

Scrutiny Review – Prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls

A Review by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 2025/26	
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1. Chair's Foreword

Our review sets a clear, practical plan to support the good partnership work already taking place to prevent VAWG, strengthen support for survivors and build trust. We hope our recommendations provide a focus on areas not yet focused on and support the work on the updated council strategy for preventing violence against Women and Girls. We have put forward actions for improving signposting for those bereaved by VAWG-related homicide or suicide and to have closer alignment with the Suicide Prevention Strategy. We want Family Hub Navigators to be fully VAWG-trained and for young people will co-design the new strategy.

We also recommend that Schools adopt a whole-school approach, expand POW, and engage parents from diverse backgrounds.

We further include some tangible actions that can be taken forward such as mandating frontline training, promoting community-wide awareness (including faith settings), work with Police to boost reporting confidence and updates, encouraging DAHA accreditation.

I want to thank all officers, partners, stakeholders and committee members that have given their time to support this far-reaching review. I would also like to thank Cllrs Cathy Brennan, Emine Ibrahim and Mary Mason, who joined the Committee's evidence sessions, for their valuable contributions to the Review.

Cllr Matt White, Chair – Overview & Scrutiny Committee

2. Recommendations

Domestic Abuse Awareness training	
1	The Committee welcomed the introduction of mandatory Domestic Abuse Awareness training for all Council staff and suggested that the uptake and impact of this training should be monitored, including an assessment of the number of VAWG interventions and referrals made by staff over time. The Committee also recommended that mandatory specialist training should be provided for members of staff who deliver services directly to residents.
2	The Committee recommended that Domestic Abuse Awareness training should also be made available to the wider community and voluntary sector in Haringey so that more people in a position to intervene are trained to recognise the signs of domestic violence and emotional abuse.
End of Project reports	
3	Commenting on general issues associated with a local strategic approach, the Committee recommended that, given the short-term nature of some government funded projects, the VAWG team should assemble end of project reports with a brief introduction on the learnings and the future viability of projects within the lifetime of the upcoming local strategy.
Support for people affected by VAWG-related homicide or suicide	
4	That the Council should signpost to specialist support services, advice and guidance which could be of help to people who have been bereaved by a VAWG-related homicide or suicide.
5	That the local VAWG Strategy should be linked to the local Suicide Prevention Strategy and its strategic objective of supporting people bereaved by suicide.
Schools	
6	Educational programmes such as Protect Our Women (POW) should be delivered in all Haringey secondary schools as there is only partial coverage currently.
7	That the development of a whole-school approach on VAWG in Haringey schools should be a stated objective of the Council, that a detailed implementation plan should be established within 12 months and that funding should be sought to develop a pilot programme.
Family Hubs	
8	That all Family Hub Navigators are fully VAWG trained so that they can identify individuals and families affected by VAWG and that advice, guidance and referrals to support services is provided within the Family Hubs.
Children & Young People	
9	For the consultation on the new VAWG Strategy for Haringey to proactively involve young people, across different communities and areas of the Borough.
10	For the new VAWG Strategy for Haringey to include a strong emphasis on the needs of children and young people who are affected by VAWG, including online harms.

11	To establish long-term co-design structures to include children and young people in the development of VAWG policies in Haringey.
Housing	
12	That the Council should promote Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation to other housing providers in Haringey.
MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)	
13	That the Cabinet Member should emphasise to all multi-agency partners the Council's strong support for the MARAC coordination of action plans and the importance of ensuring that this process operates effectively when brought in-house from April 2026.
Police	
14	That advice for women and girls on the options available to them to report concerns and/or specific incidences of VAWG crime to the Police should be included in the new local VAWG strategy, through local VAWG-related services and wider communications on VAWG issues.
Supreme Court Ruling & the Equality Act	
15	That a review be carried out of the council's VAWG policy, and all services and risk assessments, to ensure they reflect the definition of "sex" in the Equality Act as established by the Supreme Court ruling in 'For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers'.
16	To ensure that specialist provision is available in Haringey for people who fall outside of the legal definition.

3. Context to the Review

3.1 A reduction in Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is included as a specific outcome area in the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26 under the Safer Haringey theme.¹ The specific activities listed are:

- Continue to develop and pilot work on a Safer Parks for Women and Girls Network.
- Increase the number of safe havens in local businesses for women to use at night.
- Develop a new training offer to raise awareness and support professionals and residents in accessing the diverse VAWG services available, ensuring victims are signposted to the correct support in a timely manner, supporting prevention, and promoting earlier intervention.
- Coordinate and introduce a VAWG residents association, and a training offer for residents.
- Create a VAWG and housing pathway that supports all teams in both internal housing and external domestic abuse services.
- Hearthstone to collaborate with Haringey Repairs Team to develop an improved service offer and process for the Sanctuary scheme.
- Continue to improve our housing response to domestic abuse by working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA) within Housing Demand and Placemaking and Housing.

3.2 The Council's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy for 2016-2026 sets out the Council's vision to make Haringey one of the safest boroughs in London for women and girls in which no form of abuse is tolerated.

3.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee held a 'Scrutiny Café' community consultation event in September 2022, to help identify priorities for the Committee's 2022-24 work programme. The prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) was identified as a high priority. The feedback received was that there needed to be more funding and staff for VAWG services, that victims could experience deep-rooted trauma but often experienced difficulties in accessing support and that VAWG was an issue that particularly affected young people and so more support was needed in schools.

3.4 Based on information that had been received through previous scrutiny sessions, the feedback from the Scrutiny Café consultation event and further discussions with officers from the Public Health team, the Committee's main interest focused on two key areas of VAWG policy: Schools-based VAWG prevention and Community-based VAWG prevention.

3.5 **Schools-based VAWG prevention:** "Developing a Coordinated Community Response (CCR)" and "Prevention" were two of the four key priorities of the Council's VAWG Strategy (2016-2026) and involved all agencies working together in partnership. The Committee was informed that part of the Council's CCR and Prevention work had involved the

¹ p.41, Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26 https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/haringey_corporate_delivery_plan_2024-2026.pdf

commissioning of a small pilot project involving a worker going into schools in the Borough to speak to pupils about healthy relationships. There had been discussion at previous scrutiny sessions about the need to tackle attitudes and behaviour in boys at an early age to reduce the incidences of VAWG in the future. The Committee therefore determined to examine the local approach to schools-based engagement on VAWG.

3.6 **Community-based VAWG prevention:** Another part of the Council's CCR had involved the development of a Community Engagement model with some specific areas of working with local partners in the community and voluntary sector including:

- Identifying and training Safe Spaces and Community Initiatives
- Recruiting and training VAWG Community Champions
- Co-producing an effective Communications Campaign with partners

3.7 The Committee had also heard through the Scrutiny Café consultation event that some women and girls in Haringey who were affected by VAWG did not always find it easy to access support. The Committee therefore determined to examine the local approach to community-based engagement on VAWG.

4. Terms of reference & Committee membership

Terms of Reference

4.1 The terms of reference for the Scrutiny Review were to review the current arrangements for specific areas of VAWG prevention in Haringey under the remit of the Council's VAWG Strategy 2016-26 including:

- the Council's approach to schools-based engagement on VAWG, including the progress of recent pilot projects, the likely future resource requirements, national policy/guidance and approaches to school-based engagement elsewhere in London and the UK that Haringey could potentially learn from.
- the Council's approach to community engagement on VAWG, including the progress of recent work in this area, the likely future resource requirements, national policy/guidance and approaches to community engagement elsewhere in London and the UK that Haringey could potentially learn from.

Committee Membership

4.2 The terms of reference for the Scrutiny Review were approved by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in October 2022 and evidence sessions were held with a range of witnesses between December 2022 and March 2024. Following a delay to the progress of the Review, updates were received by Council officers and recommendations were proposed by the Committee in 2025.

4.3 The membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that approved the terms of reference for the Review and participated in the earlier evidence sessions was:

Councillors: Cllr John Bevan (Chair), Cllr Pippa Connor, Cllr Makbule Gunes, Cllr Michelle Simmons-Safo & Cllr Matt White.

- 4.4 The membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that completed the evidence sessions for the Review was:
- Councillors: Cllr Matt White (Chair), Cllr Pippa Connor, Cllr Makbule Gunes, Cllr Anna Lawton & Adam Small.
- 4.5 The Committee was also assisted in the evidence sessions and deliberations on recommendations by other Councillors with an interest and expertise in the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls. These were Cllr Cathy Brennan, Cllr Emine Ibrahim and Cllr Mary Mason.

5. Background to Violence Against Women and Girls in England

Definition of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- 5.1 The United Nations defines violence against women and girls as *“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”*²
- 5.2 The Committee was informed by the Consultant in Public Health at the Council that ‘Violence Against Women and Girls’ was an umbrella term that referred to acts of violence or abuse that disproportionately affected women and girls, noting that the crimes and behaviours covered by this term were varied. The Council’s VAWG Strategy, published in 2016, states that VAWG includes violence that is targeted at women or girls because of their gender or affects women and girls disproportionately. Examples of VAWG given include:
- Sexual violence, abuse and exploitation
 - Sexual harassment and bullying
 - Stalking
 - Trafficking
 - Domestic violence and abuse
 - Coercive and controlling behaviour
 - Female genital mutilation (FGM)
 - Forced marriage
 - Crimes committed in the name of ‘honour’ (so-called ‘honour’ based violence)
- 5.3 The UK Government’s national VAWG Strategy states that violence against women and girls covers *“a wide range of crime types and behaviours that are disproportionately experienced by women and perpetrated by men.”*³ These include:
- Domestic abuse;
 - Stalking;
 - Sexual violence, including rape and other sexual offences;
 - Sexual harassment;

² World Health Organization factsheet <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

³ p.15, Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls, UK Government (Dec 2025)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697c7e14043a4ade0f7b503f/31.260_VAWG_01_Strategy_Slip_FINAL_v5_290126_WEB.pdf

- ‘Honour’-based abuse (HBA), including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM);
- Online and technology-facilitated abuse, including ‘cyberflashing’ and non-consensual intimate image abuse;
- Fatal VAWG, including domestic homicides, femicides, and suicides and sudden or unexplained deaths which occur in the context of abuse;
- Sexual exploitation, including in relation to prostitution and human trafficking;
- Spiking

