

7 February 2019		ITEM: 5
Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview Scrutiny Committee		
Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Report		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Daren Spring, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the areas of work associated with the Thurrock Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2017-2020. Whilst this Strategy is focused on the needs of women and girls as a deliberate response to the disproportionate impact of the crimes of domestic and sexual violence and abuse on them, it also fully recognises and responds to the fact that men can be victims of these crimes too. Similarly, it recognises that not all perpetrators are men.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is committed to meeting the needs of both women and men by tackling all forms of exploitation and abuse across Thurrock and by delivering protection and legal redress for all.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 Request that members champion the VAWG agenda and raise the profile of the services that are available to Thurrock residents.**
 - 1.2 Ensure that services are resourced adequately to help all victims of these crimes. In doing so Thurrock Council are addressing and preventing domestic and sexual violence and reducing demand on services.**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 National Legal Framework

2.1.1 The role of local authorities in the prevention of crime and disorder became a legal requirement under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. To meet this obligation, Community Safety Partnerships (as they are now known) were created, ensuring that the named 'responsible authorities' worked together on a statutory basis.

In the years that followed a range of additional legislation strengthened and amended these arrangements. In most recent times, significant legislation and national strategies were introduced which stressed the importance of partnership working to help protect those most affected by specific crimes and actions.

2.1.2 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has multiple and long lasting impact on victims as well as society as a whole. Around 2 women are killed every week in England and Wales by a current or former partner¹. It is estimated that 4.3 million suffer domestic abuse over their lifetime, 1.2 million women suffer domestic abuse each year and 3.4 million women are victims of sexual violence over their lifetime. Furthermore, violence against the person and sexual offences has the highest under-recording rates nationally, 33% and 26% respectively.²

2.1.3 The United Nations defines violence against women as: 'violence that is directed at a woman disproportionately' this includes a wide range of abusive behaviours including physical, sexual, financial, emotional and psychological abuse.³

2.1.4 VAWG is abuse that is targeted at women or girls because of their gender and it affects women and girls disproportionately but men can, and are, abused too. It is important that VAWG is not seen as a series of incidents or assaults which a woman or girl is expected to experience. VAWG has a very big impact on the physical safety, health and emotional well-being of individuals, as well as impacting on their families, carers, children and the community as a whole. Abuse can happen to anyone regardless of economic status, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexuality or age. It is also accepted that male on male and female on female abuse occurs. Whilst it is recognised that that the issues across the VAWG agenda have a disproportionate effect on women it is also recognised that boys and men are victims of this violence too.

2.1.5 Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004). A DHR is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence,

¹ Office for national statistics (2016) Compendium – Homicide (average taken over 10 years)

² 2018 Women's Budget Group Briefing: Violence Against Women and Girls

³ United Nations (1992) CEDAW General Recommendation No 19

abuse, or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Section 9 of the Act came into force on 13 April 2011 which requires Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to undertake a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets the criteria set. Within Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) it was agreed that this process would be centralised and coordinated by the SET Domestic Abuse team, commencing July 2017.

Since April 2011 there have been over 400 completed DHR's nationally. Thurrock has not had a DHR since the introduction of this legislation. Across Essex there have been 31 reviews, 5 occurred in 2017/18⁴. DHR legislation applies to all victims, but the national analysis of reviews in 2014/15 revealed that there is over double the number of female victims (107) compared to male (50), and the majority of women are killed by a partner or ex-partner.⁵

- 2.1.6 In 2016 the government updated their approach to tackling domestic violence in the national Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy (2016-2020). This document recognised the scale of the problem, and went further than the 'traditional' scope of domestic abuse to look at a host of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes that disproportionately affect women throughout life. Areas included in this strategy are: domestic violence and abuse; sexual violence; child sexual abuse; stalking; so-called "honour-based" violence – including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM); gang-related violence; and human trafficking. Key terms and definitions are detailed in appendix 1. The strategy is focused on crimes that disproportionately affect women, but it is unequivocally clear in its support for men should they also find themselves a victim of these offences and require help from enforcement and supportive services.

Government initially committed 80 million to support this strategy, and in the 2017 Spring Budget a further 20 million was agreed. Although this level of funding is encouraging, sustainable funding is what is required to have an impact on the cost of these crimes to society. In 2008 domestic abuse was estimated to cost the UK 15.7 billion. This cost included 3.9 billion for the criminal justice system, civil legal services, healthcare, social services, housing and refuge, more than 1.9 billion for the economy (time off work/injuries) over 9.9 billion in 'human and emotional' costs (actual and attempted murders, threatening behaviour and suffering and fear caused)⁶. In 2016, the government recognised the impact of domestic abuse and the relationship to suicides and in response produced updated DHR statutory guidance to require a review in suicides where domestic abuse or controlling coercive behaviour had been a concern.

- 2.1.7 The VAWG agenda is supported nationally and locally by a number of other significant pieces of legislation which protects all victims of these crimes.

