

**Safer Greenwich Partnership
Violence Against Women & Girls
Strategy
2019 to 2021**

OUR SHARED VISION

The Safer Greenwich Partnership recognises that it is beyond one borough's, or even one country's, capacity to eradicate violence against women and girls, but we can do everything within our power to protect, educate and mitigate against it.

We will encourage victims of violence against women and girls to ask for help and do all we can to ensure that they are safeguarded from harm and supported, whatever their situation. We will also look to ensure that perpetrators of these crimes are held to account for their actions.

We will work towards preventing violence against women and girls in the long-term by challenging misogynistic attitudes and behaviour that can often lie behind these crimes.

Most importantly, we will work to make sure all agencies working in the Royal Borough recognise that violence against women and girls is everybody's business and will promote this principle amongst their own staff and within the local community.

In doing so we aim to make the Royal Borough a place where women and girls are able to live in a safe environment, free from harassment, violence and abuse.

WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS?

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 Violence Against Women and Girls used in this strategy is 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
- Honour Based Violence
- Forced Marriage
- Prostitution
- Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation

It must be recognised that some strands of Violence Against Women and Girls can be linked and that victims may be suffering from multiple elements of violence and/or abuse. For example, victims of Forced Marriage can often become victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse.

There are other offences such as modern slavery, exploitation by gangs and Child Sexual Exploitation that can be associated with Violence Against Women and Girls that sit under our safeguarding procedures but are not explicitly covered in this strategy. We recognise that victims of Violence Against Women and Girls can also be victims of other offences and we will use whatever legislation is available to us to protect victims and bring perpetrators to justice (e.g. using the Modern Slavery Act 2015) to protect victims of trafficking for exploitation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & ABUSE?

Domestic Violence & Abuse (DVA) is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or 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: physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and economic. Domestic abuse is complex and victims may have multiple needs beyond their need for support to address the abuse; this can include immigration, substance misuse and mental health issues.

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. Perpetrators can also use children as a means of control over their victim e.g. threats to take them away, 'inform' statutory agencies or harm the children.

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

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVELANCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- 3,387 DVA offences were recorded by the Police in 2017/18 and Royal Greenwich had the 3rd highest level of offences of London boroughs.
- Areas of the borough where reported DVA was most prevalent were all in the top 30% most deprived areas in England
- A third of reported DVA offences are alcohol related in some way.
- Of offences reported to the police, 3 in 5 victims and suspects are aged 20 to 39.
- Half of victims in RBG had previously reported being a victim and a third of suspects had previously been reported a suspect.
- 70% of suspects were the victim's ex-partner or partner, and a quarter of suspects had a familial relation to the victim.
- Using national estimates, approximately 23,076 women living in Greenwich have been the victim of DVA in their lifetime.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT?

Sexual assault is an act of physical, psychological and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act, which is inflicted on someone without consent. It can involve forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in any sexual acts, apart from penetration. Perpetrators can be acquaintances, family members, trusted individuals or strangers. Anyone can experience sexual violence or harassment including children, teens, adults and elders.

Sexual harassment is unwanted verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature. This can include flashing, obscene / threatening calls and online harassment. It can take place anywhere, including the workplace, schools, streets, public transport and social situations.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVALANCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- 721 offences were recorded by the Police in 2017/18.
- 1 in 3 offences were alcohol related in some way.
- 1 in 10 offences have a DVA flag.
- The hot spot was Woolwich Town Centre
- Almost half of victims are aged 19 and younger
- 13% of suspects were partner/ex-partner of the victim, 5% were family members, 28% otherwise known to the victim.
- 1 in 5 women aged over 16 in the UK have been a victim of sexual offences and 16% of victims were students.

STALKING

WHAT IS STALKING?

Stalking is repeated harassment causing fear, alarm or distress (i.e. on at least two occasions). It can include threatening phone calls, texts or letters, damaging property, watching and / or following a victim. Stalking can happen to anyone. It can be committed by a current partner, a former partner, a casual acquaintance or a stranger.

