

Ending violence against women and girls:

A gender-informed strategy to tackle domestic and sexual violence

2018-2022





Vision

Domestic and sexual violence has severe long-lasting and wide-ranging social, health and economic impacts in Barking and Dagenham. The costs are high to individuals, families, to our community, and to services. Therefore, the Borough Manifesto sets out a clear target to reduce domestic abuse.

We understand that domestic abuse is rarely experienced in isolation; it is often experienced alongside other forms of violence, which is set out in international law as Violence Against Women and Girls. We will adopt a violence against women and girls approach to tackling domestic and sexual violence to improve outcomes for women and girls, and men and boys.

Our ambition is to improve social, economic and health outcomes to survivors by working with communities to prevent violence happening in the first place and to improve early help seeking by building resilience. Resilience is not about individuals being able to cope with violence and abuse on their own. It is about increasing the internal resources and protective factors of families, communities, and local networks to recognise when it is happening, respond appropriately and challenge abusive behaviours. This will relieve pressure on overstretched services, still ensuring survivors are able to access the type of support that works for them and helping us to get it right first time.

This strategy sets out the main pieces of work taking place 2018-2022 but is underpinned by work towards a whole system approach where tackling violence against women and girls is seen as everybody's business.



Contents

Context	6
Definitions	8
Strategic Framework	9
Vision and Priorities/Themes	10
Priority 1: Support Survivors	12
Priority 2: Educate and Communicate	14
Priority 3: Challenge Abusive Behaviours	16
Priority 4: Include Lived Experience	18
Lived Experiences	19
Intersectionality	22
Children and Young People	23
Engagement, Consultation and Co-Production	24
Understanding Data	25
Governance	26
References and links to supporting documents	27

Strategy on a Page

Vision

Violence and abuse has severe long-lasting and wide-ranging social, health and economic impacts in Barking and Dagenham. Our response is to work towards a whole systems approach to tackling it. We want survivors to have early access to supportive services that can help keep them and their families safe. We want to disrupt the normalisation of violence through robust preventative approaches and we want to improve the resilience in individuals, families and communities so that we can work together in getting it right first time.

Context and strategic framework

- Barking and Dagenham has a high prevalence rate of reported domestic abuse – 23 incidents are reported per 1000 of the population.
- In 2017/18 there were 2093 referrals to children's social care for domestic and sexual violence against women and girls.
- A gender informed approach is required to improve outcomes for women and girls, men and boys, and for people who identify outside of the gender binary.
- As London's growth opportunity we anticipate dynamic population growth and change, and this will impact how we design services to reflect local need, but it also offers us opportunities to seek out funding through social capital.
- Our young population offers us clear opportunity to tackle the high acceptance of abusive behaviours early.

Engagement, consultation and co-production

- Domestic and sexual violence is so widespread and prevalent that it can affect any person from any background.
- Survivors have told us we need to work on the normalisation of abusive behaviours, raise awareness and educate young people.
- Self-disclosure is often traumatic, and survivors have told us that responses need to be more empathetic, compassionate, and that they should be believed when they have the courage to come forwards.
- Survivors have told us they need more support with housing, children's social care and criminal justice processes.

Priority 1: Support Survivors

Outcomes:

- Improved effectiveness and efficiency through services
- Reduction in repeat victimisation
- Reduced levels of high risk cases
- Increased confidence in services
- Improved joined up response to survivors

Target:

- Reduction in repeat victimisation through police reporting

Priority 2: Educate and Communicate

Outcomes:

- Reduction in victimisation and repeat victimisation
- Improved resilience in individuals, families, and communities.
- Reduced socioeconomic costs related to VAWG
- Disruption of the normalisation of violence.

Target:

- Decreased percentage of young people reporting an acceptance of abusive behaviours through the biennial school health survey

Priority 3: Challenge Abusive Behaviours

Outcomes:

- Reduction in repeat offending
- Reduction in victimisation and repeat victimisation
- Reduction in risk to children and survivors where families choose to remain together

Target:

- An increased conviction rate through the criminal justice system.

Priority 4: Include Lived Experience

Outcomes:

- Earlier positive engagement with survivors
- Services are designed to work towards positive outcomes as set by survivors
- Services are cost effective as a result of being more visible, accessible and responsive to the needs of survivors.

Target:

- Improved engagement rate through specialist advocacy services

Context

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is recognised in international law as a violation of human rights, that has severe and lasting impacts on victims, from the cradle to the grave. In 2016 the UK government published a VAWG strategy for parliament, highlighting the huge impacts on our economy, health services and criminal justice system. The Femicide Report published in December 2017 by Women's Aid revealed that 113 women were killed by men in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2016, 90% of which knew the man who murdered them as a current or former intimate partner.

The London Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021 sets VAWG as a clear priority and a refreshed London VAWG strategy was published in early 2018. The level of recorded violence against women and girls in London is increasing with 1 in 10 crimes recorded by the Metropolitan Police being domestic abuse related. In the year to September 2017 there were 18,757 sexual offences reported to police; a 9.4% increase on the previous year.

In Barking and Dagenham, there is a high prevalence rate of domestic abuse understood locally, and this is a clear demand driver for services. The Barking and Dagenham Borough Manifesto sets a clear target to reduce the number of incidents of domestic abuse to the East London average. However, recent priority reviews have highlighted the limitations of using police reporting to understand local prevalence and makes it clear that steps towards positive change may increase reporting as more people are supported to come forwards.

