

Report for: Cabinet – 15 September 2026

Item Number: 9

Title: Matters Referred to Cabinet by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
– Scrutiny Review on the Prevention of Violence Against Women
and Girls

**Report
authorised by:** Sara Sutton, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health

Lead Officer: Will Maimaris/Chantelle Fatania

Ward(s) affected: N/A

**Report for Key/
Non-Key Decision:** Non-Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed Cabinet response to the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee review on the Prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1. Safeguarding is one of the most important areas of work we do as a Council. Violence against women and girls is not a niche policy issue; it is a fundamental question of safety and equality in our borough. Every day, women and girls in Haringey live with the reality of fear, control and abuse, in their homes, in their relationships, and too often in public spaces.
- 2.2. We know that the scale of this violence is vast, and we also know that the current system is not good enough. Survivors still face barriers to accessing support. Services are fragmented. And too many women and girls, including those from our most marginalised communities, do not feel protected
- 2.3. That is why I welcome the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review on the prevention of violence against women and girls. It is rigorous, it is honest, and it pushes us to go further and faster. It focuses on two crucial fronts: what we do in schools to prevent harmful attitudes and behaviours before they take root, and what we do in communities to make sure that no one is left behind when they need help.

- 2.4. As a Green administration, we believe that tackling violence against women and girls is inseparable from our wider mission to fight inequality, challenge discrimination and build a fairer society. That means we must be uncompromising in our commitment to women and girls, whether they are trans or cisgender, as well as recognising the violence, abuse and harassment faced by gender diverse people.
- 2.5. Our response to the recommendations reflects that commitment. We are strengthening training for staff, expanding community-based support, improving how we learn from short-term projects, and linking our VAWG work to suicide prevention and bereavement support. We are also committing to a new GBV Strategy that will be developed from 2027, with a strong focus on children and young people, including specific attention to online harms.
- 2.6. On trans inclusion, I want to be equally clear. Trans people, including trans women, trans men and non-binary people, experience high levels of domestic abuse, sexual violence and harassment, and they face additional barriers when seeking help. Our approach must ensure that we have a range of services that are safe, accessible and non-discriminatory.
- 2.7. Given this fact, there is a strong case for moving towards “gender based violence (GBV)” as a broader framing, because it better captures the reality that violence rooted in gender does not only affect women and girls, while still allowing us to keep focus on the forms of abuse that do disproportionately affect them. We are therefore committing to a new more widely focussed Gender Based Violence Strategy that will be developed from 2027, with a strong focus on children and young people, including specific attention to online harms
- 2.8. We will not solve this crisis overnight. But we can be the Council that refuses to look away, that refuses to treat this as “someone else’s problem”, and that refuses to accept a world where people are expected to live with fear of gender-based violence. I am proud that this Cabinet is taking forward a response that is practical, honest about constraints, and firmly rooted in our values. I commend the report.
- 2.9. I am proud that this Cabinet is taking forward a response that is practical, honest about constraints, and firmly rooted in our values. I commend the report.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Note the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as attached at Appendix 1.

- 3.2 Respond to these recommendations as set out in the table attached at Appendix 2.

4. Reasons for decision

- 3.1 This report is put forward by Overview and Scrutiny in accordance with Part Four, Section G, Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules, paragraph 1.3 (vi) which outlines that following approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the final report and recommendations will be presented to the next available Cabinet meeting. Under the agreed protocols, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has responsibility for all overview and scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council, where the OSC can assist the Council and the Cabinet in its budgetary and policy framework through conducting in-depth analysis of local policy issues and can make recommendations for service development or improvement. The Committee may: (a) Review or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Cabinet's or Council's functions. (b) Make reports and recommendations to the full Council, the Cabinet or relevant non-Executive Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions. (c) Make reports or recommendations on matters affecting the area or its inhabitants.
- 4.2. On 11th March 2026, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee approved the Review on the Prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls and agreed to send the recommendations to Cabinet for response.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 None. Part Four, Section G, Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules provide at paragraph 11, that final reports and recommendations will be presented to the next available Cabinet meeting.

6. Background Information

- 6.1 The prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) was identified as a high priority as part of a 'Scrutiny Café' consultation event. Based on feedback from this event, information that had been received through previous scrutiny sessions 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.
- 6.2 **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 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.

6.3 **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

6.4 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.

6.5 Evidence and background information was received from national and local organisations including Mind in Haringey, Respect, AAFDA (Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse), Hearthstone, the Metropolitan Police, the MARAC Coordinator and the Council Children's Services and VAWG team.

6.6 The recommendations of the Review are set out in full on page 4 of the Committee's report (**APPENDIX A**). These include recommendations on the wider use of educational programmes in schools, the future adoption of a 'whole-school approach' on VAWG, the expansion of domestic abuse awareness training for Council staff, the promotion of Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation for housing providers in Haringey and improved support for people affected by a VAWG related homicide or suicide.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

7.1 A reduction in Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) was included as a outcome area in the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan (CDP) 2024-26 under the 'Safer Haringey' theme.

7.2 The specific activities listed in the CDP were:

- *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.*

8. Carbon and Climate Change

- 8.1 There are no significant implications for carbon and climate change as part of this Review.

9. Statutory Officers comments

9.1. Finance and Procurement

- 9.1.1. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

9.2. Legal

- 9.2.1. Under Section 9F Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) have the powers to review and scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge of any executive and non executive functions and to make reports or recommendations to the executive or to the authority with respect to the discharge of those functions
- 9.2.2. OSC also have the powers to make reports or recommendations to the executive or to the authority on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of its area. In order to discharge this scrutiny function, OSC has appointed Scrutiny Review Panels.
- 9.2.3. The OSC has conducted a review into Violence Against Women and Girls and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet that has been approved by the committee. Under Section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, there is a duty on Cabinet to respond to the scrutiny report, indicating what (if any) action Cabinet proposes to take, within 2 months of receiving the report and recommendations.

- 9.2.4. OSC recommends that the council reviews its VAWG Policy to ensure it reflects the Equality Act 2010 and the Supreme Court ruling on the meaning of sex within the Equality Act 2010. Any review of the VAWG policy should take account of the current statutory framework and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Statutory Code due to come into effect on the 5th August 2026.

9.3. **Equality**

- 9.3.1. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

- 9.3.2. The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

- 9.3.3. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has considered the Public Sector Equality Duty through evidence gathering and final reporting. The Review terms of reference and recommendations are directly related to the requirements listed under paragraph 9.6 including the prevention of discrimination, harassment and victimisation of women and girls based on their sex.

- 9.3.4. The report references the implications of the 2025 Supreme Court Ruling on VAWG Policy. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Statutory Code of Practice, services, public functions and associations is due to come into effect on the 5th August 2026. Whilst the Code is not legislation, it is statutory guidance issued under the Equality Act 2006. Public Authorities must have regard to the Code in exercising their public functions.

10. **Use of Appendices**

APPENDIX A – Scrutiny Review on Prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls.

APPENDIX B – Response to Recommendations of the Scrutiny Review.