

# COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

## REPORT

**Subject:** Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Subgroup Update

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### 1. Brief Update

- 1.1 The VAWG Sub Group meet quarterly and last met in January 2018. The VAWG sub group have developed a forward plan which is a live document and sets out pieces of work to tackle VAWG in Barking and Dagenham.
- 1.2 The previous CSP meeting in December 2017 set actions to further develop the forward plan, ensuring actions link to a delivery aim and to the Borough Manifesto. The forward plan January 2018 update is attached within the appendices but has not yet been updated to these requests at the time of writing this report. However, the following information examines the Borough Manifesto targets and performance against those targets:
- i) The Borough Manifesto sets the target to reduce domestic violence incidents to the level of the East London average.

The prevalence rate has reduced over the last financial year to 23 per 1000 of the population, from 28 per 1000 of the population in April 2018. This is still the highest prevalence rate in London and therefore has not moved closer to the East London average which is 18.3 as of September 2017.

To provide some context, although prevalence incident rate has decreased over the last year (mirrored across London), the number of offences has increased, suggesting more cases being put forwards for a charging decision and being recorded as crimes. There have also been more victim personal statements made at court, more specialist support at court and higher numbers of officers in charge of cases attending trials. Confidence in reporting is difficult to measure, and this will be explored more with the priority review being undertaken by the Council's delivery unit.

- ii) Other indicators that are relevant to VAWG within the Borough Manifesto include those around unemployment, personal wellbeing and happiness, healthy life expectancy, community engagement, and educational attainment.

Work is taking place to encourage survivor's engagement with employability schemes, training and college. The developing VAWG strategy is heavily focused on improved local understanding and response to trauma, particularly in children, which has both short term and long-term impacts on behaviour and ability to learn. It also impacts on people's ability to go on to live happy adults lives with healthy life expectancies.

- 1.3 The CSP also requested that the sub groups develop a response to the crime and disorder strategic needs assessment and this has been shared with the Head of Community Safety/Operational Director of Enforcement. Main areas of discussion were led by the report and focussed on:

- i) Reviewing repeat victimisation – Repeat victimisation is being reviewed as part of the MARAC and police data, as well as through IDSVAs service provision. Not all agencies are able to flag and tag and therefore referrals for repeat victimisation are not necessarily being generated consistently. Repeat victimisation is only reviewed for domestic abuse and no other area of VAWG currently.
- ii) Intervention for standard risk repeat incidents – Main themes focused on the interventions being available but not necessarily well connected or linking with each other. Specialist services such as the Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Service (IDSVAs) holds a caseload of up to 30 medium risk cases but there is no 'low level' repeat case service as such. Locally commissioned services including Council internally commissioned services such as Community Solutions offer early interventions. Some feedback centred on the difference in understanding risk across partners and there is some thought being given to training around the SafeLives Risk assessment tool to improve consistency of the understanding of risk.
- iii) How to design services to support victims of standard risk repeat incidents - future commissioning should look at therapeutic support for victims, and a focus on understanding risk from the victim's perspective. Key issues for victims/survivors is that if core aspects of their experiences are not addressed then they will continue to be at risk. So, interventions that focus on need such as housing, money and support with children will enable risk to be managed. There is a need to recognise that regardless of how professionals classify risk a person who is experiencing abuse may have an over or under reactive trauma response and therefore may present as 'difficult to engage', so building a better understanding of trauma locally is likely to increase engagement as a whole, and at an earlier stage in an individuals help seeking.

Further thought is given to increasing the ability to recognise, identify and respond to VAWG within families, friends, communities etc. Community engagement is a key area to build resilience and validate victim's experiences, assisting them in their help-seeking process.

- iv) Discussion around supporting evidence that socio-economic factors are having an impact on intergenerational violence and abuse - This is quite tricky in terms of measuring at a local level. Preliminary findings from the Delivery Unit Priority

Review name a dominant driver for local domestic abuse as rooted in poverty and deprivation, socialisation etc.

Studies such as ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) are useful to provide some understanding around how intergenerational transmission of violence may be impacting the picture of VAWG locally.

1.4 Since the formation of the VAWG group there have been several key pieces of work undertaken:

1.5 Development of the LBBDD VAWG Strategy: Strategy workshops were held in January 2018 with key stakeholders to discuss the shape of the Domestic and Sexual Violence/VAWG Strategy. There were representatives from across the partnership. The discussions identified some key points:

- There is appetite to move to a VAWG model, recognising that domestic abuse is the demand driver for this borough but that there is still a need to recognise the ways different strands of violence and abuse interrelate and develop a better understanding of these correlations locally. Domestic abuse is one symptom of a wider issue, and there is a need to name the issue to tackle it.

Much discussion was had around the language of VAWG, with concerns raised around men feeling excluded. Conversely, there was a feeling that it was important to recognise that VAWG is a cause and consequence of gender inequality and this impacts all people regardless of their gender identity. A VAWG approach provides the framework to better understand a gender informed approach, including unpicking the diverse and unique needs of men and boys.

Conversations with local LGBT people highlighted that they felt absent from the public narrative of domestic abuse, sexual violence and VAWG and that ultimately, there is a need to include their needs and experiences within any strategy that seeks to tackle these issues.

- There was a heavy focus on trauma response, and emotional wellbeing. As the demographic profile of the borough includes a high prevalence of children and young people it was agreed that there were real opportunities to focus on prevention programmes that were trauma-responsive, and that this could create long-term change in the borough.
- A trauma-informed approach was identified as appropriate for adult survivors, and there was some thought given to how this approach can inform the response from all services using training, community engagement programmes and communications etc.
- A theme that run through workshops and meetings with survivors was that there needs to be community-based programmes targeted at people perpetrating abuse. This included behaviour change programmes, programmes that disrupt perpetrators through risk management case work, and a better knowledge across all services of how to work with people using abuse. Note was drawn to the Hackney model, which employs a worker who keeps the perpetrator visible through all child protection processes, reducing

victim blaming and the pressure of a victim trying to manage the abuser and requirements from statutory agencies.