Extent of VAWG

- 5.4 The World Health Organization estimates that about 30% of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. It states that most of this violence is intimate partner violence and that about 27% of women worldwide have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.⁴
- 5.5 In February 2025, the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) published a Snapshot Report for 2024/25, on VAWG in the UK which included the following statistics from a range of sources⁵:
- A total of 69,958 rape offences were registered in England and Wales in the year ending September 2024, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
 - The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 4.5% of people aged 16 years or over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending September 2024. In the same period there were 827,609 domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the police in England and Wales.
 - At least 80 women in the UK were killed in 2024, in circumstances where a man or men were the principal suspect.
 - There were 2,755 so-called ‘honour-based’ abuse-related offences recorded by Police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2024. This included 201 forced marriage offences and 111 female genital mutilation (FGM) offences.
 - Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed that almost a quarter of young women aged 16-24 had experienced sexual harassment in the past year.
- 5.6 The UK Government’s national VAWG Strategy states that domestic abuse, stalking and sexual assault affected 5.1 million victims in the year ending March 2025, adding that this did not include victims of other VAWG crimes and behaviours, such as sexual harassment, online and technology-facilitated abuse, and teenage relationship abuse.
- 5.7 Haringey Borough recorded the 10th highest number of Domestic Abuse Offences in London (from 32 Boroughs) with 3,059 in the year to Jan 2026 which equated to 10.8 per 1,000 of the population. In terms of domestic violence with injury, Haringey Borough also recorded

⁴ World Health Organization factsheet <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

⁵ VAWG snapshot – Fifth edition (Feb 2024) https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/EWAC_Snapshot_2024_web.pdf

the 10th highest figures in London with 662 incidents in the year to Jan 2026.⁶ It should be noted that the Crime Survey of England and Wales has found that fewer than 20% of domestic abuse victims and survivors report to the police and so the true number of offences will be considerably higher.⁷

Strategic approach to tackling VAWG

- 5.8 The World Health Organization states that “*preventing and responding to violence against women requires a multi-sectoral approach*”⁸, and that specific actions that can be taken by the health sector are to:
1. Advocate to make violence against women unacceptable and for such violence to be addressed as a public health problem.
 2. Provide comprehensive services, sensitize and train health care providers in responding to the needs of survivors holistically and empathetically.
 3. Prevent recurrence of violence through early identification of women and children who are experiencing violence and providing appropriate referral and support.
 4. Promote egalitarian gender norms as part of life skills and comprehensive sexuality education curricula taught to young people.
 5. Generate evidence on what works and on the magnitude of the problem by carrying out population-based surveys or including violence against women in population-based demographic and health surveys.
- 5.9 **National strategy** - The UK Government’s most recent national VAWG strategy was published in December 2025⁹. The implementation of the Strategy involves a cross-government VAWG Ministerial Group which meets quarterly to review progress, drive next steps and report back to the Prime Minister.
- 5.10 The three objectives of the national Strategy are:
- **Prevention and Early Intervention** – This section includes action to:
 - Supporting schools to challenge misogyny.
 - Safeguarding young people by making the UK one of the hardest places for children to access harmful content and misogynistic influences online.
 - Building a positive, aspirational agenda for men and boys.
 - **Relentless Pursuit of Perpetrators** – This section includes action to:
 - Embed domestic abuse specialists into emergency response.
 - Ensure that there are dedicated teams to respond to rape and sexual offences.
 - Increase the use of enforcement technologies.
 - Driving cultural change so that VAWG is treated on an equal footing with other serious crimes.
 - **Support** – This section includes action to support victims/survivors by:

⁶ Crime data: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/metropolitan.police.service/viz/MonthlyCrimeDataNewCats/Coversheet>

⁷ p.12, *Shifting the Scales* report, Domestic Abuse Commissioner (Jan 2025) https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/dac_cjs-report_main_FINAL-DIGITAL.pdf

⁸ World Health Organization factsheet <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

⁹ *Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy*, December 2025
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-from-violence-and-abuse-a-cross-government-strategy>

- Delivering a whole-of-government approach to improve access to housing, health and justice.
 - Reform the court system based on a trauma-informed approach to improve and enhance access to justice.
 - Reform the commissioning of services so that provision is fit for purpose and based on what victims and survivors need.
- 5.11 The national VAWG strategy is also supported by an Action Plan¹⁰ which includes greater detail on the actions above and how they will be implemented and a summary of evidence.¹¹
- 5.12 **Regional strategy** - The Mayor of London has a VAWG Strategy for 2022-2025¹² and this is expected to be refreshed soon. The Strategy aims to place a strong emphasis on partnership working, prevention and education across a wide range of services in London. The four priority areas for action in the Strategy are:
- Preventing and reducing VAWG
 - Supporting all victims and survivors
 - Holding perpetrators to account
 - Building trust and confidence
- 5.13 **Local strategy** - Since the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, public health teams have been based within upper-tier local authorities¹³. Haringey Council's public health team is led by the Director for Public Health and is based within the Department for Adults, Health and Communities. The public health team includes a Strategic Lead for VAWG who coordinates the multi-agency partnership response to VAWG. The Council also has a 10-year VAWG Strategy for 2016-2026¹⁴.
- 5.14 The Committee was informed in 2025 by the Council's VAWG team that the process of developing a new Haringey VAWG strategy from 2026 onwards was underway. The publication of a draft local strategy for consultation was anticipated in early 2026 with publication of a final version later in the year. The specific timescales would be influenced by the publication of the national and London VAWG strategies as the local strategy would need to be informed by these. The national strategy was subsequently published in December 2025, while the London strategy was not yet available at the time of the publication of this report.

¹⁰ VAWG Strategy Action Plan, UK Government (December 2025) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697c7e21aacd0dc9777b502a/31.260_VAWG_02_Action_Plan_Slip_FINAL_v3_WEB_290126.pdf

¹¹ VAWG summary of evidence, UK Government (December 2025) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943f8a5143d960161547e74/31.260_VAWG_03_Evidence_Review_FINAL_181225_WEB.pdf

¹² Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/mopac-news-and-publications/mopac-publications/mayors-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-2022-25>

¹³ The term "upper-tier" refers to unitary authorities or County Councils. Haringey Council, as with all London Boroughs, is a unitary authority and therefore classed as upper-tier.

¹⁴ Haringey Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2026 https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/vawg_strategy.pdf

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

5.15 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was introduced by the UK Government with the following objectives¹⁵:

- Promote awareness;
- Protect and support victims;
- Hold perpetrators to account;
- Transform the justice response;
- Improve performance (of the response to domestic abuse).

5.16 Sections 1 to 3 of the Act provide a new statutory definition of domestic abuse in two parts. The first part defines the relationship between the abuser and the abused as each being aged 16 or over and “personally connected” to each other. The term “personally connected” is set out in detail in the Act and includes two people who are (or have been) married, in a civil partnership, intimate personal relationship or are relatives. The second part defines the abusive behaviour in five broad categories:

- Physical or sexual abuse;
- Violent or threatening behaviour;
- Controlling or coercive behaviour;
- Economic abuse;
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

5.17 The Act also specifies that children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse (and is related to or under parental responsibility of the perpetrator and/or victim) are also to be recognised as victims. This is intended to recognise the impact that domestic abuse can have on children who experience its effects in their own home and also to ensure that locally commissioned services consider and address the needs of children affected by domestic abuse¹⁶. The statutory guidance for the Act cites estimates that 7% of children aged 10-15 years old were living in households where an adult reported experiencing abuse within the previous year and that, in 41% of cases where adults reported experiencing partner abuse, there was at least one child living in the household¹⁷.

5.18 Section 57 of the Act places a duty on upper-tier local authorities to provide safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse in their area and to ensure that their support needs are met.¹⁸ The statutory guidance to the Act makes clear that victims who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse have priority need for accommodation and that local authorities have a duty to secure suitable accommodation for them. The Council’s approach to housing-related support is set out in Section 9 of this report.

¹⁵ Page 16, Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Statutory guidance (Home Office, July 2022) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

¹⁶ Statutory definition of domestic abuse factsheet (UK Government, July 2022) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/statutory-definition-of-domestic-abuse-factsheet>

¹⁷ Paragraph 129, Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Statutory guidance (Home Office, July 2022)

¹⁸ Page 100-102, Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Statutory guidance (Home Office, July 2022) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

- 5.19 In relation to the role of schools, the statutory guidance for the Act notes that school staff are particularly important as they are in a unique position to identify concerns early, provide help for children and prevent concerns from escalating. It also emphasises the need for all staff to receive regularly updated safeguarding training, including identification of domestic abuse, and that every school should have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to support other staff in carrying out their safeguarding duties and to liaise with other agencies.¹⁹

6. Background to Haringey Council's Strategic Approach to VAWG

Haringey Council – Strategic Approach

- 6.1 The Council's VAWG Strategy (2016-2026) states that violence against women and girls includes violence that is targeted at women or girls because of their gender or affects women and girls disproportionately. Examples of VAWG given include:
- Sexual violence, abuse and exploitation;
 - Sexual harassment and bullying;
 - Stalking;
 - Trafficking;
 - Domestic violence and abuse;
 - Coercive and controlling behaviour;
 - Female genital mutilation;
 - Forced marriage;
 - Crimes committed in the name of 'honour' (so-called 'honour' based violence).
- 6.2 The Council's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy for 2016-2026 sets out four key priorities:
- Developing a Coordinated Community Response;
 - Prevention;
 - Support for victims/survivors;
 - Holding perpetrators accountable.
- 6.3 The governance structure for the Strategy comprised of a VAWG Strategic Board which included partners from health and the voluntary/community sector. Reporting into the Board was a VAWG Operational Group and a VAWG Commissioning Group along with the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings. The Strategic Board provided updates to the Community Safety Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. There were also coordinated VAWG and MARAC meetings with other Boroughs across London to share information and ideas.
- 6.4 In evidence to the Committee, Public Health officers set out key points relating to each of the four areas of the Council's strategic approach to tackling VAWG in Haringey:
- 1) Developing a Coordinated Community Response (CCR)**

¹⁹ Page 82-84, Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Statutory guidance (Home Office, July 2022)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

- 100+ VAWG Community Champions and 30 Safe Spaces e.g. schools, job centres, children's centres and libraries.
- Community based work to dispel myths through a range of workshops.
- Links with different organisation and forums including multifaith forum.

2) Prevention

- Awareness raising campaigns including 16 days of action and international women's day.
- 172 professionals and frontline workers/volunteers have been trained in how to identify and respond to domestic abuse in the context of Covid-19.
- 110 young people have engaged in a VAWG educational programme.
- Developing an approach for young people to make disclosures safely.
- Co-production of videos for young people.

3) Support for victims/survivors

- Developed a directory of VAWG services for professionals.
- Commissioned services include:
 - a) Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVA);
 - b) IRIS support service for GP practice staff to support DA patients;
 - c) Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to discuss all high risk cases.

4) Holding perpetrators accountable

- Different models for perpetrator programmes are being explored to address behaviour and ultimately reduce further domestic abuse incidences.

The Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

- 6.5 The Coordinated Community Response (CCR) is a strand of the Strategy where agencies are brought together to tackle VAWG, including by supporting victims/survivors and holding perpetrators to account. The CCR model was piloted with 30 partners from April 2021 to March 2022. The primary objectives of the CCR are to:
- Increase the confidence and ability of professionals and volunteers working directly with the community to identify domestic abuse.
 - Link women and girls experiencing abuse to specialist VAWG services to increase their chances of being safe from abuse.
 - Challenge the root causes of VAWG which will ultimately help prevent further VAWG from occurring.
- 6.6 The immediate circle around the victim is the family, friends, community, children, colleagues, peers and neighbours who can help to identify abuse and help the victim to access support. The next layer of the CCR is then the key agencies who can support a survivor and hold a perpetrator to account. The outer circle represents the multi-agency arrangements such as the MARAC.
- 6.7 The CCR model included identifying and training Safe Spaces and recruiting and training volunteer VAWG Community Champions. The Safe Spaces are based in community locations such as children's centres, food banks, libraries and places of worship where victims can access support without arousing suspicion from the perpetrator. The Safe Spaces provide a

quiet and private space where victims can make disclosures and can be signposted to services. For a venue to qualify as a Safe Space, at least two members of staff/volunteers must attend the VAWG Community Champions Training. This training enables people to identify signs of domestic abuse, respond to disclosures, connect survivors with support services and dispel myths around VAWG. It also includes introductory bystander training which outlines the steps that community members can take to intervene if they witness VAWG.

- 6.8 A total of 32 Safe Spaces were achieved (against an original target of 27) and around 150 Community Champions were trained at Level 1, with around 130 trained at Levels 1 & 2 (against an original target of 45). Level 1 training involves increasing confidence and ability to identify domestic abuse and Level 2 training involves challenging the root causes of VAWG. The pilot was described as “very successful at engaging with a wide range of community partners, highlighting a real appetite amongst our community services and members to better understand, respond to and prevent VAWG.”
- 6.9 The Safe Spaces scheme was relaunched in Spring 2024 with free training, ongoing support and promotional materials.
- 6.10 Co-production was described as an integral part of an effective CCR, with the pilot aimed at ensuring that the model was designed, developed and adapted in partnership with the community, reflecting the needs of the community. The charity, AVA (Against Violence & Abuse), would also be assisting with some co-production and engagement work with a local group of survivors.

VAWG services in Haringey

- 6.11 There were now a range of different services in Haringey to support victims of VAWG including:
- Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service to support high risk victim advisors, including with legal issues and housing safety plans. (Provided by Nia and funded by Public Health)
 - Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) workers to support staff in GP practices to help victims at medium risk to access relevant support. (Provided by Nia and funded by Public Health)
 - A specialist ‘KIDVA’ – domestic abuse advocacy for under-16s. (Provided by Nia and funded by Public Health). The pathways for support would involve Children’s Services being linked in.
 - A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) held every three weeks (Chaired by the Police and supported by Standing Together)
 - A ‘Protect Our Women’ schools prevention programme that had been running for the past 7-8 years (run by Solace Women’s Aid)
 - A BAME IDVA service (provided by Imece). Feedback from recent engagement sessions with BAME communities had been that there was not adequate specialised support for BAME women and so funding was subsequently secured for this service. This will be in place for a couple of years as a pilot programme.

- A specialist LGBTQ+ IDVA (provided by Galop)
- Floating support and refuge provision (provided by Solace – with a small amount of refuge space also provided by the London Black Women’s Project)
- The DVIP (Domestic Violence Intervention Project) provided 3-hour training sessions for professionals including police and social workers, to enhance their understanding about responding to domestic abuse and engaging with perpetrators.

6.12 The Committee was informed that current contracts for VAWG services were due to end in 2025. Consultation and engagement activities had been carried out in summer/autumn 2023 with a view to going out to tender in summer 2024. Key strategic priorities for future commissioning were:

- Specialist support – meeting the needs of diverse communities in Haringey.
- Strengthening partnership between key agencies – to avoid working in silos and to streamline the process for victims.
- Community response – utilising the expertise and assets of Haringey communities.
- Education and early intervention.
- Reducing harm from perpetrators – including by working with men and boys as part of the solution.
- Training – to ensure that communities and professionals are aware of the services available and how to access them.
- Co-production – listening to residents, service providers and victims.

6.13 In December 2025, a set of contracts for the provision of VAWG services in Haringey from April 2026 to March 2032 were approved by the Cabinet²⁰. Proposed services included:

- Generalist Domestic Abuse Advocacy and Support
- Minoritised women’s Domestic Abuse Advocacy and Support
- Ethnically Minoritised women’s Refuge Accommodation
- LGBTQ+ IDVA service
- Generalist Refuge Accommodation
- Domestic & Gender-Based Abuse Prevention and Support for Children and Young People

6.14 VAWG team officers were asked about staff training on VAWG within the Council. The Committee was informed that free, half-day online training was available for all staff on:

- The application of the ‘DASH’ checklist (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment)
- Identifying and Responding to Coercive Control

This online training was also available for multi-agency partners to use free of charge.

6.15 A new e-learning module on Domestic Abuse Awareness was also in development and this would be mandatory training for all Council staff. This would ensure that all staff were trained to recognise the signs of domestic violence and emotional abuse so that early interventions could be made.

²⁰ Agenda item 358, meeting of Cabinet, 9th Dec 2025 <https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=84182>

RECOMMENDATION 1 – The Committee welcomed the introduction of mandatory Domestic Abuse Awareness training for all Council staff and suggested that the uptake and impact of this training should be monitored, including an assessment of the number of VAWG interventions and referrals made by staff over time. The Committee also recommended that mandatory specialist training should be provided for members of staff who deliver services directly to residents.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – The Committee recommended that Domestic Abuse Awareness training should also be made available to the wider community and voluntary sector in Haringey so that more people in a position to intervene are trained to recognise the signs of domestic violence and emotional abuse.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – Commenting on general issues associated with a local strategic approach, the Committee recommended that, given the short-term nature of some government funded projects, the VAWG team should assemble end of project reports with a brief introduction on the learnings and the future viability of projects within the lifetime of the upcoming local strategy.

7. Evidence received – Impact of domestic abuse

- 7.1 Evidence and background information was received from national and local organisations to provide evidence and background information about the impact of domestic abuse.

MIND in Haringey

- 7.2 The Committee spoke to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Head of Business Development (HBD) at MIND in Haringey about their work and the impact of domestic abuse on mental health.
- 7.3 The CEO explained that MIND in Haringey delivered a lot of training in the local community to raise awareness about mental health issues across the board, which was particularly important in areas of high deprivation. MIND in Haringey aimed to raise awareness of different types of VAWG and the impact that this can have on the mental health of individuals as part of its training and information distribution. They had delivered mental health training to groups of students at schools and Sixth Form colleges. Some of the young people would share details about issues at home that was impacting on their mental health. She added that VAWG was not just about physical violence but also about other types of coercive behaviour, as referenced in both the national and local VAWG strategies.
- 7.4 Evidence was provided about the importance of working with grassroots organisations in communities in which there were people who did not speak English as a first language so that they could be skilled up to support those experiencing VAWG. Mind in Haringey's mental health and well-being programme worked with various grassroots organisations including Hopec (House of Polish & European community) and they would hear about the higher levels of violence and other situations that could arise within those communities. They were also engaged with other grassroots organisations connected with the Afro-Caribbean, Turkish and homeless communities. There could also be higher barriers to

seeking help because of translation issues or because of the stigma of VAWG issues within these communities and she added that statutory services were sometimes not fit to help people from those communities when approaches were made. The grassroots organisations therefore needed to be skilled up and integrated into an overall strategic approach. The needs of those in the LGBT+ community that were experiencing abuse also needed to be considered.

- 7.5 Details were provided of a campaign on VAWG prevention that had run a few years previously, known as the White Ribbon project, that MIND had been involved with. The project had included a video that was made by young people about exploitation and she felt that this was an example of destigmatising issues across this area and helping people to understand that it was not their fault if they were involved in a domestic abuse situation, particularly in communities where stigma may be greater for cultural reasons.
- 7.6 It was explained that Mind in Haringey received relatively few mental health referrals from organisations such as Solace, though there must be many women in refuges or places of safety that could benefit from coming to Mind in Haringey. It could therefore be useful for the Mind in Haringey team to receive training on recognising signs of domestic abuse because these themes would not always emerge at an early stage in conversations with people. In terms of wider training and awareness-raising it was important to engage with children at a younger age and also to include men and boys in the conversation. Young people could be an effective route to challenge some of the stigma and secrecy on VAWG issues in some communities in Haringey.
- 7.7 MIND in Haringey recommended that there should also be a strategy bringing in all organisations across the Borough and addressing issues such as availability of training workshops, more options for safe spaces and dealing with issues further upstream rather than at crisis point. There also needed to be resources available in schools to be able to offer the therapy that some young people need to talk about the abuse that they may have seen or experienced at home.

Respect

- 7.8 Evidence was also received from the national organisation, Respect, which was described by its Head of Influencing as a “*pioneering UK membership organisation in the domestic abuse sector*” which led on the development of safe, effective work with perpetrators, male victims and young people using violence in their close relationships. Respect’s membership figures were at around 85 with another 35 accredited members. Respect’s vision was to end domestic abuse and to live in a world where domestic abuse was not tolerated, where perpetrators were held to account and the safety and well-being of survivors was centred. They were currently in the process of developing a five-year strategy with new themes and planning a social change campaign to raise awareness of perpetrator intervention.
- 7.9 The Committee was informed that Respect provided leadership across the three main themes of Influence, Support and Innovation:

- The Influence work involved working with members and stakeholders to shape the thinking around policy, practice and legislation including the recent Domestic Abuse Act of 2021. The aim was to push for strategic, well-funded, cross-government, multi-agency responses to domestic abuse that centred on the needs of adult and child survivors.
- The Support work involved providing leadership and guidance to members and the wider sector, providing training and workforce development. They also set standards for specialist responses to domestic abuse, for both perpetrators and male victims. It was necessary to bring more people into the perpetrator sector in order for it to survive, as the low funding levels in this area were challenging. Respect also delivered two helplines: the Respect Phoneline for perpetrators and the Men's Advice Line for male victims of domestic abuse.
- The Innovation work involved the development of new approaches on domestic abuse, working with research partners to develop the evidence base. In recent years this had included a review of perpetrator programmes called the Mirabal Project (<https://projectmirabal.co.uk/>) in order to provide evidence of what interventions were effective in ending domestic abuse and changing the behaviour of perpetrators.

