



IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF WOMEN & GIRLS

Our Plan for Action - DRAFT

February 2022



Foreword

Violence, misogyny, and other forms of abuse towards women and girls sadly remain an unacceptable but everyday occurrence up and down the country. The despicable murders of Sabina Nessa here in our own borough, and of Sarah Everard in March last year, have rightly amplified calls upon the Government and wider public institutions to do more to reverse this horrific trend, particularly to tackle the outdated attitudes and grievous behaviour still displayed by many men toward women. The time this needed to stop has long since passed.



Here at the Royal Borough of Greenwich, we recognise our statutory and moral responsibilities regarding gender-based violence, and also that our best efforts to date to improve women's safety, whether in the home, at school or elsewhere, have not been enough. We need to do more, not just as a Council, but also with our community safety partners and our wider stakeholders, be it community groups, local businesses, or the voluntary sector.

Since the horrific murder of Sarah back in early 2021, the Council has embarked on a listening and engagement campaign in our communities, both in person and virtually. During the Autumn, we formally established a combined member and officer taskforce to reflect on what we were hearing, to review our current approaches, and to identify additional opportunities where we can make greater impact going forward. The taskforce, and its relative sub-groups, have looked at four main themes. These are:

- Prevention of, and the response to, domestic abuse
- Safety of women and girls in public places
- Education of young people, particularly men and boys, within educational settings
- Improving equality and accessibility for women and girls in terms of how the Council operates and how key services are delivered.

This document is the fruit of our efforts and outlines our plan for action going forward. This includes measures recently or soon-to-be introduced, as well as those which we will consider or take forward as part of longer-term strategies and modernisation programmes planned or already underway.

In support of this work, the Council has already started to identify funding, including from existing budgets and local development opportunities, to help progress from design to delivery over the coming months and years. We will continue to explore additional grant and partnership funding opportunities to build on and sustain the improvements we seek to achieve going forward.

As the Deputy Leader, and the Chair of the Royal Borough of Greenwich's Women Safety Taskforce, I commend this plan to you.

Councillor Denise Scott McDonald
Deputy Leader of the Council

Our approach to the safety of women and girls

The Royal Borough of Greenwich, as part of the wider Safer Greenwich community safety partnership, has prioritised its efforts towards tackling violence against women & girls (VAWG) for many years, particularly in regard to domestic abuse. This focus is also supported by other statutory partnerships responsible for the safeguarding of both adults and children.

Our most recent VAWG strategy (2019-21) outlines our shared vision and the approaches that have been developed and adopted over recent times. This strategy is currently being refreshed and will also be broadened to include 'Women's Safety' which will focus on wider safety issues impacting women of all ages, including girls. As such, this will include misogyny and other forms of non-violent, but nevertheless unacceptable, behaviour by men toward women.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19, the Council and its various community safety and safeguarding partnerships, have worked hard to maintain support for victims, to jointly manage growing numbers of referrals for high-risk domestic abuses cases reaching the borough's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC), but also to introduce a range of new initiatives with the support of external grant-funded successfully applied for. Some of these projects are described below and where possible, will be continued or built upon in addition to the other measures described within this document.

Domestic abuse housing alliance (DAHA) accreditation



The Royal Borough of Greenwich was successful in achieving the DAHA accreditation in 2020/21, seen as best practice in housing services to respond to domestic abuse.

This has ensured that all housing and tenancy staff have comprehensive knowledge of how to respond to domestic abuse, including the implications surrounding cohesive control, complex needs, and the wider issues around violence against women and girls.

This accreditation has ensured that all housing staff:

- Respond with empathy to trauma-affected victims.
- Are aware of support services and referral pathways, including those presenting from other areas.
- Support victims into refuge provision, emergency temporary accommodation or with reciprocal moves with consideration of safety.
- Offer the sanctuary scheme, when appropriate, to allow victims to remain in their home.
- Are equipped to offer support to domestic abuse victims with complex needs, disabilities, those from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and marginalised communities.
- Offer an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) support service at the point of contact, who can provide advice and guidance of legal options and safety planning.
- Support victims in Royal Greenwich refuges into independent living and permanent housing.