Stalking is a crime of power and control, as stalkers tend to obsess about their victim. Stalkers often see nothing wrong with their behaviour and do not believe they are threatening or intimidating. Stalkers can see their actions simply as attempts to get closer to their victim, help them or gain their love. They can refuse to believe the victim does not want a relationship.

The risk to a victim of stalking can often be minimised by victims, family/friends and by statutory agencies but the risk can be high and lead to violent assault or even murder.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVALANCE OF STALKING IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- 37 offences were recorded by the Police in 2017/18
- A third of offences had a DVA flag and 1 in 4 had a Hate flag
- 3 in 10 victims were aged 20-29, half of suspects were aged 40 to 49
- 32% of suspects were the ex-partner of the victim.
- Nationally, 1 in 5 women over the age of 16 have been a victim of stalking and 1 in 10 victims of stalking are female students.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

WHAT IS FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION?

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) describes all procedures involving the complete or partial removal or alteration of female external genitalia, for non-medical reasons.

The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously according to their community. It may be carried out when the girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during the first pregnancy. However, the majority of cases of FGM are thought to take place between the ages of 5 and 8. FGM is considered a form of child abuse.

FGM is a complex issue, with a variety of misguided explanations and motives. It can include a belief that it brings status and respect to the family, a sense of belonging to the community, upholds the family honour or preserves virginity/chastity and suitability for marriage. It can also include a belief that it helps women and girls to be clean and hygienic and aesthetically desirable and that it makes childbirth safer for the baby.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVALANCE OF FGM IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- There have only been 3 offences recorded by the Police since 2014/15.
- Over half of victims in the UK are aged between 5 and 9 and 77% of victims were born in East Africa, 79% of FGM was carried out in East Africa
- It is estimated that 4,668 women living in RBG have undergone FGM at some point in their lives and that 169 RBG resident women and girls underwent FGM in 2017.

PROSTITUTION

WHAT IS PROSTITUTION?

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 defines a prostitute as a person who has offered or given services of a sexual nature to another person in return for financial gain on one or more occasions.

Very few women become involved in prostitution through choice. Some may become involved as they feel they have no other options, for others there can be an element of coercion or violence. Prostitution is exploitative, regardless of the context, or whether the person is said to have consented to the prostitution.

Women become involved in prostitution for a variety of reasons, such as homelessness, child sexual abuse, mental ill health, trauma, previous sexual violence, drug or alcohol misuse or money pressures. These factors, which serve to lead or force women into prostitution should not be mistaken for the cause of prostitution itself, which is demand from men to buy sex.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVALANCE OF PROSTITUTION IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- There has only been 1 offence recorded by the Police since 2014/15.
- There are an estimated 72,800 sex workers in the UK, 44% of which work in London.

TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WHAT IS TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Human trafficking is now defined under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It includes the movement of a person from one place to another into conditions of exploitation, using deception, coercion, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone's vulnerability. Although trafficking often involves an international cross-border element, it is also possible to be a victim of trafficking within your own country. The primary concern in this strategy is with trafficking for sexual exploitation, which includes prostitution, child sexual exploitation, escort work and pornography.

Most women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation suffer from extreme violations of their human rights. Perpetrators who commit trafficking for sexual exploitation are generally motivated by financial gain and have no consideration for their victims.

Some women are abducted and sold, some are deceived into consenting by the promise of a better life or a better job, and some feel that entrusting themselves to traffickers is the only economically viable option. Some will enter the country willingly, in the belief that they will be found legitimate employment, only to become trapped in prostitution.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVALANCE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- There has only been 1 offence recorded by the Police since 2014/15.
- Nationally, 1 in 4 National Referral Mechanism referrals were for to adult sexual exploitation and 1 in 10 NRM referrals were for sexual exploitation of minors.

'HONOUR' BASED VIOLENCE

WHAT IS 'HONOUR' BASED VIOLENCE?

Violence claimed to have been committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of the family or community, in the context of their traditional or cultural beliefs.