AAFDA (Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse)

- 7.10 The Committee received evidence from the national organisation Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA). The Team Leader & Specialist Advocate at AAFDA, explained that their work was at the very worst part of VAWG by supporting family or friends after they had lost a loved one as a result of a homicide or suicide related to domestic abuse. AAFDA had been founded by their CEO, Frank Mullane, after he lost his sister and nephew to an incident of domestic violence homicide and found that there wasn't any support for families going through that type of event and that families were not given a voice. While AAFDA initially dealt only with cases of homicide, they were now dealing with a number of cases of suicide resulting from domestic abuse and cases of unexplained deaths following domestic abuse. These all involved engaging with families who were traumatised and at the worst place in their lives. The majority of suicide cases were self-referrals, often resulting from internet searches, and could often be more complex than the homicide cases. She said that there needed to be services in communities across the country so that people were not just trying to find sources of support from search engines at a time when they were in a desperate state.
- 7.11 In relation to the advocacy role, the Committee was informed that the first stage often focused on emotional support because they had been traumatised by the bereavement, the lack of support and an uncertainty about what was going to happen in the future. In cases of suicide or unexplained deaths, there was also often a feeling that no justice had been achieved because there had been no arrest or criminal charges. Most families will never have come into contact with the Police, justice system or the coroner system and did not understand what was likely to happen. They also often assumed that support would be provided for them but in reality this was very limited. AAFDA was able to explain everything that was going to happen, accompany them to meetings/hearings and advocate on their behalf with all the agencies involved. AAFDA's aim was to make the family's voice integral to

all of the processes that took place after a death and empower them to have their views about the case heard. There could sometimes be negative or inappropriate responses from agencies and AAFDA would help them to navigate that.

- 7.12 As of April 2023, AAFDA had 20 active cases in London (12 homicide cases and 8 suicide cases), one of which (a homicide case) was in Haringey. While a large percentage of referrals to AAFDA were self-referrals, they also received referrals from the Police, Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) chairs, Community Safety Partnerships and other agencies. However, they would like to see more referrals coming from agencies working with families who had experienced VAWG and so this required a raising of awareness about AAFDA services.
- 7.13 AAFDA now had two specialist children's advocates who were working to develop a programme for children being involved in processes such as domestic homicide reviews. Children often knew better than anyone what had gone on within a household but there were huge barriers for children taking part in these processes, so AAFDA aimed to break down those barriers and to wrap support around that child throughout that time.
- 7.14 The Committee noted that the Council's webpage on domestic abuse services provided signposting to a range of specialist support services²¹ but that this did not include services specifically aimed at supporting families who have experienced bereavement as a consequence of a domestic-abuse related homicide or suicide.
- 7.15 While recognising the limited availability of specialist services in this area, the Council could signpost to national organisations who provide advice, guidance and resources. This could include AAFDA and also the Support After Suicide Partnership²² which comprises of over 120 support organisations including Samaritans and provides resources such as practical guidance on dealing with the Police or Coroner after a suicide²³ and information such as the Help Is At Hand support booklet²⁴ for people who have been bereaved by suicide.
- 7.16 The Committee considered that the new local VAWG Strategy for Haringey should include specific reference to families and friends affected by VAWG-related homicide or suicide and should also be linked to the Haringey Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan which includes a strategic aim of providing better support to those bereaved or affected by suicide.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – That the Council should signpost to specialist support services, advice and guidance which could be of help to people who have been bereaved by a VAWG-related homicide or suicide.

RECOMMENDATION 5 – That the local VAWG Strategy should be linked to the local Suicide Prevention Strategy and its strategic objective of supporting people bereaved by suicide.

²¹ Haringey Council – Domestic Abuse Services: <https://schoolsbulletin.haringey.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/services-support/domestic-abuse-violence-against-women-girls/domestic-abuse-services>

²² Support After Suicide partnership <https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

²³ Support After Suicide Partnership – Impacted by Suicide: <https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/journey-days/>

²⁴ Support After Suicide Partnership Resources: <https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/resource>

8. Evidence received – Schools-based interventions

8.1 Public Health officers provided an overview to the Committee on tackling VAWG in schools, noting that:

- Schools play a vital role in fostering a positive culture in which healthy behaviours are promoted and harmful attitudes are challenged before they escalate.
- A recent national initiative called Everyone's Invited had provided an online platform enabling many young women and girls from schools and universities to anonymously share their experiences of misogyny, harassment, abuse and assault.
- An Ofsted Review of sexual abuse in schools have shown that the frequency of harmful sexual behaviours experienced by young people means that some children and young people consider them normal. There was therefore an urgent need to address VAWG in educational institutions.
- Relationships Education was now mandatory in all primary schools, Relationships & Sex Education was now mandatory in all secondary schools and Health Education was now mandatory in all state funded schools.

Schools-based survey

8.2 The Healthy Schools Programme Lead for the Council shared results from a schools-based survey commissioned through the Schools and Students Health Education Unit (SHEU Survey) which had been carried out from November 2021 to February 2022. This involved a total of 4,157 pupils in Haringey from Years 4, 6, 8 and 10. Results could be compared to results from a similar survey carried out in 2018/19.

- In response to the question asked to secondary school pupils, "Have you experienced at least one of these negative behaviours when in a romantic relationship with a partner? (Anger, jealousy, threatening language, pressure to have sex, threatened to hit me, hit me)" 15% of girls said yes (no change from previous survey) and 18% of boys said yes (up 2% from previous survey).
- In response to the question asked to secondary school pupils, "If any of the things above were to happen to you, would you know what to do?" 58% said yes (up 1% from previous survey).
- In response to the question asked to secondary school pupils, "Have you received sexual images or videos from someone in the past year?" 27% said yes (up 6% from previous survey).
- In response to the question asked to primary school Year 6 pupils, "Have you learned about respectful and healthy relationship in school?" 64% said yes (no change from previous survey). In terms of the proportion of positive responses this was the second highest of six topics, below "puberty and growing up" but above "human reproduction", "smoking", "alcohol" and "drugs".
- A slide was shown which displayed the results of a question asked to secondary school pupils, "Have you learned about the following at school?" on 15 different topics. Those with the lowest proportion of negative responses (answering "not at all") included "Healthy relationships" and "unhealthy relationships and keeping safe" which were both at around 20%.

- In response to the question asked to secondary school pupils, “Have any of these things happened to you in a romantic relationship with a partner?”, 146 pupils (around 10%) said that their partner had been angry or jealous when they wanted to spend time with friends. 47 students said that their partner had hit them and 39 students said that their partner had done something of a sexual nature without their consent.
- 8.3 Committee Members queried why only Year 8 and Year 10 pupils had been included in the secondary school surveys. The Director for Public Health explained that the Year Groups selected were intended to provide a cross-section of views and that there would be a cost implication of surveying additional age groups.
- 8.4 Committee Members also:
- Expressed concern that Year 11 was excluded from the survey as this was where she had seen the greatest impact in her experience as a social worker.
 - Suggested that a survey specific to RSHE or VAWG could be carried out rather than a generic survey geared around certain year groups.
 - Commented that it would be useful to have a broader understanding across the age groups as it could help to establish whether the prevention work, including by addressing unhealthy attitudes amongst boys, was having an impact as children progressed through the Year Groups.
 - Suggested that interviews or focus groups could also add to the depth of understanding.
- 8.5 The Director for Public Health said that the survey had covered a wider range of issues than VAWG but acknowledged the point about the importance of Year 11 and that the cohorts that were surveyed and the specific questions that were asked was something that could be looked at in the future. It was also noted that not all local authorities carried out this kind of survey at all.
- 8.6 The Committee asked about the use of the data from the survey to drive the overall VAWG approach in schools. The Director for Public Health said that there were two elements to this:
- Firstly, each school was provided with a report of their own on their survey results which was used to drive the individual school response.
 - Secondly, this informed was the Borough-wide response, which included projects such as the partnership with Solace Women’s Aid to deliver initiatives in schools. He added that the Council actually played a relatively small role in terms of resources and that the communications and links with partners was a major part of the strategy.

Healthy Schools Programme

- 8.7 The Committee was provided with details of the Healthy Schools Programme which supported a whole school approach to health and wellbeing including support to schools to deliver quality PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education):

- RSHE Network Meetings, open to all primary, secondary and special schools in Haringey, had been held over the past few years, run by a RSHE specialist. These sessions support schools to understand the teaching of the curriculum and about responding questions that they may get in the classroom.
- An audit survey of RSHE leads in schools had been carried out the previous year to gauge the support that they felt they needed. Results was positive overall and some asked for further training and for the Network Meetings to continue so this is what was being delivered, including a recent early years training session as well as training on PSHE topics.
- Public Health had also continued to fund access to the PSHE Association for all schools which provides quality resources to support the teaching of RSHE.
- Public Health had also produced a document to support schools in preventing peer on peer abuse, using a range of resources, tools and information which schools can access.

8.8 Committee Members with connections to school governor bodies in the Borough suggested that some governors were not aware of this Programme and that from recent discussions they'd had, some staff were not aware of what the Council offered in this area. Committee Members proposed that more visible information should be provided to schools and to governors. The Healthy Schools Programme Lead reported that information had recently been presented to an online meeting of school governors. In addition, all teachers were welcome to join the RSHE Network Meetings which provided advice on and that the teachers who attended were encouraged to cascade this information down to colleagues.

Protect Our Women (POW) programme

8.9 The Protect Our Women (POW) programme had been established in Haringey for several years with work delivered by Solace Women's Aid in primary and secondary schools and involved talking about a range of issues such as consent, healthy relationships, self-care strategies, online safety, gender stereotypes, domestic violence, stalking and harassment. This was supported by journals and learning booklets. The programme also supported parents as well with literature, coffee mornings and focus groups about spotting signs of trauma and abuse and how to engage young people in difficult conversations. It also included a Young Change Makers initiative for young people aged 11 to 21 to become mentors and help with campaigning and awareness raising.

8.10 The Committee heard from the Deputy Head of Children & Young People Services and the Service Manager for Early Intervention & Prevention at Solace Women's Aid who provided an overview of this work:

- Solace was an organisation that had more than 40 years of experience working with survivors of abuse. Prevention was a key part of their work which including visiting schools, educating parents, teachers and young people on the strands of VAWG.
- The vision of Solace was for a world without violence or abuse against women and girls. The organisation worked proactively to:
 - Prevent abuse;
 - Serve the needs of survivors;
 - Help survivors to achieve independent lives;

- Provide education and training.
- The programme provided RSE (Relationships & Sex Education) through 10 sessions for primary school pupils and 12 sessions for secondary school pupils. During the pandemic, when it was not possible to be in schools, emotional wellbeing programmes were also developed which were delivered in primary/secondary schools throughout Haringey.
- This was embedded as a whole school approach, working with teachers and parents as well as young people. This was important because domestic abuse was sometimes assumed to be about physical abuse, when it could also involve coercive control, psychological abuse and financial abuse.
- Young people were engaged as Young Change Makers as beacons of change by using their skills and knowledge with presentations and campaigns to speak out against VAWG in their schools and at a Borough wide level.
- The POW Primary School programme sessions (mainly targeted at Years 5 & 6) included:
 - Family;
 - Healthy Relationships;
 - Equality & Human Rights;
 - Consent & Personal Space;
 - Gender Stereotypes;
 - Bullying;
 - Domestic Violence & Abuse;
 - Self-care Strategies;
 - Feelings & Emotions (including how boys express anger appropriately);
 - Online Safety (including safe use of social media & gaming).
- The POW Secondary School programme sessions included:
 - Gender Stereotypes;
 - Power;
 - Healthy Relationships;
 - Domestic Violence & Abuse;
 - Sexual Violence & Consent;
 - Social Media & Safety;
 - Stalking & Harassment;
 - CSE & Grooming;
 - VAWG in Media;
 - Harmful Practices (including FGM, forced marriage & honour-based violence);
 - Campaigning.
- The POW Emotional Wellbeing programme sessions (both at primary and secondary school level) included:
 - Identity & Self-awareness;
 - Feelings & Emotions;
 - Emotional Wellbeing;
 - Self-care;
 - Growth Mindset;
 - Social Wellbeing.

