

<b>MAYOR AND CABINET</b>			
<b>Report Title</b>	Response to the Comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls: awareness raising and prevention review		
<b>Key Decision</b>	No	Item No.	
<b>Ward</b>	All		
<b>Contributors</b>	Executive Director for Community Services		
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	Date: 9 September 2015	

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report sets out the response to the views and comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee arising from their in depth review of Violence Against women and girls raising awareness and prevention review. The review was scoped in September 2014 and three evidence gathering sessions were held in December 2014, January 2015 and March 2015. The Committee agreed the report and the recommendations in May 2015.

## **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Mayor:

- 2.1 Approve the responses from the Executive Director for Community Services to the comments from the Safer Stronger Select Committee.
- 2.2 Agree that this report should be forwarded to the Safer Stronger Select Committee.

## **3. Policy Context**

- 3.1 The Mayor of London has committed that, as part of its work to reduce youth violence, the London Crime Reduction Board will ensure that by 2017:

‘Access to prevention programmes in all London state schools and educational establishments will be available, enabling children and young people to make positive life choices. Every ‘at risk’ child will receive targeted support for a positive transition to secondary school  
 Troubled Families, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs and other family support and safeguarding mechanisms should understand and address gang issues’

(Mayor of London; strategic ambitions for London (2014); gangs and serious youth violence, p26)

3.2 The MOPAC strategic framework for responding to gang associated women and girls recommends that services in boroughs for girls and women affected by gang violence should include:

- Prevention work/healthy relationships that covers gang-association and violence against women and girls (VAWG) delivered in schools, pupil referral units and in out of school youth-based settings.
- Early intervention and diversionary work such as mentoring and peer support to support young women on the peripheries of gangs.
- Crisis support such as advocacy, exit provision that is safe and provided by women that addresses the holistic needs of young women and girls (as above).
- Longer-term support such as specialist counselling to support young women and girls to overcome the trauma of gang-associated VAWG. Counselling services should be specialised as inappropriate responses can exacerbate the effects of sexual violence as they can damage the victim's positive sense of self or lead to higher levels of psychological symptoms and poorer recovery.
- Interventions to promote self-esteem and confidence.
- Education, training and employment opportunities tailored for young women and girls. A women-centred approach to education, training and employment should be about ensuring young women and girls have access to a broad and diverse range of opportunities and that appropriate systems and support are put in place to address their specific needs.

3.3 Lewisham's violence against women and girls strategy

In May 15 the Council commissioned a single violence against women and girls service to develop a coordinated approach to violence against women and girls in the borough. The service provides a single point of contact for services in the borough. The ambition is that this increased level of coordination will improve the following outcomes:

- An increase in the number of referrals to the service.
- Increasing the number of victims and families made safe and who stay safe.
- A reduction in repeat reports of domestic violence and abuse.
- Increased interventions and therefore reductions in risk and cases of significant harm.
- Successful work with perpetrators, such as change in the behaviour of perpetrators and an awareness of the impacts of their behaviour.
- Improving outcomes for individuals and groups in other areas of their lives.
- Increased and improved service user involvement

3.4 Some of the broader expected outcomes of the new VAWG service include;

- Reduced repeat victimisation.
- Reduced repeat perpetrators and positive changes in perpetrator behaviour.
- Increased reports and criminal justice outcomes e.g. sanction detections
- Increase in the number of referrals to the service for support.
- Improved safety for children and young people
- Reducing the risk of children and young people becoming a future victim / perpetrator of domestic abuse

3.5 The overall vision for Lewisham is established in the Sustainable Community Strategy. The issues covered in this report relate to the strategy's strategic priority - Safer. Additionally it links to Council priority 4, Safety, security and a visible presence.

#### **4. Background**

4.1 At its meeting on 15 July 2014, when deciding on its annual work programme, the Safer Stronger Select Committee discussed its concerns about the prevalence of violence against women and girls. Members of the Committee highlighted information published in the national press (and reported by the Safer London Foundation<sup>1</sup>) about the dangers posed to women and girls by gangs<sup>2</sup>. Members were alarmed at these reports and sought to further understand the actions being taken by Partner organisations in Lewisham to protect women and girls from gang violence.

4.2 In response to the Committee's concerns, officers provided additional information about the development and delivery of Lewisham's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy at the Committee's meeting on 10 September 2014. The Council's Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People and the Lead Police Sergeant for Lewisham's gangs unit also answered questions about the Safer Lewisham Partnership's approach to tackling violence against women and girls, including its work with gang associated women and girls.

4.3 After consideration of the information provided and questioning of officers, the Committee resolved to carry out a review into the issues facing gang associated women and girls in the borough, which would focus on preventative work, awareness raising and early intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gangs draw up lists of girls to rape as proxy attack on rivals* in the Guardian (19-07-14), accessed online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/19/gangs-rape-lists-sex-assault>

<sup>2</sup> *Sexual Violence in parts of UK as bad as warzones*, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/26/gangs-sexual-violence-warzones>

### Meeting the criteria for a review

- 4.4 At its meeting on 3 November 2014, the Committee received a scoping report for the review, which set out the background, proposed key lines of enquiry and suggested key questions for the review.
- 4.5 It was agreed that a review of prevention work for gang associated women and girls would meet the criteria for carrying out a scrutiny review, because:
1. it was a strategic and significant issue
  2. it affected a number of people living in Lewisham
  3. the Council was in the process of tendering a service for the provision of services to prevent, and reduce the impacts of, violence against women and girls
  4. the Council was required to make a major reduction to its budget, which would reduce resources available to community and voluntary organisations, public health, supported housing, youth offending and schools improvement services.

