

Strategy Boards & Committee:	Date:
Safer City Partnership	27/09/2021
Subject: Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services, City of London Corporation	For Information
Author: Ayesha Fordham, Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer	
Summary	
<p>The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on current service delivery, actions and provision around Domestic Abuse (DA) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The report will provide an update on VAWG services, DA Insight Hour, Safer Streets Fund, Ask for Angela campaign, DA/VAWG training, the DA Act 2021 and Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA) report on the City of London's Co-ordinated Community Response to VAWG (Appendix 1).</p> <p>The report also provides an overview of the findings from the survey around how safe women feel within the Square Mile, and a data analysis of DA/VAWG from 2020–2021.</p>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report 	

Main Report

Background

1. There has been a significant amount of work being delivered across the partnership to ensure that the City of London is a safe place for residents, workers and visitors, after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in July. The data indicates that reports of DA and VAWG have started to increase as more people are coming into the City of London, either for work or to visit, as venues and hotels have opened to the public.

Current Position

2. The Community Safety Team (CST) co-ordinates the quarterly VAWG Forum, which includes representatives from statutory, voluntary and commissioned

organisations. The forum discusses a variety of aspects of work within the City, such as service delivery, legislative development, awareness and outcomes of engagement work, as well as collating statistical information from stakeholders.

3. The Specialist Bangladeshi Advocate is due to start in post on 6 September 2021. She will be based within the Solace DA service in Tower Hamlets, which will ensure that she is well connected with the borough's Bangladeshi community to effectively deliver the service within the City of London.
4. The Vulnerable Victims Advocate (VVA) service has resumed operating five days per week, as the postholder for the additional three days has started. Training was delivered by the VVA to the City of London Police (City Police) initial responders on DA, the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment risk assessment and support services. This will also raise awareness of the VVA service and encourage officers to promote the service to victims to increase referrals.
5. The CST facilitated a DA Insight Hour in June, which was attended by 50 professionals from within the City of London Corporation (City Corporation) and external agencies. The event provided professionals with information on local DA and VAWG services and referral pathways, training opportunities and an update from the DA Commissioners Office and the DA Act 2021.
6. The City Corporation applied for funding through the Home Office Safer Streets Fund for Night Hubs to run on Friday nights by Liverpool Street Station from September and three nights per week over the Christmas period. The criteria for this funding was to improve safety and feelings of safety for women and girls in public spaces. The Home Office are currently reviewing the applications.
7. The City Corporation and City Police are currently working in partnership to promote the Ask for Angela campaign within licensed venues across the City of London. The Metropolitan police have recently updated the materials for the campaign to make it more inclusive. The same materials will be promoted within City of London venues, to ensure there is continuity with the campaign across London.
8. The City of London housing staff and managers have received DA training virtually to ensure that they know how to respond to concerns or disclosures around DA. This is part of the work towards achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation. Staff who have not yet received training will be trained in October and November 2021. The DA training will be embedded within Housing's yearly training schedule, as it is mandatory for all staff to attend yearly refresher sessions.
9. Good Night Out have delivered three virtual training sessions on tackling sexual harassment to licensed venues in preparation for venues opening and a potential increase in sexual harassment/abuse. There was a higher level of attendance from venues compared to the sessions delivered in November

2019 and February 2020. This could be due to the sessions being delivered virtually, or the anticipated increase around offences occurring. There are five sessions yet to be delivered, which will be rolled out over the next few months.

DA Act 2021

10. The DA Act 2021 came into UK law after receiving Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. Part four of the DA Act places a statutory duty on Tier 1 local authorities to provide safe accommodation to victims fleeing DA. The Greater London Authority (GLA) will develop a DA Strategy and needs assessment for commissioning safe accommodation across London. To date, the City Corporation has fed into the GLA's DA Strategy through surveys and questionnaires. London boroughs are currently waiting for the GLA to provide a dataset to local authorities to complete the needs assessment.
11. The comptroller is submitting a report to the Safer City Partnership (SCP) strategic board and the Police Authority board at their September meetings to provide more details on the legal implications of the Act.

Review of the City of London response to VAWG

12. The SCP funded a DA review in the City through Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) funds. STADA have completed a review of the City of London's co-ordinated community response to VAWG (Appendix 1). The review highlighted areas of good practice and challenges within our current response to DA. STADA provided recommendations that will inform the VAWG action plan. The three identified areas for improvement were:
 - i. To ensure effective strategic governance
 - ii. Develop a standardised and comprehensive dataset
 - iii. Enhancing the multi-agency response.
13. Further discussions will take place to improve the areas highlighted in the report. We have already taken some steps as a partnership to improve some of the areas highlighted in the report, as it is the formalisation of the SCP Information Sharing Agreement that will encourage agencies' due diligence in sharing information.

