

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Violence Against Women and Girls – Update	
REPORT OF Jon Rowney, Executive Director for Corporate Services	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee	DATE 15 July 2024
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. It sets out our ambition for everyone in Camden to have a place they call home and key to this is the challenge that “everyone is safe at home and safe in our communities”.</p> <p>The Council is committed to working with partners, community groups and people with lived experience to eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as part of meeting the challenge set out in We Make Camden.</p> <p>This report sets out the Council’s strategic priorities, approach and progress in relation to VAWG. It provides an update on the strategic commitment to improve women’s safety in the public realm and the range work taking place to advance this through community engagement, initiatives and a communication campaign.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report: No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report</p> <p>Contact Officer: Jamie Akinola Director of Public Safety 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG</p> <p>jamie.akinola@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That the Committee notes the updates provided in the report</p>	

Signed: Agreed by Jon Rowney, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Date: 4th July 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report sets out the Council's strategic approach for eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and demonstrates its commitment to making the borough a place where everyone is safe at home and in their community.
- 1.2. The report gives an update on progress across the following areas:
 - **Women's safety in the public realm**
 - **Community initiatives and public engagement**
 - **Communication campaign**
 - The **Estate Mission** and a public arts project on Camden's estates.
- 1.3. The report also provides a brief overview of the Local Police VAWG strategy and governance arrangement.

2. Background and strategic context

- 2.1. Domestic abuse is a high harm, high volume crime that remains largely hidden. It has a profoundly traumatic and disruptive impact on the lives of survivors, their families, and communities. Domestic abuse takes many forms and can happen to anyone.
- 2.2. Domestic abuse is a highly gendered and disproportionately affects women and people with minoritised gender-identities. The Crime Survey of England and Wales estimates that 1 in 5 women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Research from Stonewall has found that 80% of trans people in Scotland have experienced domestic abuse (Stonewall, 2018). The majority of domestic homicide victims are women. According to research by Refuge, on average, one woman is killed by an abusive partner or ex-partner every five days in England and Wales.
- 2.3. In March 2022, the Council published We Make Camden, the Council's community vision for the Borough. This sets out the key issues and challenges facing our residents and the work the Council is doing to make Camden a fairer and more equal place. 'Safety at Home and in the Community' is one of the ten missions and challenges within this change agenda, with eliminating Violence against Women and Girls a prioritised work area.
- 2.4. The Council is committed to eliminating domestic abuse in Camden and continues to invest in a dedicated, in-house Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate service, Camden Safety Net. In December 2021 the Council added £400,000 a year to its budgets to expand its work tackling Violence Against Women and Girls. Investment is being used across services to strengthen the Council's response to VAWG. Examples of where additional resources have been invested include:

- Housing: the council is undergoing the process for achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation which is the best-practice approach, endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, for how local authorities respond to domestic abuse. Additional resources have been invested for domestic abuse specialist as well as a DAHA co-ordinator role
 - Perpetrator response: creating a new team in the Council to work with perpetrators of domestic.
 - Specialist organisations: Hopscotch and Camden Law Centre have both been awarded grant funding.
 - Support for Council staff through a domestic abuse HR policy
- 2.5 In January 2023, Cabinet endorsed the Council's overall vision statement: "Camden is a place where Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is unacceptable and not tolerated. We want to reduce levels of VAWG in Camden, to broaden, enrich and increase the levels of support to survivors of VAWG and their families, and to deal with perpetrators". It also endorsed the six pillars underpinning our work:
1. **Raise awareness** and break the stigma across all parts of the community
 2. **Identify** everyone affected by VAWG at the earliest opportunity
 3. **Support** those affected by VAWG to access the help they need to be safe
 4. Seek to take action to **change and stop the behaviour of offenders** and the conditions that enable them to offend
 5. Ensuring that women and girls are **safe in the public realm**
 6. Taking a **Public Health approach** to tackling and eliminating VAWG
- 2.6 In June 2023, the Leader and the Council created Cabinet Adviser roles to provide evidence-based policy support and recommendations to the Council's Cabinet. Councillor Nasrine Djemai was appointed Cabinet Adviser on reducing violence and abuse for women and girls in the 2023-24 municipal year.
- 2.7 Councillor Djemai examined the work the Council is doing and what Camden can do to ensure women and girls have the knowledge and confidence to navigate services, access support and create their own projects around safety and how we as a community can take practical action together to provide safer estates, streets, and venues. Her work made recommendations under three key themes, education, addressing violence in the private realm, and addressing violence in the public realm. These were considered and supported by the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee in February 2024.
- 2.8 In June 2024, Councillor Callaghan, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, took a report to Cabinet which examines the recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser, considered the delivery

implications of these and made recommendations for how the Council can take them forward as part of its commitment to eliminating VAWG.