We know that in the financial year 2017/18 there were over 1700 referrals to children's social care for domestic abuse alone. There were 390 referrals for other forms of violence against women and girls such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, stalking, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

In the short term, there continues to be demand for specialist support and interventions to assist survivors with navigating the criminal justice system, social care, housing, employment, and support for their emotional wellbeing. Historically, the Borough has provided advocacy services, which are effective ways of supporting people experiencing violence against women and girls to access practical support to increase their safety. Going forwards there is a need to improve service delivery to be more trauma-informed to improve outcomes for survivors.

In the long term, we need to develop preventative approaches for sustainable positive change. Our young population offers us clear opportunity to tackle the high acceptance of abusive behaviours early. Our resident community groups and local voluntary sector offer opportunities to tackle the normalisation of abuse locally, develop recognition of abusive behaviours and improve prospects for validating survivor's experiences to assist with their help-seeking.



Definitions

Domestic violence and abuse is defined by the Home Office as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling and/or, coercive behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten, their victims.

Violence Against Women and Girls is defined within the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence towards Women (1993, Article 1) as:

'Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women [or girls], including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'.

Strands of violence against women and girls include:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Sexual Violence (including rape)
- Stalking
- Prostitution and Trafficking
- Sexual Harassment
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced Marriage
- So called 'Honour' Based Violence
- Sexual Exploitation (including Child Sexual Exploitation)
- Faith Based Abuse

Strategic Framework

The Borough Manifesto sets domestic abuse as a priority. Barking and Dagenham is currently recorded as having the highest prevalence rate of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police in London – 23 per 1000 of the population. A priority review on domestic abuse, delivered by the Council's Delivery Unit highlighted the limitations with using recorded reporting as representative of the true prevalence of domestic abuse. The Crime Survey for England and Wales clearly demonstrates that around 80% of victims do not report to the police.

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out that the implementation of Community Solutions – a new approach to working with residents and empowering them to change their lives – will help tackle the complex challenges facing the borough, including domestic abuse. A strategy to tackle domestic and sexual violence in the Borough is a key commitment in the plan. This strategy has been developed in partnership with local stakeholders including statutory services, voluntary and community sector groups, and of course, with survivors. There has been appetite from across the key stakeholders to move to a Violence Against Women and Girls approach which acknowledges how crimes such as domestic and sexual abuse affect women and girls disproportionately.

Adopting a VAWG approach provides the framework to move towards a local understanding that is gender informed, recognising the way gender and identity impact experiences of violence. It provides the basis for open dialogue that informs service development and delivery and examines the needs of all people experiencing domestic and sexual violence. All people can experience violence and abuse, and a gender informed approach to service design and delivery creates improved outcomes for women and girls, men and boys.

The Barking and Dagenham Health and Wellbeing strategy highlights domestic abuse as a demand driver for social care referrals. The strategy also communicates the impact domestic abuse has on children throughout their lives and draws attention to the importance of a good start in life – an area drastically impacted by violence against women and girls.

Barking and Dagenham's Equality and Diversity Strategy demonstrates an ethnically diverse and young population. Despite the borough's strong historical record of advancing equality, particularly regarding women's rights and suffrage, the people in Barking and Dagenham are more deprived, die earlier, have poorer health and lower education and skills than in most other London Boroughs. These are all indicators that are correlative with violence against women and girls.

Barking and Dagenham is the main growth area in London over the next 20 years. Our status as an East London Growth Borough combined with our high proportion of children and young people offers both challenges and opportunities in the coming years.

As the borough changes there is likely to be changes in the socioeconomic and demographic make-up of our residents. This will bring challenges around ensuring the diverse and changing needs of survivors are met. Integrating work to tackle violence against women and girls provides the context for shaping how services respond to the crossover between the different strands of violence against women and girls.

Child sexual exploitation is regarded as a strand of violence against women and girls. This strategy is directly linked to the Barking and Dagenham Child Sexual Exploitation strategy 2018-2021. Specific work to link the two strategies will focus on a review of commissioned services for young people affected by domestic and sexual violence, and work to develop and implement a transitional pathway for young people at risk of or experiencing domestic and sexual violence so that they are adequately supported as they move into adulthood.

Vision & Priorities/ Themes

Domestic and sexual violence has severe long-lasting and wide-ranging social, health and economic impacts in Barking and Dagenham. The costs are high to individuals, communities and to services. Therefore, the Borough Manifesto sets out a clear target to reduce domestic abuse.

We understand that domestic abuse is rarely experienced in isolation; it is often experienced alongside other forms of violence, which is set out in international law as Violence Against Women and Girls. We will adopt a violence against women and girls approach to tackling domestic and sexual violence to improve outcomes for women and girls, and men and boys.

Our ambition is to improve outcomes to survivors by working with communities to prevent it happening in the first place and to improve early help seeking by building resilience. Resilience is not about individuals being able to cope with violence and abuse on their own. It is about increasing the internal resources and protective factors of families, communities and local networks to recognise when it is happening, respond appropriately and challenge abusive behaviours. This will relieve pressure on overstretched services and strengthen community resilience ensuring survivors are able to access the type of support that works for them and will tackle the normalisation of abusive behaviours.

Priorities or Themes

The culmination of desk-based research, engagement and consultation led to the identification of four key priorities for the strategy.