These crimes might include: physical and sexual violence, forced marriage, forced repatriation (sending someone back to a country from which they originate without their consent), written or verbal threats or insults and holding someone against their will.

These crimes are often linked to family, including extended family, or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. For example, victims having a relationship outside of marriage (particularly with someone from a different culture or religion), refusing an arranged marriage, having ideological differences from their parents / westernisation , reporting/fleeing domestic abuse/ forced marriage and being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVELANCE OF 'HONOUR' BASED VIOLENCE IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- There have only been 16 offences recorded by the Police since 2014/15.
- Nationally 2 in 5 victims were aged 18-24 and 3 out of 5 of were British Pakistani/Pakistani.
- Estimates suggest 42 'honour' crimes occurred in RBG in 2016/17.

FORCED MARRIAGE

WHAT IS FORCED MARRIAGE?

A forced marriage is one that is carried out without the valid consent of both people, where duress is a factor.

Forced Marriage can happen in this country or abroad. When the marriage occurs abroad, the victim can be kept there or brought back to this country. The perpetrators can be one or many, including parents, siblings, grandparents, members of the victim's wider family and community members.

Some of the key motives are very similar to those for 'Honour' Based Violence. These can include behaviours or a sexual identity that is seen as 'shameful' to the family (e.g. being LGBTQ, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up, having an 'unsuitable' relationship. or behaving in a 'westernised manner'). It can also be used to strengthen family links, adhere to long-standing family commitments, for financial gain (ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family) and assisting with claims for UK residence and citizenship.

Forced marriages can also be arranged to ensure the care for an adult with a disability or other special needs. In these cases, both parties to the marriage are victims.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PREVELANCE OF FORCED MARRIAGE IN ROYAL GREENWICH?

- There have only been 6 offences recorded by the Police since 2014/15.
- Nationally, 1 in 4 victims were aged 18 to 21 and 43% of victims was British Pakistani/Pakistani.
- Estimates suggest 45 forced marriages occurred in RBG in 2016/17.

A GENDERED APPROACH

VAWG is the most widespread form of abuse worldwide, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimating that at least one in three women will directly experience at least one form of Violence Against Women and Girls in their lifetime. Violence Against Women and Girls is a form of gender-based violence, which the United Nations defines as 'violence directed against a person because of his or her gender and expectations of his or her role in a society or culture'. Gender-based violence and abuse applies to people of all genders, however, women and girls, regardless of their sexual orientation and background, are significantly and disproportionately affected in comparison to men. Due to this, the United Nations has developed a gender-based approach to tackling the offences considered under its definition of Violence Against Women and Girls.

There is no single cause for women and girls experiencing violence and abuse disproportionately to men. Violence Against Women and Girls stems from historical and continuing inequalities between men and women across all sectors of society. Women are less likely to progress in the workplace and statistically are paid less than men, they are subjected to strictly enforced gender roles resulting in them being the primary caregivers for children and taking on the majority of "unpaid work" such as running the household. They are often invisible in fields that tend to have influence, such as in government and parliamentary positions, in the criminal justice system and in roles that decide on the public agenda in terms of health, education and access to services. They are more likely to be discriminated against and given less choice and opportunities due to the fact that they are female. The message that women and girls are inferior to men is heavily reinforced by the media, education, culture, religion, the legal system and society in general, fuelling further inequalities between men and women and the societal belief that all aspects of VAWG are acceptable. It is important to recognise that whilst most men do not commit Violence Against Women and Girls offences, being born male gives a person automatic privilege and power over females in social, economic, and political spheres, purely because of their sex.

This Strategy recognises the diverse and differing experiences of women and girls depending on their ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, culture, religion, ability and economic status. We will therefore aim to provide services that consider all aspects of women and girls' identities and that meet the needs of the women and girls across our community. This includes our transgender community and any other person identifying as female.

Whilst this Strategy focuses on women and girls for the various reasons outlined above, it fully recognises that men and boys are also victims of domestic and sexual abuse and need support and access to services that cater to their needs in a holistic and empathetic way. A separate policy will be produced to ensure that services meet the needs of male victims.

