

London Borough of Barnet Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2013 -2016

Foreword

Violence against women and girls (VAWG here after), is prevalent and serious; a violation of human rights and unacceptable. It is shocking that responding to domestic violence alone costs our borough **£38 million a year**¹. If we can respond to VAWG early on and even prevent it, we can make significant savings and most importantly reduce the harm it causes to victims, their families and the wider community.

Understanding the economic cost of VAWG is important as we are undertaking this ambitious strategy at a time when resources are limited. Working together is necessary not only so that victims and their families get the help they need from a range of services, but so that the partnership is creative and bold in how it works to respond to VAWG.

Through this ambitious and wide ranging strategy and action plan, we are demonstrating our concern about VAWG in our community and our commitment to address it. Addressing VAWG will require support and commitment of the entire partnership and it is a main priority of the Safer Community Strategy.

As a borough we want to develop a comprehensive response to VAWG, which includes all agencies working together so that we are able to prevent abuse before it happens and stop it from happening again, make sure victims and their families are provided with information, support and care by a knowledgeable workforce. It is important that staff know what to do and that together we challenge attitudes and beliefs that underpin VAWG. We will continue to hold perpetrators accountable (with partner agencies in the criminal justice system) for their behaviour and support them to change their behaviour.

We all have a role to play in ending violence against women.

What is violence against women and girls?

In March 2013 the Home Office revised the definition of domestic violence to include those aged 16-17 and wording to reflect coercive control. The definition of domestic violence and abuse now states:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- *psychological*
- *physical*
- *sexual*
- *financial*

¹ *The Cost of Domestic Violence: by local authority, Trust for London and the Henry Smith Charity (2011)*

➤ *emotional*

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

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

* This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

In line with HM Government's strategy *Call to End to Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2010* and the Mayor of London strategy *The Way Forward 2010*, this strategy will be adopting the United Nations (UN) Declaration (1993) on the elimination of violence against women.

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Violence against women and girls includes the following:

- *Sexual violence, abuse and exploitation*
- *Sexual harassment and bullying*
- *Stalking*
- *Trafficking and forced prostitution*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Female genital mutilation*
- *Forced marriage*
- *Crime committed in the name of “honour”.*

We agree that it is helpful to define VAWG as “*any form of violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately*”.

Barnet's response to violence against women and girls

The change to the definition of DV to include young people is welcomed, as it will help raise awareness that young people experience domestic violence in their own intimate relationships. This will mean that our safeguarding children systems in Barnet will need to be reviewed to ensure that are equipped to respond appropriately to younger victims. The responsibilities of the multi agency partnership for the aspects of VAWG affecting children and young people will need to be reviewed so that there is agreement of the strategic ownership for these areas. We have included this work as objectives in our VAWG action plan.

As a partnership, we will need to be clear in explaining the vision of this strategy, particularly in respect to what this means for men and boys. We appreciate that our

response to VAWG will be focusing particularly on domestic violence and that we need to develop our response to other types of VAWG so that these get equal attention. We have included all aspects of VAWG in our action plan and will review these.

What does our strategy mean for men and boys?

The term violence against women and girls can be accompanied by concern about the exclusion of men and boys from services and a lack of recognition that men and boys can experience these forms of violence and abuse.

We recognise the gendered nature of these forms of violence and abuse (that women and girls are more likely to experience them), therefore the response we are developing to VAWG is based on the understanding that women and girls **disproportionately** experience these different forms of violence.

By adopting the definition of VAWG used by the UN and the government, we understand that women and girls are **disproportionately** victims of all forms VAWG and consequently men are over represented as abusers. The term **disproportionately**, helpfully reinforces the fact that men and boys are not excluded as they can be victims of VAWG. This also allows for understanding that perpetrators can also be female. Helpfully and very specifically, this definition and strategy also understands that some forms of VAWG are gender specific such as female genital mutilation.

It is important that men and boys are included in all aspects of the strategy, particularly our prevention and awareness raising work. We hope to engage more men and boys in this through working closely with www.whiteribboncampaign.org.uk

We are committed to ensuring that **any** victim of DV or VAWG receives a sensitive and appropriate response so that they get the help and support they need. This strategy and action plan will help us achieve this aim.

The vision for the borough's response to VAWG

The vision we have for the response to VAWG is simple. We want to ensure that people who experience any form of VAWG get the help and support they need. We have achieved a significant amount in our response to domestic violence and now we need to further develop and improve this, whilst giving equal attention and effort to the other forms of VAWG. We have taken the vision we produced for the previous Barnet DV strategy and as they are still relevant, refreshed it to include our plans for VAWG.

The Barnet Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2013 - 2016 aims to coordinate services in Barnet in support of the wider safeguarding agenda and to ensure that:

Survivors and their children

Able to access to a consistent range of co-ordinated support services that maximise safety, reduce repeat victimisation and acknowledge their individual needs and experiences.

Systems of early identification and a proactive response to VAWG are in place to reduce risks

Perpetrators

Held accountable by a range of interventions that reduce risk; provide appropriate penalties; provide clear messages that their behaviour is not acceptable and provided with specialist support to change their behaviour.