- 2.9 This report highlights the progress the Council is making with delivering the recommendations set out in the Cabinet report relating to women's safety in the public realm, community engagement and communication.

3. Women's safety in the public realm

- 3.1 Improving women's safety in public spaces and taking effective action to address gender-related crime is a key priority in the Camden's Community Safety Partnership Action Plan 2024-27. Outcomes for this include:

- Increased levels of enforcement action taken to address gender-related crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Reduced incidents of violence against women and girls in public places.
- Women and girls feeling safer in public spaces.
- Increased confidence of women to report safety concerns to the Police and partner agencies.
- Clear messaging across the borough that harassment and misogyny is not acceptable.

- 3.2 The Council is committed to working with residents and acting on their feedback. It recognises that residents hold deep knowledge of their communities and what needs to be done to make them safe. The Council has dedicated VAWG walkabouts which take place bi-monthly and focus on creating a safe space for women and girls to share their experiences of VAWG in the public realm.

- 3.3 The Council is working with local community groups and Camden Voices Against Abuse (CVAA) to identify areas where women do not feel safe, especially at night. The walkabouts have allowed community groups and CVAA to directly influence the areas where more lighting and CCTV were needed and have since been installed following feedback. Future locations for walkabouts are identified through a combination of VAWG data and insights from residents.

- 3.4 The Council will continue to have monthly walkabouts led by the Community Safety Officer for the respective ward: the views, experiences and concerns from women will continue to play an important role in influencing both the programme of public realm walkabouts and the activity delivered in response to local concerns. Neighbourhood, estate-based staff, and external agencies will also be invited to these walkabouts and to encourage resident participation.

- 3.5 Other work taking place to improve the safety of women in the public realm includes:

- Sharing women's safety guidance and materials with developers and private landowners to foster a collective commitment to safety.

- Improving coordination between Camden CCTV service and private CCTV networks to increase surveillance and safety measures.
- Developing systems to incorporate women's safety concerns into Camden's public realm street lighting strategies and existing Authority planning and regeneration processes, including the Future High Streets programme.
- Collaborating with contracted service providers to assess and develop equality, diversity, and inclusion policies, addressing misogynistic behaviour and promoting safer environments.

3.6 This year Council published its [Evening and Night-Time Strategy 2024-2029](#), which further promotes the objective for women's safety during the evening and at night. The business led 'Camden Business Against Crime' network (CBAC) provides scope for businesses to share intelligence and support the co-ordination of activity delivered in partnership with the Council and the Met Police. There is already a single point of contact with regard to information sharing between night-time economy venues to help keep women safe from customer who may pose a threat to them. The Council is currently benchmarking across London to assess the effectiveness of the existing Business Crime Reduction partnerships to support the development of a range of initiatives linked to improving the safety for women across the Camden public realm.

4. Community safety initiatives and public engagement

4.1 The Council is committed to actively engaging in community safety initiatives, examples of these include:

- 'Ask for Angela' campaign: the Council encourages local venues to participate in the initiative which allows residents to discreetly seek help from venue staff if they feel unsafe or threatened. By promoting and implementing this campaign, the council aims to create safer environments where patrons can seek assistance with confidence.
- Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) training: the Council promotes and facilitates WAVE training for venue staff which equips them with skills to identify signs of vulnerability and engage effectively with their customers who are in distress. By empowering venue staff through WAVE training, the Council enhances their ability to provide support and ensure the safety of the public.

