, adult social care, and the substance misuse service.

Recommendation: Review the location of the VVA role once it is full time, to identify whether co-location with other services is possible.

Recommendation: Establish mandatory training for key services including children's social care, adult social care, substance misuse services, advice services, homelessness, and housing (this last is already planned). Training should cover awareness and understanding of all forms of VAWG, information on referral pathways and appropriate responses, including completion of the DASH risk assessment for domestic abuse where appropriate.

Recommendation: Work with employers and businesses has been identified and should continue either in person as soon as Covid-restrictions allow, and/or using new technologies to raise awareness. The VAWG Forum should identify other services to deliver this work in partnership, e.g., Corporation departments already involved with businesses in the City.

7.0 Summary of Recommendations

Area	Recommendations
Ensure effective strategic governance	The Safer City Partnership and the VAWG Forum should establish a strategic function (this could be a group) that is smaller than the VAWG Forum and focused on strategic leadership and ownership of the VAWG Strategy and agenda; but informed by the expertise and experience of the wider VAWG Forum membership.
	The partnership should review the way in which VAWG is discussed and described as outlined in this report, to ensure that these understandings are built into strategy, policies, procedures, and training.
	Review the actions in the action plan to ensure they are precise and enable measurement of outcomes.
Standardised and comprehensive dataset	Develop a standardised and comprehensive dataset covering all relevant services and all forms of violence against women and girls. The report sets out how this can be done.
Enhance the multi-agency response	Review the location of the VVA role once it is full time, to identify whether co-location with other services is possible.
	Establish mandatory training for key services including children's social care, adult social care, substance misuse services, advice services, homelessness, and housing (this last is already planned). Training should cover awareness and understanding of all forms of VAWG, information on referral pathways and appropriate responses, including completion of the DASH risk assessment for domestic abuse where appropriate.
	Work with employers and businesses has been identified and should continue either in person as soon as Covid-restrictions allow, and/or using new technologies to raise awareness. The VAWG Forum should identify other services to work in partnership with, including other Corporation departments that are already involved with businesses in the City.