8.11 The Committee focused on the coverage of this programme throughout the Borough and was informed that 47 institutions had been visited over a nine-year period, including community centres and social services groups. This figure included a total of 28 schools. They explained that the programme usually took 6 to 10 weeks to deliver and there was only

one worker for the whole Borough so this limited the pace at which this could be done. The primary school programme had only started two or three years ago and it was now much more viable to deliver to primary schools with one worker than with secondary schools. In an ideal world, if there was one worker to deliver to primary schools and another worker to focus on secondary schools then the programme could be delivered to more pupils. The resource issue was not just about delivering the programme but also about updating the programme and its evidence and materials informed by the feedback.

- 8.12 A Committee Member commented that a complete culture change was needed in terms of these emerging ways of helping young people and so she felt that the programme needed to be revisited on a termly basis and embedded in the school culture. Another Committee Member suggested that longer course could have a significant impact and would not necessarily have to be revisited quite so often. It was generally agreed that a lot more partnership and governance work would be required to make this a reality.
- 8.13 Asked whether it would be possible to track the progress of children as part of the programme over a period of time, the Deputy Head of Children & Young People Services explained that there were questionnaires conducted at the beginning of the programme in order to establish a base assessment of where young people were on specific topics with the same questions are asked at the end of the programme to establish what the learning has been. This feedback was provided to commissioners and it was possible to see the confidence and understanding of young people increasing. She added that feedback from the teachers was an important part of assessing impact because they had a sense of the culture of the school. The Service Manager for Early Intervention & Prevention added that, to assess impact over the longer term, it would probably be necessary to partner with a separate organisation with professional researchers to conduct a longitudinal study with participants from different programmes and schools.
- 8.14 At a later session, the Committee asked commissioning officers about the coverage of the POW programme and emphasised the importance of rolling out programmes such as POW to all schools in the Borough. Officers responded that, in addition to the size of the contract, there were also some time limitations as the course took 10 weeks to complete so this needed to fit within the curriculum and schedule of each school. The funding and scheduling limitations had led to an emphasis on supporting teachers with training, including on the delivery of RSHE education, and then delivering to as many schools as possible.
- 8.15 The Committee welcomed the progress made through the POW programme in Haringey and the range of issues relevant to VAWG that were being raised in schools as this helped young people to clearly understand the multiple elements of VAWG and equipped them to access appropriate sources of support. While acknowledging that further assessment of the programme may be required and that the resources to support wider delivery was currently limited, the Committee felt that the longer-term ambition should be for programmes such as this to be made available to all secondary schools in Haringey so that it reaches more young people.

RECOMMENDATION 6 - Educational programmes such as Protect Our Women (POW) should be delivered in all Haringey secondary schools as there is only partial coverage currently.

Whole School Approach

- 8.16 In addition to these specific schools-based programmes, the Committee was made aware of the Whole School Approach model which aims to address the wider school culture at all levels through multiple interventions and with the involvement of pupils, staff and teachers rather than be limited to a one-off programme.
- 8.17 The End Violence Against Women & Girls (EVAWG) Coalition, a grouping of specialist service providers, defines the Whole School Approach *“an approach that addresses the needs of pupils, staff and the wider community across the entire school environment, from the curriculum or learning environment to addressing the school’s physical environment and what actions are taken to prevent VAWG and ensure safety for both students and staff”*²⁵
- 8.18 The importance of the approach is highlighted by the EVAWG Coalition in a 2023 report which sets out the scale of sexual bullying and harassment in schools and the distress and anxiety that this causes along with other consequences such as low self-esteem and poor academic achievement.
- 8.19 The Whole School Approach is proposed by the EVAWG Coalition as a way of successfully addressing the root causes of VAWG in schools and later life. The key elements of the approach put forward are:
- Institutional and policy development;
 - Awareness-raising, training and support for staff;
 - Education for pupils through formal curriculum and informal school spaces;
 - Early support, safeguarding and signposting to specialist services for pupils
- 8.20 It is recognised by the EVAWG Coalition that, although there are case studies for the Whole School Approach, the wider national implementation has been limited so far and that greater political will, funding and prioritisation is required if progress is to be made.
- 8.21 The Committee was also made aware of a three-year pilot programme for the Whole School Approach that took place in four schools in the London Borough of Croydon between 2018 and 2020. The pilot programme was funded by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and delivered by the educational organisation Tender.
- 8.22 An evaluation report about the pilot scheme was published by DMSS Research in 2021²⁶. The project worked with three primary schools and one secondary school with the majority of the direct work with students in Years 6 to 10. The report described the six ‘building blocks’ used to embed a whole school approach to prevent gender-based violence.
- Establishing school ownership and leadership
 - Building a strong delivery team

²⁵ Page 11, *It’s #AboutTime* report, End Violence Against Women & Girls Coalition (2023)

<https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FINAL-About-Time-WSA-report-140723.pdf>

²⁶ Whole School Approach Learning Report, DMSS Research (2021) <https://dmss.co.uk/pdfs/DMSS-WSA-Learning-Report-Jan-2021.pdf>

- Raising awareness, skills and confidence among school staff
 - Working with children and young people
 - Developing a positive school culture
 - Involving parents and the wider community
- 8.23 The direct work with children and young people in the schools was mainly through PHSE sessions, targeted group work and assemblies. This involved the use of age-appropriate language, games and activities to address issues such as gender stereotypes, diversity and healthy relationships. Older students also learnt about victim blaming, sexual cyber bullying and consent.
- 8.24 Overall, the report concluded that the learning from the project emphasised the importance of building a foundation of school leadership and staff ownership to enable schools, with the support of a skilled Whole School Approach team, to engage all stakeholders and to build a positive school culture of gender equality and anti-violence.
- 8.25 In terms of developing the Whole School Approach further in the future, the EVAWG Coalition’s recommendations for local commissioners were to:
- Champion a Whole School Approach to preventing VAWG among primary and secondary schools, including academies, in your area;
 - Fund partnership work between schools and specialist VAWG services, including ‘by and for’ organisations, to deliver a Whole School Approach to tackling VAWG;
 - Ensure prevention work is central to the work of local partnerships with relevant voluntary sector agencies, including the specialist VAWG sector and ‘by and for’ partners, primary and secondary schools.
- 8.26 Based on the evidence reviewed, the Committee’s view was that the development of a Whole School Approach should be a longer-term policy objective in Haringey. The Committee fully accepted that the approach was still at an early stage nationally and that this was one of the more resource-intensive proposals discussed in this report but felt that the inclusion of the Whole School Approach as an aspiration in the new local VAWG strategy was worthy of consideration.

RECOMMENDATION 7 - That the development of a whole-school approach on VAWG in Haringey schools should be a stated objective of the Council, that a detailed implementation plan should be established within 12 months and that funding should be sought to develop a pilot programme.

Social workers in schools

- 8.27 The Assistant Director for Social Care spoke to the Committee in 2023 about the work of social workers in schools on the issue of domestic issue with a particular emphasis on supporting children and families as part of the school community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council had applied for funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to support seven social workers in seven secondary schools as part of a scheme supported by the What Works Centre, a national organisation that uses evidence to inform practice and intervention initiatives. From August 2020, seven social workers had been embedded in 7

out of the 12 schools that the Council had responsibility for and were selected based on data on referrals around those schools over the previous five years. The schools were:

- Alexandra Park School
- Park View School
- Haringey Learning Partnership
- Greig City Academy
- Harris Academy Tottenham
- Heartlands High School
- Woodside High School

- 8.28 The social workers in schools had been asked to focus on ensuring that there were a range of interventions for families around domestic abuse and this formed the large majority of their work. In the Harris Academy, for example, their domestic abuse work was embedded into the curriculum from Year 1 through to Sixth Form, including positive work around what constitutes healthy relationships. They also worked with outside partners such as the Voice Box and Solace Women's Aid.
- 8.29 It had been agreed with the DfE and the What Works Centre to design an evaluative programme that would look at the impact over 3-4 years at three key issues which were the main areas of concern from schools making referrals:
- Mental health support for children and their families;
 - Families with substance misuse issues;
 - Addressing domestic abuse.
- 8.30 The subsequent evaluation had included positive comments about the innovative use of the funding and the difference that it had made. It found that a lot of emphasis was being placed on changing and educating the child but that the child was then being sent back to a home environment where the inter-generational beliefs and the concrete thinking of the parenting remained the same in particular cohorts in the community. The work of Solace in this area was therefore very welcome but there was also an intensity and depth of work to unpick.
- 8.31 The DfE had then made the decision not to continue to fund social workers in schools and so the funding to Haringey and other local authorities ended in July 2023. The DfE and What Works had provided just short of £500k for this but that this was now being redirected to support children's hubs.
- 8.32 Asked about the situation with funding for counselling/pastoral support in schools, the Assistant Director for Social Care said that part of the role of social workers in schools had been to coordinate with services such as CAHMS, Open Door or the Stephen Lawrence Trust to meet the needs of children.
- 8.33 The Social Care team had also engaged in partnership work to address particular issues in schools. This included VAWG colleagues but also housing colleagues and tenancy management teams to identify potential issues with specific children who could be experiencing intergenerational trauma and also with police officers in Safer Neighbourhood Teams attached to schools. The Assistant Director for Social Care reported that this work

was beginning to have an impact on the way that students had been able to describe issues affecting them when speaking to their pastoral team. Some of this evidence may be included in the evaluation report that was previously referred to, though there were also some specific case examples. Some schools had also created their own videos to promote the work that social workers had completed in the three key areas and the impact.