IRIS project

General Practitioner (GPs) are well placed to identify both victims and perpetrators through connected health needs. The information held by GPs is often invaluable, as it helps 'fill the gaps', especially when a victim and/or perpetrator has not had contact with any other statutory body. Therefore, GP surgery staff have a crucial role in ensuring victims are referred for specialist support and in preventing homicides. The IRIS model is proven to improve NHS General Practice response to domestic abuse, which in turn improves the safety, quality of life and wellbeing of domestic abuse victims.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich, supported by the Her Centre, introduced the IRIS project locally just before lockdown in September 2020. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, a growing number of GP surgeries have been fully trained and more are signing up as time progresses.

Already, the MARAC has already seen an increase in referrals from GP practices, and feedback confirms a significant improvement in the understanding of domestic abuse issues among local GP surgeries.

Domestic abuse perpetration

As part of our approach to tackling the behaviour of men, the Royal Borough of Greenwich has continued to improve responses and intervention around high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators, particularly with repeat offenders.¹

We were successful in securing initial and repeat Home Office funding to launch a specific perpetrator project. Although work to engage offenders is often challenging, particularly when they are not already working with other services, improvements are being made to gain subject consent. As a result, we are already seeing successful engagement with those willing to participate in the programme.

As well as closer monitoring and information sharing between partners, the project includes an offender-focused therapeutic programme which is being provided by the Mary Dolly Foundation, amongst other holistic interventions available.

SafeCORE

SafeCORE works with children and families already supported by the Council's Children's Services department in relation to domestic abuse or other family conflict, who don't not always need continuing social work support. SafeCORE aims to provide interventions which reduce future escalation of conflict by addressing underlying causal factors in each family.

Key elements of the SafeCORE innovation model include:

- Intensive, relationship-based interventions with families, of up to six months
- Compassion-focused approach to service delivery
- 'Whole family' approach with a focus on engaging fathers / male partners
- Consent-based service, working alongside families

¹ It should be noted that domestic abuse affects all genders, not just women.

- Making the ‘voice of the child’ prominent – what is it like to be a child in the family?
- Building sustainability with families

Moving forward

The following section outlines the range of actions we will commit to as a local authority and in conjunction with our partners. These measures are being developed following significant engagement with local women and girls, and relevant support organisations.

As can be seen in the following table, our high-level plan covers five pillars of activity, these being:

- **Enforcement** – addressing offending through visible presence, rule-setting and appropriate use of legislation.
- **Education** – delivering positive behavioural change within our schools and universities.
- **Engagement & Empowerment** – raising public awareness and improving community participation.
- **Engineering** – making places safer through physical improvements and taking a targeted approach to areas of concern.
- **Equalities & Equity** – ensuring that women and girls from all backgrounds are better able to access key Council and partner services, which are more tailored to their individual and intersectional collective needs. Equally, taking steps to maximise the standard and consistency of service delivery across Council departments.

Ensuring delivery through robust governance

This document, and the action plan contained within, has been endorsed by both the Cabinet and Full Council prior to public publication. Periodic updates will be provided to these forums, as directed by the Leader of the Council, to provide reassurance on progress.

As Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) is already an agreed priority for the Safer Greenwich Partnership (SGP) – our local community safety partnership – annual updates will continue to be provided with more regular monitoring undertaken by the smaller SGP executive group. Updates to other key strategic boards, for example the Greenwich Adult Safeguarding Board and the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership, will also be provided.

In terms of delivery oversight itself, all of the actions contained within the plan will be taken forward by identified teams and project boards already in existence. Some actions will also specifically be referenced in relevant strategy documents currently in development or being refreshed, for example our new VAWG Strategy.

We will also seek to use our formal scrutiny arrangements to again monitor the delivery and impact of our plan. This will further aid transparency and legitimacy of approach in support of community confidence but may also help identify further opportunities to improve delivery.

Our Plan for Action

PILLAR	ACTION	COMMENTS
ENFORCEMENT	To fund, for a minimum of 18 months, two additional uniformed Community Safety Enforcement Officers within our Safer Spaces team. This will increase enforcement visibility and reassurance, while also providing problem-solving activities in priority areas of concern.	We anticipate officers will be selected and in post by the start of the first half of 2022/3.
	To explore the use of Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) legislation, and supporting signage in hotspot locations, to enable enforcement against unacceptable behaviour towards women and girls.	<p>We are currently reviewing whether existing PSPOs within Royal Greenwich may enable enforcement or whether variations of these orders would be required. This is a statutory process and therefore any changes to existing orders would be subject to consultation and evidential requirements.</p> <p>We are also considering whether introduction of signage alone may assist in 'rule-setting' and provide some positive behavioural change amongst men, even if enforcement powers are limited or unavailable.</p>
	To launch a new 'Beat Stop' initiative in conjunction with local businesses, in order to keep local police officers 'on the beat', through the increased availability of welcoming and accommodating venues whilst on duty.	The 'Beat Stop' scheme looks to increase the number of business premises where local officers can use available facilities during normal operating times, including during the evening, in order to maximise their time on the street.