- There were many highlights of good work but ultimately the key principles that have been written into the developing strategy will include
  - (a) A clear statement that violence and abuse of any kind is not acceptable
  - (b) To re-empower survivors to take control of their lives by providing support when, where and how they need it
  - (c) To hold perpetrators to account in ways that challenge or disrupt future behaviour
  - (d) Ensure that agencies work together to get it right first time

The strategy is currently in draft form and will be ready for presentation to the Community Safety Partnership at the summer meeting. It will be circulated well ahead of time for comments.

#### 1.6 Delivery Unit Priority Review: Domestic Abuse

The Council's Delivery Unit undertook a 6-month priority review in domestic abuse which consisted of intensive desk-based research and service user engagement. The aim of the review was to better understand the drivers behind domestic abuse locally and to provide recommendations for positive change.

The review highlighted the limitations of using single indicators to understand local prevalence and has identified a number of common drivers including socioeconomic factors, socialisation and education, and the lack of options for tackling perpetrators outside of the criminal justice system.

The review ends at the end of March and the recommendations will inform the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

#### 1.7 Modern Slavery

In May 2017 an event was held at City Hall Queens Walk by the Human Trafficking Foundation, ADASS (Association for the Directors of Adult Social Services), IOM (International Organisation for Migration) and ECPAT (children's rights organisation working to protect children from child trafficking and transnational child exploitation). They set out ambitions to provide train-the-trainer style workshops around Modern Slavery in which a commitment was made by delegates to become borough 'SPoCs' or single points of contact who go one to deliver awareness raising sessions in their areas.

In summer 2017 the VAWG sub-group included Modern Slavery in its terms of reference considering the many crossovers with VAWG, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation, human trafficking and domestic servitude. It is noted that not all forms of Modern Slavery are also forms of VAWG. For example, labour exploitation largely victimises men and boys. For this reason, an action was set by the VAWG group to form a working group to look at progressing the training in the borough

A working group came together and with advice and assistance from the Human Trafficking Foundation formed a pathway based on the London Working Group's best practice model. It was felt by the group that this was needed before training could start so there was a clear and robust understanding of how to respond if modern slavery indicators are identified.

The pathway is still in development, and discussions are being had to launch the document for consultation at a Safeguarding Adults Review Learning in May 2018.

Following comments and feedback, the updated pathway will also come to the CSP in June.

## 1.8 Training Offers

Since the formation of the VAWG sub group, there has been a domestic abuse training offer developed alongside the LSCB training and development team. Three sessions have been provided at the time of writing this report, and a further one is planned before the end of the financial year. The Independent Domestic and Sexual Advocacy service provided the sessions. Feedback has been mixed and in response, the domestic abuse commissioner will be taking this forward in the new financial year with two dates planned for basic domestic abuse awareness and two dates planned for more advanced sessions focused on risk assessments, coercive control legislation and criminal and civil tools.

A group that has been set up by the Substance Misuse Strategy Team in partnership with Job Centre Plus, Job Shop, Probation and Substance Misuse services is focusing on training and skills sharing events. Two events have been held, one that focused on substance misuse and one that focused on recognising and responding to domestic abuse. Feedback has been good and future sessions are likely to focus on the criminal justice system, employability etc.

The domestic abuse commissioner is also speaking with the adult college to target learners who will be moving in to the work place over the coming years, particularly in relation to social work, health and teaching.

1.9 The VAWG sub group fed in to a discussion around the potential domestic homicide review for the victims of Stephen Port. A report with recommendations was created and circulated within the CSP to inform the decision-making process.

1.10 Members of the VAWG sub group fed into the consultations for the London Mayoral VAWG Strategy, listed as Appendix 2. Members included commissioners, police and voluntary sector organisations.

## 2. Key Challenge(s)

2.1 Attendance at the VAWG sub-group has been fairly strong but slipped in January due to sickness etc. Many pieces of work have taken place virtually, such as updates to the forward plan and consultation on the crime and disorder strategic needs assessment. Input and feedback tends to come from voluntary sector organisations, probation and commissioners but is not always fully representative of the whole partnership.

There is a heavy focus on domestic abuse as the local demand driver for services. As a VAWG group there is need to ensure strategic discussions are taking place around other forms of VAWG, and how the different strands interrelate. A lack of local data around these issues creates challenges. Some focus is required around understanding local needs around sexual exploitation and prostitution, female genital mutilation (BHRUT identified 100 adult cases over 6 months) and harmful practices.

### **3. Support required from CSP Board**

- 3.1 Support to ensure that there is strategic buy in from all parties, with meetings prioritised in order to inform discussions that are fully representative of the partnership.
- 3.2 There has been much support from the Council Performance and Intelligence team to start to develop a local VAWG dataset. This is heavily reliant on police and children's care and support data, and on data provided from commissioned services.

However, in order to have a dataset that is representative of a partnership response we need to include data from as many local services as possible. Some form of agreement from the CSP board for representatives to put forwards data would be very useful.

It is recognised that not all services may be represented at the board, and in these cases useful contacts would be appreciated.

Some key areas that would be useful

- i) BHRUT data covering A&E, Maternity, Sexual Health etc.
- ii) Mental Health
- iii) Housing
- iv) General Practitioners
- v) Any Board members that may have relevant data

### **4. List of Appendices: None**