How safe do women feel in the Square Mile? Survey findings

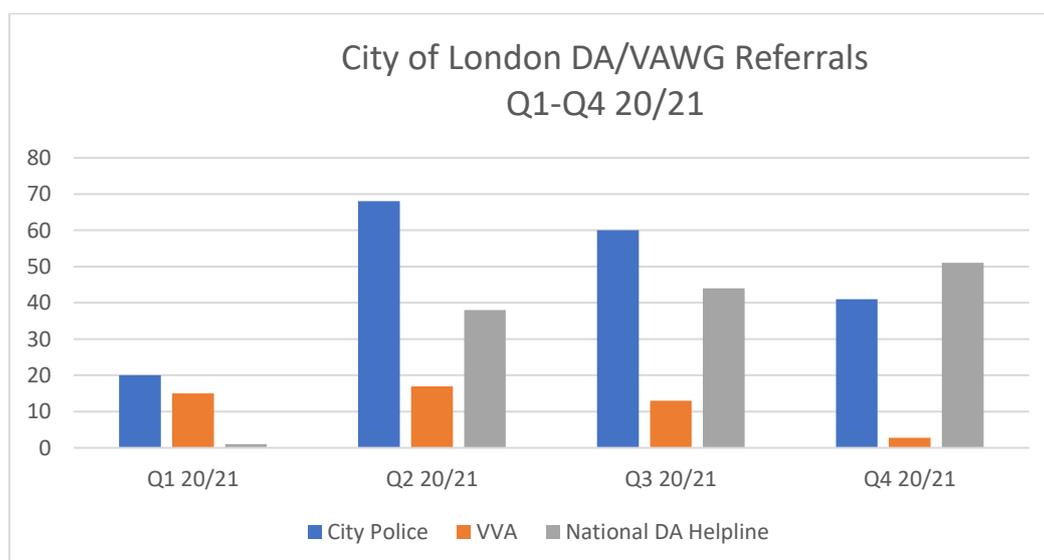
14. The survey asked women who live, work or visit the City of London how safe they feel within the Square Mile. The survey was completed by 351 respondents: 66% were City workers; 27% resided in the City; and 7% were visiting the City. The results of the survey indicated that, generally, women feel safe in the Square Mile, with 34% of respondents saying they feel 'very safe' on their journey to and from the Square Mile, 48% stating they feel 'somewhat safe', 7% stating they did not feel safe, and 11% were indifferent.

15. The survey indicated that women feel less safe travelling around the Square Mile outside of working hours, with 26% stating they feel 'very safe', 43% stating they feel 'somewhat safe', 15% feeling 'somewhat unsafe', 2% feeling 'very unsafe' and 15% were indifferent.
16. Respondents feeling unsafe was generally linked to the night-time economy and feeling intimidated around groups of intoxicated men. Quiet and dark streets appeared to increase feelings of vulnerability. Respondents indicated that their feelings of safety would be improved if there was a more visible police presence, safety hubs at night-time, knowing the locations and opening times of police stations, and an education campaign to stop men perpetrating.
17. The survey asked responders how they would respond if they experienced sexual harassment: 41% of women said they would report to the police; 31% said they would tell a friend; 7% said they would tell an employer or colleague; and 21% answered 'other', which was that they wouldn't tell anyone, wouldn't report to the police, and the answer would depend on what had happened.
18. The results of the survey led to the funding application for the Night Hubs. The VAWG partnership members are exploring ideas around delivering a campaign aimed at perpetrators.

Data Analysis

19. In 2020–2021, reporting trends of DA and VAWG made to the City Police have been in line with national COVID-19 lockdowns. In Quarter 1 (Q1) of 2020–2021 the police recorded 20 reports of DA/VAWG, which was a 621% decrease from reports in Q4 of 2019–2020. In Q2 of 2020–2021, the police saw a significant increase in DA/VAWG reports of 240% compared to the previous quarter, with 68 reports. There is also an interesting comparison between these two quarters in terms of where the reports came from. In Q1, when people were told to work from home and most venues were closed, 45% of reports came from City of London residents. Whereas, in Q2, when venues opened for a short period, only 24% of reports came from residents.
20. The trend continued to align with the national lockdowns in Q3 and Q4, as the number of reports decreased by 12% in Q3, as venues were forced to close again over the Christmas period, with 60 reports of DA/VAWG to the City police. There was a further 32% decrease in reports in Q4, with 41 reports made as venues continued to stay closed and people were still working from home where possible. During Q4, 51% of reports were made by City of London residents.
21. The City Police have seen a 56% increase in DA/VAWG reports during Q1 of 2021–2022, with 64 reports being made. Only 23% of reports have come from residents, indicating the increase in visitors and workers coming into the Square Mile as people are encouraged back to the workplace and to visit venues, hotels and the night-time economy.

22. The VVA saw a decrease in referrals over 2020–2021 in comparison to the previous year. From April 2020 to September 2020, the VVA received 32 DA/VAWG referrals, in comparison to 48 referrals in the same period in 2019–2020. There was an even further decrease in October 2020 to March 2021 when the VVA received 25 DA/VAWG referrals, in comparison to 30 in 2019–2020. However, referrals increased in line with COVID-19 restrictions slowly being lifted in April 2021 to June 2021, when the VVA received 21 DA/VAWG referrals for this three-month period.
23. The data provided by London Councils for the number of calls made to the National DA Helpline continued to increase throughout 2020–2021. This data did not appear to align with COVID-19 national lockdowns as the City Police reports and VVA referrals indicated. In Q1 2020–2021, there was only one recorded call made to the National DA Helpline from the City of London. This increased significantly in Q2, with 38 recorded calls made to the helpline. Continuing to increase in Q3, 44 calls were made, and in Q4, 51 calls were made. In Q4, the number of calls received to the helpline per 1000 population was nearly four times higher than other London boroughs.
24. Refuge, who provide the National DA Helpline, indicated that they only request information for the area in which the service user resides, not a postcode or address. They suggested the reason for calls from the City of London being significantly higher than other boroughs could be a result of increased promotion and awareness; as a safety measure, service users stating the City of London if they work (rather than live) in the Square Mile; or that service users might say they reside in the City of London when they are referring to wider London.



Strategic Implications

25. All of the work noted in this report contributes to the SCP's aims:

- Vulnerable people and communities are protected and safeguarded
- People are safe from violent crime and crime against the person
- People are safe and feel safe in the night-time economy.

Conclusion

26. The VAWG partnership continues to work together to deliver and enhance the City of London's response to DA and VAWG. This report has outlined some of the initiatives that have taken place over the past quarter, through training, campaigns and embedding specialist support services.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – STADA report on the City of London's Co-ordinated Community Response to VAWG

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