A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH

We understand that when dealing with victims, (both adults and children), there must be a recognition that they are likely to be suffering from the effects of trauma.

Trauma is defined as an emotional wound, resulting from a shocking event or multiple and repeated life threatening and/or extremely frightening experiences that may cause lasting negative effects. This leads to adverse brain and psychological changes that damage self, relational and spiritual development and impair living, learning and working. Its effects can overwhelm a victim's capacity to cope and produce intense physical reactions. The violence, threats, control, abuse and neglect inflicted on a victim of Violence Against Women and Girls means they suffer repetitive or cumulative trauma.

Victims of trauma can present with emotional, cognitive and physical effects that may not be recognised, or could be seen in a negative way, particularly for professionals trying to provide support or help a victim through the criminal justice system.

The effect of trauma on children is of particular concern, as it can affect the long term development of the brain and have a significant negative impact on a child's future. Children brought up in a Domestic Abusive environment, who are not able to rely on an adult to respond to their needs, or experience their care giver as both 'the source of alarm and its only solution' are unlikely to develop the secure attachments needed for a child's positive brain development. Instead the insecure attachments that are developed can create a blueprint of relationships that mix up the need for love and connection with feelings of fear and unease. As an adult, these children may find that abusive, dangerous or dismissing relationships as predictable or normal and so the cycle continues.

Due to this understanding of the effect of trauma, we are committed to ensuring that all services that provide support or intervention for both victims, perpetrators and their children are trauma informed. Service practice will be improved to ensure that front line workers recognise possible trauma and considers this within any plan to provide support or intervention.

In Royal Greenwich, Children's Services we have taken a trauma informed approach which allows an understanding of the impact of trauma on child development, self-regulation, behaviour and the ability to engage to be developed. Emphasising physical, psychological and emotional safety it creates opportunities for children and young people affected by trauma to work towards empowerment and building self-worth and control.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE / SPOTTING THE SIGNS

All forms of Violence Against Women and Girls are under-reported to the police and other services and it is very difficult to get a full picture of the scale of the problem across the borough. We also understand that the level of risk posed to victims and their level of needs varies on an individual basis, as does the number of services that are in touch with them and their ability to engage fully with those services.

As a partnership, professionals working across our organisations are very likely to be aware of those victims who have a high level of need and who may be accessing a number of services e.g. mental health support, drug/alcohol treatment. However, there are some victims who are high risk but are currently only accessing universal services.

An example would be a young girl who is otherwise happy and healthy and not accessing services beyond attending school but is at risk of FGM. This can mean that the risk to the girl is higher as there is less opportunity for a professional to spot the warning signs (which may not be obvious if the girl herself does not know that something is going to happen to her) and refer her on for appropriate intervention or support.

Conversely, a victim of DVA with a high level of need as a result of substance misuse and who is accessing specialist services for these issues will be in touch with highly trained professionals who will readily recognise warning signs be able to refer her onwards for support, thus reducing her immediate level of risk.

We need to ensure that professionals working across the full range of services available to women and girls are aware of the risk factors and feel confident to able to offer support and/or refer on victims appropriately.

OUR PRIORITIES

In order to achieve our aim of tackling violence against women and girls, the Safer Greenwich Partnership will deliver on four priorities.

Ensuring that all professionals have the skills, knowledge and confidence to identify and support/refer victims appropriately.