Commissioners of services and senior management

Commitment to mainstreaming responses to both VAWG; allocation of sufficient resources for specialist services; implement robust and comprehensive monitoring systems to ensure equality and effectiveness of services; provide good practice guidance, training and support to practitioners and improve effectiveness through better coordination, information sharing and allocation of existing funds.

The people of Barnet

Live in a safer community; are informed of support services; have an increased understanding of VAWG, challenge the social tolerance of VAWG in their communities.

DV and VAWG in the London Borough of Barnet

Like other areas we know that our intelligence of the nature of DV and VAWG in Barnet is very limited. The information we have available is patchy, mostly linked to police reporting and is heavily based on DV.

For the period 2011/12 there were 3.41 offences (per 1000 population) DV reported to the police in Barnet, raking us second in London.

The total costs of domestic violence to Barnet have been estimated to be **£38 million** (not including human and emotional costs and pro rated by population)².

Costs included in this total sum of £38 million are:

- Physical and mental health care £11.4 million
- Criminal justice £8.3 million
- Social Services £1.1 million
- Housing £0.8 million

In the period 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012 there were a total of 163 cases discussed at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which involved a total of 183 children. The MARAC aims to review and co-ordinate service provision in high risk of harm domestic violence cases. The aim is to reduce repeat victimisation and prevent domestic violence homicides. Cases discussed at the MARAC have been risk assessed as cases where the victim is considered to be at risk of death or significant harm. MARACs review approximately the top ten percent of all DV incidents that reported.

² Ibid

Each high risk case of domestic violence discussed at the MARAC costs the public purse £20,000 and health services £5,000 per victim³. Using this formula we know that the 163 cases discussed in the last year of the MARAC's operation, **cost the public purse in Barnet just over £3.25 million and health services £815 000.**

Barnet has had one domestic homicide in 2012 and this has been reviewed in accordance with new Home Office homicide review guidelines.

As the information we have on the nature and prevalence of VAWG in the borough is very limited we will seek to improve this through objectives included in the 3 year action plan. This will require the support and cooperation of the partnership so that we can gather as much data as possible to help us learn more about VAWG in Barnet.

What have we achieved since the last strategy?

Whilst we recognise we still have a significant amount of work to do in delivering a comprehensive response to VAWG, we have achieved meaningful success with our work on domestic violence in the last 3 years. The challenge will be to continue this level of achievement on DV whilst broadening it out to cover the other forms of VAWG so that they equally benefit from our commitment and efforts.

Since the last domestic violence strategy we have achieved the following:

1. The council has a new domestic violence web page and a MARAC web page. Within this there is a practitioner's page that contains up to date information, especially the work that we completed about referral pathways for different agencies and council departments.
2. Monthly MARAC training sessions continue to be delivered across the partnership to ensure the MARAC system is effective and high risk victims of domestic violence are supported.
3. The borough's domestic violence forum participated in the 'Safeguarding Month' events for borough. "
4. We have successfully commissioned Solace Women's Aid to deliver the DV Services in the borough from 1st April 2012 till 31st March 2014. Solace Women's Aid will deliver with other specialist DV services the following:
 - Two refuges, 18 bed spaces, one is with Jewish Women's Aid
 - An independent DV Advocacy and Support Service, with an Independent DV Advocate for the Specialist Domestic Violence Court, alongside Barnet Asian Women's Association.
 - A perpetrator service delivered by DVIP.
5. We have supported the development of the North London Rape Crisis service (along with the Mayor of London and other north London boroughs), provided by Solace Women's Aid, to provide help, support and counselling for victims of rape and sexual violence

³ Saving lives, saving money: MARACs and high risk domestic abuse CAADA 2010

6. We have promoted our domestic violence services to all residents through features included in Barnet First magazine and community engagement events
7. We have worked hard to improve the MARAC. The MARAC now meets every three weeks, and we have set up a MARAC steering group, that is chaired by the police to oversee its work and continue to deliver an excellent coordinated response to high risk victims of domestic violence
8. In accordance with the legal requirements we have held and completed a multi agency domestic homicide review (the report was reviewed by the Home in early 2013)
9. Continue to support the work of the Specialist DV Court at Hendon Magistrates court and commissioning an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) to support victims.
10. Developed links with Barnet Homes to improve the response to people at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence
11. Worked alongside the Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board and Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board to ensure that DV is included in their work
12. Developed links with services to support difficult and complex cases such as substance misuse and mental health services
13. Improved the response of Children's Service to DV – the service now has in place;
 - Within social care, three specialist DV workers who work with and support families affected by domestic violence who are deemed to be vulnerable and high risk
 - A Safer Families Team, which works around early intervention staffed by three DV workers, who work with children up to 11 years old
 - The new Troubled Families Unit that will also work with families affected by DV
14. Designing a DV training programme for the partnership. This will run from January 2013, on a level 1 basic DV awareness, level 2, in-depth DV training and level 3 which is the MARAC training. Separate VAWG training modules will also be provided.