Support Survivors

Survivors identified the need for practical support early in their experiences and we know that successful help seeking requires a response that is empathetic, compassionate, and validating. We want survivors to have access to trauma-informed specialist support, and we also want to ensure non-specialist services, whether statutory or non-statutory adopt the same level of understanding. If we get it right first time, we will be able to tackle repeat victimisation. It will help ensure that survivors and their families are safe, and that they are able to move forwards with their lives.

Educate and Communicate

We want to see Barking and Dagenham as a place where open dialogue is encouraged and helps raise awareness of violence against women and girls across the population. We want to engage children and young people with trauma-informed approaches to break the cycle and end the intergenerational transmission of violence. We recognise that this is a long-term approach to tackling violence and abuse. This needs to be delivered alongside a communications plan that includes collaboration with different community groups to improve recognition of abusive behaviours locally, support early help seeking, and to avoid a top down approach. By educating our young people, and openly communicating with our adult community groups about abusive behaviours we can best work towards long term sustainable change.

Challenge Abusive Behaviours:

We want people who are perpetrating violence against women and girls to be held to account and to stop being abusive. However, we can see that the number of perpetrators held to account through the criminal justice system is minimal. The Crime Survey of England and Wales demonstrates that approximately 3.6% of perpetrators of domestic abuse end up with a conviction. Therefore, we need to disrupt perpetrators abusive behaviours through criminal justice where possible, but we also need to support them to change through community interventions.

Include Lived Experiences:

We are fully committed to including lived experience from people from different backgrounds and identities in all aspects of strategic commissioning, service design and delivery. We recognise that there are limitations with data indicators and value survivors as experts in their own recovery. Co-production with survivors will help us shape and improve outcomes for future survivors. By understanding the lived experiences of people using violence we can improve understanding of what is needed to stop them using violence.

Priority 1: Support Survivors

Experiencing violence or abuse of any kind is traumatic. Multiple or complex traumatic incidents have severe and lasting impacts on a person's physical and mental health needs, their behaviour, and interpersonal capabilities. It also has a massive impact on cognition and can negatively affect the person's ability to process what is happening to them, to think logically, forward plan or problem solve. The impact on cognition can also leave the person with no sense of continuity and time, disrupting memory recall.

Survivors need trauma-informed practical support to help them make sense of what has been done to them, to navigate services and systems such as the criminal justice system, children's social care, housing, and employment. Support services need to be independent and specialist to mitigate the barriers of engaging with statutory services. If support services are not trauma-informed and advocacy is not self-determined, then we risk a survivor not engaging and we continue to disempower them. This further perpetuates their victimisation.

To deliver this, we need to develop a commissioned specialist support service that can work to a trauma-informed approach. We also need to ensure that statutory services can communicate in the same language as the specialist services and are able to recognise trauma and work with people experiencing trauma reminders. They too are responsible for supporting survivors through their services, and this is particularly relevant for Community Solutions housing services and children's care and support. Community Solutions offers us an opportunity to improve access to all local services. Local support programmes around employment, education, and training are particularly relevant. For survivors of violence and abuse, not having access to financial resources or not being able to budget can be an enormous barrier to leaving their perpetrators or living independently. We can work to improve employability prospects that many of us take for granted.



The output for this priority will be the development of a specialist support service that can offer advocacy and practical guidance as well as therapeutic interventions for people experiencing the violence against women and girls strands. Survivors will receive practical and therapeutic support in a trauma informed way to assist with navigating their physical and mental health needs, safety and security needs such as housing and employment, support through social care and criminal justice processes. Additional outputs will include regular focus groups and service user surveys to ensure lived experience continues to inform service delivery across the borough.

In addition to specialist advocacy support the Council commits to the ongoing provision of refuge accommodation for women fleeing domestic and sexual violence. This includes 13 bed spaces with six month move on and will continue to build

on the excellent working relationship had with Community Solutions, which is able to assist women move on into appropriate permanent accommodation.

This will lead to short and long-term outcomes. Improved support to survivors will lead to better retention through services and reduced repeat victimisation. Over time, this will lead to reduced service demand, including reduced number of children taken into local authority care and reduced socioeconomic costs associated with violence against women and girls.

The target for this priority is a reduction in repeat victimisation through police reporting. In September 2017, the repeat victimisation rate for domestic abuse was 28% of all domestic abuse cases. The total number of repeat case victims for the same month was 138. This priority will

be further supported through the measurement of repeat cases through MARAC and specialist services, in order to build the context for need across the borough.

This requires funding, which is committed by the Council through Public Health Grants, General Fund, Housing revenue account allocations and through allocations from the MOPAC London Crime Prevention Fund. The recommissioning of services is due for Summer 2019 and specification building will be informed by priorities set out in this strategy.

We recognise that as more people feel re-empowered to seek support we are likely to see short term outcomes that increase reporting of incidents to police which conflicts with the Borough Manifesto target to reduce recorded incidents. However, we would expect to see this number decrease over time.

Priority 2: Educate and Communicate

A plan to create long term sustainable change must be preventative in nature, working with young people to break the cycle of intergenerational transmissions of violence whilst simultaneously challenging the existing cultural scaffolding that upholds the normalisation of violence.

