

Violence Against Women Girls Strategy 2015-18 Summary

- The United Nations defines Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as *“any act of gender-based violence that is directed at a woman because she is a woman, or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman or girl, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.*
- The term VAWG used in this strategy is therefore taken to refer to the following range of serious crime types which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls: Domestic Violence and Abuse, Sexual Offences, Stalking, Female Genital Mutilation, Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of ‘Honour’, Forced Marriage, Prostitution, Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation and Exploitation of Girls by Gangs
- The VAWG Strategy does not include any detail on Domestic Violence And Abuse. There is a separate, but closely linked, Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy. This is because it is the highest volume VAWG crime and the most developed area of partnership working. There are also links between the VAWG Strategy and the Greenwich Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy
- The term VAWG can cause concern about a lack of recognition that men and boys also experience these forms of violence and abuse and can be excluded from support services. This VAWG strategy is based on the understanding that women and girls are disproportionately victims of all forms of VAWG, and that some are gender specific such as Female Genital Mutilation. All partners remain committed to ensuring that any victim of VAWG receives a sensitive and appropriate response so that they get the help and support they need. Many of the services referred to within this strategy are not gender specific and men and boys will also benefit from the work to which we are committing, particularly with regards to prevention and awareness raising.
- Many women and girls choose not to report the violence they are experiencing, especially to the police and other statutory agencies. There are many reasons for this, ranging from not defining what has happened as abuse through to distrust of the agencies themselves. Whilst awareness raising and improved responses can address some of these barriers, there will always be some who choose to remain silent and only seek support later in life. Others will choose not to take a legal case, but to approach agencies which offer confidential services. If the victim is an adult then their decisions about who to report to and when should be respected, unless their child is deemed to be at risk.
- Several established partnership governance groups have a role in responding to VAWG in Royal Greenwich including: the Safer Greenwich Partnership (SGP), Greenwich Safeguarding Children’s Board (GSCB), Children’s Trust Board (CTB), Health and Well-Being Board (HWBB), Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). The SGP develops an annual action plan to deliver the more detailed priorities set out in this strategy. It has also established a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership Group. This group is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the annual VAWG action plan.

This document is a summary of the full VAWG Strategy. The full version is available from the Safer Communities Team on 020 8921 8396 or community-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Common Principles Across the VAWG Strands

The following key principles inform our interventions to tackle VAWG are common across most of the eight strands:

- Ensure that the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is at the forefront of any action taken.
- Ensure that the safety of both victims and professionals is the key consideration.
- Take all allegations seriously and at no point suggest that the victim may be responsible for what has happened to them.
- Encourage victims to report to the police but respecting the wishes of adult women if they do not wish to do so.

Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities have been derived from the ambitions set out in each of the eight VAWG strands.

- **Sexual Offences**
 - Ensure that victims are informed of where they can go for help and that services for women are joined up with police reporting arrangements.
 - Ensure that staff inform victims of referral pathways to any available services.
- **Stalking**
 - Raise staff understanding of stalking and improve their ability to identify it at an early stage.
 - Raise awareness amongst the general public about how to identify the early signs of stalking and encourage reporting to the police.
- **Female Genital Mutilation**
 - Ensure that organisations make a clear statement to staff about their responsibilities with regards to reporting/recording incidents of FGM, as well as providing guidelines on appropriate responses.
 - Ensure that organisations train their staff to an appropriate level. This will include general awareness-raising for all staff, as well as improving the ability of frontline staff to respond and signpost victims/potential victims to available services
 - Use the powers available to the police to bring perpetrators to justice.
- **Forced Marriage and Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of 'Honour'**
 - Improve the understanding and knowledge of the two issues amongst front line staff, so that they are able to identify victims and report/record incidents.
 - Develop local understanding/clarity on how civil/criminal justice powers for dealing with the two issues can be used to bring perpetrators to justice and protect victims.
- **Prostitution**
 - Clarify which agencies will inform women involved in prostitution about the services they can access to address any needs they have, particularly support for substance misuse and sexual health.
 - Deal with the anti-social behaviour associated with prostitution in public spaces and the concerns of local residents.
- **Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation**
 - Raise awareness amongst staff about what trafficking is and improve their ability to identify potential victims.
 - Raise awareness amongst front line professionals about the function of the National Referral Mechanism.
- **Exploitation of Girls by Gangs**
 - Carry out analysis of the network of girls involved in gangs in order to improve identification and targeted support services.