

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee		
Title	Violence Against Women and Girls including Girls and Gangs	
Contributor	Executive Director for Community Services.	Item 4
Class	Part 1 (open)	10 September 2014

1. Summary

- 1.1 Violence Against Women and Girls (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
- 1.2 The Lewisham VAWG Plan sets out three important objectives and goals for our borough;
- Early intervention and prevention of VAWG – To develop a better understanding of VAWG and its impact in our borough;
 - To ensure an improved access to the support and protection of women and girls in our borough;
 - To hold perpetrators to account and consideration of rehabilitation provision.

2. Recommendation

Members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee are recommended to note the contents of this report which aims to assist the committee with the possible scoping of a future in-depth review.

3. Background

- 3.1 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 VAWG Plan.
- 3.2 A needs assessment was undertaken in the summer of 2013 to look at the prevalence of VAWG locally and to determine what our priorities should be. We also consulted with our Council partners as well as residents and victims of VAWG.
- 3.3 The needs assessment identified gaps in local knowledge in a number of areas; and proposes 3 key strands for local focus and priority:
- Domestic violence and abuse
 - Rape and sexual violence
 - Sexual exploitation with particular focus on children

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

- 3.4 As with all partnership intelligence development documents it is likely priorities may be revised as further information on all strands of VAWG becomes available. All local partners are committed to dealing with any aspects of VAWG and will be reviewing and reassessing areas annually.
- 3.5 In addition, significant work has been undertaken in relation to gangs – a menu of options has previously been shared with Members – specific focus will be placed on the work undertaken in relation to girls and gangs.

4. What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

- 4.1 Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is both a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights. Locally we adopt 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 Mayors “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

- 4.4 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.

5. Lewisham’s VAWG Plan

- 5.1 Victims are at the forefront of the Council’s wider Crime Reduction Plan, and this continues to be the focus within the VAWG Plan.

- 5.2 Although domestic violence and abuse has been a key priority for the Safer Lewisham Partnership over the last five years, more can be done to address all other strands of VAWG and how they affect each other.
- 5.3 We are committed to awareness raising programmes on the issue of VAWG as well as training for all professionals in the borough.
- 5.4 We aim 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.
- 5.5 We 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 contribute to victim safety.

6. Our Principles and Priorities

- 6.1 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'.

6.2 Lewisham's Principles

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

- Early intervention and prevention of VAWG – To develop a better understanding of VAWG and its impact in our borough;
- To ensure an improved access to the support and protection of women and girls in our borough;
- To hold perpetrators to account.

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

6.3 What we aim to achieve:

Within the principles outlined and with a clear commitment as set out in the Safer Lewisham Plan 13/14, we want to achieve the following;

- Reducing key crimes with particular reference to VAWG and serious youth violence.
- Ensuring 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.

6.4 Our 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.

7. Public Consultation - The Views of Stakeholders and Local Residents

7.1 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. Lewisham Council commissioned a London-based VAWG charity³ to consult with local residents (women and girls only) on a variety of issues such as barriers to accessing services and whether a single service would be more beneficial.

7.2 This consultation involved the following;

- The consultation sought to obtain the perspectives of women and girls on their experiences of accessing support services across the voluntary, statutory and community sector, how current services could be improved and recommendations for how VAWG should be tackled in the future.
- Consultation with professionals and partners through our local violence against women and girls professional networks.
- An on-line consultation with professionals and service users

7.3 49 women and girls were consulted, 25% of whom were young people between the ages of 13 and 25.

7.4 A recommendation from the consultation with local women and girls is for Lewisham to consider a one-stop-shop type service, where women and girls can access a variety of needs such as counselling, outreach support or crisis management. See attached for executive summary.

8. Current Service Delivery

8.1 Currently, a number of specialist services are commissioned – and located in different parts of the borough – to deliver services to victims of domestic violence

³ Imkaan - <http://imkaan.org.uk/AboutUs>

and abuse. The current service is disjointed, with service users often having to access multiple different services before being referred to the appropriate service.

- 8.2 In Lewisham the refuge provision is commissioned by the Prevention and Inclusion Team and is delivered by Refuge (the charity). The domestic violence and abuse support service is commissioned by the Crime Reduction Service and is delivered by a number of providers namely, Refuge, Victim Support Lewisham, TRYangle Project and the Community Groups Programme.
- 8.3 Victim Support Lewisham is located in the south of the borough, offering community services for victims of domestic violence and abuse, while Refuge is located in Lewisham Police Station offering crisis management and risk reduction services, but no counselling or community service.
- 8.4 The TRYangle service, which is a perpetrator programme for male abusers, is jointly commissioned with Bromley Council but located on the border of Lewisham and Bromley.

9. The Way Forward

- 9.1 The proposed borough commissioning model will see the provision of refuge accommodation and community based domestic violence and abuse support services included in a single contract for three years, with an option to renew the contract for two years subject to satisfactory outcomes.
- 9.2 A VAWG service in Lewisham will aim to achieve;
- Expansion of services.
 - Additional support of gender based violence issues for service users.
 - Efficiency in contract management.
- 9.3 The Lewisham VAWG service will see an expansion of services, for example, services will be expanded to a younger age group (currently over 16 only) and include wider VAWG strands such as female genital mutilation, human trafficking, prostitution, and domestic violence and abuse advocates co-located in primary health care settings.
- 9.4 In addition officers propose to widen the remit of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) in the service specifications to include other violence against women and girls issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), honour based violence, forced marriage and prostitution.
- 9.5 The commissioned service will measure progress against 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

10. Expected Outcomes

- 10.1 Lambeth Council currently have a one-stop shop type VAWG service, where service users are able to access the service easily and quickly through a single referral pathway.
- 10.2 In addition to providing domestic violence and abuse services, gender based violence support (trafficking, honour based violence, etc) is also provided. These services were not provided by Lambeth prior to commissioning their VAWG service in 2011.
- 10.3 Data from Lambeth show that in the most recent quarter of operation, their VAWG service received 525 referrals, over 100% increase from 250 referrals in the first quarter of operation.
- 10.4 The Lewisham VAWG service would be expected to see an increase in annual number of referrals, including an expansion of support services such as early intervention, additional community outreach and high risk advocacy support.
- 10.5 Some of the broader expected outcomes include, but not limited to;
- 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

11. Girls and Gangs

- 11.1 Though there is not currently an agreed definition of gang associated women and girls the local partnership uses the ACPO definition of “a woman or girl who is a family member of or in an intimate relationship with a gang nominal.