To seek long term sustainable change, we will support work being undertaken across the Community Safety Partnership, Safeguarding Boards and Health and Wellbeing board to develop a trauma-informed health intervention model to address adverse experiences in children and young people. This links with Priority 1 and will include wraparound support for the family and the young people to encourage the development of emotional intelligence and resilience in individuals and improve their support networks. We need to educate our young people to recognise abusive behaviours and be able to seek help when they experience or use them.

Education does needs to be targeted towards our young residents but should also include a comprehensive training and awareness raising programme for local professionals. Buy-in from across the partnerships and boards is important to ensure all services receive the same quality of training and can work consistently to provide support to survivors. This will include how to recognise and work with perpetrators. This work will be supported through domestic abuse operational forum membership, as all members have knowledge to share.

Awareness campaigns will be designed in collaboration with community groups to ensure messages are strong and appropriate. By linking with resident-led initiatives, we can avoid a 'top-down' approach and be led by the needs of our residents, working in partnership to address the normalisation of abusive behaviours in the borough.



To deliver this, we need to have an education and communications plan in place with clear goals for the life of the strategy. This will include a training offer targeting services as well as community and resident's groups. It will support the development of a trauma-informed health intervention model to tackle the adverse childhood experiences and improve health indicators for young people. The final output will be a community campaign programme in which local community groups are encouraged and funded to run campaigns about domestic and sexual violence.

This will bring positive outcomes. Survivors validated in early help seeking will be more able to engage with offers of support earlier in their experience, lessening the likelihood of escalation to higher levels of risk and reducing repeat victimisation. Young people progressing into adulthood will be less likely to experience

or use abusive behaviours, therefore disrupting the intergenerational transmission of violence. Improved resilience in individuals, families, and communities will lead to attitudinal shifts regarding the normalisation of violence leading to less violence against women and girls in the long term.

The target for this priority is to decrease the percentage of young people reporting an acceptance of abusive behaviours through the biennial school health survey. This will be supported through regular focus groups with young people and adults, which will be facilitated through commissioned services and the trauma informed health intervention model. The target is chosen to measure the acceptance level of types of abusive behaviour rather than one strand of violence against women and girls.

The baseline data for this target is from the 2017 Barking and Dagenham School Survey report in which several abusive behaviours are listed, and the young people asked which were always wrong in a relationship. 38% of students surveyed said that abusive behaviours were not always wrong. Working with this target is difficult – the survey is completed every other year. However, there is scope to include the targets from the trauma-informed health intervention model to support our understanding of how accepting young people are in relation to domestic abuse behaviours.

Resources include the recommissioning of support services to include a robust training offer, complemented by training available through voluntary sector projects. The communications plan will be supported through funds available for the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls campaign, and through the domestic abuse operational forum. The Community Safety Partnership are seeking resources through various funding opportunities for the health intervention model for young people.

This priority has links to the Borough Manifesto, Corporate Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It also links to the Crime and Disorder Strategic Needs Assessment produced by the Community Safety Partnership.

Priority 3: Challenge Abusive Behaviours

Less than 3.6% of domestic abuse perpetrators receive a conviction. This is even lower for other violence against women and girls strands. Survivors often feel 'punished' for being victims. They are told they need to move away, leave their jobs, move their children's schools, leave their support networks etc. We recognise the need for these actions, but we want to step away from the narrative where the perpetrator is free to go on to victimise another person and so we will take a zero-tolerance approach to tackling perpetrators of violence. Over the course of the 4 year strategy we will work towards a whole system approach to tackling violent perpetrators.

When we think of perpetrators, we tend to think of domestic abuse perpetrators and not perpetrators of sexual violence and exploitation, and harmful practices. To challenge all abusive behaviours and deliver against this priority, we need to consider community interventions that will engage with abusive behaviours, encouraging perpetrators to change. We need interventions that keep the perpetrator visible and accountable through child protection cases. The 2014 Ofsted Single Inspection of Barking and Dagenham Children's Services and LSCB commented that the lack of specialist programmes for perpetrators contributes to delays in some child in need and protection plans being progressed.

We are exploring how we can make better use of coercive and controlling behaviour legislation. Social care, health, community, and voluntary sector groups often hold information about cases which would form evidence in coercive and controlling behaviour trials. Precedent has now been set to use this evidence in court, taking the emphasis away from the survivor to give witness testimony. The use of criminal or civil orders to compel the perpetrator to stop returning to the family home also need to be better promoted.



The outputs for this priority are to develop a programme of engagement through one to one and group work for people using abusive behaviours against family or intimate partners. This should work closely with MARAC partners and integrate with Children's Care and Support to disrupt offending behaviour, address risk factors such as substance misuse, employment, housing and mental health needs and encourage the use of non-abusive behaviour alternatives. This will be balanced with work to improve victim experiences through the criminal justice process.

The expected outcomes for this priority include reduced victimisation and repeat victimisation, a reduction in risk to children and survivors where families choose to remain together, reduction in repeat offending and attitudinal shift towards survivors being able to remain in the family home

(where safe to do so) which would reduce strain on stretched housing resources.

The target for this priority is an increased conviction rate through the criminal justice system. The baseline is 58% for domestic abuse with target to increase to 65% over the course of the strategy.

Limited resources exist within commissioning budgets to procure perpetrator programmes, but through working with partners and pooling funds and opportunities for joint working we can be innovative with how we commission community interventions to tackle perpetrators. This includes exploring opportunities to adopt models such as the DRIVE programme, or whole family approaches.