4.2 Following the recommendation made by the Cabinet Advisor for the Council to hold yearly, themed community safety events on a borough-wide level, the first annual event is planned to take place this Autumn. The meetings will be a place to raise awareness about gender-based violence, showcase achievements, foster collaboration and promote community involvement in creating safer public spaces. The event will be attended by Council officers, the Police and stakeholder partners from the VCS. Community members and women's groups will be integral to the success of the event which will

provide a platform for diverse perspectives and active participation in addressing women's safety concerns effectively.

5. Communication campaign – sexual harassment in the public realm

- 5.1 The [Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Act 2023](#) came into effect at the start of 2024. The Act has increased the maximum penalty for offences from six months to two years imprisonment. It applies to any conduct that is intended to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to another person and does not require the conduct to be sexually motivated or for the purpose of sexual gratification. Women, particularly those aged 16 to 34 years old, are more likely to experience sex-based public harassment, such as receiving unwanted sexual comments from a stranger, being followed, or being insulted or shouted at by a stranger in public.
- 5.2 The Council has developed a new campaign to raise awareness about sexual harassment. By using first person quotes from diverse women, the campaign, 'in Camden, we call it out' highlights the gendered nature of sexual harassment and how women alter their behaviour when they are in the public realm, such as where they go and what they wear. It also builds awareness of behaviour that is unacceptable in Camden and a criminal offence. The campaign is a call to action for everyone to safely challenge and intervene when they witness sexual harassment, detailing how to report it.
- 5.3 The campaign was developed through workshops held with diverse groups of Camden residents, as well as Camden Voices Against Abuse (CVAA), a survivors group in Camden, and domestic abuse organisations, Solace and Hopscotch.
- 5.4 The campaign will launch in the summer and be promoted through bus shelters adverts, posters at leisure centres, libraries, and community centres, as well as evening and night-time venues. It will also be promoted through the Council's core channels such as the Camden magazine, social media and newsletters.

6. Estate Mission: public realm arts – 'light up our estates'

- 6.1 We Make Camden sets out the Estates and Neighbourhoods Mission that by 2030, "Camden's estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity". 'Art and Culture' is one of the themes of the Mission and under this banner, the Council will develop an innovative and exciting project to promote the safety of women through a public realm project called 'light up our estates', one of the Cabinet Advisor's recommendations agreed by Cabinet in June 2024.

6.2 The Council will explore opportunities for creative engagement around the topic of safety and ensure the project is community and place-based. The Council will use feedback gathered through the intensive tenant-participation engagement exercise conducted earlier in the year to identify estates where safety is highlighted as an issue. It will work with tenants and residents associations as well as local artists to pilot this innovative participatory and creative project.

7. Local Police VAWG Strategy

7.1 The Council is committed to working in partnership with the Police and to taking a co-ordinated community response to eliminating VAWG. The local Borough Command Unit (BCU) has recently produced its Delivery Plan for 2024-25 which sets out how it will deliver the strategic aspirations to:

- Protect women and girls in Central North BCU at home, in public and online.
- Work to the highest possible standards of care and investigation, working with partners to provide the best support to victims and prioritising resources and training to our officers and staff.
- Engage effectively with women and girls, partners and third sector organisations to hear views, inform our response and scrutinise operational delivery.
- Apply an offender centric approach, prosecuting perpetrators, identifying and utilising prevention opportunities.
- Increase policing presence in the public space, using data to target night-time violence and create more safe space initiatives

7.2 The Central North Met Police Borough Command Unit has recently signalled its intention to establish a Strategic Partnership Board to oversee the delivery this. Senior Council officers will form part of the strategic board in order to take forward a number of initiatives and priorities.

7.3 The Met Police BCU are due to report to the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee later this year with the Police annual state of the borough report and a separate piece on delivering the strategic objectives of trust and confidence, relentless pursuit of perpetrators and safer spaces. Further information relating to the Met Police Local VAWG strategy and delivery plan will be included within these policing focused reports.

8. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

8.1 In December 2021 the Council added £400,000 a year to its budgets to expand its work tackling Violence Against Women and Girls. The work described in this paper is either funded from this expanded budget or from existing service budgets elsewhere in the Council.

9. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

9.1 There are no comments from Legal.

10. Environmental Implications

10.1 The proposals have no environmental impacts.

REPORT ENDS