

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee			
Title	DRAFT Safer Violence Against Women and Girls Plan 14-17		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services. Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People	Item	5
Class	Part 1 (Open)	Date	25 February 2014

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Lewisham Council has a long history of commitment to tackling domestic and sexual violence. This work is now supported by a unified and comprehensive approach to tackling violence against women and girls through a systemic Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Plan.
- 1.2 A needs assessment was undertaken in the summer of 2013 to look at the prevalence of VAWG locally and to determine what Lewisham's priorities should be. Officers in Community Services consulted with partners as well as residents and victims of VAWG.
- 1.3 The needs assessment identified gaps in local knowledge in a number of areas, and proposed 3 key strands for local focus and priority:
- Domestic violence and abuse
 - Rape and sexual violence
 - Sexual exploitation with particular focus on children
- 1.4 As with all partnership intelligence development documents it is likely that priorities will be revised as further information on all strands of VAWG becomes available. All local partners are committed to dealing with all aspects of VAWG and will be reviewing annually the areas for focus.
- 1.5 The DRAFT plan, which is attached to this report as an appendix, outlines all strands of VAWG and details the consultation undertaken to assist with developing a greater understanding of this agenda. There is more work in train in relation to further understanding the local picture, and this will include focus groups with those who responded to the consultation and with others. Additionally a directory of services in this area is being developed. A final plan will be completed in April 2014.

2. Summary

2.1 Objectives and Goals

VAWG is a multi-faceted issue that links to, and impacts on, a range of other social issues including poverty, unemployment, youth crime, homelessness, child

abuse, health, and problematic substance use. A multi-agency integrated approach to tackling these issues is therefore required.¹

2.2 The Plan sets out four important objectives and goals for Lewisham;

1. Develop a better understanding of VAWG and its impact in the borough;
2. Early Intervention and prevention of VAWG
3. Ensure improved access to support and protection for women and girls in the borough;
4. Hold perpetrators to account and give consideration to the provision of rehabilitation

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 Members of the Safer Stronger Select Committee are invited to note the content of the plan and agree to receive an annual update on its progress.

4. **Background**

4.1 What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

Violence against Women and Girls is both a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights. The Council has adopted the United Nations declaration on elimination of violence towards women, which defines violence against women 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’

United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence towards Women (1993, Article 1)

4.2 Lewisham’s Plan links to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the recent launch of the London Mayor’s “Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2011) and the refreshed Plan in 2013.

4.3 VAWG includes violence that is targeted at women or girls because of their gender or affects women and girls disproportionately. The strands of VAWG as outlined by the government are;

- Domestic Violence
- Rape and Sexual Violence
- Prostitution and Trafficking
- Sexual Exploitation
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced Marriage
- Honour Based Violence
- Stalking and Harassment

¹ Mayoral Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls 2013-2017

- 4.4 This Plan is focused on the needs of women and girls and is a deliberate response to the disproportionate impact of VAWG crimes on women and girls.
- 4.5 This does not mean that men are never victims of, for example, rape, forced marriage, or domestic violence, or even that women are not sometimes perpetrators. The Council is equally committed to tackling the needs of men and to addressing all forms of violence and abuse across the borough. We will do this by ensuring the services we commission also provide support to male victims.

4.6 Lewisham's VAWG Plan

Victims are at the forefront of the Council's wider Crime Reduction Plan, and this continues to be the focus within the VAWG Plan. Although domestic violence and abuse have been a key priority for the Safer Lewisham Partnership over the last five years, it is acknowledged that more can be done to address all other strands of VAWG and how they affect each other. Lewisham remains committed to awareness raising programmes on the issue of VAWG as well as training for all professionals in the borough.

- 4.7 The Council aims to ensure that victims of gender-based violence are provided with an effective multi agency approach through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) conference and other fora.

- 4.8 The Council and partners also aim to continue to work with perpetrators to reduce future harm and all criminal justice partners working together to ensure that responses reduce risk of harm and contributes to victim safety.