12. Strategic Context

- 12.1 Historically, approaches to tackling gang violence have centred around the experiences of men and boys and neglected the specific needs of gang associated women and girls, many of whom are at heightened risk of violence and sexual exploitation⁴. Public authorities have a legal duty to eliminate discrimination and promote equality under the Equality Act 2010, and the Partnership is committed to ensuring there is no discrimination in the provision of services to men and women. Recent MOPAC guidance such as the Strategic Framework for Responding to Gang Associated Women and Girls is intended to help address this oversight and local partnership work is also informed by the findings of the Children’s Commissioners Report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups .” One

⁴ Inevitably this tends to focus on violent perpetrators whilst many females who may be victims of retaliatory attacks/sexual assaults and/or the object of grooming will not be highlighted.

of the principal areas of concern in this field is the hidden nature of the problem, and it remains a key priority to effectively profile at risk groups and ensure timely sharing of information

12.2 Issues

Changes in the modus operandi of gangs across London point to a more prominent role for female nominals. Lewisham mirrors a trend across the capital where drug dealing, mostly outside London, is supplanting conflicts over territory and vulnerable females have a high value as couriers. Gang members are also increasingly using girls/young women to safe house drugs/weapons. The MPS's Trident unit are currently leading on co-ordinated enforcement against gangs involved in the exploitation of children in particular, and safeguarding protocols are being actively reviewed in light of updated intelligence profiles.

12.3 Interventions

Safeguarding women and girls from the threat of violence and of places a premium on identifying at risk females, and ensuring that current intelligence on female partners and siblings is shared with relevant safeguarding agencies, represented on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) MASE (Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation) and Youth MARAC panels. Intelligence is constantly reviewed in order to ensure at risk individuals are known and that safeguarding decisions are taken with full disclosure of information between key agencies

12.4 The Youth MARAC and MASE remain key forums for co-coordinating interventions, enforcement in the area of gang connected CSE . Intelligence gained from referrals is also used to inform the strategic profiling of sexual violence ; this meets MOPAC's best practice guidance in ensuring effective needs mapping within the Community Safety Partnership of domestic and sexual violence⁵. Such panels also act as early warning alerts for at risk females – e.g. many girls involved in the 'county lines'. Given the reduced repeat victimisation rates attested to by external audit⁶ such forums offer a solid foundation for reducing the harm to vulnerable females, and the partnership will continue to work with the Home Office EGYV team to drive down levels repeat victimisation

12.5 The EGYV team are also working with the Youth MARAC to further develop good practice in strategic and operational planning in this area, and the Serious Violence Team is working with the Early Intervention CSE leads to ensure a uniform approach by school safeguarding leads in responding to the needs of gang associated girls.

12.6 The Serious Violence Team tasked with working with gangs is the primary co-ordinator of the Youth MARAC and also sits on MASE as well as the Domestic

⁵ MOPAC Strategic Framework for Responding to Gang Associated Women and Girls 2013

⁶ The Youth MARAC was formally audited by the Bright Ideas Partnership in 2011 which concluded with following observations

Overall the project has been successful in meeting its key aims as it has: made young people feel safer and more secure; reduced the likelihood of repeat victimisation (the 25.9% repeat victimisation rate reported in this project is considerably lower than the normal re-victimisation rate of young victims of 58%); addressed the risk factors which can lead to offending, and as a result is likely to have reduced the number of young victims adapting offending behaviour; and has increased young victims' confidence in different agencies, such as the police, increasing the numbers of young people accessing services and reporting crimes

Violence steering groups. This will ensure key recommendations by MOPAC and Home Office on joint strategic planning in this area.

12.7 The Safer Lewisham Partnership has also merged the Strategic Assessment and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and will adopt an integrated approach to Violence with Injury and ensure linkages with wider VAWG specific targets

12.8 The partnership regularly delivers training under the auspices of the Local Safeguarding Children’s Group to frontline practitioners on gangs and these events will be used to disseminate a consistent safeguarding approach.

13. Financial Implications

13.1 The SLP currently monitors the spend in relation to the MOPAC funding Resource allocation in relation to tackling emerging issues are agreed and tabled for agreement at the Performance and Delivery Board or the SLP as required. External funding is heavily relied upon in the delivery of this agenda currently.

	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total value	£678,877	£678,887	£485,887 Potential Reduction of £192,990 in external funding

14. Legal Implications

14.1 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.

14.2 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.

14.3 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.

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

15. Equalities Implications

- 15.1 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.

16. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 16.1 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.

17. Environmental Implications

- 17.1 Key decisions made which may have environmental implications. The Council 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.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 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 communities strategy, and the Safer Lewisham Strategy as well as having links to children's and young persons board and the health and wellbeing board. This plan will link closely to the London Mayors recent VAWG plan and continue to investigate and understand better the local Lewisham picture.

For further information on this report please contact Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney Head of Crime Reduction & Supporting People, Directorate for Community Services on 020 8 314 956