		The scheme is due to launch during Q4 of 2021/23 and includes supporting venues such as licensed premises and leisure centres where even a small, additional police presence may help generate greater levels of reassurance for women and girls, as well as promoting more positive behaviour from men and boys in such settings.
EDUCATION	To commission Little Fish Theatre to deliver a series of plays in secondary schools across the borough, focusing on challenging misogyny and reducing violence towards women and girls.	Little Fish are an existing commissioned service who deliver wider hate crime campaigns across Royal Greenwich. Delivery of the plays will commence in March 2022.
	To work with colleges and universities across Royal Greenwich focusing on engagement, education and empowerment. Colleges will develop policies and deliver workshops to students which, in turn, will encourage public safety within the community.	We are currently working with Greenwich University who have recently signed up to the Women's Night Safety Charter and who are currently working on the development of a policy in partnership with the Student Union.
ENGAGEMENT & EMPOWERMENT	To undertake a further, more locality-focused women's safety survey to identify areas and venues of concern, and to help shape delivery of this plan.	This survey was launched by the Taskforce in December to help inform aspects of this plan. Perceptions of public space safety were also included in this with view to potentially measuring indicative improvement in future years.

	<p>To re-publicise and continue to promote use of the police Street Safe App. Street Safe is a new online tool being piloted by the Police to enable people, particularly women and girls, to report locations where they feel or have felt unsafe and to further identify the features on why that location made them feel unsafe.</p>	<p>The Street Safe App has been launched in Royal Greenwich. We will launch a marketing campaign to encourage additional members of the public to use it. Working in partnership with the Police, a plan has now been put in place and a relaunch is planned to take place in March in-line with International Women's Day.</p> <p>Street Safe data will be reviewed on a regular basis by community safety and wider partners in order to consider opportunities to address the issues and locations raised as concerns, for example in our parks, open spaces and on our estates.</p>
	<p>To procure and develop the White Ribbon accreditation. This will ensure that Royal Greenwich has a strategic approach to ending male violence against women and girls by engaging with men and boys, changing cultures and raising awareness.</p>	<p>We have started the application process and we are looking for men and boys who work or live within the Royal borough to become White Ribbon Ambassadors who engage with other men and boys to call out abusive and sexist behaviour among their friends, colleagues, and communities to promote a culture of equality and respect.</p>
	<p>To design, develop and launch a QR code which will be installed in various public spaces across the Royal borough. Women and girls can scan the QR code to report harassment, it will also be used as a directory which provides useful information of how to get support and report crime. The QR code can also be used to identify hot spot areas in Royal Greenwich.</p>	<p>The QR code is currently being designed and will be launched in April 2022. Marketing the code will consist of a public communication awareness campaign which will aim to run concurrently with the launch.</p>

	To establish an independent Women's Safety Reference Group to help shape the Council's response, and to act as an ongoing critical friend for the wider Safer Greenwich Partnership.	This group is currently being established and will consist of women and girls from the local community and support organisations. The reference group will assist in the wider development and implementation of this plan.
	To refresh and further roll-out our 'Women's Safety Charter', particularly across licensed premises within Royal Greenwich. In addition, to sign up to the London wide night-time charter, ensuring any principles contained within are included within our broader local safety pledge.	The Council will also explore whether a mandatory licensing condition can be introduced for all relevant licensed premises to sign up to the revised pledge.
	To roll-out a new and improved range of Town Watch and similar 'Watch' schemes across the borough.	It is anticipated that roll out of these schemes will commence in Q1 2022/23.
ENGINEERING	As part of the Council's CCTV modernisation programme (currently underway), to explore opportunities to expand and/or further enhance monitoring of public spaces and the prevention and detection of VAWG.	The Council has so far provisionally committed c.£3.7m to digitise, upgrade and maintain the former CCTV system over the next 7-9 years. Modernisation of the existing system has already commenced and should be completed within the next 3 years in terms of public spaces. Benefits will include much improved night-time coverage and the use of analytics to help with incident response and threat detection. In addition, the Council is already looking at associated technology, for example audio messaging and detection, to help Digital Evidence (CCTV) Officers to better identify and challenge criminal and anti-social behaviour.