Children's IDVA

- 8.34 The Assistant Director for Social Care explained that, despite the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, there was still a lot of work to do in Haringey around having a Children's IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence/Abuse Advocate) as this was a particular skill involving making children feel safe and able to share what was happening in their household. However, Haringey did have the Bambu service (providing specialist support to children impacted by domestic abuse in the home) which was working well with social workers in schools but was not advocacy.
- 8.35 The Assistant Director for Social Care noted that social workers in schools were particularly strong at identifying themes, patterns and issues, and then mobilising professionals to address those issues. However, it was understood that more would need to be done following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which is why the Children's IDVA was needed along with support from MARAC (Multi-agency risk assessment conference) so that cases involving children from domestic abuse households could be considered in a sensitive, child-focused way.
- 8.36 Asked about the funding source for a children's IDVA, the Assistant Director for Social Care acknowledged that this was an area of financial vulnerability because it was not entirely clear through the 2021 legislation who had responsibility for IDVAs. So there could be a mechanism through the MARAC and organisations such as Whittington Health and Hearthstone could also have involvement.

Everyone's Invited initiative

- 8.37 The Assistant Director for Social Care also spoke about the Everyone's Invited initiative, set up by the Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP), resulting from the Sarah Everard case. This involved a working group including representatives of schools in Haringey and other partners. The work included a review of policy and practice with all schools to ensure that it would support them to keep children safe as well as training delivered to a selection of schools based on local data to be targeted at local need.
- 8.38 Children now had a range of methods within those schools to share their experiences and access support. Partners such as the Safer Neighbourhood teams had gone into schools to deliver workshops and there had been a push to work with GPs to ensure that their duty around identifying domestic abuse was effective and that they were liaising with children's social care and schools. A local audit tool had been developed to help schools to evaluate how well they were addressing these issues. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) had played a pivotal role in facilitating workshops in schools. Two independent people, Tony Hartley (a retired headteacher) and Angela Corby (an ex-HMI inspector), had been appointed

to visit schools and provide advice on what more they could do about peer-on-peer abuse and domestic abuse.

- 8.39 Asked whether the training in selected schools that was mentioned would be provided to all schools across the Borough. The Assistant Director for Social Care confirmed that this was the ambition but pointed out that all schools had a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and that, through the DSL schools forum, they had all had access to the domestic abuse training and the Everyone's Invited bespoke peer-on-peer training through the HSCP. The schools that had been selected were prioritised having been identified through data analysis as needing a particular injection of this dedicated piece of work.

Family Hubs

- 8.40 The Committee spoke with the Assistant Director for Early Health Prevention and SEND, regarding the introduction of new Family Hubs and their role in preventing domestic abuse.
- 8.41 'Family Hubs' would provide families with a single access point to integrated family support. Some support and services will be available online/virtually and include health, education and care and other support for families. This early intervention approach replicates the Children's Centre and Sure Start model.
- A Family Hub supports families from conception, through the child's early years and up to the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).
 - Family Hubs provide family support early, when families need it, providing universal and targeted services, and access to more intensive support. So although it was a universal offer, there was an expectation that the programme would target families that need support to prevent escalation to statutory and high cost services.
 - Family Hubs can support all families, but it is particularly important that they are designed to be accessible to families experiencing social and economic disadvantage or those from minoritised groups who experience inequalities and/or exclusion.
- 8.42 Haringey was one of 75 local authorities to receive government funding for this programme, based on areas of deprivation, with the long-term aim of providing sustainable funding across the country. There would be four Family Hubs in Haringey, one of which had opened in June 2023 (at the Triangle Centre, South Tottenham). The other three Hubs were due to be up and running by 2025 and would be located in the North-East, Central and West areas of the Borough.
- 8.43 In terms of domestic abuse support, the Family Hubs would provide face-to-face support including:
- Staff in the family hub are aware of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance, are trauma informed, and can distinguish between parental conflict and domestic abuse, recognise signs of all forms of domestic abuse (including coercive control), the impact of this abuse on victims (adult and child, including where children see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse). Staff in the family hub are also aware of key risk points, such as pregnancy and ending an abusive relationship.

- Staff in the Family Hub have a good understanding of the support services available locally and are able to connect adult and child victims to specialist domestic abuse services (including VCS organisations) either on site or within the family hub network, as well as support from other agencies such as health, police, housing and/or local safe accommodation.
 - Private spaces are available to allow victim (adult and/or child) to speak confidentially, to reduce risk associated with disclosing in front of perpetrators.
 - Funding was also provided from the Department for Work and Pensions to all local authorities for a three-year Reducing Parental Conflict programme.
- 8.44 There had been substantial communications work including through a very active parent carer panel led by local parents in informing the offer. In addition, every household in the area had been written to with details of the development of Family Hubs, including building works.
- 8.45 A Committee Member observed that some VAWG services in Enfield were based in Children's Centres for a day per week and suggested that similar connections be developed with Family Hubs. Officers responded that they were keen to offer space in the Family Hubs to any organisation that could support families and children and would be working with the VAWG lead on the space within Family Hubs.
- 8.46 As of February 2026, there are four active Family Hubs:
- Triangle Centre Family Hub (Seven Sisters ward)
 - Muswell Hill Centre Family Hub (Muswell Hill ward)
 - Northumberland Family Hub (Northumberland Park ward)
 - Rising Green Family Hub (Noel Park ward)
- 8.47 The Family Hubs are supported by 'Navigators' – these are members of staff who act as the first point of contact for children and families and help to provide advice and guidance and to help people access appropriate support services. This includes information about employment opportunities, financial support, domestic abuse and physical & mental health support.
- 8.48 Given the many different aspects of VAWG and the diverse range of VAWG services in Haringey as set out in section 6 of this report, the Committee was keen to ensure that the advice and guidance provided by Family Hub Navigators is not limited to domestic abuse. The Committee recommended that checks be made to ensure that all Family Hub Navigators have received VAWG training, including on how to spot the signs of someone who may be affected by VAWG and that they are equipped with the full range of information about VAWG support services that are available.

RECOMMENDATION 8 – That all Family Hub Navigators are fully VAWG trained so that they can identify individuals and families affected by VAWG and that advice, guidance and referrals to support services is provided within the Family Hubs.

Children & Young People's Services

- 8.49 The VAWG Programme Lead outlined to the Committee some other services focused on children and young people:
- **Young women & girls Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocate (IDSVA)** – The IDSVA offers free and confidential one-to-one support for young women and girls aged 11-25 that have witnessed, been subjected to or at risk of domestic/sexual violence. Practical and emotional support is offered either by phone, video call or face to face. Support is also provided throughout the criminal justice process where necessary, including helping the young woman/girl to understand their options and rights.
 - **Bambu Project** – The Bambu project was delivered by the Richmond Fellowship (for 11-15 year olds) and Rise Mutual (for 16-24 year olds) and was not funded by the Council. This provided tailored, specialist support to meet the holistic needs of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse in the home. This involved work around resilience, trauma and cognitive behavioural therapies.
 - **CAPVA Project** – The CAPVA (Child & Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse intervention) Project is for children and young people aged 11-17 who have been identified as displaying abusive behaviour towards their parents, siblings or other family members (or up to age 24 if the individual has been identified as vulnerable or neurodivergent). Practitioners work with the child and their family for 6-8 months teaching Non-Violent Resistance techniques and to build resilience, improve communication and develop empathy increasing wellbeing.
- 8.50 Asked about the need to tackle misogynistic behaviour in schools, the VAWG Programme Lead told the Committee that the Bambu and CAPVA projects were new and that the training previously referred to on incel culture and other issues was also new. This training would enable the Children and Young People's workforce to have more informed and more supportive conversations with the young people. In addition, a safeguarding working group had been set up in response to the Everyone's Invited initiative and the terms of reference had now been adapted to focus on VAWG more broadly. In addition, the Commissioning Officer reported that Solace were also piloting a programme working with young men and boys at Alexandra Park School with a view to expanding this to other schools. There was also a focus on long-term sustainability for the programme including training for teachers so that they know how best to respond to disclosures for example. However, the scope of what could be delivered was limited by the size of the contract.

Issues affecting young people – Online Safety

- 8.51 The VAWG Programme Lead informed the Committee that the Online Safety Act came into force at the end of 2023. The key points of this were:
- Services under Ofcom's remit will have to protect users from illegal content and activities online and protect children from harmful content.
 - Stalking and harassment and Controlling and Coercive Behaviour (CCB) recognised as 'priority offences'.
 - Domestic Abuse Commissioner working with Ofcom to develop statutory guidance to tackle VAWG online, informed by VAWG Code of Practice developed by experts in the sector.

- 8.52 Online harm was disproportionately experienced by women and girls. Refuge had found that 60% of survivors of domestic abuse had experienced coercive and controlling behaviours that were perpetrated in online spaces. Women and girls were also more likely to be the victims of online offences such as cyber flashing or the sharing of intimate images without consent.
- 8.53 Intentionally sharing an intimate image without consent was already a criminal offence but the law had now been strengthened by added the element of doing so with the intention of causing alarm, distress or humiliation. Threatening to share an intimate image or film was also a criminal offence within the act because this was a common tactic of coercive and controlling behaviours.

Involvement of Children & Young People in the consultation for the new Haringey VAWG strategy

- 8.54 Throughout the collection of evidence set out in Section 8 of this report, the Committee was mindful of the profound impact that VAWG has on the children and young people who are affected by it.
- 8.55 The Committee welcomed the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which specified that children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse within the home are to be specifically recognised as victims.
- 8.56 The Committee emphasised the importance of understanding the views of young people in the development of the new local VAWG Strategy for Haringey, including the support available to them in schools. Areas highlighted by the Committee included:
- Are they aware of support services that are available?
 - Do they think that the current support services provide the help that young people may need and, if not, what other services do they think should be available?
 - What kind of information do they think should be provided in schools that would help them?

RECOMMENDATION 9 – For the consultation on the new VAWG Strategy for Haringey to proactively involve young people, across different communities and areas of the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – For the new VAWG Strategy for Haringey to include a strong emphasis on the needs of children and young people who are affected by VAWG, including online harms.

- 8.57 The Committee also emphasised the importance of longer-term involvement of young people in the co-design of the Council's VAWG approach. This would help to ensure that the Council's policies better reflected the lived experience, local context, and cultural realities of young people. This could also help to establish stronger trust between schools, young people and the Council.
- 8.58 Some approaches proposed by the Committee to establish long-term co-design principles with children and young people on VAWG policies were:

- **Establish School-Based Youth Design Panels**
 - Every secondary school (and a selection of primaries) should create a *Youth Design Panel* — a diverse group of pupils (11–18 years old) supported by a trained facilitator.
 - Panels would meet termly to discuss themes like safety, relationships, respect, and equality.
 - Findings feed into borough-wide strategy through a structured reporting channel.
- **Create a Borough-Wide “Youth Policy Assembly”**
 - Representatives from each school’s panel form a **Haringey's Youth Policy Assembly**, chaired jointly by a young person and a Council officer.
 - The Assembly co-produces draft priorities, reviews Council actions, and provides feedback on delivery plans before final sign-off.
- **Provide Safeguarded Participation Structures**
 - Ensure all engagement is trauma-informed and facilitated by trained youth workers or educators.
 - Provide anonymised feedback routes for sensitive issues (violence, harassment, abuse).
 - Include clear consent, safeguarding, and escalation protocols.
- **Build a “You Said – We Did” Accountability Loop**
 - Publish annual summaries showing how young people’s input shaped specific policies, e.g. “Students told us they didn’t feel safe on the walk to school — we funded extra street lighting and police liaison.”
 - Make this report public and present it to Cabinet and the Safeguarding Board.
- **Resource and Evaluate the Framework**
 - Allocate a small dedicated budget (shared between Education and Community Safety).
 - Commission an independent annual evaluation (perhaps via a local university or youth organisation) to assess inclusivity and impact.