5. **Principles and Priorities**

- 5.1 The Government's approach to ending VAWG involves a number of actions², including, but not limited to:

- widening the definition of domestic violence and abuse following a public consultation, to include coercive control and to cover 16 and 17 year olds
- publishing a pocket sized declaration opposing female genital mutilation document for girls and women to carry when abroad, explaining the law and potential criminal penalties
- running the teenage relation abuse and teenage rape prevention campaigns to prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of sexual violence and abuse and directing them to places for help and advice
- providing protection for victims of stalking by introducing two new specific criminal offences, along with additional related police search powers and training for police and prosecutors
- signing the Council of Europe's convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence - the 'Istanbul Convention'

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-uk>

5.2 Lewisham's Principles

The Partnership is committed to delivering an integrated provision for VAWG, working to achieve the following goals and objectives:

1. To develop a better understanding of VAWG and its impact in our borough;
2. To ensure improved access to the support and protection of women and girls in our borough;
3. To hold perpetrators to account.

5.3 What The Partnership Wants to Achieve

Within the context of the principles outlined and following the clear commitment set out in the Safer Lewisham Plan 13/14:

- Reduce key crimes with particular reference to VAWG and serious youth violence.
- Ensure all public services work collaboratively and with communities to prevent crime support victims and reduce re-offending and improving confidence across all criminal justice agencies.

5.4 The identified VAWG priorities are:

- Tackling and reducing incidents of domestic violence and abuse year on year.
- Tackling and reducing rape and sexual violence year on year.
- Tackling sexual exploitation with specific focus on children.

6. Public Consultation - The views of stakeholders and local residents

6.1 To help develop this plan, a consultation was undertaken to seek the views of a wide range of partners in the borough between November 2013 and January 2014. This consultation involved the following;

- Consultation with professionals and partners through local violence against women and girls professional networks.
- An on-line consultation with professionals and service users.

Full details can be found in the attached Plan.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The SLP currently monitors the spend in relation to the MOPAC funding resource allocation for tackling emerging issues, and this data will be reviewed and agreed at the Performance and Delivery Board or the SLP as required.

7.2 Currently external funding is relied upon in the delivery of this agenda.

8 Legal & Human Rights Implications

8.1 The Council is under a number of statutory obligations to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to

formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder; the Anti Social Behaviour 2003 requires the Council as a local housing authority to have policies and procedures for dealing with anti-social behaviour and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places the Council under a duty to have, when carrying out its functions, due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.

8.2 The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty on the local authorities to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised having regard to the combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

8.3 Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers the local authority to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of all or any persons within the local authority's area.

8.4 These statutory duties amongst others feed into the Council's Safer Lewisham Strategy.

9 Equalities Implications

9.1 Developing safe and secure communities is central to the work of the Council as a whole and in particular to the Community Services directorate. Reducing and preventing crime, reducing fear of crime and supporting vulnerable communities is critical to the well-being of all our citizens.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 Section 17 places a duty on partners to do all they can to reasonably prevent crime and disorder in their area. The level of crime and its impact is influenced by the decisions and activities taken in the day-to-day of local bodies and organisations. The responsible authorities are required to provide a range of services in their community from policing, fire protection, planning, consumer and environmental protection, transport and highways. They each have a key statutory role in providing these services and, in carrying out their core activities, can significantly contribute to reducing crime and improving the quality of life in their area.

11. Environmental Implications

11.1 The Council's lead for this is an advisor to the SLP and makes representations as appropriate in relation to impact. Environmental services are consulted about all agreed activity before proceeding.

12. Conclusion

12.1 The SLP will continue to review its practice and that of the sub groups to ensure that all activity in relation to crime and disorder and drugs and alcohol is in line

with the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the Safer Lewisham Strategy as well as having links to the children's and young persons' board and the health and wellbeing board. This plan will link closely to the London Mayor's recent VAWG plan and continue to investigate and better understand the local Lewisham picture.

For further information on this report please contact Geeta Subramaniam Head of Crime Reduction & Supporting People, Directorate for Community Services on 020 8 314 9569.