		<p>Additional funding may help increase coverage in areas which have no or little cameras. Capacity is limited and there are strict legal and privacy tests to be met where CCTV can be used for public surveillance.</p> <p>The Council is also looking at limited opportunities to connect commercially owned CCTV with our main system to maximise coverage and improve the response to incidents in public spaces.</p>
	To introduce a new, highly visible CCTV-equipped enforcement vehicle to help increase monitoring of priority locations and support additional patrol activity.	We anticipate the vehicle being procured and retro fitted by Q4 2022/23.
	To explore opportunities to reprioritise and/or expand the Council's Street Lighting upgrade programme, making best use of feedback and data obtained to inform decision-making.	<p>The Mayor of London's Energy Efficiency Fund ('MEEF') has provided funding to the upgrade of close to 20,000 streetlights to LED. As well as cost savings, light will be more evenly distributed, making streets feel safer.</p> <p>Although the majority of street lighting within Royal Greenwich appears reasonably well aligned with the main crime and disorder hotspots of relevance, there may still be some limited opportunity to reprioritise the roll-out of upgraded lighting against the level of concern, while also adding lighting in some areas where beneficial, feasible and additional funding exists.</p>

EQUALITIES & EQUITY	<p>To focus on key actions to ensure that all our work in relation to the safety of women and girls is in-line with the Council's equality charter and contributes to promoting equality, valuing diversity, working inclusively, and upholding intersectional values across Royal Greenwich. The actions will fully aim to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into our systems, processes, policies, and a change in behaviour.</p>	<p>We aim to conduct further consultation with those groups who are often under-represented, so that their needs and input are considered in the overall mobilisation of the plan.</p>
	<p>To explore opportunities how Council procurement and contract policies can better promote equality, diversity, inclusivity, and social value amongst our contractors and suppliers.</p>	<p>As well options to ensure any contractors/suppliers have relevant equality policies, some businesses that already work with the Council have expressed interest in how they can support efforts to improve the safety of women and girls and promote wider community safety.</p> <p>We also hope to engage with and encourage our contractors/suppliers to sign up to relevant ally schemes that we will be promoting.</p>
	<p>To undertake a 'deep-dive' review of Council casework relating to Violence Against Women & Girls to help identify opportunities to improve service standards that are inclusive to all, while providing a consistent approach across all departments.</p>	<p>Violence Against Women & Girls, particularly domestic abuse, can be reported to, and managed by, various areas of the Council. Although Royal Greenwich continues to take steps to improve service standards, for example, by achieving the DAHA accreditation regarding housing management (described earlier), we wish to ensure the highest standards possible are being achieved, and that any opportunities to improve our response to cases reported are pursued.</p>

Cross-cutting actions

The GLA Women's Night Safety Charter

Recognising the experiences and additional concerns of women and girls during the evening and at night, alongside a growing appetite within Royal Greenwich to develop a stronger night-time economy offer for residents in future, the Council has recently signed up to the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Women's Night Safety Charter. Although many aspects of this commitment are already encapsulated within our own localised Women's Safety Charter and covered within this action plan, Royal Greenwich decided to join the growing number of other London local authorities and wider organisations who have pledged their support and solidarity in this way.

As well as identifying both Member and Officer-level champions to promote the charter and represent Royal Greenwich both locally and regionally, the Council will also maximise use of the GLA's night safety toolkit and those relationships that are developed across the charter network in order to better protect women and girls during the evening hours.

Safer Streets funding

The Royal Borough of Greenwich will continue to bid for any funding made available by the UK Government under the 'Safer Streets' initiative while identifying other similar grant opportunities. Although the Council put forward a highly commended application during 2021/22 which was shortlisted and put forward by the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime, we were sadly not successful overall. The bidding window for the 2022/23 round of funding – 'Safer Streets 4' has been announced as opening in February/March 2022. The Council, supported by local policing partners, will again be seeking to secure additional monies, on a match-funding basis, to help deliver this action plan and deliver better safety outcomes for local women, girls and our wider communities.