RECOMMENDATION 11 – To establish long-term co-design structures to include children and young people in the development of VAWG policies in Haringey.

9. Evidence received – Community-based interventions

Hearthstone Domestic Violence Advice and Support Centre

- 9.1 Evidence was received from the Hearthstone Domestic Violence Advice and Support Centre which provides emotional and practical support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse in Haringey.

- 9.2 The Assistant Director for Housing Demand explained that Hearthstone had been in place in Haringey for many years following a recommendation from a scrutiny committee to create the service. A survey had established that survivors of domestic abuse needed to be in contact with up to nine different agencies in order to get their lives back on track and so the premise of Hearthstone was to bring these services together in one place. This originally included a full-time police officer and also social care workers being co-located to Hearthstone for part of the week. However, there were now fewer staff resources available.
- 9.3 Hearthstone was managed through the Housing Demand team (which was now in the Adults, Health & Communities department since Homes for Haringey had returned to the Council) so there was scope to work closely with the Public Health team and commissioning staff. Hearthstone received funding from various sources including the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, there was a staff post funded by housing related support and there was funding from homelessness prevention grants and a new burdens grant resulting from the likely impact of the Domestic Abuse Act on housing.
- 9.4 The Hearthstone Manager provided an overview of her team which included a senior caseworker, two full-time caseworkers and a part-time caseworker, an administrator and a floating support worker for specific housing-related support cases. The team worked with partners including children's and adult social care, the Police and VAWG specialists in the borough including the commissioned IDVAs, Solace and the London Black Women's Project.
- 9.5 The service offer was to provide a holistic package of emotional and practical support for anybody over the age of 16 in the Borough who had experienced domestic abuse. The overall service offer included:
- General advice and support around domestic abuse;
 - Support across the range of VAWG issues with referrals to specialists;
 - Housing advice and options;
 - Access to pro-bono legal advice on a range of civil remedies, such as injunctions;
 - Counselling, including through Nafsiyat which provides intercultural therapy in a range of languages;
 - Gendered violence workshops;
 - Domestic Abuse Awareness and Understanding Training;
 - Sessions with specialist caseworker;
 - Partnership working with VAWG partners supporting with links to the housing teams.
- 9.6 A large proportion of approaches to Hearthstone services were from Haringey leaseholders or tenants or from people approaching as homeless because of the domestic abuse they were experiencing. The housing options provided by Hearthstone included:
- Management Transfer for Haringey tenants – caseworkers support individuals through the process and provide the direct link with the tenancy offer to ensure that the offer meets the needs of the individual (and their families) including their safety needs.
 - Link to pan-London Reciprocal Agreement – Haringey secure tenants are able to be moved to the Borough of their choice.

- Access to women’s refuges.
 - Access to the supported housing pathway – links had strengthened here as all officers were now in all in the Adults Health & Communities department.
 - Access to private rented accommodation – including support with deposits and finding properties.
 - Joint Housing Needs Assessments and Housing Plans.
 - Supporting people through homelessness applications.
- 9.7 The Sanctuary Scheme supported survivors of domestic abuse who wished to remain in their own homes. Measures available included locks, secured doors/windows and secure rooms and this was offered across tenure. This work was done in-house by Haringey Repairs Service operatives with the support of specialists in the Police and Community Safety Team. These types of security measures worked most effectively alongside a non-molestation order and/or an occupation order. There was a UK-wide benchmark exercise currently being carried out because some Boroughs were able to provide additional measures such as CCTV which not all Boroughs were able to provide funding for. Following installation, ongoing support was provided through a Sanctuary officer and a floating support worker.
- 9.8 Hearthstone supported a total of 358 households in 2022/23 following a full assessment, with the main referral routes being:
- Self-referral – 25.35%
 - Housing needs – 23.10%
 - Children & Young People Services – 21.41%
 - Customer Services – 10.14%
- 9.9 The outcomes of the 358 cases in 2022/23 were:
- 92% agreed to access advice and safety planning through Hearthstone.
 - 50% accessed counselling support.
 - 48% accessed legal remedy.
 - 35% explored housing options with Hearthstone.
 - 25% wanted to be referred to floating support.
- 9.10 The Assistant Director for Housing Demand noted that Homes for Haringey (prior to the transfer of services back to the Council) had applied for DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation. This was specialist domestic abuse accreditation for housing providers and involved the review of policies and procedures, such as tenancy agreements. There was also an awareness that the staff out and about on the estates were often repairs operatives and others so work had been carried out on broader awareness raising and training so that referrals to VAWG services could be made where appropriate.

Housing and DAHA Accreditation

- 9.11 A previous version of the Government’s national VAWG Strategy (2016-2020) described how a housing officer may be a VAWG victim’s first point of call and that “*Housing providers are*

ideally placed to identify those carrying out domestic abuse and also those at risk, including children”.²⁷

- 9.12 The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) provides accreditation for housing providers which it describes as *“the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse”*. The accreditation is based on a framework of 8 priority areas that considers an organisation’s operations and delivers safe and effective interventions in domestic abuse. The priority areas are:
- Policies & Procedures
 - Publicity & Awareness Raising
 - Partnerships & Collaboration
 - Safety-led Case Management
 - Survivor-led Support
 - Intersectional & Anti-racist Practice
 - Perpetrator Accountability
 - Staff Development & Support
- 9.13 In evidence from the Council’s VAWG team, the Committee was informed that the Council was currently engaged with the DAHA accreditation process with the aim of achieving accreditation by 2027 as a housing provider. The Committee welcomed the progress in this area and recognised that achieving accreditation against a high standard across a range of priority areas was a lengthy process which required steps such as the development of a comprehensive training plan for example.
- 9.14 The Committee was also informed that some Housing Associations which operate in the Borough were already DAHA accredited while others were not. The Committee felt that all housing providers in the Borough should aspire to the same high standard on VAWG to ensure that tenants affected by VAWG were supported and should therefore aim to achieve DAHA accreditation.
- 9.15 While the Committee recognised that the process of Housing Associations seeking DAHA accredited would be independent from the Council, the Council should encourage local Housing Associations to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 12 – That the Council should promote Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation to other housing providers in Haringey.

MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

- 9.16 A MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) is a local multi-agency meeting where information is share on the highest risk cases of domestic abuse. This is a national model with guidance on best practice provided by the Government.

²⁷ p.38 Ending Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy 2016-2020, HM Government
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522166/VAWG_Strategy_FINAL_PUBLICATION_MASTER_vRB.PDF

- 9.17 The Committee took evidence from the Senior Coordinator for the Haringey MARAC. As of 2025/26, the Haringey MARAC was coordinated by the national charity, Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA) which also coordinated MARACs in three other London Boroughs²⁸. However, a Cabinet report published in December 2025 indicated that the provision of the MARAC coordination would be brought in-house from April 2026.²⁹
- 9.18 The Committee was informed that each of the four MARACs across the four Boroughs typically heard between 300 and 700 cases per year. The Haringey MARAC met every three weeks and the agencies represented were:
- IDVA/DV Support Service (advocating for the victims/survivors at the meetings)
 - Police
 - Probation
 - CYPS
 - Adult Safeguarding
 - Mental Health
 - Substance Misuse
 - Health
 - Housing
- 9.19 The aim of the MARAC was to reduce the risk to victims/survivors of domestic abuse who had been assessed as being at high risk of serious harm or homicide – this represented approximately the top 10% of cases. The partnership arrangements involved sharing information and putting in place an action plan with effective and safe interventions to reduce risk. It also involved holding each other to account and professionally challenging each other to reach the best and most creative outcomes for victims/survivors. The victims/survivors' voice should be at the centre of this process and the action plan should be reflective of this. As the victims/survivors did not attend the MARAC meeting it was imperative to express their voice and needs through this process.

Information sharing

- 9.20 The Committee explored issues around appropriate information sharing through the MARAC. It was explained that GP practices were the service that tended to have the most direct contact with victims/survivors so it was important that they were involved in that process. In Haringey, there was an active information sharing process in place with a number of the GP practices signed up to the MARAC. If the MARAC held the victims/survivors' GP information, then they could share information with the GP who would be expected to then flag and tag their records accordingly (as would other relevant agencies contacted by the MARAC after a case had been raised at the MARAC) and then the GP would be aware of this at the next patient appointment and could undertake any necessary safeguarding actions. However, in some cases, the GP point of contact was not known and the information sharing would therefore not be possible. It was noted that there were restrictions on information sharing due to the confidential nature of the MARAC and so it was important to have as

²⁸ These are Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea.

²⁹ Item 358, meeting of the Cabinet, 9th December 2025 <https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=84182>

many professionals and agencies as possible signed up to the information sharing protocols so that this could be done in a safe way.

- 9.21 Concerns were expressed by Members that, in practice, information sharing may not be happening in some parts of the Borough and that while information may get referred on from GP practices, the GPs often did not receive any information back. This meant that patients would often have to unnecessarily recount their experiences again to their GPs. The Senior Coordinator for the Haringey MARAC informed the Committee that she would send minutes to GPs that had requested it or provided information about a patient, but acknowledged that it could be tricky if GPs did not provide any information and this could be why there were sometimes gaps.
- 9.22 Other considerations by the MARAC around information sharing included:
- That the MARAC did not own the data that it held and therefore needed to be mindful about the information that it shared. It was necessary to consider who was requesting information and why.
 - It was necessary to consider the consequences of the wrong person obtaining sensitive documentation and the additional risk that this could impose on a victim/survivor. A perpetrator should not be made aware of the MARAC process as this suggested that the victim/survivor had made a disclosure to a professional and there were no circumstances under which a perpetrator would be given access to MARAC information. This was made clear to professionals through MARAC training.
 - Victim/survivors could make a subject access request to have access to the MARAC minutes about them.
- 9.23 A Committee Member spoke about the importance of multi-agency communications and coordination, particularly between the Police, Probation, Prisons and the MARAC, when a perpetrator was released from prison as failure to do so exposed the victim/survivor to greater risk. The Senior Coordinator responded that the MARAC had encountered these kinds of challenges before and acknowledged that there may be certain agencies and professionals who perhaps did not know how to manage that risk in some cases.
- 9.24 A Committee Member highlighted the role of MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) which managed the risk of perpetrators, but expressed concern that this was limited to too few cases. The Senior Coordinator noted that a challenge faced at the MARAC was that it was not statutory whereas MAPPA was and so a stronger reaction and response to MAPPA was often seen. Ideally, the MARAC would also be statutory as this would help to get all partners on the same page.
- 9.25 Asked if there were particular challenges with information sharing where there are different arrangements across Boroughs or where some partners, such as local authorities, were sometimes not viewed by other agencies to be on an equal footing with the same level of responsibilities and challenges. The Senior Coordinator acknowledged that there were different approaches to coordinating a MARAC and noted that, in her personal opinion, where a MARAC was coordinated by the Police, it could be much more perpetrator-focused and on arrest/criminal history with less focus on the victim/survivor. She also acknowledged the point about equal footing and reiterated the previous concern that some statutory

agencies and/or professionals may consider that they may be able to safeguard the individual themselves rather than needing to fully engage with the multi-agency process so this was an ongoing challenge.