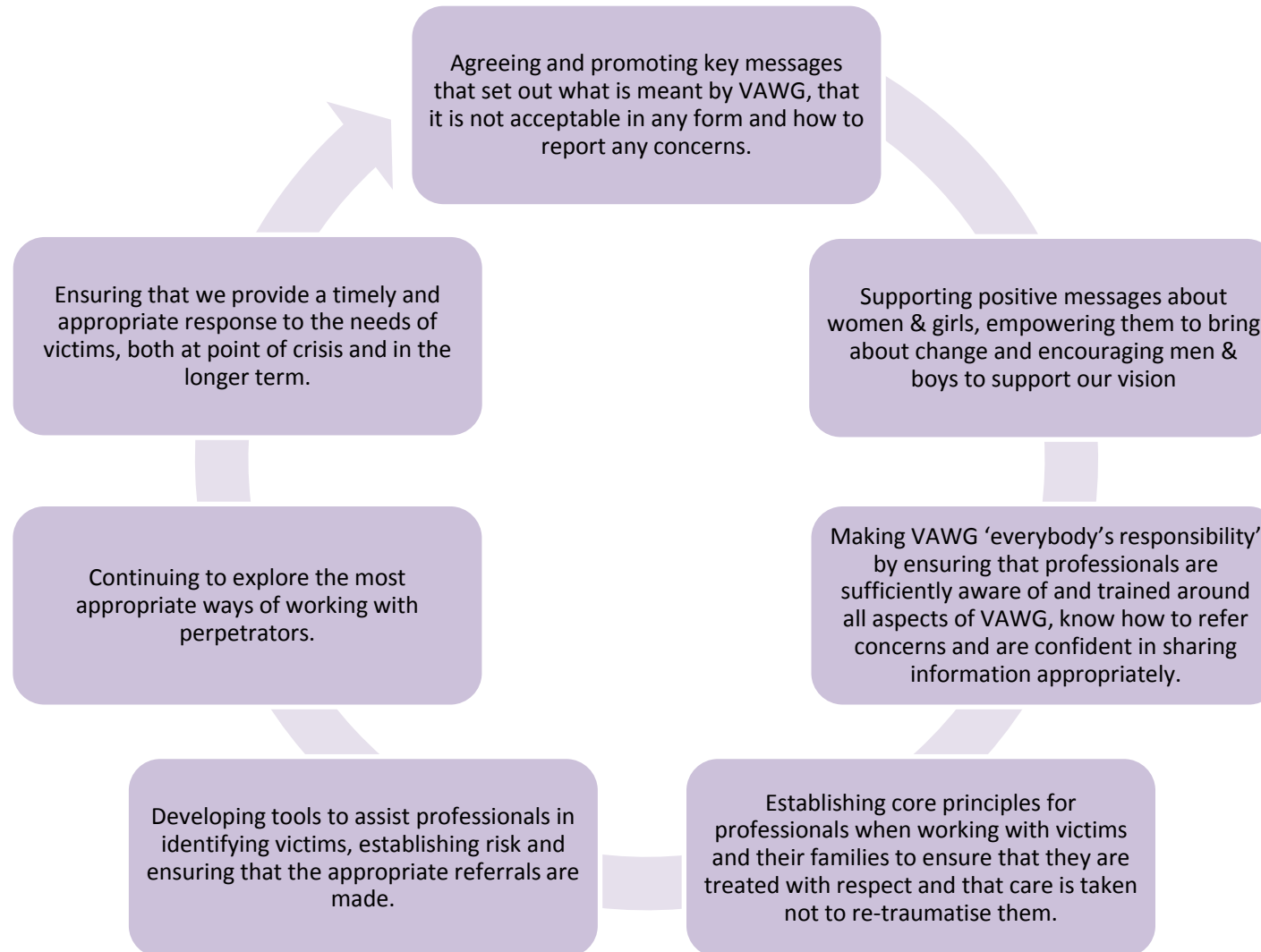
Protecting and supporting victims giving priority to those who are high risk whilst also helping those in need of early intervention by encouraging victims to report and promoting services available.

Raising awareness amongst the community, enabling people to understand the impact of violence against women and girls on families and communities and working together to challenge the culture of acceptance and repair the harm.

Pursuing perpetrators through enforcement action whilst intervening to change the behaviour of perpetrators where it is appropriate and there is genuine motivation for change.

WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY

We will agree annual partnership action plans to deliver this strategy, overseen by the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership, that will set out activity against the following areas:



MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Setting outcomes against our plans to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls can be difficult, as often our work can lead to an apparent increase in these offences as we work to encourage victims to come forward and have the confidence to report. However, we need to ensure that our plans are both aspirational as well as measurable.