This priority directly relates to the Borough Manifesto aim to see a reduction in domestic abuse, and to the Council's vision to enable social responsibility. Challenging abusive behaviours starts with challenging harmful attitudes to gender and gender roles. Please see the boroughs Gender Equality Charter.

Priority 4: Include Lived Experience

We include all people in our strategy to tackle violence against women and girls – and we recognise the diverse and unique needs and experiences of people from different backgrounds and identities.

We will improve local response by working collaboratively with survivors to understand and meet their needs. Their input has helped shape this strategy, and we commit to continuing to develop mechanisms for lived experience to inform strategic discussions and commissioning. We will work closely with survivors at various stages in their journeys, and from a wide variety of identities to co-design services.

To deliver this priority, we need to develop a structure for lived experience to inform all aspects of design and delivery and we will ensure that equality impact assessments are used for all projects. The output for this priority is to bring together a partnership for experience-based co-design of services. The group should collate experiences of the wider community through interviewing, group discussions and co-design workshops. We can do this by creating an advisory group that includes local survivors, local community and faith leads, and key stakeholders. This group should be part of the membership of the domestic abuse operational forum, which will create a clear framework of accountability through the violence against women and girls sub group to the Community Safety Partnership.

There have been structural changes in statutory services over 2017/18 including within the police, the council, probation, and health. The advisory group will create a space to highlight good work and raise concerns when necessary.

This work will also help with connecting various voluntary sector provisions together to ensure that survivors have access to holistic services and



early validation in their help-seeking. It will also support work with the Excel Women's Centre, the Muslimah Women's Association and London Sport to set up a Women's Activity Network, and work around employability for women, helping to address some of the wider socioeconomic and health inequalities affecting women and girls.

The outcomes for this priority will be improved confidence in commissioned services which are inclusive, accessible, and visible to survivor's requiring support. Services will be cost-effective as survivor's requirements are met more quickly and more effectively. Early access to support will decrease wider socioeconomic costs associated with violence against women and girls and outcomes for survivors and communities will be self-determined and based on an understanding of challenges that services are facing. In addition,

there will be an improved understanding of violence against women and girls locally.

The target for this priority is an improved engagement rate through locally commissioned domestic abuse services. The baseline is 64% due to high numbers of survivors declining support when first referred.

Current resources include a well-attended domestic abuse operational forum and strong links with specialist voluntary sector services. Funding will be allocated for delivering workshops and this will include the need for incentives to encourage survivors at different stages of their journeys to take part.

This priority has a clear link to the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy, in which engagement and consultation is a key theme.

Lived Experiences

Naming Violence Against Women and Girls recognises that women and girls are predominantly impacted by violence and abuse at global, international, regional, and local levels. It pulls together types of crime that when viewed together provides a framework for understanding that violence against women and girls is both a cause of, and a consequence of gender inequalities. It is widely recognised that men can be victims of domestic abuse and other strands of violence such as forced marriage, sexual violence, and 'honour' based violence. However, women and children experience more domestic and sexual violence and their experiences are more likely to be higher risk than that experienced by men. Our response must be tailored accordingly.

Our vision and priorities have been influenced by what local survivors have told us, what we know through data and research analysis and by adopting an intersectional approach; by exploring how power hierarchies impact need within relationships, families, communities and within society. Violence against women and girls should be viewed through the lens of social inequality, which is upheld through the normalisation and acceptance of violence. The acceptance of abusive behaviours amongst our young people has been clearly evidenced through the Barking and Dagenham School Health Survey.

Work has been undertaken to look at diversity data through local specialist support services which are able to explore widely the representation of different groups. This has been cross-examined with national research and specialist organisations recommendations such as SafeLives, who provide recommendations for MARAC. Findings have shown that although the people accessing services are generally representative of the people living in the borough, there are some groups that remain under or overrepresented such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities.

Data can only tell us so much. We have put a real emphasis on ensuring lived experience informs the development of this strategy, and this

is particularly relevant to ensure we are human-centred in our approach. Local data, national and international research has helped us shape an understanding of who we should expect to be impacted, but it is through open dialogue we can learn about how different people are affected, what challenges they have faced and what has helped them find safety and emotional wellbeing.

Specific groups face unique experiences of violence and barriers to accessing support:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Experiences

The experiences of LGBT survivors of domestic violence and abuse rarely fit in to the public narrative of domestic abuse. The public narrative of intimate partner violence tends to follow a heterosexual and cisgender model of abuse, in which the privilege and power held by cisgender heterosexual men leads to the conclusion that perpetrators of domestic abuse are cisgender heterosexual men and that victims of domestic abuse are cisgender heterosexual women. This is reflected in various research publications as well as from what local LGBT groups have said to us.

Experiences may not always exist in the domestic sphere in terms of intimate and familial relationships but may include sexual exploitation, prostitution, and trafficking. Extended family abuse forced marriage and so called 'honour' based violence brings additional considerations for LGBT survivors. The notion of identity abuse may be unique to LGBT experiences of domestic abuse - when a survivors' sexuality or gender identity is used as a weapon to exert power and control over them.



The murders of four young gay men in 2015 in Barking were a stark reminder that we need to recognise the unique experiences of LGBT people and include the experiences of LGBT people in campaigns and service provision. One element that requires better understanding is the sometimes-transient nature of LGBT relationships – people may be more likely to move across boroughs or regions to meet with each other. Better understanding of the tools, particularly technology facilitated tools, used to meet each other is also required.