The national VAWG policy framework and local strategic links

As previously explained, we have decided to move our response to DV so that it is placed within the wider VAWG agenda. We feel this is the right thing to do for both improving the services and help for victims, their families and abusers and to ensure our work here in Barnet is in line with government policy (both regionally and nationally) recognised best practice.

The VAWG policy framework as set out by the government and the Greater London Authority (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) is established and provides us with a valuable framework to start our VAWG response with.

- 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Violence Against Women (the Convention defines and criminalises various forms of VAWG and is the first legally binding instrument to provide a legal framework).

- The Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls (November 2010)
Coalition government with revised action plan (March 2011).
- The Way Forward, Mayor's Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2010)
- Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence Against Women and Children, Department of Health (2010)
- Protecting People, Promoting Health, Department of Health (2012)
- Public Health Outcomes Framework (2012)

Local

- Children and Young People Plan 2013 – 2016
- Safer Communities Action Plan 2012/13
- Council's Corporate Plan
- Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment 2009
- Housing Strategy 2003 – 2010
- Homelessness Strategy 2004
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2008/09 – 2011/12
- Local Safeguarding Children Board Workplan
- Safer Communities Strategy 2008-2011
- Barnet Drug Treatment Plan 2010/11
- Barnet Alcohol Strategy 2010/11

Engagement with the new health system

This strategy faces the challenge of addressing all form of VAWG at a time of unprecedented change and restructure within the health service. The health service is a key partner in the response to people affected by VAWG (victims, their families and abusers). If this strategy is to be successful (and the action plan achieved), we will need to ensure that all health partners across the system (Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health, Hospital Trust, mental health, primary care and community services care providers) are engaged in this strategy and action plan.

Public Health is now placed within the local authority. This will help strengthen strategic links with this work as Public Health have roles and responsibilities in preventing violence. Public Health are closely involved in crime reduction, so will be a key partner in this strategy. The Public Health Outcomes Framework includes DV and sexual violence indicators, which will be relevant and helpful to our local work on these issues.

Through the course of the strategy and action plan we hope to be able to engage with the Health and Wellbeing Board so that VAWG is recognised as a health and wellbeing priority for the borough.

We will need to ensure that the clinical commissioning group is appropriately engaged in the coordinated community response to VAWG at both a strategic and operational level (responding to victims, families and abusers) so that necessary health based services are commissioned and we can support health services improve their response to DV and VAWG.

Outline of strategic themes

This strategy has 4 strategic objectives. These build on the strategic themes we adopted for our last domestic violence strategy. Not only are these themes helpful because they reflect the structure of national and regional policy but provide a platform for us to build and deliver an effective response to all aspects of VAWG on.

They are:

- Coordination of the response – Ensuring that the coordinated community response model to domestic violence and violence against women and girls is developed and implemented locally
- Prevention – changing attitudes and preventing violence, awareness raising campaigns, safeguarding and educating children and young people, early identification/training and training
- Provision – helping women and girls to continue with their lives (effective provision of services, specialist services and support; emergency and acute services; refuges and safe accommodation)
- Protection – delivering an effective criminal justice system (investigation, prosecution, victim support and protection and perpetrator programmes)

How we measure the impact of this strategy and action plan?

The action plan will help us ensure that we succeed and deliver this VAWG strategy. The strategy and action plan will be monitored regularly so that the partnership is clear about what progress is being made. Effective review and monitoring will be important as the VAWG agenda is wider than we have tackled previously and the work will be challenging and complex.

The action plan will be monitored through a series of reporting arrangements within the Barnet partnership. Barnet Safer Communities Partnership will have ultimate responsibility for delivery of the strategy and action plan. We have some work to in the early part of the strategy to review and re organise the meeting structure so that this is extended to cover all aspects of VAWG. We will also need to agree with other strategic groups that meet in Barnet about their arrangements and responsibilities for VAWG (specifically young people and adults at risk of harm).

The revised VAWG Strategy Board will be responsible for overseeing progress of the action plan. This will be done with support from both the VAWG Operational Group and the VAWG Forum. The Strategy Group will receive quarterly reports on the entire action plan. It will identify and agree the risks to delivery and will report these to the Safer Communities Partnership Board (and other boards where this is deemed necessary/appropriate).

- Barnet Safer Communities Partnership – Is responsible for delivering the Safer Community Strategy and has the specific aim to reduce crime and anti-Social Behaviour: and ensure residents feel safe
- VAWG Strategy Board - This board exists to ensure that there is a robust, coordinated response to VAWG working at a strategic level across the partnership in Barnet. It does this by making clear the roles, responsibilities and commitments of partner agencies to ensure that outcomes and targets in the action plan are agreed and delivered.
- VAWG Operational Group – This group oversees the implementation of the co-ordinated community response and this strategy
- VAWG Forum with an independent chairperson – This forum is a networking space for practitioners, where best practice is shared and it works to support victims of domestic violence and aims to reduce VAWG in the borough
- A VAWG Coordinator*
- A MARAC coordinator* will be working on a full time basis from April 2013.
- **posts will move to Safeguarding Children's Division in January 2013.*