⁴ SETDAB

⁵Home Office: Domestic homicide reviews: key findings from research

⁶ Sylvia Walby (2009) The cost of domestic violence up-date 2009

- The Equalities Act, 2010 which places a duty on all local authorities and other public bodies to eliminate unlawful victimisation, harassment and discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- The Care Act, 2014 which places adult safeguarding on a legal footing and directs the way in which it must be undertaken by local authorities.
- The Children Act, 1989 which places a responsibility on local authorities to safeguard children and, as amended by the Adoption and Children Act, 2002, adds to the definition of harm those children suffering impairment “from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.”

2.2 Local Response

2.2.1 Thurrock Community Safety Partnership recognised the importance of addressing the wider issues that were disproportionately affecting women within the community and made a decision that the appropriate response would be to have a local strategy to tackle the issues. The strategy was developed and subsequently refreshed to reflect the national themes and the National Statement of Expectations for Violence Against Women and Girls Services (December 2016).

2.2.2 The core objectives of the VAWG strategy and action plan 2017-2020 are:

- Putting the Victim at the centre of Service Delivery
- Pursuing perpetrators in order to keep victims safe
- Safeguarding Individuals at every point
- Partnership Working: Communities and professionals have a greater awareness of what an abusive relationship is and how to report it

2.2.3 The strategy also supports the outcomes of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB), the delivery of the Board’s “Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse, 2015-20” as well as the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner’s (PFCC) Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020 and Essex Police Crime Prevention Strategy 2018-2021.

2.2.4 Partnership working is vital to ensuring the successful delivery of the VAWG strategy. This will be achieved through collaborative working alongside some of our key stakeholders and contributors. These include the VAWG Strategy Group, local providers such as South Essex Rape Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC), Changing Pathways and many internal departments such as the Housing Safeguarding Team. Essex wide there are close working relationships with the PFCC and the SETDAB.

2.3 Funding

2.3.1 In 2018/19 Thurrock Council allocated £549,113.72⁷ towards the costs associated with commissioning VAWG services. Below is a summary of key contributions, financially and through service provision.

2.3.2 Thurrock is an active member of SETDAB. Whilst SETDAB have recently extended their remit to include some elements of VAWG, such as stalking, it is acknowledged that SETDAB does not look specifically at sexual violence and abuse and other crime types within the VAWG agenda.

Commissioner/Lead	Services that contribute towards VAWG
Thurrock Council Children's commissioned services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brighter Futures programme (provider 1-£89,000) Brighter Futures programme (provider 2-£45,000) DV perpetrator programme (£25,000) Strategy Operational Support contract (£20,000) Children and Young People Specialist Counselling Service (£62,000)
Children's Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Centre for FGM: Embedded case worker (£20,000)
Enforcement and Public Protection (Environment and Highways)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service (£17,000) VAWG coordinator total costs. (£35,500)
TCSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic Abuse Advisor (40,000) VAWG related training for staff and partners (£7,985)
Housing Housing Safeguarding Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist domestic abuse refuge services – contract value £155,509 per annum 1x Domestic abuse officer (£40,000) 1x Safeguarding Manager (£45,000) 2x floating support officers (coming in-house 2019) – previously funded at £99,000 per annum when outsourced Sanctuary Scheme: enabling victims to stay in their home.- budget value £50,000 per annum
PFCC-Commissioned Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Domestic Violence Advocates Independent Sexual Violence Advisers Victim Support Essex Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC)

⁷ Thurrock Council FOI response to information request for total figure spent on VAWG related services.

PFCC Grant funded Annual projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHR fund contribution (CSP's top sliced) • SETDAB partnership contribution
<p>SET DA Partnership</p> <p>Thurrock is a partner of this partnership and benefit from the commissioning of the majority of services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrators Pathway programme (£450,000 Home Office Transformation Fund) • MARAC/MARAT • Domestic Homicide Reviews • Drive Project (not in Thurrock) • Project MAYA (Department of Local Government and Communities funding)

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The crimes and actions committed under the VAWG umbrella continue to have an impact on the demand of council services. Of the 4,961 Violence Against Person offences reported to Essex Police for 12 month period ending November 2018, 37.3% were domestic related (1850 crimes). In addition 35.5 % of the 121 reported rapes were domestic related (43).⁸

Across children' social care, the impact is especially noted. The latest report by the Association of Directors of Children's Services found that '*Of all the parental factors, domestic abuse was cited as the most prevalent, and is a prominent factor in re-referral of children to children's social care services, making it difficult to achieve sustainable change for some children. Children subject to repeat referrals and child protection plans are often children living in households with these factors*'. In Thurrock, 40% of all referrals to children's social care are domestic abuse related.⁹

- 3.2 This demand has knock on consequence for Thurrock Housing Team in terms of refuge provision, allocation of housing and the difficulties in working with the introduction of new government policies. The roll out of Universal Credit, for example, means that couples are given a single payment to one individual, which limits a victim's ability to have financial autonomy and escape an abusive situation.
- 3.3 Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is attentive to these strains which demonstrate the need for the robust strategy and action plan. The topics highlighted will form some of the additional and amended actions within the refresh of the VAWG action plan in 2019.