Experiences of black and/or minority ethnic (BME) people

Violence and abuse impacts people from all ethnic groups and there is no evidence to suggest that a person from one ethnic or cultural group is any more at risk than a person from another group. However, violence and abuse may be experienced differently. The experiences of BME women in particular, may be compounded by additional barriers to accessing services. This might include, among others:

- A fear of a racist response from services
- Services basing their response on stereotypes, or not responding for fear of being perceived as racist
- A fear of rejection from their community if they speak out
- If they are from a community that places great value on marriage, it may be particularly hard to admit that there is abuse in the marriage, and there may be additional pressure to remain in the marriage
- Language constraints
- They may be more likely to experience abuse from multiple perpetrators
- Women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) who experience violence are particularly vulnerable because of their immigration status. The NRPF condition imposed on them during their stay in the UK presents a major obstacle in accessing services.
- A lack of understanding from services of the trauma experienced by BME women who often are not 'just' leaving a perpetrator which is massively traumatic and highly risky but may also be separating from their whole family, community, and identity. BME experiences require an approach that relays understanding of needs and is sensitive to the trauma experienced.

A BME woman could experience 'honour' based violence in the context of domestic abuse. Despite being just as likely to experience abuse as any other ethnic group, research shows that the level of disclosure for BME victim/survivors of domestic abuse is far lower than that of the general population (Walby & Allen, 2004). This is reflected in local MARAC and service data which shows the service user profile is not fully representative of the borough demographic profile.

Men's Experiences

It is widely recognised that men can be victims of domestic abuse and other strands of violence such as forced marriage, sexual violence and 'honour' based violence.

Of reported domestic abuse incidents to the local police, 76% are reported by women and 24% by men. As an indicator this may be impacted by confidence in reporting; comparatively higher levels of women are arrested when reported for domestic abuse in comparison to the numbers of men arrested when reported for domestic abuse (Professor Marianne Hester, 2009). Counter allegations are common tactics by people perpetrating abuse and it can often be difficult for first responders to identify the victim and perpetrator. This is particularly difficult when victims are in crisis and may be in 'fight mode' because of their own survival response.

Many victims who are men are still experiencing violence from another man or men, for example in gay relationships or from male family members. In these situations, the victims/survivor's experiences of risk are comparatively like heterosexual female victims as the abuse often follows the same



patterns: higher levels of post separation abuse, stalking, harassment, physical violence etc.

A barrier to men reporting their experiences as victim/survivors can be that they feel they are perceived as weak, or that their masculinity is questioned. Taking a gender informed approach that seeks to create attitudinal change around accepted gender norms will help support male victims to come forwards. A gender informed approach brings many positive outcomes over time including reduced victimisation, reduced repeat victimisation, reduction in substance misuse, mental health needs etc. It brings additionality by creating space for boys and men to connect with their emotional needs, which may also impact on levels of suicide in male populations.

Men survivors often require different types of services to women survivors. Men survivors are more likely to make use of helplines rather than face to face interventions. Taking a gender informed approach will build on the understanding that men do not necessarily require a replication of what is traditionally perceived to be women's services. Instead of designing services to be generic in their approach and therefore struggle to be effective in response to different needs, we will seek to design service provision that understands the commonalities shared by different groups and works to create areas of support specific to the needs of the borough's residents.