Prioritisation of cases

- 9.26 The Committee queried the determination of which cases were sufficiently prioritised to reach the MARAC, highlighting the increased risk of homicides and suicides relating to domestic violence from cases which did not reach the MARAC. The Senior Coordinator agreed that this was a concern and emphasised that the reason the MARAC existed was to reduce that risk to victims/survivors. The issue was ensuring that the right cases were referred to the MARAC at an early stage so there was a real push to reach out to partners to provide MARAC workshops and briefings to improve awareness about the MARAC process. This emphasised the multi-agency approach to domestic abuse so that, if they are working with a victim/survivor or perpetrator that they think is high risk, they know what to do and how to safeguard that individual. Some agencies (e.g. social workers) may think that they can safeguard by themselves but a multi-agency response was provided to be more effective. The MARAC platform enabled professionals to challenge one another and enable liaison between professionals on managing risk. Representatives on the MARAC could also raise concerns about any agencies that they felt were not participating in the multi-agency approach.
- 9.27 In terms of future actions that could improve MARAC referrals, the Senior Coordinator suggested that mandatory training on domestic abuse could be beneficial, noting that new starters at various agencies would typically have an induction period which would often include a safeguarding induction. Training on domestic abuse and the MARAC process could be beneficial at that stage as some professionals were unaware of the MARAC and its role or how to refer to it when they might be in a position to help a client or patient.

Joint Action Plans

- 9.28 Committee Members requested details of how action plans were tracked, including with reporting back to all relevant agencies. The Senior Coordinator explained that the MARAC did keep track of when actions had been set and when the time limit expired. Overdue actions would then be raised with the relevant agency and escalated to line managers or VAWG leads where appropriate in cases where responses were not occurring. Some agencies were better than others in providing updates and, in some cases, it may be that the action had been completed but that the MARAC was not being provided with the information about this and so actions were showing as being outstanding. She added that the MARAC was always looking for ways to improve the action tracking process.

RECOMMENDATION 13 – That the Cabinet Member should emphasise to all multi-agency partners the Council’s strong support for the MARAC coordination of action plans and the importance of ensuring that this process operates effectively when brought in-house from April 2026.

Immigration status

- 9.29 Queries were raised about women experiencing domestic abuse who had immigration status issues as they could often be fearful about being referred to authorities, particularly with the Police as a partner agency to the MARAC and domestic abuse services. The Senior Coordinator agreed that, when the MARAC was aware of victim/survivors with immigration or NRPF (No Recourse to Public Funds) issues, it was clear that it was very difficult for them to access support, there was a lack of agencies to refer them to and they were very worried about the possible repercussions of being in contact with statutory services. This was an issue across all Boroughs. The MARAC did include any immigration/NRPF issues on referral forms to services so that they were aware of the sensitivities and any actions taken or required. She acknowledged that there could be difficulties with the Police as partners if there was a potential criminal offence involved but this was for the MARAC chair to navigate that situation as the purpose of the MARAC was to address the risk of serious harm or homicide and not to hinder victim/survivors. There could also be a lack of overall support for people with immigration/NRPF issues so these cases sometimes required thinking outside of the box from partners across the MARAC.

Metropolitan Police

- 9.30 The Committee heard directly from several local Metropolitan Police officers about their work on VAWG prevention in Haringey.
- 9.31 The Committee was informed that changes were coming into effect as a result of the recent criticism of Public Protection (Casey Review) and also Operation Aegis was ongoing – this was a two-year project involving teams of officers experienced in public protection visiting every Basic Command Unit (BCU) to work with them for a period of time to improve processes and morale. The team had visited North Area BCU recently and had provided a report including learning that had been taken on board.
- 9.32 Staffing was an area of change that had been highlighted as part of these findings and so the Community Safety teams (responsible for domestic abuse investigations) would get one additional DI (Detective Inspector), four additional DSs (Detective Sergeants) and 12 DCs (Detective Constables) in order to help with workload issues, both in terms of volume and experience. The RASSO teams (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) would get one additional DI, one additional DS and two additional DCs. The Sexual Exploitation teams (dealing with offences against children and young people) would get one additional DS and four DCs. All of these posts would not be filled immediately but this would be the main change.
- 9.33 Examples of specific action that could be taken against offenders included:
- A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) enables the Police to take immediate emergency protection measures outside of the evidential chain (i.e. separate to any ongoing investigation or legal proceedings) when risk was considered to be high. If an offender breached a notice issued to them, they could be arrested and brought before the courts.
 - Sexual Risk Orders and Stalking Preventative Orders could also be used. There was a recent example of this being used against a known offender who was observed to be stalking lone females. The Order was restrictive and prohibited him from engaging

with any lone females. He was proactively monitored through surveillance with patterns of behaviour observed and he was caught breaching his order which enabled an arrest.

- Another change taking place was the offender focus which would be a more proactive rather than reactive part of offender management including through the Predatory Offender Unit and Risk Management Unit.
- An initiative called VAWG 100 involved a risk management tool which had identified the 100 most prolific offenders in the Metropolitan Police area. This information was provided to the proactive teams with the expectation of utilising every method possible to target these individuals and prevent further offences.

9.34 Community based initiatives included:

- Proactive policing through the Town Centre teams, including speaking to the managers of the local businesses and requesting the opportunity to deliver a personalised presentation to the staff and speak to them about their priorities and concerns. This often involved night-time economy crime and the concerns raised would vary according to the individual, but some people expressed concerns that they were at greater risk of crime because of their gender. The advice included what you should do in certain situations and how to reduce the risk of being a victim of crime, including offences involving drink spiking and harassment in the street for example, and how to report offences. Information was also provided about what the Police was doing to tackle these types of offences.
- The Walk and Talk initiative was a Metropolitan Police-wide VAWG initiative to provide women over the age of 18 with the opportunity to engage with a female Police officer in plain clothes to share concerns and experiences about safety in a private way. The feedback was relayed back to other officers/teams or to other partnership agencies where, for example, there were concerns about street lighting in a particular area. Patrols could also be targeted at a specific area, such as a park or near a late night bar/club area for example, if there were particular concerns raised.
- Working with partner agencies to divert young people from coming into contact with the Police. This including engaging with men and boys about their how their behaviour could potentially impact on women and girls.
- There had been recent engagement with the Somali community through the RISE project by attending the female-only Rise & Shine coffee mornings to enable them to discuss VAWG issues that they didn't know how to raise or deal with due to stigma, cultural issues or not having the confidence to speak to services directly.

9.35 The Committee welcomed the proactive initiatives being undertaken to engage with local communities on VAWG issues. The Committee was conscious that there was considerable underreporting of VAWG crimes³⁰ and that it was therefore crucial for women and girls to feel comfortable to be able to report incidents to the Police. In particular, the Committee

³⁰ p.3, 17 & 19, VAWG Strategic Threat Assessment, National Police Chiefs' Council (2023)
<https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/violence-against-women-and-girls---strategic-threat-risk-assessment-2023.pdf>

felt that the Walk and Talk initiative provided a valuable and less formal route for women to be able to communicate concerns and experiences to Police.

- 9.36 The Committee also emphasised the importance of women and girls being regularly kept informed by the Police about the progress of their case.

RECOMMENDATION 14 – That advice for women and girls on the options available to them to report concerns and/or specific incidences of VAWG crime to the Police should be included in the new local VAWG strategy, through local VAWG-related services and wider communications on VAWG issues.

10. Implications of 2025 Supreme Court Ruling on the Equality Act

- 10.1 In April 2025, the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom issued a judgment³¹ on the correct interpretation of the Equality Act 2010, with particular reference to how the words “woman” and “sex” are defined in the Act.
- 10.2 The Equality Act defines nine protected characteristics which are provided with statutory protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. These characteristics are: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation.
- 10.3 The judgment was the outcome of the final stage of legal proceedings brought by the campaign group For Women Scotland against the Scottish Ministers. The judgment was that the terms “man”, “woman” and “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex.
- 10.4 The rights of transgender people remain protected under the Equality Act by virtue of the ‘gender reassignment’ characteristic and through the Gender Recognition Act 2004. They are also able to invoke the provisions on direct discrimination and harassment, and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex. A trans woman can claim sex discrimination because she is perceived to be a woman.
- 10.5 The judgment has implications for a range of services, but in the context of VAWG services provided by local authorities this could mean that a failure to provide single-sex services, for example at women’s refuges, would be indirect discrimination. The Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has updated its Statutory Code of Practice for services, public functions and associations. An EHRC consultation on the updated Code closed at the end of June 2025³² but, as of March 2026, the new draft Code has not been laid before Parliament.
- 10.6 Asked by the Committee about the likely implication of the judgment for Haringey’s VAWG services, the VAWG Programme Lead reported that the team was represented on a cross-

³¹ United Kingdom Supreme Court Judgment, *For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers*, April 2025:

https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf

³² ECHR update on Code of Practice for services, public functions and associations:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/codes-practice/code-practice-services-public-functions-and-associations>

organisational working group that was examining these issues. She also noted that referrals for trans-women were relatively infrequent.

- 10.7 The Committee concluded that further clarity was required on the provision of VAWG services in Haringey to ensure that they were compliant with the Supreme Court ruling and therefore recommended that a full review of the Council's VAWG policy be carried out.

RECOMMENDATION 15 - That a review be carried out of the council's VAWG policy, and all services and risk assessments, to ensure they reflect the definition of "sex" in the Equality Act as established by the Supreme Court ruling in 'For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers'.

RECOMMENDATION 16 - To ensure that specialist provision is available in Haringey for people who fall outside of the legal definition.