### Key lines of inquiry

- 4.6 In order to successfully complete this review, the Committee agreed that it would seek answers to the following questions:
- What data is available about the extent of issues affecting gang associated girls and women in Lewisham?
  - What services exist to prevent women and girls from becoming associated with gangs?
  - What is the pattern of take up of prevention services?
  - What is the current level of resource for prevention services in Lewisham?
  - Are there examples of effective practice in other areas?
  - What are the future challenges to delivering successful prevention and awareness raising work?

### Review questions:

- How do Lewisham and its partner organisations work to prevent women and girls from becoming associated with gangs?
  - What could be done to enhance the effectiveness of work in this area?
- 4.7 Issues agreed to be outside of the scope of the review:
- Dealing with individual cases or casework

## **5.0 Responses to the Referrals**

5.1 Referral 1

**Further work is required on mapping the scale of the issues highlighted in this report. It is clear that the Council and its partners hold information about issues relating to gang associated women and girls in the borough who are at the highest level of risk, however, Mayor and Cabinet should task officers with developing a coordinated approach to mapping and monitoring the extent of violence against gang associated women and girls in Lewisham.**

Response:

The Youth MARAC remains the principal forum through which information on vulnerable gang-associated young girls is captured in a coordinated way. Given the scale of under recording it is important to note that sources are not confined to police reports, they include A and E and schools for example.

Mapping and monitoring also includes having operational strategies for safeguarding the welfare of female siblings, partners, and gang members. This is built into the multi-agency gangs MATRIX meetings which take place between the police and local authority partners.

From September 2015 additional resources will be allocated to proactive enforcement against gangs nominals and those involved in the exploitation of children for criminal enterprises. A strategic evaluation of the effectiveness of the borough's response will also be undertaken in autumn 2015 as part of the council's Strategic Assessment and reflected in subsequent Action Plans

5.2 Referral 2

**Officers should work with neighbouring boroughs to review ideas for best practice in preventing violence against gang associated women and girls - and to share information, where appropriate.**

Response:

The council will continue to work through pan London forums such as the MOPAC Gang Exit Forum and Home Office Ending Gang and Youth Violence forum. Lewisham works closely with a number of other boroughs currently. A *leads list* of gang-affected girls is shared between some boroughs and Lewisham to ensure consistent monitoring of affected girls moving between boroughs. The Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting people chairs 2 pan London boards where crime reduction, youth justice and issues such as this are discussed : best practice, information sharing and joint working are key aspects of these forums.

5.3 Referral 3

**The Council should write to the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors of every school in the borough to highlight the issue of violence against gang associated women and girls and to make schools aware of sources of information, support and advice available.**

Response:

The Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People and Children and Young people's Service directorate continues to ensure updated circulars on current risks and referral pathways for at risk children are issued to Safeguarding Leads and school governors. These circulars have relevant and useful information on what resources are available to schools, safeguarding professionals, and education staff including local and pan-London resources. These will continue alongside regular meetings and briefings directly with Heads.

5.4 Referral 4

**Working with partners in the support and advice sector, the Council should ensure that it maintains a comprehensive record of services and support being offered in the borough's schools.**

Response:

A rolling audit is to be carried out to collate an inventory of services, and ensure it meets standard of training delivered via the Lewisham Safeguarding Children's Board's sub group of Policies, Procedures and Training (PPT), including working closely with partners in Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL).

The council will ensure the latter training is delivered to all Safeguarding Leads throughout the year and ensure relevant police teams are engaged in this process across the borough

5.5 Referral 5

**The Committee notes the important work being carried out by the Safer London Foundation and requests that the Council and its partners give full consideration to securing future funding of the Empower programme in Lewisham.**

Response:

The *empower* programme has had very positive feedback to date. The service for Lewisham includes six days' worth of training for professionals and six days' worth of training for young people in educational settings.

The empower programme is funded by the London Mayor's Office on Police and Crime (MOPAC) Victims Fund until September 2015. Proposals have been put forward to extend this programme for another year. Council officers recognise the advantages conferred by this resource and are engaged in discussion with MOPAC to secure ongoing funding for this service.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this response however Services noted within the review are either delivered by Council officers, commissioned or provided via external funds. Within a climate of overall reductions in resources across the Council there may be impacts on this agenda.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this response, save for noting that the Council's Constitution provides that the Executive may respond to reports and recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **8. Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 8.1 The Violence Against Women and Girls agenda is a priority set by the Safer Lewisham Partnership and the impact on victims and management of offenders in relation to these strands are critical in the overall work and impact on Crime and Disorder..

## **9. Equalities Implications**

- 9.1 The Safer Lewisham Partnership priorities impact on large sections of the community, including the most vulnerable (e.g. victims of Domestic Violence , victimisation of women and young people). The focus on effective interventions in the Criminal Justice System ensures that Human Rights remain essential to the strategy's vision, strategic themes and monitoring processes.
- 9.2 One of the Partnership's key outcomes is to ensure equity in representation and that equality and diversity issues are followed in the work of the partnership.

## **10. Environmental Implications**

- 10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this response.

## **Background Papers**

Mayor and cabinet report – 3rd June 15

Matters referred by Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee – Violence Against Women and Girls: awareness raising and prevention review

Overview and Scrutiny – Violence against Women and Girls: awareness raising and prevention review – Safer Stronger Select committee – Spring 2015

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