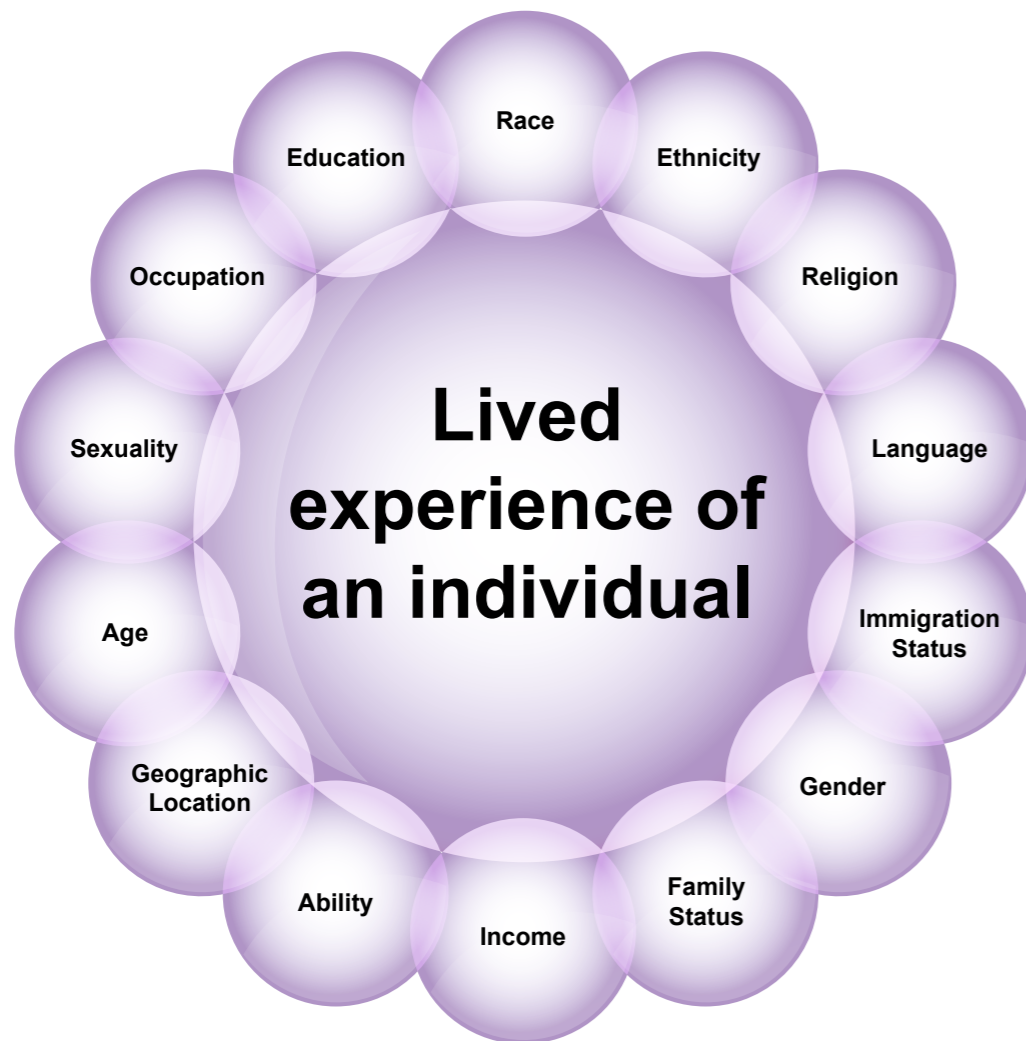
Intersectionality

Part of the problem services and organisations face is that they are sometimes missing a holistic view of a survivor's experience and options available. Giving advice without taking a full assessment of need that includes all factors is problematic and leads to a misunderstanding of risk and need.

Intersectionality is a gender and anti-oppression theory. It considers the various aspects of humanity (class, race, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability etc.) do not exist separately from each other but are complexly interwoven and that their

relationships are essential to an understanding of the human condition. This perspective recognises the unique experience of individuals and the difference within communities and explains how multiple forces interact to reinforce conditions of inequality and social exclusion.

It is important to note that intersectional theory is not the sum of the various aspects of an individual's identity but is an analysis of power hierarchies present within identities and reflects multiple forms of discrimination. When applied to violence and abuse, this can translate as barriers to accessing services, lack of recognition of violence and abuse, and lack of ability or perceived ability to respond to it.



Intersectional understanding provides space for expanding our analysis of how our borough profile may impact local need: Barking and Dagenham's status as an East London Growth Borough will lead to changes within our socioeconomic and demographic profile. This is likely to impact the

need locally as we may see changes in languages spoken, the make-up of families, employment figures, changes in the residential layout of borough and so on. All these factors correlate and create additional or unique needs for individuals and families experiencing violence and abuse.

Children and Young People



The 2017 Joint Targeted Area Inspections of the response to children living with domestic abuse (multiple local authorities) called for a national public service initiative to raise awareness of domestic abuse and violence. The report highlighted patterns that suggest agencies focus on the victim as the only solution. The end of an abusive relationship was considered to reduce the risk to children, when in fact research tells us that separation can escalate risk. This is reflected in what local survivors have told us in Barking and Dagenham.

The use of written agreements was called into question for domestic abuse cases, which places inappropriate attribution of responsibility on the mother to protect her children, and often does not consider the coercive control that she has likely been subjected to. Inspectors found that there was no evidence that written agreements were effective in domestic abuse cases and that not enough emphasis was placed on the source of the abuse – the perpetrator.

Intergenerational Transmission of Violence and Trauma Theory

The intergenerational transmission of violence is a well-researched hypothesis in violence research in recent decades and the notion that family violence persists across generations is pervasive amongst clinicians, researchers, and the public. Estimates of likelihood of intergenerational transmission of

violence varies widely and researchers have found several risk and protective factors that may alter the rate of transmission.

Exploring attachment theory, neuroscience and the role of trauma can help provide a backdrop for understanding the likelihood of transmission. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) is a research study conducted in the United States that demonstrated an association of adverse childhood experiences with health and social problems as an adult. All adverse childhood experiences researched as part of the study are also able to be framed as traumatic experiences. ACES is a useful piece of work to demonstrate the need to address trauma experienced by the children and young people on the borough.

People accessing support locally report varying levels of trauma in their histories, particularly when they were children or young people. The impacts of complex trauma on children and young people can be wide ranging and will depend upon various characteristics of the individual such as their age, their development, and their level of resilience. Complex trauma can negatively impact children in several ways: their attachment and relationships, physically (body and brain), emotionally, their behaviour, cognition. It also impacts their self-concept and future realisation leaving them unable to plan for or even dream about the future. Tackling trauma in young people helps to tackle disillusionment, and creates space to nurture ambition, learning and self-development.

It is important to note that not all people who experience violence and abuse as a child will go on to become a victim or perpetrator of abuse; this would be a disempowering message to a child or young person, and to their families. However, where people experience multiple or prolonged trauma in childhood and are not provided support to address that trauma, they are likely to be more vulnerable to negative social, economic and health experiences in their adult lives.