We also need to ensure that when we are agreeing new initiatives to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls that we learn from best practice, ensure that they are evidence informed, based on local intelligence and national research.

We need to be confident that our plans meet the following criteria:

- Professionals work together in partnership.
- Risk to individuals and families is identified and appropriate referrals are made.
- Interventions make a difference to the lives of individuals and families.
- Referrals are dealt with appropriately.
- Initiatives have a positive impact across all communities within Royal Greenwich.
- All professionals within our organisations are aware of our plans and their role in delivering them.

Alongside our annual action plan, we will develop a basket of measures that will tell us whether or not we are achieving these aims and, ultimately, our aspiration to end Violence Against Women and Girls.



GOVERNANCE

No single agency can effectively tackle Violence Against Women and Girls on its own. Agencies must work together to ensure that their respective roles are clear and their joint response to Violence Against Women and Girls is well co-ordinated.

Several established partnership governance groups have a role in responding to Violence Against Women and Girls in Royal Greenwich. The key partnership governance groups are:

- Safer Greenwich Partnership (SGP)
- Greenwich Safeguarding Children's Board (GSCB)
- Health and Well-Being Board (HWBB)
- Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)

The SGP has established 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' as a priority within its Community Safety Strategy and therefore develops an annual action plan for delivery in this area. This strategy will therefore inform the SGP's action plan from 2019/20 onwards.

Reporting to the SGP is the VAWG Strategic Partnership Group, which is responsible for leading on aspects of work in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls as well as ensuring strategic coherence between the different partnerships and agencies involved. It also oversees the delivery of the annual VAWG action plan. The MARAC (high risk DVA case panel) and MARAC Steering Group also report into the VAWG Strategic Partnership Group.

The Children and Young People's Plan has 'Healthy Relationships, Tackling Violence and Exploitation' as one of its priorities with a commitment to see

- Fewer children demonstrating harmful sexual behaviour
- Fewer children needing to be brought into care due to domestic violence
- Fewer children are exploited sexually, through gangs, trafficking or through radicalisation
- More children have a good understanding of healthy relationships

COMMISSIONING & RESOURCES

Funding to respond to Violence Against Women and Girls comes from a number of different sources. Whilst some is core council funding, the ability to fund a number of services, or commission new ones depends on the council receiving grants or making bids to external funders such as MOPAC, Home Office, DCLG and London councils. Additionally, whilst the council is able to commission some support services through third-sector organisations, they too rely on bids to organisations such as the Big Lottery Fund to support their work.

As a result, the levels of funding for initiatives to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls and support victims can vary significantly from year to year, depending on government priorities. This can make the commissioning of sustainable service that meets the needs of all victims challenging and complex. It has also meant that the commissioning of services has been fragmented with different departments within the council receiving funding from different government bodies. Although the council has managed to ensure that the required services are in place, it has been hard to maintain oversight of the all commissioned services and their process and at times there has been a disconnection between services.

As most of the funding available is for the provision of Domestic Violence & Abuse services, the council has established a Domestic Violence Joint Commissioning Group, under the VAWG Strategic Partnership, to bring all the relevant departments and agencies together to ensure that there is a greater overview, planning and consistency around the commissioning of Domestic Violence & Abuse services. A review of the current commissioning picture was undertaken and a Domestic Violence & Abuse Joint Commissioning Strategy has been developed to oversee and monitor future commissioning processes. The commissioning priorities set out in this strategy are to deliver the following services:

Independent Domestic Violence Advocates
Advice and support
Children/young person's support
Counselling support

Independent Gender Violence Advocate
Refuge and floating support
Family support
Establishing an IRIS Programme

Helpline/Website
Peer support
Perpetrator support
Awareness raising campaigns

Across the partnership we also commission and run a range of services that are not specifically aimed at tackling Violence Against Women and Girls but are focussed on keeping people safe, for example parenting classes and substance misuse services and therefore contribute to tackling VAWG.

For Further Information Contact

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