3.4 Activity delivered in 2018/19

Some headline achievements across VAWG in Thurrock include:

⁸ Essex Police: District briefing note November 2018

⁹ Thurrock Children's Social Care

- Successful recruitment of a VAWG Coordinator to drive forward the delivery of the VAWG strategy.
- Continued working with the Thurrock Housing Safeguarding Team and Changing Pathways to provide support for all victims of domestic abuse, including standard and medium risk.
- Raising awareness of honour based abuse to professionals.
- Commissioning of a Domestic Abuse Advisor to work alongside Children's Social Care and Housing Teams enabling appropriate working with perpetrators.
- Continued roll out of J9 training, an initiative to raise awareness with professionals and the community and help victims of domestic abuse
- Development and delivery of a 'challenging myths, changing attitudes' programme of training, delivered by SERICC.
- Raising awareness of many VAWG crimes and issues, including stalking through the 16 days of action events.
- Support for project MAYA – a specific service for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to tackle so called honour based abuse.
- Working with Public Health to support schools in the forthcoming delivery of mandatory Relationship Sex Education.
- Launch of 'Ask for Angela' safety campaign in conjunction with Pub Watch to promote a code word for people who feel unsafe on a date.
- Continued support for our partner Changing Pathways in raising awareness of the specialist stalking service.
- The action plan will be refreshed in 2019 to ensure it is relevant and that actions are appropriate.

3.5 The VAWG Equality Impact Assessment has highlighted:

- There is a gender imbalance in relation to reported VAWG: 77% of victims were female, 24% of perpetrators are male.
- Sexual exploitation adversely impacts young people.
- Elder abuse is acknowledged as under reported and is being highlighted for action.
- The scope of the strategy doesn't cover gender reassignment.
- Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse.
- BAME communities are more at risk from Honour Based Abuse including FGM.
- None of the established religions recognise the abuse highlighted within this strategy.
- Whilst domestic abuse affects all communities, deprived wards have a higher reporting level.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is committed to meeting the needs of both women and men by tackling all forms of exploitation and abuse across Thurrock and by delivering preventative measures, protection, and legal redress for all.

4. Summary

- 4.1 VAWG remains widespread and has a devastating impact on victims and families. Thurrock Community Safety Partnership remains committed, through its members and partnership to develop and implement innovative programmes to tackle these crimes.
- 4.2 Our multi-agency groups, both locally and Essex wide are established to tackle operational and strategic issues that impact the VAWG agenda. Working collaboratively in partnership will strengthen processes to help victims of these crimes. Every victim matters.
- 4.3 The appointment of a VAWG coordinator demonstrates the Council commitment to raising awareness of VAWG and delivery of our strategy.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 This report is to provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to review the performance of the VAWG strategy and note the crucial contribution that Thurrock Council makes to it.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Not applicable

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 7.1 The VAWG is central to delivering Thurrock Council's priority of:

People - a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay. All elements of this priority are relevant to VAWG

Prosperity - a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations. In particular 'vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all.' which provides victims with access further opportunities to help them rebuild their lives.

- 7.2 The VAWG action plan links closely to and supports delivery Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) Joint Commissioning Strategy, the PFCC Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020 and Essex Police Crime Prevention Strategy 2018-2021.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising from this report

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
**Assistant Director of Law & Governance
& Monitoring Officer**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

As outlined in the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and 3.3 and which are reflected and recognised with the action plan

Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder

This report will help the Council and its Partners ensure that they are delivering on its commitments to Section 17.

9 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Police and Crime Plan
www.essex.pcc.police.uk/priorities-for-essex/police-and-crime-plan/
- Southend, Essex and Thurrock Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse 2015-20
<https://setdab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Joint-Commissioning-Strategy-for-Domestic-Abuse-201516.pdf>
- Crime-recording: making the victim count

<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count/>

- Domestic homicide reviews: key findings from research
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-homicide-review-lessons-learned>
- 2018 Women's Budget Group Briefing: Violence Against Women and Girls
<https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/2018-wbg-briefing-violence-against-women-and-girls/>
- ADCS Safeguarding Pressures: Phase 6, November 2018
<http://adcs.org.uk/safeguarding/article/safeguarding-pressures-phase-6>
- Office for national statistics (2016) Compendium – Homicide (average taken over 10 years) www.ons.gov.uk
- United Nations (1992) CEDAW General Recommendation No 19
<http://bit.ly/1ple2Cz>
- Sylvia Walby (2009) The cost of domestic violence up-date 2009
<http://bit.ly/2m5VXGM>

10 Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 - Thurrock Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy- including VAWG terminology and definitions at appendix 3

www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/strategy-vawg-2017-v02.pdf

Appendix 2 - Thurrock Housing Service Safeguarding Report 2015/18,

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