Engagement, Consultation and Co-Production

We have ensured lived experience is at the heart of this strategy through one to one interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, and workshops with local survivors including representation of affected groups within the community. This has been facilitated through commissioned support services and local community groups but there is a need to ensure ongoing consultation to adapt to changes within the Borough and to expand the engagement to people who have experienced different forms of violence.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls offers excellent opportunities for co-production, and we recognise how powerful it can be for survivors to share their experiences. Survivor testimony has a real impact when raising awareness and training, and it is so important that we hear what survivors tell us and use it to shape service delivery. We can also share opportunities by employing survivors where appropriate to deliver peer support and advocacy.

We have faced challenges with quantitative engagement. Numbers of survivors attending workshops and focus groups have been small and have tended to be focused on domestic abuse and sexual violence within the context of the domestic sphere, and less on other forms of violence such as sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and 'honour' based violence. Nevertheless, we have consulted with 38 survivors through workshops and focus groups, and one to one interviews.

This qualitative learning has very much been more focused towards the practical needs of women experiencing violence and therefore has guided the development of the priorities in this strategy around wider service development and delivery, particularly regarding housing need and support with advocacy through children's social care.



We would like to acknowledge the invaluable feedback and input from local survivors and their support workers over 2017/18. Their experiences and suggestions have been vital to shaping this strategy. They have shown great strength and tenacity despite their experiences and have also shared their vulnerabilities to help create a change for people in the future. We recognise that this can be retraumatising and we offer real thanks, a genuine commitment to do better and we look forward to continuing working with you over the course of this strategy

Understanding Data

Measuring success around VAWG is difficult. Much of the violence and abuse happening on the borough will be in the domestic sphere, our outside of the public domain. Organisations working to support survivors often respond in the context of number of incidents and risk. Survivors do not necessarily view their experiences through this lens, instead putting forwards the cumulative effects of abuse over time. To survivor's success is simple: the abuse stops, and support is provided for them to process what has been done to them. For the partnership, this is somewhat more complex and relies on improving recognition, identification and then response.

It is important to note that to create positive and sustainable long-term changes, short term indicators are very likely to get worse. The more work that is done to raise awareness and encourage survivors to seek help and abusers to change, the more likely it is that we will see reporting and service demand increase in the short-term. This is in direct conflict with Borough Manifesto targets and some targets set in this strategy.

However, in the long-term, the work undertaken will start to tackle the normalisation of abuse, and the intergenerational transmission of violence leading to a steady decline in reporting and service demand.

To support the understanding of indicators and give context to what is happening on the borough we are developing a wider VAWG data set including information collated from a wide range of services and agencies.

Governance

The Barking and Dagenham Community Safety Partnership has five strategic priority sub-groups which report to the Community Safety Partnership board. The sub-groups have been set up to mirror the five areas of vulnerability as set out within the London Police and Crime Plan 2016/17. One of the priority sub groups is violence against women and girls. This strategy, and its commitments will be the responsibility of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sub-group. This sub-group will also link with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the safeguarding boards to ensure that the response to violence against women and girls is robust, representative of need and well understood across all other priority areas.

The VAWG sub group is Chaired by the Borough Director for NELFT and supported by the domestic abuse commissioning manager. The membership consists of partners from children's care and support, adult's care and support, community solutions, commissioning managers, local police, national probation service, London community rehabilitation centre, as well as several specialist voluntary sector partners. A quarterly report analysing target performance will be discussed at the VAWG sub group and will be reported up to the Community Safety Partnership.

There are several resources that will assist in delivering this strategy:

- The Council fund a domestic abuse commissioning manager post responsible for commissioning services to tackle domestic abuse and other violence against women and girls strands. The post is also responsible for coordinating this strategy and supports the violence against women and girls sub group to the Community Safety Partnership.
- The MARAC is a meeting that facilitates strategic discussion of the boroughs highest risk domestic abuse cases. The Council fund a MARAC coordinators post to support this function. The coordinator also supports the Missing and Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meeting and the hate crime and intolerance panel. MARAC steering is undertaken by the VAWG sub Group.

- Domestic abuse operational forum comes together quarterly, and the membership includes several local services with an appetite to tackle violence against women and girls. This group feeds into the VAWG sub group to the Community Safety Partnership.
- The Independent Domestic and Sexual Advocacy (IDSVA) service which consists of three advocates, a caseworker, a young person advocate and a children's domestic abuse caseworker. The service works with medium and high-risk cases of domestic abuse and other violence against women and girls strands. The service is not gender specific – any person victimised by a perpetrator of domestic or sexual violence can access support.
- The Domestic violence programme is a support group programme for children who have experienced domestic abuse. A concurrent group for mothers is also provided and a peer support group meets every other week.
- Refuge provision includes 13 beds with 6 months move on, supporting 26 women and their children each year.
- Violence Against Women and Girls counselling is provided through London Councils funding and an uplift is provided through the London Crime Prevention Fund allocations.
- A diversionary programme to empower girls and deliver peer to peer education in schools is funded through London Crime Prevention allocations.
- Excel Women's Centre is an open-door community hub based in Barking but working across the borough providing services to children, women, and families. The centre offer help to vulnerable women and their families to fight discrimination, demand their right and increase their self-esteem and confidence within our multicultural society.
- Huggett Women's Centre, based at Dagenham Heathway is managed by Nia and is a safe space for women to access women-centred psycho-educational support groups, drop ins and support.

References and links to supporting documents

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7. Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, Public Health England
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12. Criminal Prosecution Service VAWG Report
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